



## **Winchester & District Allotment Holders Society (WDAHS)**

### **Tenancy Handbook - 2025**

**Our Allotment Society provides an opportunity for members to grow fruit, flowers, herbs and vegetables, to meet new people and to have plenty of fresh air and exercise.**

**This Handbook is intended to help you get the most from your allotment.**

- |                                      |  |
|--------------------------------------|--|
| 1. Introduction                      | 20. Security                               |
| 2. History                           | 21. Keys & Codes                           |
| 3. Management                        | 22. Bonfires & Waste                       |
| 4. Affiliation & Governing Body      | 23. Visitors & Socialising                 |
| 5. Volunteering                      | 24. Barbecues                              |
| 6. Communication                     | 25. Child Safety                           |
| 7. Health and Safety                 | 26. Dogs                                   |
| 8. Facilities                        | 27. Livestock                              |
| 9. Conditions of Tenancy             | 28. Vermin Control                         |
| 10. Termination of Tenancy           | 29. Deliveries                             |
| 11. Waiting List                     | 30. Assistance from Family & Friends       |
| 12. Plot Maintenance & Cultivation   | 31. Non-member Access Request              |
| 13. Inspections                      | 32. Sub-contractors on Site                |
| 14. Infrastructure                   | 33. Associate Members                      |
| 15. Conduct                          | 34. Wildlife, Environment & Sustainability |
| 16. Sheds, Greenhouses & Polytunnels | 35. Disputes & Complaints                  |
| 17. Hedges & Trees                   | 36. Rules, Regulations & Policies          |
| 18. Water Usage                      | 37. Privacy Policy                         |
| 19. Vehicles & Parking               | 38. The Committee                          |

## **1. Introduction**

Winchester and District Allotment Holders Society (WDAHS) provides allotments to grow fruit, flowers, herbs & vegetables and grazing to keep livestock – a space to feed body and soul.

The Society is inclusive, friendly and welcomes people from all walks of life. We have a duty to care for the environment and we aim to maintain biodiversity, native species, wildlife habitats and to capture carbon.

WDAHS prides itself on being a friendly society, so please email or ask a member of the Committee if you have any questions, concerns or ideas, [secretary@wdahs.or](mailto:secretary@wdahs.or)

Winchester & District Allotments Holders Society Ltd. Registered in England, number: IP04572R

Registered address: 36 Gordon Avenue, Winchester SO23 0QQ

Winchester & District Allotments Holders Society is a registered society under the Co-operative & Community Benefit Societies Act 2014, number 4572R.

## 2. History

Winchester & District Allotment Holders Society was founded in 1907, and at its peak, the Society leased multiple sites across Winchester from the Ecclesiastical Commissioners for over 3000 members to use as allotments. We owe a great deal of thanks to the provisional Committee who worked tirelessly from 1905 to 1907 to form the Society. The Committee's aim was to take over the land let as allotments from the Ecclesiastical Commissioners, to guarantee the rent and to have longer tenancies. In order to do this, Councillor Hutchings (the provisional President), Mr Wort (the provisional Secretary), Mr Widgery (the provisional Treasurer) and the rest of the Committee needed trustees to guarantee the payment of the rent and it was Mr Bostock of Lainston and 3 other gentlemen who agreed to be guarantors: the Committee reassured the trustees that they would never have an occasion to fall back on those gentlemen to meet any liability, because he, the Chairman, believed that if they put shoulder to shoulder they could do all they wanted... The Chairman stated at the meeting held at St Maurice Hall in 1908 that he had hoped to be able to tell the allottees that they had secured allotment gardens to cultivate for as long as they wished, but the Ecclesiastical Commissioners, "were prepared to let the working man have the allotments on a 14 years' lease ..." but "if they (the Commissioners) wanted the land, the working man had to give it up in a month". The provisional Committee did not think this was helping the working men enough so they asked the County Council for land under the Small Holdings Act who said they would be pleased to help. But it was not until 1922 that Mr Wort (still the Secretary of the Society) reported to the members that the land at Highcliffe, whose lease would expire in 1926, was to be on the market and it was at this meeting that the members agreed to the formal resolution authorising the Committee to take up a loan of £1700 (from the Corporation – the Council) to cover the cost of purchase and contingent expenses. In 1925, the Society bought the Highcliffe site from the Ecclesiastical Commissioners: the land has a covenant on it specifying that it must be used for allotments. Previously in 1911, Mr Hutchings (the President) stated at the Society's AGM, that the time would come when they would taste the fruits of their labours in carrying on their gardens and being their own landlords and tenants, the original committee's aim was realised when the Highcliffe site was purchased! The Society is still owned and run by its members. Each member is a single shareholder in the Society which allows them to make proposals and vote at the AGM.

From 1955, due to a combination of reduced membership, increased rents by the Ecclesiastical Commissioners and pressure to develop allotments for housing, the Society gradually reduced in size and now the Highcliffe site is the only remaining WDAHS allotment.

## 3 Management

3.1 The Society is managed by a Management Committee (known as the Committee), which is made up of volunteer members, who are elected at the Annual General Meeting. It is their responsibility to manage the day-to-day running of the society on behalf of its members.

3.2 The Society's Annual General Meeting is held every year before the 31st March.

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3.3 The elected Committee consists of:

Chair  
Vice-Chair  
Secretary  
Treasurer

And up to 5 additional members.

3.4 The Committee may co-opt up to 5 additional members should they deem it necessary. Committee Members may have a specific portfolio, a list of which can be found at the end of this handbook.

3.5 The Committee is elected to manage the Society on behalf of the members; all members have the right to seek clarification of, and challenge decisions made by the Committee. Members' concerns will be treated fairly and without prejudice.

3.6 The Committee will operate in an open and transparent manner and will adhere to all relevant GDPR legislation.

3.7 Members may raise agenda items / proposals for both Committee Meetings and the AGM by notifying the Secretary.

3.8 The Committee meets monthly and welcomes input from members. Any suggestions that members may have to improve the allotment can be raised by contacting any member of the Committee. If you would like to get involved in any of the current projects, please contact the Committee, your help will always be welcomed and appreciated.

## **4 Affiliation & Governing Body**

WDAHS is affiliated to the National Society of Allotments & Leisure Gardens (The National Allotment Society) and as a Pre-Commencement Registered Society, it is regulated by the FCA.

## **5 Volunteering**

The Society is owned and run by its members, all of whom are volunteers, it is hoped that all members will devote time to help in the running and maintenance of the Society.

## **6 Communication**

6.1 The Committee will try to keep members informed through the regular distribution of emails, newsletters and the minutes of meetings. The Society has a private Facebook Group called the 'Highcliffe Allotments Winchester', please send a request if you would like to join the group and feel free to contribute to the page. The purpose of the group is to share news and ideas and to offer surplus seeds, plants & materials to other members.

6.2 Tenants shall not display notices or adverts without prior consent from the Committee.

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## **7 Health & Safety**

7.1 Most activities carry an element of risk and allotment gardening is no exception. You have a responsibility to minimise the risk to yourself and others on your plot and on allocated paths.

7.2 Every member is responsible for maintaining their plot and ensuring the access path nearest to the gate is safe to walk on and free from obstruction.

7.3 Pesticides & herbicides are discouraged, but if you do use them, you must follow all manufacturers' guidelines on use and storage.

7.4 Oil, fuel, lubricants or other flammable liquids must not be stored in any shed except in an approved container with a maximum capacity of 5 litres.

7.5 Sheds containing potentially hazardous materials must be kept locked.

7.6 The Society shall not be held responsible for any loss by accident or fire caused using chemicals or fuels.

7.7 There is a First Aid Kit in the Portakabin: if you use an item, please replace it or let a Committee Member know you have used it, so it can be replenished.

7.8 Do not dump or store materials in communal areas.

7.9 All open water including ponds and water butts, must be protected in by methods approved by our insurers. (Ref 18.9 & 34.2)

7.10 Wood-burning stoves or fixed cooking systems are not permitted unless the member can provide the Committee with proof of appropriate liability insurance.

7.11 Any concerns relating to Health & Safety must be reported to a member of the Committee immediately.

## **8. Facilities**

8.1 Toilet - We have a toilet on site that can be accessed using your site key. Please keep the toilet stocked and clean, and leave the door locked after use.

8.2 Portakabin - The green Portakabin is our clubhouse. It is used for allotment meetings and the noticeboard has up-to-date information on a variety of subjects. The door code is the same as the code for the main gate.

Annual renewal notices are placed in the Portakabin for you to collect in October.

8.3 Wildlife Garden - The Society has a small communal wildlife garden, where you can relax and plant wildlife-friendly plants. It is located at the top end of the track on the right-hand side (ask if you can't find it or check out the allotment site-map in the Portakabin).

We are always looking for help to maintain this special place.

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## **9. Conditions of Tenancy**

9.1 Tenancies are subject to Society Rules, the Tenancy Agreement and any other laws relating to the Society.

9.2 Tenancy renewal takes place at the start of our year which is the 30<sup>th</sup> September. You will be notified by email when the renewal notices are available for collection from the Portakabin. Payment must be made by the 31<sup>st</sup> December, if you fail to pay by this date, you may forfeit your tenancy. Currently, £3 of your subscription provides you with membership to the National Society of Allotments & Leisure Gardens, registration number S3296A which includes your Allotmenters Liability Insurance .

9.3 Tenants are not permitted to sub-let; the registered plot holder must be the primary user of the plot. (Livestock & bees may be moved between grazing plots with approval from the committee).

9.4 Plots must not be used for any kind of commercial activity.

9.5 No member shall be allowed to accumulate more than 20 rods while there are new members on the waiting list (this does not apply to members who already have over 20 rods or grazing land).

## **10. Termination of Tenancy**

10.1 While the expectation is that Tenants will continue to rent plots indefinitely, the Committee may terminate any tenancy if the Tenant has broken the rules of the Society or conditions of tenancy.

10.2 Tenants may terminate their tenancy on any date by notifying the Committee, there is no entitlement to a refund.

10.3 On termination of tenancy, all site keys must be returned and plots must be left in good condition. All sheds, greenhouses, polytunnels and other materials must be removed from site unless the Committee has authorised for them to be left on site.

10.4 If in the opinion of the Committee, the plot has not been left in a satisfactory condition, any work carried out by the Society to return the plot to a satisfactory condition shall be charged to the departing Tenant.

## **11. Waiting List**

11.1 Non-members wishing to join the Society must complete a membership application form. Assuming the application is successful, they will be placed on the waiting list in chronological order and plots will be allocated accordingly.

11.2 The Committee may choose to set geographical restrictions on the waiting list and close the list to new applicants should they deem it necessary.

11.3 Existing Tenants interested in applying for additional plots must complete the appropriate application form, they will then be added to the waiting list. Plots will be allocated in chronological order, (once you are at the top of the waiting list, you will be offered the plot when available). Only members who are maintaining existing plots to a high standard will be allowed to go on to the waiting list for additional plots.

11.4 The waiting list for new and existing members will run consecutively and chronologically, no preference shall be shown to either group.

## **12. Plot Maintenance and cultivation**

12.1 Allotments can be maintained in a variety of ways ranging from no-dig permaculture to traditional double-digging, from planting in regimented lines to informal higgledy-piggledy. However you choose to grow, you must keep your plot cultivated, well-maintained and not cause a nuisance to your neighbours.

12.2 With the exception of designated grazing areas, plots must be used wholly or mainly for the production of vegetables, herbs, fruit and flower crops for the consumption and enjoyment of the Tenant and their family and for no other purpose.

12.3 Plots must be kept free from hazards such as broken glass or scrap metal, they should be reasonably free from weeds and noxious plants and in a good state of cultivation and fertility.

12.4 Pathways between plots must be kept safe, clear of obstacles and the grass mown – Tenants are responsible for the vertical paths (North/South perpendicular to the track) nearest to the main gate and the horizontal paths that edge your plot.

12.5 Tenants must not alter the size or position of existing paths or encroach into the track verge.

12.6 Areas designated for livestock and poultry must be maintained in accordance with the WDAHS Keeping Animals Guide.

## **13. Inspections**

13.1 Committee members are entitled to inspect any allotment plot at any time.

13.2 Periodic plot inspections are carried out by the Committee, if your plot is not being properly maintained, you will be contacted by the Committee and provided with an improvement plan. If there is no significant improvement, your tenancy may be revoked.

Assessment criteria includes:

- Cultivation – is the plot productive? (fruit, vegetables, herbs & flowers)
- Maintenance – is the plot well-maintained & safe?
- Use / frequency / attendance – does the tenant attend regularly?
- Waste material – is there a build-up of material which will ultimately need to be removed from site?

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13.3 There may be exceptional circumstances which prevent you from maintaining your plot. If you suspect that you are going to struggle to maintain your plot, notify the Committee as soon as possible and they will try to support you - failure to do so may result in the termination of your tenancy.

## **14. Infrastructure**

Members must not alter site infrastructure, including: the boundary fence, paths, gates, track, parking areas, portakabin, container, notice boards, toilet block or water system without written consent from the Committee.

## **15. Conduct**

15.1 Members and their visitors must not cause any nuisance or annoyance to any other plot holder or neighbouring resident and must conduct themselves appropriately at all times.

15.2 The Committee has the power to expel, after due notice and without compensation, any Tenant who:

- a. is guilty of theft, damage or wilful injury;
- b. has neglected to keep their holding in proper order, or failed to cultivate the same in a husband-like manner;
- c. has wilfully broken the Society's Rules or these Conditions of Tenancy;
- d. has caused injury, nuisance, annoyance, or loss of reputation to any other members or to the Society itself;
- e. is either growing or consuming illegal drugs on their plot.

15.3 Members, and supervised visitors, are welcome to wander around the paths and communal areas but shall not enter onto any other plot at any time without the express permission of the relevant plot holder.

15.4 Everyone in the Society and those who have dealings with the Society have a responsibility to maintain good working relationships and not to use words or deeds that may harm the wellbeing of others. This contributes to an environment in which individuals feel safe and can work effectively, competently and confidently.

## **16. Sheds, greenhouses and polytunnels**

16.1 No structures, including sheds, greenhouses, polytunnels, and fences can be erected without consent from the Committee.

16.2 All structures must be temporary and members are responsible for ensuring they conform to planning restrictions.

16.3 All new sheds must be raised 6 -10 inches from the ground to discourage rats and concrete bases are not permitted.

16.4 Sheds, greenhouses and polytunnels must be kept in good repair and to the satisfaction of the Committee.

## **17. Hedges and trees**

17.1 No hedges or trees can be planted or removed without consent from the Committee, except for fruiting bushes and dwarf root-stock fruit trees.

17.2 Fruit trees must be planted at least three feet from, and not allowed to overhang, neighbouring plots.

17.3 Boundary hedges are the responsibility of the plot holder and they must be cut back annually, this must be done outside the bird nesting season (1<sup>st</sup> March – 31<sup>st</sup> August).

## **18. Water Usage**

18.1 Water is the Society's biggest expense, so please use the mains water sparingly.

Our water is metered and the pressure is limited, the more taps running at the same time, the lower the flow at each tap, so please be considerate to other members when using water from the mains.

Very few plants require daily watering, the RHS recommends watering a maximum of 2/3 times a week in greenhouses and polytunnels and every 10-14 days outside (and only if it hasn't rained in that period). Occasional watering encourages plants to send deeper tap roots in search of water which helps sustain them through periods of hot, dry weather.

18.2 Always disconnect hoses from the tap after watering and make sure the tap is turned off.

18.3 Hoses must not be left unattended when connected to the mains.

18.4 Check hoses and tap connectors for any leaks and repair / replace accordingly.

18.5 Hose-use is not restricted but please be considerate to other members, do not use a hose for more than 30 mins continuous.

18.6 Sprinklers of any kind are not permitted.

18.7 Irrigation systems must not be connected directly to the mains water supply, they must be gravity fed or battery pumped from an IBC or other suitable container.

18.8 All sheds and greenhouses must have gutters and water butts to harvest rainwater.

18.9 All water butts must be covered (by methods approved by our insurers) to prevent contamination and drowning.

18.10 Please practise sensible water conservation by mulching as much as possible.

18.11 Allotment water must not be used to wash vehicles or taken off-site.

18.12 Broken taps and suspected water leaks must be reported to the Committee.

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## **19. Vehicles and parking**

Vehicles must drive slowly, no more than 10 mph, and must be parked in designated parking areas. Please do not drive or park on the verges and try to avoid driving on the top, grass section of the track in bad weather.

## **20. Security**

20.1 Both the side and main gate must be kept shut and locked.

20.2 The Society takes no responsibility for loss or damage to members' property.

20.3 All instances of theft or vandalism must be reported to the Committee and the Police.

## **21. Keys & Codes**

21.1 Members shall be issued with a code to access the allotment site, the portakabin and the toilet (the code is the same for all three).

21.2 Members must not share the gate code with non-members

21.3 Members shall pay for keys to the toilet should they want one. (No replica keys are to be made without approval from the Committee.)

## **22. Bonfires and Waste**

22.1 Where possible, waste material should either be composted or taken from the site for recycling.

22.2 No bonfires of any kind, including fire pits, are allowed between the 1st April and 31st October.

22.3 If you wish to have a bonfire between 1st November and 31st March, it must not be lit until after 16:00 and you must ensure that the fire is controlled and does not cause a nuisance to other members or neighbours.

22.4 No fires are to be left unattended.

22.5 Do not dump rubbish or accumulate materials which are not directly associated with gardening or animal husbandry.

22.6 Members must ensure all non-compostable waste is removed from site.

## **23. Visitors & Socialising**

23.1 Visitors to the allotment are welcome however, all non-members must be accompanied by a member, properly supervised and must not wander onto other members' plots.

23.2 Members are responsible for any damage or nuisance caused by their visitors.

23.3 Please ensure that if you use your plot for socialising with either other members or visitors, you do not cause a nuisance to other members – no loud music or excessive drinking and please ensure all rubbish is removed from site.

## **24. Barbecues**

BBQs are allowed but only in recognised BBQs (not open fires) and must be raised off the ground. Once lit BBQ's must not be left unattended and must be fully extinguished before you leave site.

## **25. Child Safety**

25.1 Children U16 are welcome on site but must be always accompanied by a parent or guardian (responsible adult) and should be supervised when moving around the site particularly when going to the toilet.

25.2 The responsible adult must keep children safe from hazards on site.

## **26. Dogs**

26.1 Dogs are allowed on site but must always be kept on a lead and under control whilst in communal areas.

26.2 Dog owners are responsible for clearing away any mess made by their dogs.

## **27. Livestock**

27.1 We are fortunate to be allowed to keep livestock on our site, however only in designated areas and with the consent from the Committee.

27.2 Livestock may only be kept in numbers as to provide for your own household and produce must not be sold or traded.

27.3 If you keep livestock on the allotment, you are responsible for their welfare and you must comply with all relevant legislation and the Society's Animal Welfare Guide.

27.4 If you see any of the livestock on site in distress, please contact a member of the Committee immediately.

## **28. Vermin Control**

28.1 Rats can be a big problem on allotments. There is a fine balance between encouraging wildlife, creating compost and providing harbourage for rats. If you want to feed wildlife including birds, it must be done in such a way as to avoid attracting vermin. Feed must be securely stored and placed in rodent-proof feeders.

28.2 Compost heaps must be placed on top of a layer of chicken wire, or some other barrier, to deter rats, must be turned regularly and should not contain cooked foods.

28.3 If you see rats, or any evidence of rat activity, please contact a member of the Committee.

## **29. Deliveries**

29.1 Deliveries of materials such as sheds, timber, compost, manure and wood chip, must be approved by the Committee if they are to be off-loaded in communal areas.

29.2 Any material deposited in communal areas must be removed promptly.

29.3 Members are responsible for any damage caused by their delivery drivers.

## **30. Assistance from Family & Friends**

Members are welcome to invite family and friends to assist them on their plots, but non-members must always be accompanied and supervised by a member.

## **31. Non-Member Access Request**

If a member would like a non-member to access the site unaccompanied for a specific purpose, such as opening and closing a greenhouse while the member is on holiday, permission must be granted by the Committee. Email an access request to [secretary@wdahs.org](mailto:secretary@wdahs.org) with the name and contact details of the helper and a summary of the proposed assistance. Access requests will be granted at the discretion of the Committee and members may be charged a fee to cover any associated costs.

## **32. Sub-contractors on Site**

Paid sub-contractors may only be invited on site with prior permission of the Committee and must provide written evidence of appropriate insurance cover.

### **33. Associate Members**

33.1 If you want to share your plot with a friend or family member, you may apply for an additional Associate Membership. The Associate Member shall pay a fee which will entitle them to unrestricted access, NSALG membership and Allotmenters Liability Insurance.

33.2 Associate members are entitled to vote at Society meetings and are entitled to serve on the Committee.

33.3 Associate members are not registered tenants and have no automatic claim to the plot to which they are registered, however the Committee may decide to allow an Associate Member to take over the plot should it be vacated.

33.4 There shall be no more than one Associate Member per plot and members must not attempt to use the Associate Membership Scheme to bypass the waiting list. Associate Members can assist tenants but should not do most of the work on the plot.

### **34. Wildlife, Environment & Sustainability**

34.1 Our site is home to bats, hedgehogs, frogs, newts, slow worms, lizards, foxes and an increasing number of birds, butterflies and moths. We have a collective responsibility to try to maintain and hopefully improve the biodiversity.

34.2 Small ponds are allowed on site and are a fantastic way of supporting wildlife, but they must be clearly visible and away from paths. Our insurers have stipulated that all ponds must be protected to prevent drowning, they must either be covered by an appropriate mesh, approved by the insurers, or surrounded by a 1m high fence with a self-closing locked gate.

34.3 Please keep the use of herbicides and pesticides to a minimum, wildlife is an ally to sustainable gardening.

34.4 Try to avoid the use of artificial fertilisers but do improve your soil structure by incorporating well-rotted manure, compost, soil conditioners and green manures.

34.5 Although you have a responsibility to maintain your plot, there is usually room for some wildflowers, a patch of long grass and a small log-pile, all of which will help to improve our insect population.

34.6 Wildlife cameras are a fantastic way of monitoring wildlife on your plot, if you want to set up a camera you must ensure that it is set up in such a way to only record wildlife on your plot. Cameras must not record other members, their plots or communal areas.

### **35. Disputes & Complaints**

Any disputes between Tenants or any other complaints must be referred to the Committee in writing. The complaint will be dealt with in accordance with the WDAHS Complaints and Disputes Policy, and after due consideration, the Committee's decision shall be final.

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## **36. Rules, Regulations & Policies**

36.1 The Society and its Members are bound by various laws and regulations, in particular:

- This Handbook
- WDAHS Rules
- WDAHS Good Governance Guidelines
- WDAHS Committee Member Code of Conduct
- WDAHS Prevention of Bullying & Harassment Policy
- WDAHS GDPR Privacy Notice
- The Co-Operative & Community Benefit Societies Act 2014
- The Small Holdings Act 1892
- The Small Holdings and Allotments Acts 1908 and 1926
- The Allotments Acts 1922, 1925 and 1950
- The Agricultural Holdings Acts 1948 and 1986

36.2 Rule changes must be agreed by the Members and where necessary registered with the FCA on the Mutuals Public Register before they come into force.

## **37. Privacy policy**

37.1 The Tenant must immediately inform the Society of any change of address, telephone number or email address.

37.2 Personal Information - The Society does not disclose private data to third parties, unless:

- specifically authorised to do so by the member concerned, or
- to fulfil the Regulator's (FCA) requirements, or
- to fulfil membership requirements of the national organisation to which the Society belongs (such as the National Allotment Society), or,
- when required to do so by third parties (such as insurers, suppliers, local authorities, and emergency services) when the Society has a contractual or legal obligation or duty to do so.

The only data held by the Society on individuals, is that which was supplied to it when a membership was applied for, renewed, or updated.

The accuracy of that data is dependent on the information supplied by the member and as such the Society cannot be held responsible for any errors in this information.

All data is stored securely and used only to ensure the day-to-day operations of the Society, it is not shared or sold to third parties. We may at times contact you directly concerning developments within the Society, and we will offer you the opportunity to opt in or out of initiatives if you so wish.

Data is only accessible to those who need to use it to undertake our organisation's activities.

Data will only be accessed by designated Committee Members.

For the Society to operate effectively, it needs to hold sufficient identity and contact details of

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allotment holders. Members have the right to know what data we hold and to request that some or all of it be deleted.

The Society reserves the right to discontinue membership if, in its judgement, insufficient up-to-date data is held about a member.

Members may request a copy of the full GDPR Privacy Notice for Winchester & District Allotment Association from the Secretary.

## **38. The Committee**

### **38.1 Committee members**

Martin Aspin – Chair	committee@wdahs.org
Dave Fouch – Vice Chair	
Cherriley Scobell - Treasurer	committee@wdahs.org
Fran Goodyear -Secretary	secretary@wdahs.org

James Winsor  
Kerri Lowe  
Dave Fouch  
Liz Fouch  
Alison Aspin  
Merlin Gore  
Ian Woolf

### **38.2 Committee Portfolios**

Animal Welfare .....	James Winsor
Events & Social .....	
Site Maintenance .....	Dave Fouch
Environment, Sustainability & Wildlife .....	Alison Aspin
Website & IT .....	Merlin Gore
Complaints Officer .....	Cherriley Scobell
New Members .....	Liz Fouch
Sheds & Constructions .....	Liz Fouch
Site Keys .....	Kerri Lowe
Health & Safety .....	Ian Woolf