Rowhedge Allotments Committee Meeting

Sunday 8th October 2023 7pm

Upstairs at The Albion

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| Attendees | Wendy Fransella (chair), Louise Burcombe, Sam Burcombe, Paul Warner, Zoe Hart, Martin Chapman, Caroline Bates, Christian Langlois, Penny Sturt, Janet Livingstone, Sarah Sprackling (minutes) |
| Apologies | Committee members Anne Jones, Barbara Chaplin.  Also, Lilian Wager and Carole Heddle. |
| Water usage | There was a recent enquiry about using pumps and hoses to water allotments. There has been clarification by email to allotment members that the tenancy agreement states these are not to be used due to the amount of water they use.  Paul has figures for each year’s water usage. This year has not been high. 2020 and 2022 were the highest years. Paul will send information to Christian who will add a document to the website.  There was agreement that the new lids for the water troughs are excellent. Thank you to Martin and Sam.  The tenancy agreements will be shared for everyone to sign in January 2024. There is awareness that newer members do not have a copy at present. |
| Current waiting list | There are currently 10 people on the waiting list for plots - some for full and some for half plots. Some applicants are existing half plot allotment holders wanting a second half plot and others are new requests. Some are priority Rowhedge residents and others from further afield (Colchester).  Prioritisation, as documented on the website, is given to local residents. It has also been previously agreed that each member can have a maximum of one whole plot (or two halves).  We know of one plot currently being surrendered but believe there could be others.  It was agreed that allocation, once prioritisation by location has been taken into account, will be offered by date order of when someone joined the waiting list, whether the person is a current allotment holder or a new applicant.  [Rowhedge Allotments (rowlots.org.uk)](https://www.rowlots.org.uk/) |
| Update on cultivation of plots. | There was discussion about plots that are not cultivated to allotment standards. The allotment tenancy agreement states that plots should be at least 70% cultivated.  There is acknowledgement that all of us have times when it is not possible to achieve this. Although the purpose of allotments is primarily cultivation, they also serve an important function in improving physical and mental health and therefore there needs to be sensitivity in applying this rule.  It was agreed that there should be monitoring checks at least annually (late July). Janet agreed to lead on this and feedback to the committee.  In the meantime, it was agreed that a communication be sent to all members as a reminder of the standards and request to consider whether anyone wishes to surrender their plot for re-allocation to someone on the waiting list. Also, to ask members to let the committee know if they are struggling so any help could be considered. |
| Land usage | As stated previously, the allotments and surrounding plot of land have been purchased by EDPC and they are now our landlords.  They have asked for consideration of usage for the additional land.  Suggestions so far are:  Creating additional plots (10 full plots), which will address waiting list;  A communal orchard area with fruit trees;  A wild nature area;  A pond;  An area for bee hives;  A combination of above:  Any other suggestions.  It was agreed that we produce a survey to canvas members’ opinions when tenancies are signed in January. |
| AOB | Christian has introduced Sarah to the document archive on the website and she now has permissions to upload documents.  Christian will consult with Caroline to be able to view the membership spreadsheet ahead of annual payments.  There is currently £3799.01 balance in the allotment accounts with an invoice pending for £150.00 relating to camera maintenance.  There have been no takers for the trail cameras. Paul is storing them for when interest is expressed. There have been no further instances of vandalism.  Paul informed the Committee that Barbara will be standing down. |