

CENTRAL SWINDON NORTH

Allotment Working Group Notes

Thursday 31st October 2024 - Held in person.

Present:

T Halton – Pickards Field Tenant
M Carter – Pickards Field Tenant
J Manley – Pickards Field Tenant
T Reynolds – Gorse Hill Tenant
B Reynolds – Pickards Field

N Jackson – CSNPC Allotments Officer
A Briggs – CSNPC Ops Manager
A Reeves – CSNPC Parish Clerk

Cllr M Lucas - WG Chair
Cllr J Yeowell

Notes:

1. Review action points of previous Working Group meeting.

A Briggs presented the notes of the previous meeting, held on 13th May 2024.

The group reviewed the action points of the previous meeting, and A Briggs and N Jackson provided updates which included:

- Update on Asian hornet traps. Traps have been updated, a massive nest in Southampton was found and has been dealt with. Kent and Sussex have also had many, only 28 reported nests compared to 100 last year. Last year the Parish had over 10 wasp's nests, this year the Parish had 2.
- CCTV inspection on Rodbourne Farm drains. The entire stretch has been inspected and there is no blockage along the soakaway.
- One main hedge cut per year is done by Idverde, and N Jackson manages any extra excessive growth.

2. Allotment Officer Workload Update

N Jackson updated the group on several matters, including:

- End of Season Update. 97% occupancy and 150 people on the waiting list. Termination letters are hand delivered and recorded to reduce the number of tenants claiming not to have received them. J Radley asked if people returned their keys. N Jackson explained that a £10 deposit is given for a key which has encouraged return rates. Mr A Briggs recommended increasing the deposit to £50 to encourage a higher return rate. M Carter asked about using a padlock with code to remove the use of a key. N Jackson explained that he has been trying to provide cleared plots to encourage new tenants to maintain it.
- The Hops and Compost Scheme has been hugely successful and very popular and will continue for the foreseeable future. It will be placed on pallets or play bark to stop it getting as wet, and tenants are encouraged to use it quickly to avoid encouraging rats.
- The continued collection of green waste has been successful but has led to a huge amount being stacked in piles, which makes it challenging to remove. The skips are still very popular.
- Winter Prep work includes setting up new tenants so they can prep their plot ready for sewing season. Water will be turned off during the winter to reduce damage from frozen pipes. Some tenants see plots as a spring to autumn activity and tend not to come out during the winter months.
- Akers Way Trees will be removed over the next few weeks as they are deemed dangerous due to their proximity to mains power lines. There are no plans to replant due to the positioning.

Item noted.

3. 24/25 AWG Project Work

- i. A Briggs explained that it was agreed at the last Leisure & Recreation Committee meeting to start the programme of doing the water trough work. There are water troughs needing work at Churchward, Akers Way and a couple at Pickards Field that need repairs. It was agreed at the Leisure & Recreation Committee meeting to start with the front entrance at Kiln Lane as it is in very poor condition, and the water trough at Churchward. A Briggs proposed that the two at Pickards Field be done next year, and the one at Akers Way the year after.



M Carter asked about getting every structure fitted with an IVC to help reduce water costs, to increase the budget available for repairs and maintenance each year.

A discussion was held on IBC's and A Briggs recommended this topic be discussed further at a future meeting.

- ii. A Briggs presented an update on the area to be repaired at Kiln Lane. A Briggs explained that to repair the entire track would cost around £100,000, so for now most needed maintenance and repairs will be facilitated as the needs arise.

Item Noted.

4. Allotment Best in Show Proposal.

A Briggs presented an update showing how Hayden Wick provided an Allotment Best in Show and their judging criteria. A Briggs recommended that next year we do a pilot at one of the smaller plots like Akers Way or Churchward Avenue to see how it goes, and then extend it to other allotments the following year if it is a success.

Cllr J Yeowell asked if this was Hayden Wicks 2023 competition and did they do one this year. If not, why. A Briggs said he would ask them.

A discussion was held around the criteria, members were happy with the judging criteria.

Cllr M Lucas explained that the main growing time was end of July August and moving judging to this time would be better.

A discussion was held around a provisional judging in June/July, with a final judging being in August.

Action – A Briggs to redraft judging criteria and take it to Council for approval.

Item Noted.

5. Allotment Plan

A Briggs presented an update on the 5-year Allotment Plan.

Allotment Working Group participation has maintained numbers, but it would be nice to increase members. A discussion was held on ideas to increase participation.

A desire to increase water butts across all allotments to reduce water usage.

The number of bonfire issues has decreased massively thanks to Neils hard work removing a lot of the green waste when possible.

Work on the roads and paths is ongoing and will be done as funds are available. Fencing is in good condition with minimal repairs needed this year. The Akers Way gate has been repaired to stop it dropping. The Pickard's gate entrance may need to be adjusted too but this is a big job.

M Carter asked about the self-management and its meaning.

A Briggs explained it is about tenants informing the Parish when work/repairs need doing or when there are issues with plots or tenants.

Tenants commented on how much the Parish had improved the repairs and maintenance on all sites since they acquired the allotment sites compared to how they used to be managed. They mentioned how important it is to encourage others to join the Working Group and voice needs and concerns so the Parish can help them.

Action – A Briggs to review Plan and bring ideas to a future meeting.

Item Noted.

6. Manor Garage

A Briggs presented an update on the parking request at Kiln Lane. The documentation is being created by the Parish solicitors, and once it is approved by Councillors the lease will commence. Money earned from the lease will be added to the ringfenced allotment budget to help with maintenance and repairs.

Item Noted.

7. Trees / Hedges

N Jackson presented a verbal update.

- 6 trees are needing maintenance or removal and are on the list to be managed.
- A Briggs presented an update on The Community Woodland Forest at Churchward Avenue. It is an area full of animals and plants and the Parish would like to maintain it as a nature area. The most popular idea was a community park with planters for local residents with no garden access. The priority is to keep it low maintenance and get people involved in the maintenance. There are a few access issues to consider but can be managed.
- A Briggs presented an update on the Allington Road Consultation which should happen this year but will be assessed as the months go on.
- A Briggs presented information on Redlynch Ave gated unmaintained back land. SBC were contacted and have offered it to the Parish, but negotiations about the costs to clear it are ongoing. It will be going to SBC Council meeting next week to transfer ownership, but funding will be needed from SBC to clear it and bring it back to usage.

Items Noted.

8. Site Issues / Concerns

J Manley asked if we received all the repairs quoted in the original quote.

A Briggs explained that the works done were not all the repairs in the original quote, just what we could budget for.

J Manley asked if the back Pickards Field gate could be fixed.

9. AOB & Date of Next Meeting.

The Salga Shop drainage works at Pickards Field has been completed. Over the winter the Parish will see if the works manage to keep flooding down.

The next meeting is to be scheduled around February 2025.

Meeting closed 7.01pm