

Upper Rissington Allotments Meeting

18 February 2023

Approximately 30 people attending.

Jonathan Truslow (JT), Upper Rissington (UR) Parish Council (PC) member, opened the meeting with a welcome, an introduction of his role as both allotment holder and liaison between the UR allotment group and the UR Parish Council. He outlined the purpose of the meeting, which is to kick off the UR allotment group and to establish how the UR allotment holders would like to organise themselves and communicate with one another.

Allotment License Queries

JT opened the floor to queries regarding the current license which could either be answered directly, or taken to the PC for further clarification.

- How are water charges going to be allocated?
 - Unsure. The UR PC are still trying to establish whether a water meter exists. Once found, if there is one, a decision will be made about how this will be allocated. If one does not exist, one will be installed.

Management of the Allotments

JT asked those present what the preference is for how they would like the allotments managed. Options put forward for management via a committee, via open plot holders meetings, or via website/online polls.

- Decision made to have a committee which would consult with the general group when required. Those interested in being on the committee to send their names to Stephanie Wallis. The committee will research options for terms of reference (e.g. via Allotment Society) and decide this at the first meeting.

Water Supply

Plan shown of proposed water supply extensions suggested by PC caretaker. This involved extending the water line under the central path and adding 2 additional points along the path (one near Plot 22 and 1 near end of Plot 25) all with troughs controlled by ballcocks.

Suggestion made to run an additional line along a central path going both north & south (e.g. between plots 21/14 & 22/15, as well as Plots 34/28 & 27/33) to place 2 additional troughs for the upper & lower plots. Group agreed for JT to put this request in to the PC & ask for a timeline for how long the work will take.

Question posed whether there is the possibility of fast tracking this through the PC decision making process. JT to investigate options.

Path surfacing

Discussion regarding options for surface paths that run north-south between the plots. Options include the same composite as in the main east-west paths, as well as bark mulch or lawn.

Group agreed that composite would be longer lasting. JT to consult with the PC about this possibility, as well as to agreed?

JT to also inquire regarding possibility of members making bulk orders of the same material through the council for their own allotments.

Fencing

Discussion re issues as follows:

- Lack of fencing along south-west hedges – dogs & rabbits getting through – Can a fence be put in?
- Holes in RAF fencing – can these be repaired? If so, by whom?
- Height of the south-west hedges, which cast shade on adjacent plots – can these be timed/layered to an appropriate height?
- Length of branches on some of the trees along the boundary with the farm – can these be trimmed?
- Brambles along the RAF fencing – these need to be trimmed

The group agreed that JT should put a request in to the PC for solutions to the above issues.

Issue raised of the cost of some of the above proposals, and group agreed that if the PC were unable to meet all requests, UR Allotment Committee would need to look at priorities, in consultation with the group.

Allotment Facilities

The following suggestions were made to possible considerations for allotment community facilities:

- Compost toilet
- Communal shed (to be installed on Plot 40?)
- Seed exchange/library
- Tool lending

All of the above to be discussed by the allotment committee once established. A suggestion was made that the committee could apply for lottery funding for some of the communal facilities.

Parking

A suggestion was made re whether additional parking might be possible near the allotments. JT to ask the village caretaker to make a plan for what might be possible (e.g. position, number of spaces, etc) to bring to the URAC. Once this has been agreed, the proposal would be taken to the UR PC. Generally the feeling was that there should not be extensive parking facilities.

Bulk Orders & Sharing of Materials

Some plot holders would like to group together to buy some materials in bulk. Agreement that it is probably best to organise this individually, via an agreed form of communication (e.g. WhatsApp group)

Suggestion was made that there might be a place for communal sharing of excess materials (e.g. wood, pots, etc. that are not being used and may be of use to others). Group agreed that the communal plot (e.g. Plot 40) might be a good space for this. URAC to discuss further.

Communication

Discussion about the best methods of communication amongst plot holders. Some members do not have email, others not on social media. Group agreed that What's App is likely the most inclusive option for communication. SW provided her telephone number to the group and invited all who would like to be in it to send a message. SW to set up WhatsApp group and invite all members.

AOB

- Allotment Society – people can join as individuals. The PC is already a member. The allotment committee to investigate options for membership & benefits.
- Dog mess - People are starting to dump their dog poo bags near the main gate. Suggestion made to print out a sign to encourage people to put them in the bins provided at the top of the path
- Poly tunnels - One plot holder would like to put up a large poly tunnel (2m high, clear, taught plastic) on center of their plot. The group agreed the specific request and in general that all requests like this should be discussed with neighbours and should be accommodated if it does not impede on other plots' access to light
- Half plots – are these an option? Some plot holders may find the full half plot too much work. The committee to consider this option if agreed, to put forward a proposal to the PC to have the license changed to accommodate
- Unpaid plots – There are currently around 10 plots that have been offered to people via the lottery, but that have not yet been taken (e.g. deadline has passed and those in question have not yet paid or signed their contracts). The PC clerk has attempted to contact these people and has not yet had a response. Some members felt that this is not in accordance with how the PC presented the lottery terms. Potential allotment holders were told that if a plot was not paid for and a license signed by the deadline, the plot would be allocated to someone on the waiting list. JT to take this to the PC and request that the remaining plots be released and re-allocated. [Post meeting note: the deadline for signing and payment was 16th February and this is now being actioned.]
- Switching plots – A few plot holders inquired re the possibility of switching plots if there were plots unallocated, or if other members would like to switch. Group agreed that if there are plots available, plot holders should be able to put a request in to the PC to switch. JT to take this to the PC to inquire about this possibility.
- Fence borders – missing plot markers – PC requested to re-mark the plots & keep plot markers in so that plot holders are aware of boundaries
- Fencing – request that plot holders not attach their fencing to other people's fencing so that repairs can be made without disturbing others. Those putting up fences should take this into account when putting up their fence along a plot border so that neighbours have room to put up their own fences – to be discussed in consultation with your neighbour.