Rowhedge Allotments Association

Notes of meeting held on 20 February 2011 6pm

Ye Olde Albion, Rowhedge

Present:

| Nina Crouchman  Paddy Adams (Membership Secretary)  Joy Magna (Chair)  Yvette Wetton  Christian Langlois  Zoe Gibson-Hart  Mandy Jones (Secretary) | Anne Jones  David Head  Carole Bacon  David Bacon  Robert Watson  Andy Randall  Paul Warner  Diana Collyer |
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Apologies: Carole Heddle, Wendy Fransella, Meg Prolingheuer, Una Jones

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| 1. Matters arising from previous minutes  1.1 Previous minutes were agreed. Most items are on the agenda so are discussed below but Joy updated on the lease which has now been signed by the Parish Council (PC) along with an agreement between the Allotments Association (RAA) and the PC which states that we will look after the allotments and our own business so there is no work/maintenance for PC.  2. Water connection and supply  2.1 Yvette fed back on the progress of the water supply:  The infrastructure for the water is now in but that the troughs have not been connected as they are vulnerable to being stolen. Rob (Watson) from AJ Taylor who are supplying the troughs said they could keep them for as long as necessary so we would not need to put them on site until we are ready. It was agreed that we would store them until we had some fencing in and had some form of presence on the site.  2.2 Rob also agreed to look into some way of securing the troughs with a ‘spike and anchor’ and supply us with some costs.  2.3 Yvette said she would find out where the stopcock/meter will be so we know how to turn it off etc.  2.4 Mandy said she would find out the yearly cost of water charges from Bob Penny at the Council as Joy mentioned that they had been higher than the £12 they had estimated but it was not clear by how much. This may affect next year’s cost for a plot but not this year’s as we have extra money from RAA subs.  3. Ploughing/land clearance  3.1 Joy mentioned that at a committee meeting we had agreed to plough the land, however she had since found out that a) the top soil went down at the most 18 inches and after that it was sand and stone (a bit like the quarry land at Fingringhoe) and b) that if we ploughed the couch grass would remain. If we plough we will therefore end up with poor quality soil. A discussion about the possible options took place and it was agreed that we need to make a decision at this meeting. A decision was made that Zoe would ask the contractor (Simon House at Fingringhoe/Abberton) if option 1 below was possible (the preferred option). If this was not possible we would ask for option 2 and people would do their own rotovating/clearing . The land will definitely not be deep ploughed as a site:    Option 1 (preferred): Cut down/clear the couch grass and take a layer or ‘turf’ off the top with the roots of the grass to leave the top soil below. This will also depend on the cost of taking away the earth.  Option 2: Cut down/clear the couch grass and then individual allotment holders clear themselves and perhaps for those who needed help or would like to rotovate, we could look at hiring one as a group (Andy had some information on a ‘tracmaster’ which was a super version of a rotovator that we could look into hiring.    3.2 It was agreed that we needed to do this before fencing and Zoe said she would contact Simon House this week and email the quote to the committee immediately and if it is reasonable we ask him to do the work asap.  4. Fencing  4.1 Anne summarised where we had got to with the fencing:   * There will not be a whole fence on the hedge side of the site, but we will fill in the gaps in the hedge with fencing. * There will be fencing on the opposite side with a gate to the allotment site. * It will be a boundary fence and not a secure fence.   4.2 There was some concern about the security of the site, however we do not have the funds to put in a secure fence at the moment. It was agreed that if security becomes an issue we may need to put in another bid for funding.  4.3 Dave also suggested some hedging by the fence side may make the site more secure and it was agreed that we will revisit this when we are on site.  4.4 Anne and Andy are meeting with Richard from Maydays on site on Friday 25 February to assess the amount of fencing we need and the date for beginning work. It was agreed that we use Richard providing the costs are reasonable and have not changed much from the original quote.    5. Marking the plots  5.1 Paddy said he will contact Jake who had said he would co-ordinate the plot marking, we are looking for 2 weekends in the middle of March when the fencing and clearing is complete, to do the marking, so volunteers are needed to help out!  5.2 Rob said he could look for some steel pins to use to wrap string around so we will only need to buy the string.  7. Finances  7.1 Diana reported that we had £420 membership and had paid out £600 approx for the water from the PC grant (Diana will ensure it is on PC agenda for 10 March who will let us have the cheque when the work is complete). Insurance was £80 and after this we have approx £11,000.  7.2 Anne said she would ask Maydays for a quote for a combination lock for the gate.  7.3 We may need to spend more to secure the water troughs but it was agreed this was a good idea, see item 2.2.  8. Storage/Container  8.1 Paul reported on the cost of a container. There were two options, one which was just a container for storage and one with a division inside with an ‘office’ space including a window and separate door. The storage only container was £1970 inc VAT delivered to the site and the storage + office was £2200. After discussion and a vote, the majority agreed that we would have the storage + office option.  8.2 Paul said we would need to get the container before the gate is in so it will need to go in before the gate and fencing. It was agreed Paul ask what is available and order asap.  8.3 The container will need approx 6 concrete blocks to put the jack legs on, Rob said he would look into getting hold of these.  8.4 It was agreed that we get a dead lock for the container and issue keys with a £10 deposit refundable when people give up their allotment.  9. Waiting list and plot allocation  9.1 The committee had met and agreed on the allocation of first plots:   * People would be grouped into date order (by month) according to when they expressed an interest * These names would then be put into a ‘hat’ by month. Those who first expressed an interest would draw first and choose where they would like their plot and so on. * The meeting for this will be public and if the person on the list who expressed an interest is not available to attend they must send someone on their behalf if they want to be involved in the draw, if not they will be allocated a plot by the committee in numerical order when all other plots are chosen.   10. Hedging  10.1 Paul’s neighbour said he would do the cutting back of the hedging this week (wk beginning 21st Feb) so it would definitely be completed by 1st March. Mandy will receive the invoice and see that he gets payment.  11. Rental and subscription to RAA  11.1 The committee had agreed that the cost for a plot would be either £60 for a full plot or £30 for a half per year, but that if members paid before 1 May by setting up a standing order they would get a discount and costs for the plots would go down to £50 for a full plot and £25 for a half.  11.2 Anne is to send standing order form to Diana to issue to members.  11.3 These levels are to be set yearly as we may need to increase next year due to water charges being higher than expected.  11.4 It was agreed that the subs for the association be collected at the same time as the rent for existing members (1 May, with the tenancy and subscription year running from 1 May to 30 April) and these will be the same level despite the point in the year members join as to administer any other way would be too time consuming. This will be the same for allotment rents.  12. New web site  12.1 Thanks were expressed to Christian for setting up the new website [www.rowlots.org.uk](http://www.rowlots.org.uk) Christian said we were having 4 to 5 hits per day. All documents including minutes are in the ‘documents’ section of the website and are sorted alphabetically.  13. Any other business  13.1 Mandy will contact Bob Penny at the borough council to see if they would be able to donate any compost or top soil or anything else we could make use of.  13.1 Andy reported that the PC were very pleased with our progress to date and wanted to thank the group for all we have done.  13.2 Joy and Paddy are attending a free course run by the Essex branch of the National Association in Ipswich on running an allotment group.  14. Date of next meeting  14.1 The next meeting will be held on Sunday 13 March at 6pm at the Albion.  14.2 The initial allocation meeting will take place very soon after, Paddy will look into booking the school for the meeting. | Rob Watson  Yvette Wetton  Mandy Jones  Zoe Gibson-Hart  Anne Jones/Andy Randall  Paddy Adams  Rob Watson  Anne Jones  Paul Warner  Rob Watson  Paul Warner  Mandy Jones  Anne Jones  Paddy Adams |

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