**Rowhedge Allotments Assoc. mtg Sunday 16th Jan 2011**

**Present**:

Joy Magna Wendy Fransella

Paddy Jake Murrells

Nina and Simon Crouchman Dominic Sutcliffe

Paul Warner & Barbara Charlino Claire Bush

Andy Randall Carole Heddle

Anne Jones Meg Prolingheuer

**Apologies**:

Christian Langlois Carol Bacon

Mandy Jones Una & Ken Jones

David Head

**UPDATES**:

Joy opened the meeting by updating all present on progress to date:

1. **Funding**: 2 pots of money were applied for, on the basis that if we failed on one front we might get the other. We got both:

* Lottery funding (which is already in the bank account) – will cover fencing/ water/ gate/ contribution to the ploughing
* East Essex Area Forum Community Initiatives. Application was made to them, once it was clear the application was successful, to ask if the monies could be spent on alternatives to water (the basis of the original application which was now covered by the Lottery funding).

Suggested spend included:

£500 towards water

£300 on gate

£2000 on container for secure storage (this includes the cost of sleepers as a hard base, and transportation to site).

£1200 on well-rotted horse manure

£500 for ploughing

The Parish Council (PC) has granted £600 to cover cost of a water meter by the gate.

2. **Lease**: Mandy and Joy went to see the Chair of the PC and the new Parish Clerk to reassure them about contact between PC and the Assoc, and to confirm funding secured.

Hard copy of lease, signed by Cadmans, has now been received and needs the PC to sign.

Cadmans released a new map showing the size and shape of the plot which is different from what had previously been understood.

**PROJECT PLAN**

1. Paddy agreed to be the **central point of contact** for all projects
2. Paddy will get **public liability insurance** (to come out of the funds). This is available through the National Allotments Soc.
3. **Plot layout**: Jake has drawn up a provisional suggested plan of the allotments. He agreed to coordinate.
4. **Water**: Yvette and Una had offered to take this on.

Joy had phoned both the water & fencing people once she knew the funding had been received, and they had confirmed they would be available to do the work with 2 weeks notice.

The water system proposed is with troughs operated by ballcocks, as used successfully by Mersea allotments. There will be a central strip between the plots where the water pipe will run.

There was discussion about ploughing before the water was put in so as to avoid any possible damage to the water pipe. This would however result in soft, turned earth which could make it difficult for the water contractors when laying the pipe. If the water pipe goes in before the ploughing, this will effectively plan out where the central path will be, as this is where the pipe will run. It will then delineate the areas to be ploughed.

1. **Ploughing & hedge trimming**: Wendy and Claire agreed to follow this up. Deep ploughing has been recommended; this may need to be done twice. It was suggested we may need to leave a wider path along by the hedge to allow space for hedge trimming. Joy will ask Cadmans about possibly moving the plots over by approx 3m to allow for extra space required to trim the hedge. Gaps in the hedge will need blocking/ repairing.
2. **Marking out plots**: it was suggested there should be a ‘working party’, with as many members as possible helping. Claire, Anne, Andy, Meg and Paddy all offered to help; David Head had also said he could help out in this area, and would be available Fridays, if it helps, to meet with contractors.

Anne and/or Paul may be able to get hold of long measuring tapes.

Rope and stakes will also be required.

Andy mentioned that the council are revamping the old playground at the recreation

Ground – they could be looking to sell of the bark which we could use on the path

between the plots.

1. **Fencing**: The cheapest were Maydays in Mersea who were very good. The suggestion is to use posts with high tensile wire fencing which we can’t do ourselves (it needs specialist machinery to get correct tension). Anne agreed to contact the contractors for new quotes. A site visit needs to be agreed, plus a date for the work to be done. Claire and Andy would be available to meet contractors on site (available in the afternoons) and take notes. Joy will ask Cadmans again if they want to stake out the site boundaries (which would also avoid possibilities of disputes in the future).
2. **Storage container**: Paul has contacts in the building trade and agreed to research costs/ availability/ sizes etc. He was doubtful about there being sufficient space to get a container hoisted into the field. Cost of a “teleporter” should be looked into, to hoist it into the field.

It was suggested the school might like to paint a mural. Claire also wondered if Sarah Sabin (?) might be willing to help (she has been involved in the past with the under 5s, and enjoys being involved in community ‘stuff’).

Dominic queried the need for a container (due to expense involved) but it was felt this would be needed initially to provide secure storage of tools/ wheelbarrows etc.

1. **Well rotted manure**: Dominic felt the soil could be quite fertile as nothing has been grown there for so long, but there are known to be problems with couch grass and current ‘wild’ growth doesn’t indicate great fertility. He suggested we check the fertility of the soil before adding lots of muck. Anne will look into availability of manure/ soil improvers and costs. It seems it mostly comes prepacked in bags.
2. **On site toilet**: Anne will research costings and options for compost/ earth toilets.

**PLOT ALLOCATION**:

As previously announced, this will be done on the basis of who joined and when. All members need to check the new website: www.rowlots.org.uk. Paddy will update details to show who wanted a full or a half plot, and who is sharing with whom. Could everyone be sure to check these details and let Paddy know of any changes required.

We currently have more people than available plots.

**THANKS**:

Joy requested that we minute the Association’s thanks to Jake for his designs, and to Christian for all the work he has done on the website. Any expenses must be reimbursed out of funds.

**ANY OTHER BUSINESS**:

Anne mentioned allotment planning available online, where you can plan what you are going to plant, where. The Guardian also apparently does an allotment guide, as do various other sites. Anne will put a link on the website to the one she had found.

Thanks were also expressed to Joy, Mandy and Paddy for all their incredibly hard work and time spent in achieving such superb results so rapidly. This was seconded by all present!

**DATE OF NEXT MEETING**: will be posted on the website.