

Alers Road Leisure Gardens Association Committee Meeting Minutes - 26th November 2023

Present	Apologies for Absence
Adrian Hawthorne – Chairman	John Hollands - Treasurer
Debra Collins – Secretary	Ray Mitchell
Linda Hartard	Roy Seymour – Deputy Chair
John Young	Mary Harrison
Richard Collins	Eddy Haydon
	Ray Mudie

Min	Item	Action
1.0	WELCOME	
	The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting. Apologies given.	
2.0	OPEN ACCESS	
	None	
3.0	Previous Meeting	
	The minutes were agreed as a true record and signed by the Chairman.	
4.0	MATTERS ARISING	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • None raised 	
5.0	CHAIR'S REPORT	
	<p>I have stated this before, but just would just like to reaffirm how fortunate we are in Bexley borough and more especially in Alers Road allotments, in not only being able to work and produce our own produce; with all the facilities at our disposal, but in comparison with boroughs elsewhere in the country how lucky we are in even having a piece of cultivated ground. Indeed, waiting lists vary around the country but are usually about seven years. Since 2011 the number of people waiting for plots in English local authorities has doubled from 86,787 to 174,183. So, I have reproduced here a recent Leader article from The Times.</p> <p>Not so long ago, getting an allotment was a relatively swift and straightforward process. There are about 330,000 plots available to rent, usually at a low fee, in Britain. That is a drastic reduction from the 1.5 million under cultivation at the end of the First World War, but the delay between applying and digging, between form and fork if you will, was bearable. Now, as demand surges and supply shrinks ever further, a great deal of patience is required. Lucky gardeners arriving at the front of the queue all say it is worth the wait.</p>	

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Although the proximate causes of the rise in applications may be disagreeable — the exigencies of lockdowns, soaring food price inflation — more people wanting to grow their own food is a welcome side effect. Longer-term factors boosting demand include earlier and lengthier retirement, support for self-sufficiency shifting from the hippie fringe into the suburban mainstream (due respect goes to Tom and Barbara Good for pointing the way) and the rediscovery of old-fashioned wisdom that had been mislaid.

Connecting with nature, experiencing the rhythms of the seasons, working the soil, inhaling fresh air and nurturing fresh vegetables are all good not only for the body but for the soul. The mental health benefits of that humble yet deeply satisfying pastime best described as “pottering about” should not be underestimated.

Allotments also unite otherwise disparate individuals in a shared interest and purpose. They lessen social isolation and increase communal bonds. They offer the sanctuary of green space to those whose homes lack gardens. Their produce reduces the cost, both to the consumer and the environment, of much food to almost zero. No wonder so many people are keen to sign up. Allotment sites should be preserved and more land should be freed up for new ones.

Reference: The Times, 11 October 2023

6.0 TREASURER’S REPORT

- Current Balance £24,132
- Profit/Loss £1,094
- Main Points
 - Rents £8,000 collected
 - Water £3,908 See Note Below **
- Income to come
 - Rents
 - Ed £130
 - Terri £30
 - Winston (2nd Plot) c. £50
 - Plot 72 c. £100
 - Total £310**
 - Castle Water £605

** Although Water shows usage of £3.9K, this is mitigated by £600 due from Castle Water (Been chased a number of times, and over paid to Everflow £270 – which makes water’s actual cost £3K which is in line with last year.

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expenditure to come <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Manure Suggest £170 (£20 increase) due to ULEZ ○ £430 machinery service • Estimated EOY Surplus £1,400 	
7.0	PLOTS REPORT	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New member: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Steven Moore – Plot 69 - Joshua Davenport-Braes – Plot 102b - Rosemary Robinson – Plot 59 - Andrew McCabe – Plot 48a • Cleared most of the waiting list – 3 new people waiting on the list plus 4 current members awaiting specific plots • Meg Ruck Plot 23b and Barry Elphick Plot 19b have given up their plots and they have both been given to current members. • Following the last cultivation survey Joe Hurnandes and Daniel Vernis now only have 1 whole plot each both have given up 1 whole plot each. • Joe Hurnandes was given notice to quit. As he has apologised and cleared the debris around the compost bins on plot 72, this has now been suspended for 6 months. Any break of his tenancy agreement or misconduct he has been informed in writing that the eviction will be reinstated 	
8.0	SITE and MACHINERY REPORT	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A number of incidents were recorded in the site log book <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – plot 81: Trellis vandalised • Plot 49: apples all taken <p>Machinery:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ride-on mower serviced (awaiting new cutting blades) • Strimmer head replaced • Spare strimmer head purchased • All other machinery checked – All OK 	
9.0	PROPOSED ALLOTMENT AGREEMENT	
	No new updates	
10.0	FEDERATION REPORT	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No Federation Meeting since May 2022 – Just about 'Dead'! • Adrian wondered if we could approach other sites and plot holders, by passing the chair of the federation? 	

Alers Road Leisure Gardens Association Committee Meeting Minutes - 26th November 2023

11.0	SOCIAL MEDIA	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facebook: Martin is really busy, he has written a crib sheet and a video showing how to manage this. John Y to meet with John Harrison on the 4th December to see if can follow through the instructions. Martin has supplied log in to John Harrison. • Whatsapp: It is too difficult to set up a group for the whole site. It would be difficult to manage and police. It was agreed that a Whatsapp group would be set up just for the committee members. Debra agreed to set this up and be the admin for it. • Twitter: No action at this time 	JY DC
12.0	WEBSITE	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • John Y shared a print out with the stats from the website. See print out attached. • Need to update and add content to encourage members to use the site more often. • Richard agreed to think about writing an article on using ash / pruning 	RC
14.0	ANY OTHER BUSINESS	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • AGM Hall booked for 5th April 2024 	
	<p>Next Meetings 28th January 2024</p> <p>Future Meeting Dates: 28th Jan 2024 31st March 2024</p>	