

PARKS AND COUNTRYSIDE SERVICES

ALLOTMENT ADVISORY GROUP Minutes of Meeting

Monday 22nd July 2024 6-8pm
The Circle 33 Rockingham Lane

Present:

Councillor Brian Holmshaw (Chair)
James Musgrave Allotment Manager
Caroline Jennings, Allotment Officer (Minutes)
Rowan Longhurst, Countryside Service Manager
Phil Webster, Sheffield Allotment Federation, Roewoods and Parson Cross Societies
Michael Booth, Allotment Federation
Peter Keen Hangingwater Allotment Association
David Martin Roscoe Plantation Allotment Society
Councillor Woodcraft SCC
Fred Oldham Norton St Pauls Allotment Society
Tony Redshaw Norton Lees Allotments
Ann Marshall Woodseats Allotment Society
Colin Williams Ecclesall Allotment Association
Leanne Wall Mossway Allotment Society
Rob Hawkins Hangingwater Allotments/Federation
Dan Bilton Walkley Bank Allotment Society

ITEM	DETAIL	ACTION
1.	Introduction Councillor Brian Holmshaw introduced everyone to the meeting, and everyone introduced themselves.	
2.	Apologies for Absence Paul Jordan Archer Lane allotments Steve Marples Hagg House Councillor Marianne Elliott Councillor Barbara Masters	
3.	Staffing and Councillor appointment updates Councillor Brian Holmshaw reported back that at the latest AGM Mark Whitakers, Stocksbridge and Upper Don, Councillor Cliff	

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4.	<p>Woodcraft and Councillor Marianne Elliott would be affiliated to the AAG.</p> <p>Rowan Longhurst introduced herself to the group and was delighted to update on the appointment of James Musgrave as the new Allotment Manager.</p> <p>Minutes and Matters Arising</p> <p>Councillor Brian Holmshaw explained to the group the new Matters Arising list would be used to update on matters arising and any other actions.</p> <p>P2 Ann Marshall from Woodseats mentioned she attended a zoom meeting about events held on allotments. Brian Holmshaw asked if it should be an allotment group document, James Musgrave agreed it would go on the website. Fred Oldham also suggested a page in the new handbook about events on allotments.</p> <p>James Musgrave updated the group on the progress of the handbook advising that it was going to committee in March and that there are still a few items to get clarification on with the legal team.</p> <p>P2 have been some discussions around self-management with some interest in water management. James Musgrave mentioned that some societies might in the future be able to access the waiting list to undertake plot offers, but more information is required around GDPR before this can happen.</p> <p>P2 Minutes on line Caroline Jennings reported back that Jane Bullimore has been informed that Committee Services use a similar format, and that we must make minutes accessible if asked.</p> <p>P2 Shirecliffe and Parkwood updates – Rowan Longhurst advised that there was nothing new yet because of a busy time around the elections and she was still waiting for further Central Government updates. Any further updates will be brought to this meeting.</p> <p>P2 The Sheffield Standard was discussed, this is where a site must meet a minimum standard, some requests that societies could be involved with this process. Peter Keen asked if there is a Sheffield Standard, Rowan explained that yes it's explained in the Green and Open Space Strategy which can be found on the website. It is a quality mark in Sheffield's green and public spaces covering clean, safe, welcoming and accessible. A link will be shared to the Green and Open Spaces Strategy.</p>	<p>JM</p> <p>JM</p>

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	<p>Rivelin Valley update, Dave Martin reported that when they get more info they can invite for a meeting. Dave Martin to update the group when information available.</p> <p>James Musgrave mentioned a grant available for Whips and will share the link when he returns from holiday.</p> <p>James also mentioned site priorities and asked people to add to the list if people have them.</p> <p>P3 There was also an informal discussion around starter plots, some points will be made for this group's information.</p> <p>P5 On the issue of burning James Musgrave mentioned the recent results of the Clear Air Zone and how we may come under more scrutiny on burning, he is open to ideas on how we might proceed in the future. Michael Booth said that we keep coming back to this and understands about the need to reduce burning, he suggests agreeing to twelve burning days a year, James says he is open to all suggestions.</p> <p>Fred Oldham suggested using open land on his site to make a communal compost. James Musgrave mentioned that Ceri Ashton tried something similar in the past but it created fly-tipping.</p> <p>Dan Bilton said that people at Walkley Bank are already dumping cuttings, and they have thought about getting a shredder in but this might be difficult to move about. Some people tend to just manage burning themselves.</p> <p>Peter Keen suggested getting Viola to come and take compost, Rowan agreed to try asking them again as have done in the past.</p> <p>Rowan agrees that a decision will have to be made, and asked the group how we move forward, what are the pros and cons, and if it would it be a good idea to have a further steer from air quality monitoring colleagues.</p> <p>Ann Marshall from Woodseats doesn't think that the same burning days would work because burning is very dependent on the wind. One idea would be to say a barrel must be used.</p> <p>Colin Williams says burning in a barrel is best, along with summer burning because it's dry and therefore very quick.</p> <p>James Musgrave summarised that the group consensus that burning in a barrel was a good idea.</p> <p>Meeting agreed as a true record.</p>	<p>DM</p> <p>JM</p> <p>JM</p> <p>JM/CJ/RL /JB</p>

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5.	<p>Annual Report 2023-2024</p> <p>James fed back to the group with the annual report. It was suggested that the report should be sent out before the meeting in future to give everyone some time to read it. This was agreed.</p> <p>Questions arising from the report were that it would be useful to have a better breakdown of what has been spend on administrative work.</p> <p>Rowan Longhurst mentioned that the council has seen a notable increase in rubbish such as whitegoods sofas, this waste has a higher cost for its removal. It was mentioned that tyres should be banned from allotment sites.</p> <p>Michael Booth asked about key returns and how there should be a higher deposit as the majority of people would be happier to pay a higher deposit.</p> <p>A discussion took place on lock changes, Rowan Longhurst suggested that societies talk to their LAC's about possible funding for lock changes as they have been able to help fund this in the past.</p>	
6.	<p>Rent for 2026/27</p> <p>James Musgrave talked through this reverting back to the 2018 questionnaire which proposed a 2% increase. The proposed rent increase for 2026/27 is 2%. Timescales for this is December and will go to committee for approval of a 2% increase.</p>	
7.	<p>Structure of the AAG Meeting</p> <p>Michael Booth reported that the meeting is sometimes a bit rushed. Could some parts of the meeting be shorter such as the annual report for example. Should the meeting be started earlier so there is more time.</p> <p>Councillor Brian Holmshaw said that 8pm was a good time to finish mainly because of the winter and the darker nights.. Some people suggested that trying to get to the meeting earlier would be difficult. James Musgrave suggested that there might be too many points on the agenda to get through and might need to be reduced.</p> <p>Rob Hawkins suggested that we need a good room to use, he doesn't feel that the rooms we use picks up all the sound. Brian Holmshaw mentioned that using the Town Hall was difficult because of public access. Rob Hawkins talked about the potential to do visit to other sites. James Musgrave said this would be a good way to reach out to other sites that don't have</p>	

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8.	<p>representation at the AAG. Rowan Longhurst said it would be a good way of understanding opportunities and challenges on other sites, could do a tour in the summer months when it's lighter and there is more time to prepare. Over the next year everyone should think about how everyone could present their sites through videos, pictures, etc to share the lesser-known sites.</p> <p>Colin Williams asked how many sites attend the AAG, James replied that the email goes out to about 20 sites. Dan Bilton suggests being less strict with who attends, representation may need tweaking.</p> <p>Peter Keen mentioned that the Tenancy Agreement with the council is a legal document. The AAG is not mandatory it's created for a purpose, and the council are the ones in the driving seat on how the AAG works. This was agreed but also agreed that the meeting needs to be affective.</p> <p>Council responsibility when a new plot is taken</p> <p>Phil Webster said there no reason not to send out hedge letters now, there is lack of enforcement on hedges.</p> <p>Tony Redshaw says that that they have a WhatsApp group where volunteers help to cut hedges.</p> <p>Dan Bilton says that they can't enforce hedges unless they are low when someone takes on a plot.</p> <p>Ann Marshall says that the responsibilities of tenants must be defined clearly when an allotment is taken on. Ann Marshall made the point that she feels we go over the same topics every meeting on such issues on sites.</p> <p>James Musgrave said that hedges are contentious and it's not possible to write to every tenant, the responsibilities are set out in the handbook and the tenancy agreement. James said we are looking at the way we work and at contractors. Rowan asked everyone to encourage tenants to give us their emails, as this way of communication has a massive cost saving.</p>	
9.	<p>Starter Plots and Finance</p> <p>To be discussed at the next meeting.</p>	
10.	<p>Timing of Inspections</p> <p>Phil Webster asked if inspections happened on time. James replied that yes they do but things can happen in the interim which means sometimes the follow-up can be later. Caroline Jennings explained that there are a lot of plots to get around.</p>	

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	<p>Michael Booth questioned the functionality of Colony around inspections. Rowan Longhurst said there wasn't much point in scrutinising Colony because we know what works and what doesn't.</p>	
<p>11.</p> <p>i.</p> <p>ii.</p> <p>iii.</p>	<p>A.O.B</p> <p>Branching Out (Tree Council is opening their community grant fund on 1st August)</p> <p>Event Risk management – everyone can use this, it's not for this meeting everyone can drop into the sub-group events, by dropping on to this group.</p> <p>Fred Oldham would like more information on managing water, James said he is working on this and will email the information through. Colin Williams would also like this information sending to him.</p> <p>Ann Marshall asked about knotweed management, James explained that the Woodlands maintenance contractor would be treating knotweed in September. He asked for any new locations to be passed to us and advised that the What3Words App was very good at pinpointing locations.</p> <p>Next meeting is 24th September.</p> <p>Allotment Competition prize evening is on the 5th September at The Circle on Rockingham Lane.</p>	<p>JM</p> <p>ALL</p>