

Allotment report – 2nd December 2023

a. Plot allocation update

All plots have now been taken up, and we have no one on the waiting list.

We may identify plots which have been given up once we reconcile payments against the 2024 Rent invoices and chased for outstanding payments.

b. Plot condition

All plots are in good order and being maintained. Now autumn has arrived many of the plots are being cleared and prepared for winter.

c. Pest Control Contractor for ongoing rat management.

We continue to engage with the Pest Control Contractor to manage the rodent population at the allotment. This will always be an ongoing activity to ensure the population is kept at manageable levels.

d. Skip & Waste disposal

After the plot inspection in September the Committee decided that there wasn't enough rubbish on site to justify the hire of a skip, this will save the Council circa £300. However, we have asked that a budget be kept in the 2024 Financials to allow us to hire a skip next October is required.

e. Plot covering

During the summer we purchased some weed membrane and used it to cover any vacated plots preventing them from turning to weed. This was a significant success, not only in keeping the plots in good order, but also making it easier to encourage new plot holders to take over vacated plots as they were not facing a significant challenge to bring the plots into a condition where planting could continue. We plan to keep this process in place and to cover all plots that are given up.

f. 2023 Best Kept Plots Award

In October we conducted the Best Kept Plot awards. It was very hard this year as all of the plots were being well maintained but three plots stood out. Ray Magness (Plot 39) was awarded 1st Prize, Russ and Jan Brooks (Plots 14b and 15b) were awarded 2nd Prize and Nigel King (Plot 8) was awarded 3rd Prize.

g. A1 Boundary Fence

We were informed that, due to the position of the electricity in the A1 end corner of the allotments, that installing a high metal fence would be considered as a risk to life due to the possibility of electric arcing. Therefore, we have opted to install a natural barrier incorporating pyracantha and brambles. The pyracantha plants will be planted in the spring once the cold period has ended.

h. The Community Plot

The Community Plot has been a significant success for the Allotments. We have provided a considerable amount of fresh vegetables to Diamond Hampers in Huntingdon for sale, with the proceeds from this going to the local Food Banks. We have decided to extend the size of the plot, and it now occupies both 23a and 23b plots. The addition of plot 23b allows us to start growing fruit as well as vegetables for donation.

We are also considering approaching the Mayfield Surgery and asking if they have any patients that may benefit from outdoor activities which may improve both their physical and mental health. They would be warmly welcomed as a volunteer at the community plot and may gain from being part of the team.

i. Front fence and main entrance

We have replaced the patchy / broken / missing front fence with a new 4ft high chain link fence identical to the one implemented along the Silver Street side. This is a marked improvement to the Allotments, which now look like a valuable asset to the Buckden Parish.

j. Eco toilet

We are looking at the possibility of installing an Eco Composting Toilet at the allotments but we are struggling to find one that doesn't need emptying on a regular basis as we cannot find anyone who would be willing to take on the task.

k. Poly tunnel

We are looking to install a polytunnel at the allotments to provide a space for those who do not have access to greenhouse space to grow plants from seed, avoiding the need and cost of buying plants from Garden Centres. This is a project we will look to implement over the winter period, hopefully making it available by early spring.

l. Defibrillator

Once the old Gardening Club shed has been converted to the Handymen's Workshop we would like to install a defibrillator to the outside of the building making it available to members of the allotment and to residents of Silver Street.