**Rowhedge Allotment Association**

**Notes of committee meeting held on Sunday 26th June, 6pm,**

**The Olde Albion Pub, Rowhedge**

**Present:**

| Carole HeddleAndy RandalCarole HeddleZoe Gibson-HartJoy Magna (Chair) | Mandy Jones (Secretary)Paddy Adams (Membership secretary)Paul WarnerRob WatsonYvette Wetton  |
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**Apologies:** Maria Jackson

**1.** **Purpose of the meeting**

1.1 The purpose of this meeting was to decide arrangements for maintaining the site and setting up some policies. It was agreed that members of the committee co-ordinate certain tasks/areas of administration or become contacts for members or plot holders, with the committee taking overall responsibility. The areas are outlined below (with the committee members co-ordinating those areas) along with clarification of some of the association’s policies. The committee will produce a list of names and contact details for the notice board in the container.

**2. Site maintenance**

2.1 Rob, Paddy and Paul are the main contacts/will co-ordinate site maintenance. Paul specifically agreed to take responsibility for the maintenance of the water troughs and it was decided that they be emptied for the winter which he will organise.

2.2 Joy reported that the broken MoD fencing is now fixed.

2.3 The black gate is not secured when open and could damage a car when driving through. Rob agreed to find something to secure the black gate (either a loop so plot holders could loop it over the fence/bush or a stake).

2.4 A discussion was held over whether we had a padlock for the black gate to deter unauthorised use of the land or fly tipping. It was decided that the combination lock should be put on the external gate as there was no point in having one on both gates. Andy will speak to Anne and Christian who were intending to put the padlock on the other gate and apologise from the committee, explaining the reasons for the change. Joy will speak to Cadmans to check whether that is acceptable to them and also ask if they have any funds to pay for the fitting of the lock.

**3. Responsibility for paths**

3.1 It was decided that plot holders should be responsible for keeping the path area in front of their plots maintained. The chippings can be used to keep the weeds down and will stop it becoming too muddy should we have a lot of rain. Joy will email plot holders and ask them to do this and to use the chippings if possible. Rob will arrange to have some more chippings dropped off at the far end of the site, so all plot holders have access to them.

**4. Health and safety and etiquette for closing the gates**

4.1 At the last meeting there was agreement that the policy for closing the gates should be as follows: whatever time of day, if you are the last person on site, or if there are no cars on site, you must close both sets of gates. Several committee members remarked that this is not always followed. Joy agreed to send out an email reminding plot holders that this was the policy and we must follow it to maintain site security.

4.2 Andy has supplied a first aid kit for the container and agreed to be the contact for health and safety for the association (the committee has overall responsibility for health and safety).

4.3 Paddy said that there is a need to do a risk assessment on site. He will devise a form and arrange with Andy to undertake a risk assessment.

**5. Social events and fundraising**

5.1 At the last meeting a group was formed to arrange social events and fundraising. Mandy will co-ordinate that group. She will email all on the group and set up a meeting for mid July. One idea for a social event was a harvest party for members at the site. This will be arranged for late September. Yvette suggested we invite Cadmans and our funders (National lottery/Area forum) and this was agreed. Another event could be held in the community centre before Christmas (probably late November). Having The Ragged String Band play was suggested. Mandy will contact Jake and ask if that is a possibility.

5.2 A quiz night was suggested to raise money, possibly for February/March. Zoe will talk to Dave Head who is a quiz master to see if he would like to present the quiz.

5.3 Rob suggested having a stall at the farmer’s market for produce that allotment holders don’t use themselves. Mandy will bring this up at the fundraising meeting.

**6. Plot cultivation and weeds clearing policy**

6.1 It was agreed that we need to tighten our policy on non cultivation and clearing of weeds and that this needs to be communicated to members clearly. After discussion it was agreed that we work out some broad principles regarding non cultivation and use our discretion as a committee about whether to evict but within the agreed guidelines. The policy at the moment for non cultivation is:

* Where a plot holder does not cultivate or allows weeds to get out of hand, the plot holder is contacted by the membership secretary informally to ask them to clear their plot.
* Where there is still no evidence of clearance, a letter is sent inviting contact and asking the plot holder to clear. If no contact is made and/or no clearance is evident a second letter is sent informing the plot holder that a three month notice period will begin from the date of that letter.
* If still no clearance occurs the plot holder is evicted from their plot and the plot is offered to the next person on the waiting list.

This policy stands at the moment, but it was agreed that Mandy ask the borough council for their policy on non-cultivation and weeds and we assess that. Yvette has done some investigations and stressed how complicated it is. She has found a variety of policies and will look into putting some broad principles together to discuss at the next meeting.

6.2 It was suggested that we ask plot holders who are having trouble managing if they need help and if they do committee members who are available will form a team and help that plot holder clear their plot. For now, Paddy will communicate the existing policy by email and ask those specific holders who are not clearing if they need any help with clearance. The committee also need to look into the issue of splitting whole plots into two, where people are overly ambitious. This will be discussed when we reconvene at the next meeting.

**7. Handling complaints**

7.1 It was agreed that we need to have a procedure and point of contact for complaints. Andy and Zoe agreed to be the people to contact if anyone has a complaint. They will bring the complaint to the committee to decide a course of action.

**8. Water harvesting**

8.1 Andy said that Diana had some ideas for water harvesting but we will save that discussion for a future meeting when Diana is around.

**9. Membership of the association, succession and members out of catchment**

9.1 A discussion was held about whether members of the association who are out of the catchment (Rowhedge or the parish of East Donyland) and cultivating a plot with the plot holder (who is within catchment) have any rights over that plot. The meeting agreed that they do not have an automatic right of succession and that people in these circumstance should be ‘Associate Members’. As a general principle, once a plot holder leaves that plot, it is re-allocated to the next person on the waiting list. However, the committee will retain discretion depending on individual circumstances. For example this could be where one member of a couple living together in the village has an allotment but this is cultivated by both partners and one of those partners leaves or dies. Paddy will draft this policy and circulate to the committee for approval.

9.2 It was decided that people outside the catchment area can join the waiting list, but residents of East Donyland and Rowhedge will always have priority.

**10. Any other business**

10.1 Yvette has a poster of the Rowhedge Fair – Joy said she would put it on the website.