

Report to: Helmdon Parish Council

Tabled on: 27 March 2024

Report author: Danny Moody

Report title: Allotment Plot Holders' Meeting

1. The 2nd Annual Allotment Plot Holders' Meeting took place on 6 March 2024. The notes of the meeting are attached below.
2. One of the items discussed at the meeting was the provision of a skip. A lot of rubbish has been left on plots that have been vacated over the past two years. The new tenants (along with several councillors) have worked hard to clear the plots and bring them back into use, but a lot of the rubbish remains on site and is in the way.
3. The plot holders feel that clearing the rubbish was the responsibility of the former tenants and the fact that they didn't clear their rubbish on vacation is because the council did not enforce that provision of the tenancy agreement. The view, therefore, is that the parish council should pay for the skip, and the current plot holders will load the rubbish into it.
4. I spoke to a local skip hire company, which has offered a 50% discount on its normal rates, which would make a six-yard skip £140+VAT. The company has also offered to deliver a load of compost at the same time free of charge.
5. The plot holders have agreed that any rubbish generated from their plots in the future is their responsibility, so they would not be expecting the council to supply a skip every year.
6. The council is asked to consider the request from the allotment plot holders for the supply of a skip, and to approve the amount of £140+VAT to have a skip and a load of compost delivered at the earliest opportunity.

**Notes of the Annual Allotment Plot Holders' Meeting held on
Wednesday 6 March 2024 at 7:30 p.m.
in the Reading Room, Helmdon**

Present: Cllrs Moody, Shepherd, and Wheeler and nine allotment plot holders

- Danny Moody welcomed everyone to the 2nd Annual Allotment Plot Holders' Meeting and thanked everyone for attending. Danny explained that the council had been through a difficult year with five councillors retiring or resigning. The council is up to full strength again now, but it has meant that not everything on the list of things to do in 2023 has been completed. He updated the meeting on progress on the Action Log from the 2023 meeting (updates in red):

Subject	Notes	Actions
Plot layout	The boundaries of the plots are sometimes not clear, although there was no desire to have the site formally surveyed and marked out.	Plot holders to contact the Clerk for clarification as and when required. No significant issues during the year.
Communications	Would be good to have a WhatsApp group or Facebook page so that plot holders can share information and tips and co-ordinate activity.	Danny Moody to set up. Done.
Clubhouse plot	For swaps and bulk purchases of items such as compost etc Viewed as a good idea.	Allotment Task & Finish Group to explore possibilities. Not done. Keep under consideration.
Overgrown plots	Request for regular inspections, more often than annual.	Site will be inspected on an ongoing basis and owners of derelict plots are now required to submit remedial plans. Done.
Trees	Trees and hedges need to be inspected and properly managed. A tree on plot 2a is in the way.	The parish council's Tree Warden to be asked for advice. An arborist inspection will be carried out in 2024. The council has budgeted £1,000 for the inspection and any identified remedial works.
Water supply	Situation was clarified. The parish council has already investigated alternatives and ruled them out due to cost. Water tank is filled regularly by Steve Wheeler.	Plot holders should contact Steve Wheeler and/or the Clerk if there any problems with the water supply. Done. Steve was thanked for his

		efforts during the year in keeping the tank filled.
Compost	There was general support for getting a supply of compost from Blackpits for all plot holders to use. On-site communal composting might be a possibility, subject to there being space.	Clerk to arrange. Allotment Task & Finish Group to consider whether to allocate space for communal composting. Outstanding.
Sawdust/chippings	There was general support for getting a supply of sawdust/chippings for all plot holders to use.	Clerk to arrange via sawmills and/or local tree surgeon. Outstanding.
Dogs	Agreed they should be allowed on plots with tenants but be kept under close control and not to cause a nuisance for other plot holders.	Allotment Task & Finish Group to include provision in the new tenancy agreement. Outstanding.
Annual Barbecue	General support for a barbecue in the late summer or early autumn to celebrate the produce grown.	Need a plot holder to offer to organise and to liaise with the Clerk. The 2023 event was hailed as a great success, and it was agreed to hold another in 2024. Offers of organising it should be sent to Charmaine Jay.
Half plots	Current plot holders happy with full size plots.	Allotment Task & Finish Group to consider whether to offer some half size plots for new tenants. Outstanding.
New tenancy agreement	Current tenancy agreement is very old and needs updating.	Allotment Task & Finish Group reviewing the tenancy agreement using a template from the National Society of Allotment & Leisure Gardeners (NSALG). Outstanding.
Shared equipment	General support for co-ordinating hire of shredder, rotavator, skip etc. with costs shared by participating plot holders.	Plot holders to co-ordinate using WhatsApp. Done.
Fertilisers	General support for co-ordinating purchase of fertiliser and other consumables with costs shared by participating plot holders.	Plot holders to co-ordinate using WhatsApp. Done.
Seed & produce swap	General support for sharing seeds, plants, and produce.	Plot holders to co-ordinate using WhatsApp. Done.

Bonfires	Plot holders asked about having bonfires on site. Provision is included in the tenancy agreement for bonfires with certain restrictions.	Plot holders welcome to have bonfires but should refer to tenancy agreement. Done. Small fires are fine as long as no nuisance is caused to other plot holders.
Flower & Produce Show	Philip Ward, who organises the Annual Helmdon Flower & Produce Show is very keen for allotment plot holders to engage.	Plot holders to look out for details of the 2023 Show and to consider entering relevant categories. Ross Vicars was congratulated for his success at the 2023 Show. All plot holders are encouraged to enter the 2024 Show, if it goes ahead.
Waiting List	There are people on the waiting list. Anyone can go on the waiting list, but priority is given to residents of Helmdon.	List managed by the Clerk. Anyone wishing to join it should contact the Clerk (see below). Done.

The outstanding items will be picked up by the Allotments Working Group during 2024.

2. Attendees gave feedback on the Allotments WhatsApp Group, which had been set up following the 2023 meeting. It was agreed that it had been useful and that it was being well used.
3. Rachel Wheeler has the old noticeboard, which had been planned to install at the allotments. It was agreed that Mike Barnes and Ross Vicars would try to find a suitable location near the allotments gate and try to install the noticeboard there.
4. Danny Moody reported that the trees on the allotment would be inspected in 2024 and that any remedial works required would be undertaken. He noted that the eastern boundary of the allotment site was really a hedge that had just overgrown over the years. There was general support for trying to return it to a hedge, which would let more light into the allotment site. A plan can be drawn up once the trees have been inspected. A plot holder requested that the council looks for opportunities to install owl boxes or similar wherever possible, which would encourage wildlife but also potentially discourage allotment pests (especially pigeons).
5. A plot holder had asked about the requirements for plot holders to leave their plots in good order when they vacate them. Danny Moody confirmed that was a requirement under the tenancy agreement, but that it is difficult to enforce. The only robust way to enforce it would be to obtain a potentially non-refundable deposit from new plot holders but there was no appetite from the attendees to go down that route.
6. Two plot holders had asked about the possibility of the council hiring a skip for all the rubbish left on plots that had been vacated. These plots are now rented out again and are being used, but the rubbish remains. Danny Moody had spoken in advance of the meeting to a local skip hire company that had offered a discounted rate for skip hire. It was agreed that Danny

Moody should ask the council to approve the expenditure at its next meeting. The plot holders felt the council should pay for this one, as it had failed to get the vacating plot holders to leave their plots in a tidy condition. If skips are required in subsequent years for rubbish that plot holders have generated themselves then it was agreed that the relevant plot holders should fund that themselves.

7. The local skip hire company had also offered to deliver a skip load of compost at the same time as bringing the skip. This was supported although it was requested that the compost be the right type for allotments... a mixed load or the black course compost, i.e. not the very strong compost that sometimes scorches plants.
8. A plot holder asked whether there would be any advantage in setting up an Allotment Association as such an organisation might be able to apply for grants. It was agreed to seek advice from NSALG. It might also be possible for the council to apply for funds for projects at the allotments. Plot holders were asked to keep an eye out for potential grants and to assist in submitting applications.
9. Danny Moody reminded those present that any questions related to the management or operation of the allotments, should be addressed to Charmaine Jay, Clerk to Helmdon Parish Council at clerk@helmdonparishcouncil.gov.uk or 01295 768588 (Charmaine works for the council on Wednesdays and Thursdays).
10. The 3rd Annual Allotment Plot Holders' Meeting will take place on Wednesday 5 March 2025 at 7:30 p.m. in the Reading Room.
11. Danny Moody thanked everyone for attending and for the very useful discussion.

The meeting closed at 8:42 p.m.

Allotment Plan

