

WEST SWINDON PARISH COUNCIL

Planning & Environment Committee

Blagrove Allotments

1. Update:

1.1 West Swindon Parish Council has 34 plots at Blagrove allotment site. 33 are currently let for 2021 and 53 residents are on the waiting list. There are minor adjustments to the income on the allotment site depending on the changeover of tenancies and whether tenants live in West Swindon. Generally, overall annual income is around £800.00.

1.2 In terms of maintenance, the allotment site requires staff resources in administration in terms of tenancy management and lettings, ad hoc grass cutting around the edges of the site, minor repairs to the gate/fences, minor shrub cutting around the perimeter and rubbish removal. It would be reasonable to say that the cost of resources is greater than the revenue generated.

Issues arising:

1.3 For the last 18 months, allotment holders have complained repeatedly about water pooling at the entrance to the allotment. During long periods of wet weather this can be problematic when opening the gates. In the last month, we have received a complaint that water is also seeping into the rear of the lower allotments and is inches deep in places. This has been reported to Thames Water who determined that it was untreated water and therefore not their responsibility. It has also been reported to Swindon Borough Council's drainage engineer who has advised that they are not going to action any work unless there is a problem on the footway. The Parish Council team originally cut a drainage channel into the entrance area and this seemed to alleviate the issue. As the problem has worsened, it needs further investigation and may be resolved by more drainage channels or introducing a soil bund around the perimeter fencing.

1.4 Some allotment holders have had a tendency to store unnecessary materials on their sites. Where this has been significant, plot holders have been written to advising that this is outside of their tenancy agreement and items need to be removed. There has also been repeated incidents of items e.g. glass, furniture, wood, being deposited on the site's communal spaces. The Parish Council has installed signs to say 'No Fly tipping' however the problem has not diminished. The Parish team collect large accumulations on an ad hoc basis. The Parish Council would benefit from establishing a position on waste removal based on one of the following options

- there is no waste removal from the site and plot holders are warned against accumulating unnecessary material

- there is one visit at the end of the season to remove any accumulations from communal spaces
- waste is removed however a fee is levied per visit and distributed across the tenants through the annual rental charge

1.5 The allotment site slopes from the entrance point parallel to Great Western Way towards the footway to Mannington/Blagrove. This has meant that the lower plots have drainage issues. Plot 10 at the foot of the site has been let a number of times however plot holders have determined that it is too difficult for growing. The plot is currently not let. The Parish Team have ordered wood supplies to create raised planters on this plot to minimise the issues with drainage and to offer a more manageable plot to let, ideally for someone who would benefit from this type of gardening. Adjacent to no.10 is a large storage container on what has historically been another plot. If Plot 10 proves to be successful as a raised planter site, the Parish Council could look at removing the container and introducing a new plot with raised planters. This would be at a cost to the Parish Council but would maximise the space allocated for letting. It would also reduce the space available for fly tipping accumulations. However, if the flood water problem on the site persists, this would not be practical.

1.6 Prior to the Parish Council managing the site, Swindon Borough Council would drop off wood chippings collected by its tree team to allotment holders on an ad hoc basis. This has established an expectation amongst plot holders that they are provided with chippings throughout the season. The Parish Council continues to request the chippings from the Borough Tree Team however this is supplied as a goodwill gesture when the team are active in West Swindon. Unfortunately, this does leave some plot holders frustrated at the lack of chippings supplied.

1.7 The allotment holders have also requested additional water troughs to avoid queuing for water during busy times. The Parish Team will install an extra trough this year.

2. Recommendations:

It is recommended that this Committee

- 2.1 Notes the problem with standing/flooding water at Blagrove and approves the ongoing work of the Parish Team to find a solution.
- 2.2 Considers the best policy on waste removal from the site.
- 2.3 Notes the addition of raised planters and gives feedback on the potential to introduce a new plot.

Paula Harrison
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