

Upwood and the Raveleys Parish Councillors: Trustees' Meeting

Parish Clerk – Mrs Carol Bilverstone. Kilimanjaro, 9 Meadow Road, Upwood, Huntingdon, Cambs. PE26 2QJ
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**A meeting of Upwood and the Raveleys Parish Councillors, the Trustees of:
Upwood & the Raveleys Allotments (Charity no. 264373)
was held on Monday 07 September 2020 at 6:30pm via "Zoom" at: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/4576035493>**

This meeting was originally scheduled for 06 April 2020 but delayed by the restrictions of the Covid-19 Pandemic.

Present: Councillors J. Edwards (from item 06-04/20), R. Howe (Chairman), A. Perkins, P. Chegwiddden.
In Attendance: Mrs C. Bilverstone (Clerk), Mr. T. Brown (URCAA Chairman)

Minutes

- 01-04/20** **To receive and approve apologies for absence.**
Councillor Burgess: Holiday; Mrs L Carter: Holiday.
- 02-04/20** **To receive and approve the minutes of the trustees' meeting held on 01 April 2019.**
The minutes of the meeting held on 01 April 2019 had been circulated in advance following the informal approval of the chairman. The chairman proposed that the minutes be approved. All those who had been present were in favour and it was **resolved** to do so.
- 03-04/20** **To receive an update from Upwood and the Raveleys Community Allotment Association (URCAA): strengths and challenges to date.**
- 04-04/20** **To receive an updated business plan from URCAA.**
- 05-04/20** **To receive a financial statement from URCAA.**
Extensive reports (see attached) had been prepared by URCAA committee members and these had been circulated in advance of this meeting. Mr. Brown presented the reports and gave trustees the opportunity to ask questions. The chairman noted that the parish council has endured ongoing challenges with the same grounds maintenance contractor and offered support if the association wishes to attempt to continue its contract. All agreed that the management of the association is in good hands and sound financial health and that it continues to thrive.
- 06-04/20** **To receive an update from Councillor Edwards (trustee with a portfolio responsibility for the allotments).**
Councillor Edwards noted that he is in regular contact with the secretary of the association and that the management of the site is in good hands and its financial management in good health.
- 07-04/20** **To consider the renewal of the formal agreement (due to expire 05 October 2020) between the Trustees and URCAA enabling URCAA to continue the operational management of the allotment sites on behalf of the Trustees for a further 6 years.**
The chairman proposed that the agreement be renewed. Councillor Edwards seconded the proposal. All were in favour and it was **resolved** to do so. All agreed that the document would be signed remotely and scanned in accordance with current Covid-19 social distancing guidelines.
- 08-04/20** **Matters for future consideration.**
No decisions can be made under this item.
- 09-04/20** **Date of next meeting: 05 April 2021.**

Close of meeting: 6:50pm

URCAA – Business Plan 2020/21 – Update date 160820

BUSINESS PLAN FOR THE UPWOOD & RAVELEY COMMUNITY ALLOTMENTS ASSOCIATION (URCAA).

The Upwood and Raveley Community Allotments Association was formed in 2012 with its own constitution and a management committee comprising of the 3 key positions of Chairman, Secretary and Treasurer plus supporting officers. URCAA is responsible for the routine running of the allotment plots situated in Upwood (Meadow Road site) and Great Raveley (junction with Raveley and Huntingdon Road) with guidance from the Allotment Trustees who report to the Charities Commission.

URCAA is responsible for:

- rent collection
- rule enforcement
- elements of ground maintenance within the internal boundaries of the site.

Responsibility for the maintenance to the external boundaries of the site fall to the Upwood Parish Council.

The Upwood site currently consists of 49 allotment plots split into a range of sizes, large, medium, small and mini. The various sizes meet the varying needs of the community and changing ways in which people engage with allotments. Included at the Upwood site is a communal plot as well as a community orchard. The site is divided roughly in half with one half of the land being rented for hay production.

The Great Raveley allotment site consists of 5 defined plots and a block of land which is rented for crop production.

The URCAA Group's mission statement is to provide a community-managed resource for the purpose of self-sustainment and crop production for local residents and aims to achieve this by:

- Providing plots which local people can hire at a reasonable annual rent.
- Providing basic facilities on site including access, water, and parking.
- Create a social group that shares a common interest in growing vegetables, crops or flowers.
- Encourage community schemes that utilise the site for all groups.

CURRENT SITUATION

- Due to the ongoing Covid-19 situation, we have been unable to hold our AGM this year. A date has yet to be set for this event that would enable the safe attendance by all allotment holders. However, the committee has recently held an al-fresco meeting in the community orchard to ensure that the allotments continue to be well managed.

- Site maintenance is being managed by Liz using local villagers for ad-hoc strimming and rotovating unused plots. The grass cutting situation is covered in more detail under the Short-Term Objectives.
- 45 of the available 49 plots at Upwood are actively cultivated and managed by allotment holders.
- The vacant plots at Upwood consist of 2 minis, which are currently covered for the winter and will be sown with a manure crop if not let by the winter, and 2 medium plots which are under cover awaiting rotovating.
- The Great Raveley site has 5 of the 5 plots in active cultivation.
- Currently there is nobody on the waiting list for vacant plots.
- 8 new families have been welcomed as tenants this year.
- The Upwood site is flanked by natural hedgerow on two sides with a restricted access track running through the site, leading to two secure points of entry onto the site.
- There is a parking area opposite the plots at the Meadow road entrance, together with a standpipe tap for the hand watering of crops.
- There are several personal tool stores, small sheds and water containers on Site for equipment storage and rainwater harvesting.

PLANS FOR THE NEXT YEAR

Short Term Objectives.

1) General Maintenance

Re-sizing and maintenance of vacant plots is being actively progressed at the Upwood site. People's expectations from working an allotment has changed over time and this generally results in a requirement for wanting smaller plots than the historically defined larger allotment plot sizes. By creating smaller plot sizes and using weed suppressant membrane to reduce overall maintenance requirements, we will continue the drive to get more people actively engaged in the allotments. We have covered a large plot with manure and membrane with a view to making the prospect of taking on a plot more appealing to any new members. Other unused plots have been covered with membrane to suppress weed growth.

The inside of the hedge will continue to be the responsibility of individual plot holders as they are expected to maintain their own plot area.

Although communal grass cutting is currently contracted out to CGM, we are reviewing the situation and may decide to employ a local man to undertake this work instead. This will result of a better targeted grass cutting regime, especially in the orchard where wild flowers could be encouraged to flourish.

2) Strengthening the association.

The URCAA committee has traditionally been made up of five members, including a representative from the Great Raveley site.

There is always a need to recruit additional members to share some of the everyday site management and to drive forward future projects but this is particularly important as the Association has grown.

URCAA will seek to engage the wider membership in general maintenance tasks and projects beneficial to the group or wider community.
Recruitment and the retention of plot holders remains a high priority.

3) Publicity.

Whilst we are managing the vacant plots, with natural turnover and some downsizing, there is always a need to attract new interest in the allotments. We will continue to publicise plot availability in 2020/21 through the village newsletter and the local free newspapers.

This year we have started our own Facebook page to further publicise our group and hopefully attract new allotment holders. This appears to be well supported and used for sharing gardening tips and sharing produce.

4) Social events.

The committee would like to hold at least one social event in the year, to raise the Group's profile as well as engender a community spirit. Unfortunately with the current Covid-19 situation this is unlikely to occur in the short term.

5) Community Orchard Project.

The Orchard will continue to be maintained. We have fully planted the area with trees now and are fully sponsored.

Tree sponsorship needs to be reviewed as some of the original sponsors may have moved away from the area. We need to ensure that the sponsored trees are not neglected.

A wildlife pond has been established and has been planted up and improved upon. Work this year will continue to focus on improvements to the pond, flower beds and borders. We hope to recruit a volunteer from the community to maintain these flower beds.

6) Water provision.

There are currently four water troughs at the Upwood site and a 1000 litre water container at the Great Raveley site. Over 2020/21 we will continue to look at innovative ways to fill them as we work towards a long-term aim of providing access to water for all plots.

7) Rewilding.

Returning land to nature, rewilding, is becoming more prominent in government policy and the public's thinking. The poor quality of the soil on plot 1 which is currently designated as a "community plot", and the presence of wildflowers in this area, has led the committee to attempt to rewild this area. The intention is to suppress invasive weeds and scrub in order to allow more diverse wild plants to thrive. We also intend to ask plot holders to set aside a small part of their plots to encourage wild flora and fauna, such as bees. This should benefit nature and the community in the short and long term.

8) On site toilet.

An on-site toilet would especially benefit those plot holders who live some distance from their plots. Some type of Eco Loo that requires no permanent plumbing would be ideal. The practicality and costs of this amenity require investigation.

9) Shelter or communal hut.

A communal shelter hut or shelter is still an objective. A building or shelter would engender a communal spirit if plot holders could share a space together on site.

Long Term Objectives.

1) Plumbed Water Supplies.

The long term aim remains to have mains fed containers strategically placed around the sites so that we can attract more plot holders.

2) Sensory Garden Project.

There is the opportunity to establish a community sensory and easy access garden for use by all members of the community. Interest may also be provided through willow structures or gazebos. With a network of paths, raised planting beds and seating areas, all ages can contribute to the maintenance, layout, planting and upkeep of the area. With close proximity to the care home and footpath access, it could be seen as an opportunity for residents to grow plants on a small scale, as well as establish an area for relaxation.

3) Improve the Orchard.

It intended that a gate be erected at the entrance to the orchard and extend the boundary fence and hedge to better enclose this area. Fund raising will be required for this project.

FINANCE

Allotment rents are now collected and managed by URCAA and retained for future Investment. It is hoped that there is enough income to manage the site on a day to day basis with a small surplus generated for site improvements. URCAA aim to build up a reserve from any fund-raising events and maintain approximately £300 in reserve for any ongoing maintenance.

All projects are dependent on fund raising, sponsorship and annual allotment rents collected by URCAA. At present the association funds would appear to be healthy and able to support the ongoing maintenance costs.

RISK ANALYSIS

The main risks that the URCAA committee have identified are fairly similar to that in previous years. Covid-19 has impacted on a number of areas though.

- Covid-19 – Due to the open nature of the allotments, we cannot be responsible for the general public adhering to the government guidelines. The onsite notice board and signs at the entrances draw attention to Covid-19 guidelines.

- Covid-19 – Again, due to the pandemic, the committee are unable to organise any fund-raising events. This has the possibility of impacting upon the association’s finances, but we do not consider that to be an immediate issue. However, funding for any short to long term projects could be an issue.
- Public liability – As the allotments are an open site and therefore accessible to the general public as well as plot holders, public liability insurance is covered by the council.
- Reduction in the number of plot-holders – There is a risk of a reduced take up of allotments and new plot holders not coming forward. Fortunately, this has not proved to be the case as more people have shown an interest in growing their own vegetables during the Covid-19 pandemic.
- Adverse weather – Severe weather could damage the site and the growing potential of the plants and vegetables, most notably drought, flooding and wind damage. This could dishearten plot holders resulting in a decline in allotment usage and therefore the funding needed to support the allotments.

URCAA FINANCIAL REPORT – 310320		
31/03/2020	Allotment Funds	£3,019.96
31/03/2020	Allotment Plot deposits	£750.00
31/03/2020	Orchard Funds	£977.94
31/03/2020	Total Balance of accounts	£4,747.90
Income/Expenditure from 31/03/2019 to 31/03/2020		
Allotments account summary 31/03/20		£3,019.96
	<i>Opening Balance</i>	£2,868.06
Key activities	Allotment Rents income	£703.50
	Water	-£92.04
	Material purchases	-£135.51
	Maintenance (Grass cutting, plot clearing, Admin etc)	-£330.00
	Notice Board - purchase and installation (GRANT funded)	£1,389.00
Orchard accounts summary 31/03/2020		£977.94
	<i>Opening Balance</i>	£1,212.70
	Fundraising (tree sponsorship)	£25.00
	Maintenance	-£200.00
	Material purchases	-£59.76