

Notes of the Annual Plotolders Meeting 27/09/2021, 7:30pm



Cllr Josh King (WPC) – Chair of Open Spaces
Mr O Armstrong (WPC) – Deputy Clerk
K Cena (WPC) – Clerical and Communications Assistant
Mr Daniel Wells (Allotment Rep)
Mr Derek Taylor (Allotment Rep)

Apologies

Cllr C Clark

Welcome and Introduction

Cllr Josh King, Chair of Open Spaces committee which also includes the oversight of the allotments introduced himself, Daniel Wells, Nigel Powell and Derek Taylor who are all allotment holders on the working party. He mentioned that Nigel Powell who is also an allotment rep may be running late. He also introduced Oli Armstrong who is the Deputy Clerk and Katy Cena who manages the day to day management of the allotments. He highlighted that there would be the opportunity for questions at the end of the meeting and that comments/suggestions could be made on the back of the agenda slips if plot holders did not want to raise any comments/questions publicly.

Cllr Josh King welcomed every one back after the disruption from the pandemic which sadly resulted in last year's meeting being cancelled. It is with great fondness that we remember Cllr Hazel Hodd who chaired the meeting back in 2019 and was fundamental in the allotment working party – she is sadly missed.

Annual Allotment Report

The following report was given by Cllr J King:

The desire to become an allotment plot holder has been stronger than ever and all 157 plots are currently occupied with a waiting list of more than 20

Plots	157
Vacancies	0
Occupied	157
Percentage Occupied	100%

Plot Inspections

Due to the disruption and the effects of the pandemic, a more lenient approach was taken to plot inspections, the pandemic has affected people in different ways with more people having to self-isolate. Having said that we are now back to doing regular inspections and we do now expect people to adhere to the terms and conditions which is to cultivate and maintain their plots. If anyone is having difficulties either due to ill health or struggling, then we would be grateful if you could inform Katy in the office.

Skips

The skip was well used in October and despite notifying all the plot holders it was less well used in April. Based on this we have decided to go back to one skip per annum which will probably be in the Autumn

Allotment Tracks

Work was done on both the top and the bottom track and the middle vegetation was removed. The turning areas off the middle track was not done but will be considered in future years. Please can allotment holders be mindful when using the track after a recent incident where reportedly someone was speeding along the track and almost knocked an allotment holder over.

Allotment gates

The allotment gate has now been fixed along Moormead Road opposite Perry's lane and has been completely

replaced with a new gate, please continue to report any maintenance issues to the office. Please can you keep the gates along the perimeter of Moormead road shut. The main gate can be left open but we would encourage plot holders to close the main gate at the end of the day.

Water Troughs

Please let the office know if there is a problem with using the water troughs. There are ball valves which over the years have become broken through misuse but it is not cost efficient to replace them when there are workable taps in all the troughs. Please ensure taps are turned off after use and the troughs can be left full with water.

Fires

This is just a reminder that if you are having a bonfire you check for any hibernating wildlife including hedgehogs, do not put any flammables on the fire, check the wind direction is blowing away from the Prospect Hospice. Lately there have been fires on the plots that border the main tracks, please could this be avoided and try to contain your bonfire in a metal bin or incinerator. Please do not leave any fires unattended.

Parking

Please can plot holders be mindful of where they park and use the designated parking spaces. It is particularly dangerous to park on edge of Moormead Road to gain access through the top gates. This can obstruct traffic and also can hinder peoples view as they are pulling out of the junction onto Moormead Road if they are coming from the Prospect Hospice or the allotment site.

Dog on Leads

We would like to remind all dog owners to have their dogs on leads which is also stated in the terms and conditions.

Theft/Vandalism

No matter how small, please report any theft or vandalism to 101. Whilst plot holders have mentioned that they feel that this is a waste of time, the more reports that police have in a specific area the more likely that they will investigate or send patrols there. There has been reports to the office whereby items have been removed from their plots by other by other plot holders as they may be under the impression that the plot is abandoned. This has caused issues so please can you ask permission from the plot holder or contact the office if you have any queries.

Allotment Land

There are still the same rumours circulating that allotment land will be sold off. Please rest assured that is very unlikely to happen as permission would need to be gained through the secretary of state.

Signage for Each Allotment Plot

We feel it would be beneficial for each plot to have clear and consistent signage and we are in the process of gaining quotes. This would involve a spike half a metre with a loop welded on top and a plate with the plot number. This would help identify plots for new plot holders, would help determine part of the boundary and also make it much clearer when plot inspections are undertaken.

SALGA

There is a local allotment group known as the Swindon Allotment & Garden Association. We have posted this on our allotment FB previously but allotment holders might find it useful to join. The website is

www.salga.org.uk

Some of the benefits include the following:

- ✓ The current subscription is £5 per year where you get 3 newsletters per year
- ✓ Monthly meetings with interesting speakers
- ✓ On presentation of your current SALGA membership card, purchases from the members only shop at Pickards Field allotment site, which sells composts, fertilisers, vegetable and salad seeds, insecticides, fungicides, nets, canes and much more at very competitive prices.

Pest Control

The following pest control report was given by Cllr J King:

Roy the pest controller has been to visit the allotments this month and reported back that there are no signs of rats, he also checked the chicken penned area and there was only a wasp's nest which has now been eradicated. Due to recent legislation, mice can no longer be dealt with as there are species of mice that need protecting. Moles are carnivores so should not be a direct threat to produce. If you do have any concerns about pests on the allotments the please contact Katy in the office who can liaise with the pest controller if necessary

Comments/Questions/Suggestions from the Floor

The following provides a summary of the questions/comments raised by plot holders.

Anti-social behaviour – An allotment holder raised an issue of bottles left at the bottom gate and that groups of youths have been spotted down there. He also mentioned that he had been clearing bottles on a regular basis which the Clerical & Communications Assistant (KC) thanked him for.

Action: KC will mention this to the local PCSO's and encourage plot holders to report any anti-social behaviour to 101

Rats have been seen by several plot holders. KC explained that the pest controller had recently visited the site and had a thorough look around and did not see any signs. KC emphasised the importance of plot holders reporting any signs of rats to the office as and when they arise as she had received very few reports. KC noted the plot numbers of where the rats have been seen.

Action: KC to liaise with the working party for further investigation.

There was recently a fire and it was on the edge of the footpath and left unattended. Cllr King mentioned that bonfires should be contained by having a trench around them if they could not be contained in a bin. KC reminded plot holders of the rules regarding bonfires which include making sure that the wind direction is not going towards the Prospect hospice, encouraged them to use fire bins and not to leave bonfires unattended.

A suggestion was given that the gate to the small paddock be left open so plot holders can use this as a turning area

Action: KC to discuss this further with the Grounds Team leader as the team do maintenance there.

A suggestion was made that bark chippings be deposited in more accessible places which include along the main track in addition to the car park off the bottom track as it would help less able plot holders whose plots are along the top half (nearest Moorhead Road)

Action: KC to discuss this further with the Grounds Team leader and Allotment WP

A comment was raised that the main gates should still be left open as we are still in the middle of a pandemic, COVID-19 is more prevalent than ever and this will avoid people touching the posts. KC explained that it was a no win situation as if the gates are open this may encourage more unwelcome visitors to the site. After a short discussion it was decided that plot holders should still be encouraged to close the main gates and Daniel Wells pointed out that they can bring and use their own hand sanitiser and wear gloves if they think it's necessary.

A plot holder pointed out that the main allotment track would be widened to make it more accessible for housing developments. The Deputy Clerk confirmed that there are no such plans.

The meeting concluded at 8.05pm