Minutes of garden group meeting with the whole group, Sunday, 15 August, 3 pm

Present: Min, Rosemarie, Maurice, Gay, Catherine, Jeffrey, Frances, Anne, Pip, Janet, Tim, Donald, Miriam, Maria, Juan, Marianne, Kristin, Sue T, Sandy, Ian, Sara

Garden Feedback and Q & A prepared by Min handed out

Min began by introducing the reasons for this meeting: the need to make clear to everyone the plans and thoughts for the garden layout to date and the plan going forward.

8 units have indicated they would like a vege plot. People were reassured that everyone who wants one would get one. The edge of the lawn could be used for more plots if necessary, although some are not keen for the grass area to be reduced. Plots which cease to be used can revert to the garden group.

Min referred to the overall plan., which Maria had drawn up. Some plants will be moved if they do not fit in with residents’ needs or desires.

The garden group is not a fixed group. It is a fluid thing. Currently, it is everyone who is on the Whatsap list, about 12-13 people.

The philosophy and layout of the gardens: this was a group compromise to fit in with the gardeners’ desires and ideas.

Questions:

Anne: if I bought some seedlings, how would I negotiate where I could put them? Will the responsibility for specific plots be known? There could be a plot key in the CH, or I could send out a query to the Whatsap. Will there be general space for all to use?

Min: As well as the large garden area, there is a lot of extra space in the long gardens between fruit trees.

Bike shed: Pip asked if we could relocate the bike shed so that it does not take up garden space. We have 30 bikes currently. Sheds/shelters are planned for

1. Behind the current compost bins (which are to be moved).
2. To the left of 1.
3. Where the bricks are
4. Behind the CH.

Catherine suggests there are different racking systems for bike storage but it was pointed out that e bikes cannot be stored by their back wheel.

Seedling and propagation area. Extend the shelter of a bike shed roof and provide shelter for propagation. It won’t be a tunnel house. We will have to wait and see where the boundaries of the bike sheds are.

It would be good to have a garden bed for the kitchen for growing greens and so on.

If the garden group wants help with garden work, will they announce a working bee? Those not part of the group need to know if and when help is needed. (Anne & Gay)

Donald reported that the group were dealing with a fluid situation and developing and changing their plans as they worked on. Donald took responsibility for getting things done. He feels that spring is approaching and we need to get planting.

Gay wants to say a huge thank you to Donald for his labours.

Tim: the garden group has decided there is an allotment style of gardening. Perhaps we need to take this to the group. He had not appreciated how much interest there was in the gardens so perhaps we need to revisit the bike shed spaces.

Gay suggests that people need different sized spaces.

Kristin: a space for the kitchen for herbs etc. was allocated near the entrance to the CH. It could be used but we need to check where bulbs have been planted (check with Donald and Miriam).

Sue: can the non-gardeners pick produce from the communal garden? Rhubarb and herb patches are communal and can be used by the community. It could be that the gardening group will choose times for harvest and alert the community. In community gardens, there are signs for people to know when to pick. This would be helpful.

Marianne: cohousing has a view of equity. People who already have ground need to consider this so that people who do not have ground have a first choice of raised beds.

Also, it has not been decided who will look after the community garden. The garden group needs to work through this.

The peace garden was put together in a hurry but it looks great and the group is very grateful for the work that was done on that and the money spent by individuals. Maintenance of this garden has not been discussed.

Jeffrey: in favour of getting started with planting as soon as they can.

We have also not talked about the cost of plants, soil and wood chips so far and many people have donated plants. We need to put more thought and time into this. Min: there is a budget for maintenance in the BC. Could the maintenance budget be used for establishment costs at this point.

Catherine: appreciated the work and money going into the gardening. The issue of process is very important – the allotment model, common garden model, and other proposals. We are in transition; we have finished a build project and we are now learning how to live and work together. We have made mistakes, we make decisions, we need to be gentle with ourselves and with each other.

Tim: please let us not reduce the lawn area. Others are also very keen to retain a large area of lawn for our children to use.

Kristen: we carry round assumptions with us all of the time and they are not the same as others’. We need to be mindful of this.

A visitor from the Peterborough project in Chch visited and said we had done something amazing and congratulated us.

Sue: if communication is good, there are great opportunities but it does rely on good communication.

There are people who had done private arrangements with others to plant or use their gardens.

Miriam is keen for overflow plants from the allotments to go into the common garden area.

Summary (Min)

1. Having allotments should be a proposal to the group. It would be good to have both pros and cons
2. People can start planting
3. Garden group will keep minutes and notify the group of what they will be doing at the weekends, and ask for help if needed. However, not every task needs to be notified. Much gardening work is spontaneous and depends on the weather.
4. The garden group needs to meet and decide to how much responsibility they will take for the whole area. There are different opinions about this. Within the garden group, there are a variety of garden approaches and philosophies and this is why the allotment method is useful.
5. It may be helpful to have quarterly sessions with the wider group, like this one.
6. Future: we need a plot key – who is responsible for which plot.