

PARKS AND COUNTRYSIDE SERVICES

ALLOTMENT ADVISORY GROUP Minutes of Meeting

Monday 11th December 2023 6-8pm
Victoria Hall

Present:

Councillor Brian Holmshaw (Chair)
James Musgrave Interim Manager
Caroline Jennings, Allotment Officer (Minutes)
Rowan Longhurst, Countryside Service Manager
Mubarak Hassan SCC LAC
Teresa Bond SCC LAC's
Karen Walke SYFAB
Michael Booth, Allotment Federation
Michael Jordan Allotment Federation
Stacey Grocock Allotment Federation
David Martin Roscoe Plantation Allotment Society
Councillor Woodcraft SCC
Sue Hinde Crookes Quarry Allotment Society
Geoff Craig Highciffe CAA
Bill Atherton Archer Lane
Keir Blockley St Paul's Allotments
Charlotte Forsyth Norton Lees Society
Ann Marshall Woodseats
Colin Williams Ecclesall Allotment Association
Lee Vallett RVAS
Rob Hawkins Hangingwater Allotments/Federation
Jude Lambe Walkley Bank Allotment Society
John Cawthorne Heeley and Meersbrook Allotments

ITEM	DETAIL	ACTION
1.	Introduction Councillor Brian Holmshaw introduced everyone to the meeting, and everyone introduced themselves.	
2.	Apologies for Absence Councillor Barbara Masters Jim Brown Meersbrook Allotment Society Phil Webster Sheffield Allotment Federation Esther Fisher Mossway Allotments	
3.		

ITEM	DETAIL	ACTION
4.	<p>Minutes and Matters Arising</p> <p>p2 Colin Williams said that the National Society do provide insurance for 3rd party cover if registered with a local Council and with a Society.</p> <p>Ann Marsden commented that revisiting the Events Policy was important and a meeting to discuss should be organised.</p> <p>Geoff Craig wants to go through the action points from the last meeting as they seem to have been missed out when going through the minutes. Brian said that we don't do this during this meeting we assume they have been completed.</p> <p>John Cawthone does not believe that rents are high because of concessions, and that this is not a true statement. Brian said that budget items would be covered later in the meeting.</p> <p>Cllr Woodcraft said with regards to the action points we need to know they have been done, Brian agreed, this would happen in future meetings.</p> <p>Colin Williams made a general point about the minutes of meetings, in that he could only find previous minutes online that were 4 years old and suggested that all future minutes go on the website. This was agreed by James.</p> <p>Meeting agreed as a true record.</p> <p>Community Funding Local Area Committee LAC and South Yorkshire Funding Advice Bureau SYFAB (presentations to be circulated via email after the meeting)</p> <p>Teresa Bond and Mubarak Hassan presented to the group. Teresa explained LAC's are to promote the involvement of local people in the democratic process. Grant funding is available to apply for. Mubarak talked about the focus of funding in the SW of the city explaining the funding that fits in with allotments are Ward Pots and the Cost of Living Fund. He explained that societies could be eligible for funding if they bring young people on site for example, to learn about food growing as an activity.</p> <p>Jude Lambe says she is aware of Food Works, they will collect excess food from allotments which goes to food banks.</p> <p>If people have any ideas or need further information to please contact staff as they are happy to help give guidance on funding pots that may be available. Contact details will be emailed out.</p> <p>Ann Marshall said that Woodseats already contribute to food banks but something that would help with this process was</p>	<p>JM/RL</p> <p>JM/RL/BH /CJ/JB</p> <p>JM</p> <p>JM</p>

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	<p>better co-ordination between Societies in the South and South West. A collective meeting would be helpful.</p> <p>Charlotte Forsyth asked if LAC's could help with rubbish removal, Brian Holmshaw said it was best to contact the local LAC to find out their area priorities.</p> <p>Rowan Longhurst said that local priorities are different, and everyone is still working out how to strike the best balance which allows areas to say what is important to them. We are coming up to the end of the second year, Rowan said it's not been easy but it's becoming clearer.</p> <p>Rob Hawkins explained that Hangingwater allotments got a skip through the Ward Pot, this happened by speaking to Councillor Cliff Woodcraft, and it was an easy and quick process.</p> <p>Next Karen Walke presented the SYFAB presentation to the group. The group, South Yorkshire Funding Advice Bureau provides advice, information, and training to improve fund raising skills and confidence. She explained that often people know what to apply for but have difficulty putting this down on paper, SYFAB can help with this. Please get in touch, contact details will be sent out on email along with the presentation.</p>	<p>JM</p>
<p>5.</p>	<p>Results of Rents Survey for 2025/26</p> <p>James Musgrave talked briefly about the results. He explained that the background and history to the current situation is on the website. The Committee paper is also published on the website. The rent increase will be 5.96%.</p> <p>Michael Booth thinks that the survey was fixed and that it should have started at 0% and not 5% he feels the survey was a waste of money.</p> <p>Rowan Longhurst said that she remembers talking about the lag in inflation and the cost of delivering the service had gone up. At the time it was unclear how things would go, this conversation was had many times over, it was not viable to offer below 5%. Rowan went on to explain how we are in a worse financial position with site maintenance massively reduced, we are not in the same situation as last year.</p> <p>Geoff was sympathetic to the situation, he asked Rowan if allotment accounts are published, Rowan said they were and this was via the annual report where income and expenditure is broken down, it is discussed at this meeting.</p> <p>Ann Marsden said there is no option for 0%.</p>	

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6.	<p>John Cawthorne said he was sympathetic but why bother with a survey, they are just a tick box and not binding. He has tried to find out how much is spent on Heeley and Meersbrook but can't get this information as all figures are citywide, he believes Heeley and Meersbrook make a profit for the allotment service.</p> <p>Rowan said that the consultation wasn't compulsory but felt it was the right thing to do to consult with tenants, and helps to inform the decision, it also shows that we take feedback from outside of this forum.</p> <p>Self-Management (working groups)</p> <p>James expressed an interest in getting these meetings organised. He asked those that went on the Chesterfield allotment visits to get in touch with him. Rowan mentioned that there are varied self-management models across the country, the decision would be a two-way conversation to discuss what people wanted, and any ideas of what your tenants wanted, everything is very open at this stage of the discussions.</p> <p>Michael Jordan asked if anyone wants to self-manage their site can we still raise the rents. Rowan said it was too early to discuss this until there is a clearer idea of what people wanted from self-management. There is a collection of models out there and the first meeting would be about what we think might work, there is no fixed agreement on this yet.</p>	ALL
7.	<p>AOB</p> <p>Parkwood/Shirecliffe levelling-up fund. There is 90 million levelling-up money covering the ski village and allotments, not sure yet what money may be available for the allotments. Options could be an uplift of the site or tackling anti-social behaviour. There is an overarching plan already in place, but nothing is known about the allocation yet, James will keep people posted when more is known.</p> <p>Budget for next year. Michael Jordan would like some idea of the budget available for next year. Rowan said this wasn't easy to predict, money continues to come in over the year. Rowan said she can look over recent years and estimate on staff costs and take an average.</p> <p>Rob Hawkins would like to know how much we spend on tree work. Rowan advised that Ash Dieback work is a bit more complicated as it is classed as safety work, so it doesn't come out of the allotment budget. Ash Dieback work is increasing year on year. Brian asked for an action on budgets for tree work.</p>	<p>JM</p> <p>RL</p> <p>RL/JM</p>

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	<p>Ranger Service. Geoff asked how many rangers there are and what do they do. James said there is now a full complement of rangers after some staff changes. Michael Booth asked what their remit is as he has some concerns. The water on sites was slow to go off this year, and at Mossway the water was still on, this could cost money from frozen pipes. He is also worried how long it will take to turn the water back on. Rowan explained that there is a lot for the rangers to learn, they are keen and want to do a good job, but it will take time. Some water is easier to turn off than others, some sites can be very tricky.</p> <p>Site Inspections. James fed back to the group that 262 non-cultivation letters had been issued, 121 other letters such as hedge letters, 48 NTQ's, and there were 11 sites to re-inspect after letters had been issued.</p> <p>Rob was concerned that there are people who do not work their plots and is worried they give us excuses, meaning they get to keep their plots, and nothing further happens. James explained that we must take health and wellbeing into account, but if people consistently do not work their plots, we do take this seriously and take action.</p> <p>Other AOB questions answered by Caroline Jennings in the break.</p>	
8.	No decision yet on the date of the next meeting, there is potential for a site visit to an allotment.	