

**Church Manor Way Allotment  
Annual General Meeting Minutes  
Seven Acre Sports Club  
Tuesday 9th April 2024**

**1) Welcome & Introductions**

- Sharon Ryan (Site Secretary and Chair) welcomed everyone to the Annual General Meeting and introduced herself.
- Representatives from Greenwich Council Parks and Open Spaces were introduced – Alex Gardiner (Business Support Officer), and Paul Martin (Park Ranger Manager).
- Community Payback Service – Jane (Payback Supervisor) and Peter (Payback Manager).
- Bumblebee Conservation Trust, The Ridgeway Project – Dr Uy Hoang.

**2) Apologies**

- Chris Tingle (Society Treasurer), John Masih (Site Lead and Chair), Oliver Mayo

**3) Minutes of last meeting (17<sup>th</sup> October 2023 – EGM)**

- Accepted and agreed as accurate.

**4) Update from Chair**

- *See Appendix 1. Update from John Masih (Site Lead,) read by Sharon corresponding with specific Agenda points.*

**5) CMW Allotment Society Progress to Date**

**5.1) Formation**

- *See Appendix 1.*

**5.2) Membership**

- *See Appendix 2. CMWAS Update Slide.*
- 81 members have joined Church Manor Way's Allotment Society out of a possible 122 plot holders, representing 66% of total plot holders; a few have yet to pick up their keys, some hold more than one plot, affecting this percentage.
- CMW is now registered with the financial conduct authority and the Treasurer is setting up a bank account.

**5.3) Communications**

The committee is working hard to improve communications, it is recognised that plot holders favour diverse ways to communicate.

**Noticeboards**

- Physical noticeboards will be at both gates and are the most effective way for people who don't use social media and e-comms to find information.
- Noticeboards are a priority and will be used alongside other communication platforms, however, money is needed to fund these.
- Initially inward facing for allotment holders, noticeboards will later also face outwards towards the street to engage our local community.

**Website & Comms Update**

*See Appendix 3. Website Draft and Comms Update Slides 1-20.*

- A CMW Website is being created.

- CMW's branding uses clear colours, including a colour reference to the Elizabeth line. Our website can generate and manage sales revenue and includes News; recent stories via a blog; an easy access Home page; Where to Find Us; Gardener's Trends and Tips - including Source Lists; translated sections in key languages spoken at CMW; a Link + Work With Us page to generate grant income also linking with the National Allotment Society; Greenwich Council etc.

All acting as a CMWA's encyclopaedia.

Any comments/suggestions for ideas/changes/improvements are welcomed.

- Facebook will be moved from CMW's current, dormant account to a live site, and Instagram will be set up – both platforms will share images and information.

#### **5.4) Financial report**

- See *Appendix 4. Treasurer's Financial Report Slide*.
- Almost all key holders have a new key.
- Allotment Holders can still become members of the Society. Membership renews in March 2025.
- Some plot holders have elected not to sell their old Heras fence panels - these panels along with other scrap metal, will be sold to generate funds for CMW Society projects.

### **6) Site Development and Plot Maintenance**

#### **6.1) Community Payback Project Update**

- Fences are almost cleared from the north end, and work is starting on fence removal in the centre, where plots 26 – 45 are in the process of having fences removed, working towards the south.
- Making pathways safer is the next priority, removing old carpet, filling holes, and shoring up old paths.

#### **6.2) Project Clearview**

- Several plot holders attending the AGM expressed misgivings around fence removal and asked for improved communication from Greenwich Council and CMW's committee, specifically related to fence removal questions.

Some felt the council had 'jumped the gun', by removing fences without improving security first; instancing items that have been stolen from plots recently – asking how thefts would be combatted by the Council.

- Plot holders questioned the short notice given to them about their fences being removed by the Payback team and questioned their ability to prune back plants on fences. It was agreed that the Payback team had worked faster than originally estimated and notification of fence removal would be revised.
- Over two thousand pounds have been spent by the council on new, site-specific keys, which cannot be copied; representing 'invested trust in CMW's plot holders' by the council, to keep all gates locked and secure. If thefts still occur at CMW, this will help identify thieves within CMW's own community.
- Plot holders at the meeting suggested removal of fences was the Site Lead's idea, and that they were being treated like children and that the committee had an antagonistic relationship with long-term plot holders.
- According to two plot holders pallet or metre high fences were originally agreed by the committee.
- Council representatives explained permanent fence removal was the council's decision, that they supported the sense of community taking fences down fosters, and that there is no possibility of re-fencing plots. It was also stated that the use of the Payback team to take fencing down was a decision made within Greenwich Council.
- Some attending the AGM commented that there was a divide between old and new allotment holders; suggesting new plot holders were 'on the side' of the council and committee, while

long-term tenants felt that they were being 'got rid of'. Questions were raised about the purpose of the council and committee, suggesting that little effort was being made to engage with allotment holders. The council officer and committee members present stated that everyone was engaged.

- Plot holders were asked who had not received invoices from the council, to gauge how effective written communication was. Quite a few had not received their bills and were advised to contact the council to update their contact details.

### **6.3) Buzzing in the East End Project – Film Clip and Introduction by Dr Uy Hoang**

Cancelled due to time reallocated to discussions around Project Clearview and Site Security. Cards about this B.E.E were left for people to take.

### **6.4) Hedge Planting**

- Clarification was sought around which barriers are permitted at all of Greenwich's allotments; hedging was offered as the only alternative to fencing.
- Native tree hedges were successfully planted at CMW in autumn 2023 and are doing well.
- When asked if there were enough whips for interested plot holders to use now, they were advised that there are plenty, however, time is running out to plant these and that more whips will be sought from the Woodland Trust, autumn 2024.
- Zigzag one metre 'double depth' hedge planting was recommended as ecologically better than single depth hedging – providing optimal standards of deep cover for wildlife to hide in.
- Hedges are to be kept below 5 feet. Hedges above 5 feet were not recommended by a plot holder, because these cast long, deep shade and have a high take-up of water and nutrients.

### **6.5) Water Maintenance**

- Thanks were given to those repairing water leaks, overwinter 2023/24.
- A survey of water provision and plumbing will be carried out later this year, anything that cannot be fixed internally will be reported to the council to repair.

### **6.6 Woodchip and Manure Deliveries**

- The committee is presently negotiating free woodchip and sub soil to repair pathways and fill holes in plots
- Local companies have been approached by the committee to see if they can deliver free woodchip but this is a slow process. The most recent delivery of woodchip was made by Greenwich Council, it's agreed CMW will be given woodchip deliveries more frequently by the council's parks dept.
- Allotment holders asked if there are quantity limits, considerate gardeners are advised to limit themselves to two barrow loads of woodchip, manure etc., however, there is no set limit.
- Deliveries are publicised via WhatsApp by committee members for speed.
- Manure is delivered frequently but this is dependent on the stables mucking out schedule.
- Unreliable sources have delivered under the pretext of giving away free manure, however, building materials and rubbish have been fly-tipped in these deliveries; council officers reminded plot holders that only reliable sources should be engaged with.

### **6.7) Site inspection**

A council site inspection will take place on Friday 19<sup>th</sup> April, to see how CMW is progressing and if there are any issues that need resolving. The Site Lead will also be in attendance and will report back.

### **6.8) Rubbish**

Council officers present at this AGM, confirmed that tonnes of rubbish have already been removed from CMW over the past year.

- The council is aware that some plot holders dump their domestic and household waste, including furniture, at CMW. Thousands of pounds have been spent clearing rubbish left by plot holders, hoarded on fenced plots which are now de-fenced, clearing unused plots of abandoned waste, or waste left by fly-tippers.
- Some plot holders at the meeting expressed concerns that waste near plots is detrimental to their health. Plot holders are expected to be responsible for removing their own waste and were asked not to dump domestic and household rubbish at CMW. Leaving rubbish encourages foxes and vermin, it can be contaminated.
- Cameras are set up to record people leaving rubbish at both gates and film footage will be reviewed.
- The council is under immense budget constraints; the start of a new financial tax year will enable some planned waste removal. To make this cost-effective, rubbish must be stored by the front gate, to fill huge rubbish trucks.
- Existing piles of waste have been separated by the Payback team, into wood, metal, green (garden) waste and general waste to help economise rubbish removal.
- A plot holder raised fires as a hazardous way of disposing rubbish. They are not banned but discouraged. There are regulations around fires, most councils set standards. Some gardeners use fires, while others feel they are a fire risk and pollute the environment.
- The council asks for fires not to be lit.

## 7) Site security

- All were asked to keep gates locked.
  - Allotment holders were also encouraged to ask people they don't recognise on the allotment, who they are, and to show their key, to deter strangers entering.
- Not all felt safe doing this.
- Some allotment holders felt it was more secure when plots were individually fenced, others disagreed and stated that thefts took place while fences were still in place and felt people should feel more secure, because people can see one another more easily without fences.
  - It was stated that a tight reign over security is the council's priority – encouraging all plot holders to collectively, monitor security. CMW was described as the 'most challenging allotment site in the borough' and it was stated that it did not feel secure in the past, but the expectation is that once everyone can see their neighbour, security will improve.
  - Plot holders were advised to contact Paul Martin at Greenwich Council, if feeling unsafe, are a victim of theft, or are a victim of repression. Paul promised to investigate.
- If anyone needs to contact the council about their allotment and don't receive a reply, Paul will respond – he is not on CMW's WhatsApp group but asked people to email him:  
[paul.martin@royalgreenwich.gov.uk](mailto:paul.martin@royalgreenwich.gov.uk)

## 8) AOB

### Education Programme

- What would people like to learn or volunteer to do, for example more experienced gardeners could support novice gardeners?
- People were asked to talk with the committee, perhaps to start small projects. For example, there are a lot of children who want to try gardening, we are also near a school, our community could support families learning to garden.

### Volunteers

- As discussed in February and October 2023's AGM/EGMs, plot holders were again encouraged to consider joining CMW's Allotment Society's Committee at this meeting.

- One plot holder described past CMW committees as ‘a dictatorship - where plot holders were consulted but not listened to - moving forward they hoped it will be a democracy’.
- Another plot holder asked what the point of CMW’s committee was. The committee is to liaise with the council & plot holders and manage the day to day running of the site.
- At present the committee has 6 elected volunteers; 3 committee posts remain vacant. It would be a step forward if people could join the committee.
- One plot holder asked if there was no confidence in the existing committee, whether a different committee could be elected and how the Site Lead could be replaced if there was no confidence in the committee. Another disagreed with this. All were advised to offer a yearly expression of interest to join the committee.
- A suggestion was made that formal allotment AGM and EGMs could take place at the weekend during the day, as opposed to a week day meeting in the evening.
- Seven Acres Club House is only available to CMW free during the week, an alternative free venue would need to be found.
- **A wealth of skills is within our allotment site**, and we would like people to consider volunteering with us, either as committee members, or as volunteers running or helping with projects.

### Harvest Festival

- Last year’s event was well attended and feedback was positive.
- The provisional date for this year is Saturday, 31st August 2024. To be held at Seven Acres Sports Club.

### Other AOB

- **WhatsApp Admin** was discussed – some people objected to the volume of messages they received. They were advised to mute/ disable WhatsApp notifications as opposed to leave, as it is currently the sites only communication method.
- **Questions were raised about CMWAS’ adopted Constitution** taken from the NAS’ Constitution template. It was confirmed that Church Manor Way’s Allotment Society is a legal constitution, which the committee is obliged to follow.

*Post meeting note: The Constitution is now available on the website to view – <https://churchmanorway.com>*

### 9) Next AGM Date

- This will be in March 2025.

**Thanks** were offered to all for attending and we hope to see each other around the site, and hopefully more people will attend next year’s AGM.

## **Appendix 1:**

### **Chair's report**

Good evening and my apologies for not being able to be here this evening.

This is a short report of some key points which Sharon and the Management Team will expand upon in this meeting.

First of all, we are now formally constituted as a society. After a long delay waiting for the National Allotment Society to process our application, the Financial Conduct Authority registered us under the Co-operative and Community Benefit Societies Act 2014 as a Co-operative Society on 23<sup>rd</sup> February 2024.

While this won't mean much to the day-to-day job of digging planting, weeding and harvesting it means we are able to open a bank account and to apply for grant funding for projects. We are in the process of opening a Community Directplus current and saving accounts with the Co-op Bank. We have to submit an annual financial return to the FCA which our Treasurer – Chris, will do before August. You'll get details of our current state of finances this evening.

The Management Committee has nine positions. As we've posted on the WhatsApp group, there are still unfilled positions, and we really need a few more people to step up and help us.

Church Manor Way is the largest allotment site in Greenwich with the most development work to do. This does require a commitment of your time but you will be able see over the next couple of years that you will have helped transform the site and built a stronger community here.

One final thing for this bit on the Society. Project-wise, initially we're looking for funding to rebuild the allotment buildings which were burnt down some years ago and also to create a new raised bed garden at the main gate. All the project grants we've looked at ask for evidence of need. So, we will be doing so surveys of all CMW gardeners for some information and opinion on what will improve the site. Any information we will collect from you is non-identifiable. The more we get, the stronger our applications will be. We won't be able to start applying until the site has been cleared and we no longer need to use the front plot at the main gate as a rubbish tip.

Next... You will have seen that the Clear View Project is progressing well. The Payback teams and some very helpful plot holders have taken down fences on the north side of the site and have started now on the south side. We hope to complete this job by July. I hope you all agree that the site is now starting to look like allotment gardens and several people have already told us that they've enjoyed the novelty of being able to talk to their neighbours.

We recognise that for some this has been an uncomfortable period of change, but we are confident that this is for the longer term good. Most people's worries are about theft. Sadly, this happens on allotment sites across the country so is nothing unique to CMW. The way to reduce this is to be vigilant and challenge and report people who are taking things which do not belong to them. So please help us with this. I've

already mentioned community once. It is the building of an inclusive, collaborative community of gardeners which will make us a happier and more fruitful (and vegetableful) society.

After, the fencing is gone, we'll start getting proper boundaries around the plots reinstated.

I'll end this report by saying thank you to:

- everyone on the northside for being cooperative with the de-fencing;
- Downen and Jane and their Saturday and Sunday Payback teams for doing a great job of taking down and hauling away several tons of rusty metal, rotting wood and rubbish;
- Paul at RBG Parks for supporting us by providing CPBT and funding to change locks and remove mountains of rubbish;
- Henry for tons of horse poo he delivers several times a week;
- Will for doing our new website;
- And finally to the Site Committee – who have all given hundreds of hours of their time to move CMW forward.

**John Masih**  
**9<sup>th</sup> April 2024**

## **Appendix 2:**

### **Church Manor Way Allotment Society Update, April 2024**

- **Society Membership to date: 81 members**
- **Membership = 66% of CMW Plot Holders**
- **Currently 140 plots / 122 Plot Holders**
  - - 7 vacant = 133 plots
  - - 7 Plot Holders yet to collect a key / join society
  - - 4 multiple plot holders
- **Society has been registered with Financial Conduct Authority so we are currently in the process of opening a Bank Account at the Co-Operative Bank.**

**Appendix 4:**

**Appendix 3: Website Draft and Comms Update**

1 **Church Manor Way Allotments**  
What we're doing in the communications committee

2 **Projects**  
A new website | Social media | Joining the NPS | Email newsletter

3 **Church Manor Way Allotment Society Finance Update, April 2024**  

- Key income of £5,200 (2023ytd)
- Society Membership income of £180 (26 members)
- Expenditure of £380 (ICA fee, Tools for P&E, Harvest Festival 2023, P&T Supplies)
- Society has been registered with Financial Conduct Authority so are currently in the process of opening a Bank Account at the Co-Operative Bank.

4 **Our new website**

5 **Who and what is the website for?**  

Allotment tenants and partners	Potential sponsors and partners	Customers and the wider society
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To get useful, accurate information</li> <li>• To share what they're working on</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To see what you're a legation, sharing community</li> <li>• To get visibility for their support</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To learn more about the allotment</li> <li>• To join us, helpfully buy jars, oblongs and other allotment produce</li> </ul>

6 **The homepage**  
**CMW Gardeners**  
A community allotment in South East London

7 **The homepage**  
The program over a week...  
Join us today

8 **The homepage**  
**News from the allotment**  
Allotment update | Allotment news | Allotment events

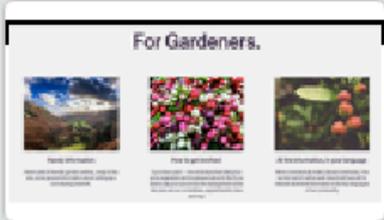
9 **The homepage**  
Where can I join the allotment?  
When do I get to the allotment?  
Get involved with Church Manor Way Allotments

10 **The homepage**  
**Let us know what you think**  
Where to shout at us over a fence from

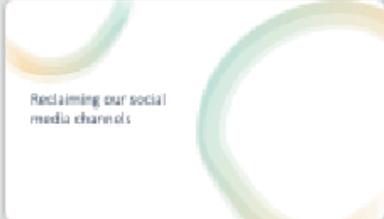
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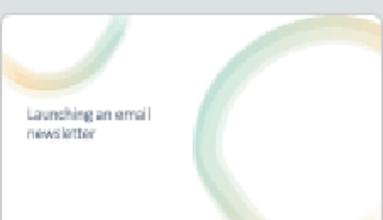
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## Church Manor Way Allotment Society Finance Update, April 2024

- **Key Income of £3,240 (162 Keys)**
- **Society Membership Income of £405 (81 members)**
- **Expenditure of £380 (FCA Fee, Tools for PBT, Harvest Festival 2023, PBT Supplies)**
- **Society has been registered with Financial Conduct Authority so we are currently in the process of opening a Bank Account at the Co-Operative Bank.**