

Upwood and the Raveleys Parish Councillors: Trustees' Meeting

Parish Clerk – Mrs Carol Bilverstone. Kilimanjaro, 9 Meadow Road, Upwood, Huntingdon, Cambs. PE26 2QJ
Telephone: 01487 812447. E-Mail: parishclerk@upwood.org

A meeting of Upwood and the Raveleys Parish Councillors, the Trustees of:

Upwood & the Raveleys Allotments (Charity no. 264373)

was held on Monday 07 March 2016 at 6:30pm at Upwood Village Hall.

Carol Bilverstone – Clerk and Responsible Financial Officer to Upwood and the Raveleys Parish Council

Present: Councillors J. Edwards, J. Noble, R. Howe (Chairman), H. Nel, J. Paxton, A. Perkins, R. Singleton, G. Slater.

In Attendance: Mrs. C. Bilverstone (Clerk), Miss A. Miles (Chairman, URCAA), Mr C. Dowdell (Treasurer, URCAA).

Minutes

- 01-03/16 To receive and approve apologies for absence.**
Apologies had been received from Councillor Smith (holiday), Mrs L. Carter, Mrs J. Evans & Mr T. Brown.
- 02-03/16 To receive and approve the minutes of the trustees' meeting held on 02 March 2015.**
Copies of the minutes of the meeting held on 02 March 2015 had been circulated in advance following their informal approval by the chairman. Councillor Slater proposed acceptance of the minutes. Councillor Paxton seconded the proposal. All who had been present were in favour and it was **resolved** to do so. The chairman signed the minutes.
- 03-03/16 To receive an update from Upwood and the Raveleys Community Allotment Association (URCAA): strengths and challenges to date.**
Miss Miles presented a comprehensive update outlining the achievements of the association over the last twelve months (please see attached).
- 04-03/16 To receive an updated business plan from URCAA.**
Miss Miles presented a draft of the association's ambitious business plan. This will be formally agreed at the URCAA AGM (please see attached).
Councillor Noble offered to assist with liaison with Upwood Primary School. Councillor Nel offered assistance with liaison and communication with the outlying communities. Miss Miles noted that several allotment holders (including two members of the committee) live outside Upwood village.
- 05-03/16 To receive a financial statement from URCAA.**
Mr Dowdell provided a healthy financial statement (please see attached), detailing income and expenditure relating to the allotments, the community orchard and the Community Chest Fund.
- 06-03/16 To receive an update from Councillor Edwards (trustee with portfolio responsibility for the allotments).**
Councillor Edwards congratulated the association on another successful year.
The chairman added that URCAA is now a thriving organisation which has undergone a complete transformation since its liberation from the parish council. He thanked the committee for their continued enthusiasm; their huge array of projects and aspirations; and their positive impact, not just on those with a direct relationship with the allotments but also on the wider community.
- 07-03/16 Matters for future consideration.**
No decisions can be made under this item. There were no matters for future consideration.
- 08-03/16 Date of next meeting: 06 March 2017.**

Close of meeting: 6:55pm

Upwood and Raveley Community Allotment Association (URCAA) and Upwood Community Orchard

Update for Trustees, March 2016

We have continued to make progress with our stated plans for the allotments. Our main aim, and greatest continuing challenge, is to acquire and keep new plot holders. We have varied the plot sizes to provide opportunities for people with different needs/time available and, as such, hope that the allotments can be an enjoyable and manageable activity for everyone. For 2016, we will look to focus our efforts on a recruitment drive. At the 2015 Allotment AGM we welcomed Trevor Brown to the committee in order to represent issues from the Great Raveley allotment plots.

The 2016 AGM will take place at the end of March/beginning of April (date tbc) where we will confirm the Associations plans for 2016.

Activity over 2015 - allotments

With the successful installation of the barrier gates and continued hedge planting, the security of the Upwood site has been improved. We have received two sets of hedging trees from the Woodland Trust, and are just finishing (weather permitting) the Huntingdon road stretch with a mix of Blackthorn, Hawthorn, Elder, Dog Rose and Hazel.

Four water troughs, funded through the community chest fund, have been purchased and placed for water storage on the Upwood site. This is our first step in a more long term ambition to have a water supply across this site.

Members carried out a litter pick of the ditches around the Upwood allotment site to enable the ditch clearing organised by the Parish Council. The spoil from the ditches has been held on the Community Plot, where we will gradually sort through the material and then reuse any suitable soil for projects.

On the 21st June, we opened the allotments for the first time as part of the Upwood Open Gardens. We also managed to host two prize winning scarecrows!

We have invested in weed suppressant material and spent time trying to clear plots ready for prospective new allotmenters. As always, nature doesn't necessarily agree with our plans!

We have had some issues with dog fouling on the allotments so we have followed up with signage and, hopefully, this will not be such an issue this year. We welcome dog walkers and the community on the main track of the allotment but, as with everywhere, owners need to clear up after their pets.

Activity over 2015 - community orchard

We have now installed the donated bench and have created and planted up three raised beds with lavender and spring bulbs. Still a work in progress but hopefully it will become a quiet corner for villagers to enjoy the orchard. We have also planted hedging to help delineate the orchard area on the western edge.

We have lost one tree across the first year, when the graft failed. This will be replaced this Spring but otherwise the trees seem to be progressing well. Following another successful fund raising Quiz, we will look to expand the orchard planting, and hopefully will have sufficient funds to keep the area mown.

We are keen to get people involved in the Orchard as it starts to develop. People do not need to be plot holders – this is a Community Orchard for the village, and support can vary from weeding to coming up with fund raising ideas. There is a job to be done to meet anyone's ability or amount of free time and we are hoping to encourage local people to take an interest in the orchard.

Ali Miles, Liz Carter, Carl Dowdell, Julia Evans, Trevor Brown (URCAA committee)

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

The Upwood & 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 . URCAA has taken over the everyday running of the allotment plots situated in Upwood (Meadow Road site) and Great Raveley (junction with Raveley & 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 to the internal boundaries of the site

Maintenance to the external boundaries of the site fall to the Upwood Parish Council.

The Upwood site currently consists of 28 full plots split into a range of sizes to meet the varying needs of the community, included in this 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 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 water, parking and a communal area for storage.
- 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

- 26 of the available 28 plots are actively cultivated or managed by allotment holders at Upwood leaving 1 large plot to be divided up this spring and 2 x ½ plot without a tenant.
- The Raveley site has a half vacant plot
- Currently there is not a waiting list for plots.
- 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 a number of 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

The vacant plots are being resized and cleared with a view to encourage uptake by new members asap. There is an ongoing need to help clear plots that remain or become vacant throughout the year. Whilst much of this can be done through self-help, URCAA have now invested in weed suppressant membrane to reduce overall maintenance requirements. We are also investigating the use of green manures. Plot holders have the opportunity to spray their plots for a reasonable cost by renting out a backpack sprayer and weed killer. We arrange for the grass track through the Upwood plots to be cut regularly throughout the growing season.

2) Security

Security has been dramatically improved with the recent installation of 2 padlocked gates at both entrances. With a further successful application to the Woodlands Trust, URCAA is extending the hedging along the Huntingdon Road to complete the hedgerow at the top of the current hayfield.

3) Strengthening the association.

As a group, URCAA committee members now stands at five, including a representative from the Raveleys site. There is always a need to recruit additional members to share some of the everyday site management and to drive forward future projects. URCAA would look to engage the wider membership in projects. A key project for 2016, will be the recruitment of new plot holders.

4) 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 increase work to publicise plot availability in 2016 until such time as a waiting list is generated. Publicity through village newsletter, website publicity and potentially local free newspapers, will be ongoing.

5) Social events.

The committee intend to hold at least one social event in the year, to raise the Group's profile as well as engender a community spirit. (Ongoing maintenance, such as ditch clearance & hedge trimming, will be done on a self-help basis.) This year's event (tbc) will be discussed at the Association's AGM

6) Community Orchard Project.

The Orchard will continue to be maintained, and if funds allow we will, expand the tree planting and complete the hedging along the bottom edge.

7) Water provision.

We have placed the four water troughs at the Upwood site and a 1000 litre water container at the Gt Raveley site. Over 2016 we will look at innovative ways to fill them as we work towards a long term aim of providing access to water for all plots.

Long Term Objectives.

8) Plumbed Water Supplies.

A successful application to the Community Chest included funds to help improve water storage for both sites. The long term aim is to have mains fed containers strategically placed around the sites so that we can attract more plot holders.

9) 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.

10) Primary School Project

Previous mention has been made about offering one of the plots as a community plot for use by the local primary school. A volunteer would be needed to start up the project and offer seeds to grow easy return produce. School parties, under adult guidance, would cultivate these areas, fitting in with natural history and green studies within the school curriculum.

11) Communal Hut.

There is a long term aspiration to raise money to purchase a communal hut. As well as funds for the hut, additional funds will be needed to:

Provide shelving and storage cupboards so that allotment holders can store implements etc. Offer some portable heating and lighting; provide a couple of tables and some chairs to shelter from inclement weather.

Estimated cost: TBD

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 should build up a reserve from fund raising events and maintain approximately £300 in reserve, for ongoing maintenance.

All projects are dependent on fund raising, sponsorship and annual allotment rents collected by URCAA.

RISK ANALYSIS

The main risks that the URCAA committee have identified are:

- The Site's personal liability is now included within the Parish Council's existing cover, however the risk remains due to unauthorised entry by dog walkers and ramblers.
- Reduction in the number of plot-holders - there is a risk of interest in the allotment scene decreasing and further plot holders not coming forward.
- Adverse weather - severe weather could damage the site and the growing potential of the plants and vegetables, most notably drought, flooding and wind damage can dishearten plot holders and see a decline in allotment usage and funds to support the site.

URCAA FINANCIAL REPORT - 3 March 2016

	Allotment Funds	£ 1,592.98	
	Community Chest	£ 136.81	
	Orchard Funds	£ 726.36	
	Balance	£ 2,456.15	Total Account Balance of the 3 funds
Date	Allotment - Mar 15 Balance B/FWD	£ 1,365.43	Site rents (incl. fields) = £608.50, other outgoings =£380.95.
2016	Allotment Rents	£ 608.50	Nett income Balance for 15/16 =£227.55
2015/6	Village Hall Hire refund for Meetings	-£ 11.65	Carry forward to 16/17 of £1592.98
2015/6	Outgoings - Site Maintenance & Water.	£ 392.60	
	Balance to C/Fwd	£ 1,592.98	
	Orchard Funds - Mar 15 Balance B/FWD	£ 530.50	C/Fwd Balance plus Quiz night (£360.00.)
07/10/2015	Fund raising	£ 360.00	Less topsoil & soil improver,
2015/6	Maintenance	£ 164.14	Leaving Balance of £726.36
	Balance to C/Fwd	£ 726.36	
	Community Chest - Mar 15 Balance B/FWD	£ 590.60	Community Chest grant paid for water containers.
30-Sep-15	Water Containers	£ 453.79	Balance of grant to be used for Bench installation.
	Balance to C/Fwd	£ 136.81	
	Total Cash Book Balances	£ 2,456.15	
	Plot rent deposit to be cleared		
	Uncashed cheque no 000022 Sean Edwards 14/07/2015	£ 30.00	
	Bank Balance as per statement dated 1/03/15	£ 2,486.15	