

Romford Smallholders Society

Revised rules and objectives agreed at the Society's Annual General Meeting 27 June 2026

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Description of the Society

1.1 The Society shall be called the "Romford Smallholders Society ", hereinafter referred to as the Society.

1.2 The Society rents the land between Pretoria Road & Jubilee Avenue, Romford from Havering Council. The Society must abide by the terms of the lease/agreement put in place by Havering Council.

1.2.1 The Society manages this site which includes access roads to the two gates of the site, buildings used by the Society in connection with its business and the allotment field itself upon which plots are let to members of the Society.

1.3 The Society has produced this set of rules (hereinafter referred to as the Rules) in order to govern the conduct of its members and so ensure the safe running of the site for the benefit of its collective membership and the local community. Agreement to abide by the Rules is a condition of membership of the Society. Failure to abide with the rules may result in membership of the Society being terminated. Members of the Society must not physically obstruct officers of the Society who are implementing or enforcing the Rules or committee decisions.

1.4 The Society has two types of membership – Full and Associate.

Full Members are those that rent plots (plot holders) from the Society and have voting rights at any Annual General Meeting (AGM) or Emergency General Meeting (EGM) of the Society. Joint plot holders may be allowed to have full membership status providing that the membership fee is paid for all joint members & that they regularly cultivate the plot. A person who has been a full member for 20 years will receive their membership fee free for the remainder of their life. They continue to have voting rights at any AGM or EGM when they no longer rent a plot.

Associate members are those who wish to buy products from the trading store or wish to be involved in the activities of the site but do not rent plots. Associate members are entitled to access the members area of the website, but they are not eligible to vote at any AGM, EGM or any other meetings of the Society.

Objectives

2.1 To let land to its members for the purpose of allotments for cultivation and the quiet enjoyment of the allotment field.

2.2 To promote interest within the local community of allotment gardening.

2.3 To provide gardening opportunities for all persons.

2.4 To supply horticultural commodities to the Society's members, by means of a trading store.

2.5 To promote biodiversity on the allotment field.

Organisation

3.1 The Society will hold an AGM in June of each year open to all its full & life members each with an equal vote on attendance. No proxy or postal votes are allowed at the AGM & EGM.

3.2 The Society shall be governed by a management committee (hereafter referred to as the Committee) consisting of a maximum of 14 full members of the Society. New committee members can be elected to join the committee by a majority vote of its existing members; they will have full voting rights but will need to be considered for re-election at the next AGM to serve for two years. A majority (i.e., at least 50% of members of the Committee plus one member) must be present at any meeting for it to be able to make decisions and pass resolutions. No postal or proxy votes are allowed at any meetings of the Committee or its sub-committees or any other committees of the Society.

3.3 All existing committee members are required to give a detailed account in writing 28 days before the AGM of the activities they have carried out in support of the Society. This is so that ordinary members of the Society can assess the value of the committee member's contribution to the Society as a whole on an annual basis and before any re-elections are decided. Members of the Society will also gain a valuable insight into the work which has been done on their behalf throughout the year.

3.4 All full members are eligible to join the committee providing they have been elected by the committee or by members at an AGM or EGM of the Society.

3.5 The Society will maintain this set of rules and its objectives and make them available to its members. A copy will be displayed in the trading store at all times.

3.6 Changes to the rules and objectives of the Society proposed by the management committee need to be ratified by a majority of the full members voting at the AGM in order for them to come into effect.

3.7 The rules contained in the current edition of Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised shall govern the Society's committee meetings, AGM, EGM and any other meetings of the society in all cases to which they are applicable and in which they are not inconsistent with these rules and any special rules of order the Society may adopt.

3.8 The principal officers of the Committee shall be President, Chairperson, Secretary, Treasurer each of whom are to be elected at the AGM to serve for two years. Nominations for membership of the Committee or as a principal officer are to be submitted to the monthly meeting of the committee preceding the AGM.

3.8.1 Except in exceptional circumstances, no person should remain in post as principal officer for more than six consecutive years, and no person should remain on the committee for more than 10 consecutive years. There should be a break of at least three years before reapplying to join the committee.

3.9 Principal Officers of the Committee will have their responsibilities agreed by the Committee should they need to be varied. Any member of the Committee can act in respect of immediate issues of health and safety on the allotment site without prior reference to the Committee.

3.10 Additional officers as are necessary to conduct the Society's business may be elected annually at the AGM. Such additional officers need not be members of the Committee.

3.11 All the members of Committee will be entitled to the refund of their reasonable out of pocket expenses in respect of their work on behalf of the Society subject to the approval of the Committee in each case. Additional refunds of monies spent by other persons on behalf of the Society may be made at the discretion of the Committee.

3.12 The Secretary and Treasurer shall keep the original documents of the Society (minutes of meetings, accounts, the Rules etc) and produce them if required at each meeting of the Committee and at the AGM.

3.13 The Committee will meet monthly on a regular day and time that is mutually convenient and is agreed at the time of the previous meeting. Any change to the timing or venue will be communicated by email in a timely manner. Usually, two weeks' notice will be given for any such change, but a shorter notice period may be required in exceptional circumstances.

3.14 The monthly meetings of the Committee will be open to all paid up full members of the Society by request and invitation and any persons making special presentations (such as appealing against expulsion or over rents, water rates etc.) Non-Committee members or attendees may participate in discussions but are not eligible to vote or propose motions at the monthly meetings.

3.15 The Secretary will call an extraordinary general meeting (EGM) at any time if requested to do so by the Committee. In addition, the Secretary must call an EGM within 28 days of receiving a written request signed by at least 25% of the full members of the Society. Only full members of the Society may vote at an EGM. No postal or proxy votes are allowed at an EGM.

3.16 The Annual General Meeting and any Extraordinary General Meetings shall be publicised at least two weeks beforehand and be open to all members of the Society.

3.17 The Society's accounts shall be audited by two independent persons nominated by the Committee who are not members of the committee and with adequate knowledge & understanding.

3.18 The Management Committee may appoint two committee members as trustees to act as on behalf of the Society in respect of the Council's lease.

3.19 Any such trustees appointed by the Committee shall not in any way be personally liable for any debts or costs incurred on behalf of the Society or by the Society as a whole; nor will any committee members be individually liable for any debts or costs incurred on behalf of Society or by the Society as a whole.

3.20 All appeals from a full member against a decision made or action taken by the Management Committee must be made in writing within 30 days of receipt of the decision and will be heard by the Trustees in the first instance who, upon consultation with the Management Committee, will make a decision on the matter. If the full member is still aggrieved, then a right of appeal will be granted for consideration by the manager of Havering Councils Parks and Open Spaces Department whose decision shall be final.

3.21 All proposed expenditure for goods or services by the Society greater than £1,000 (other than payments to London Borough of Havering, water charges, or stock for the trading store) is considered at a scheduled monthly committee meeting or AGM or EGM. If the expenditure is considered necessary at least three quotations from different suppliers must be obtained. These should be recorded and publicised to the membership by email or post well in advance of the actual purchase date with an explanation as to why the purchase is recommended. Members must be provided with contact details to enable them, to comment or raise concerns with the committee before the services are obtained. Should three potential suppliers not be found, the reasons for this must be made clear to the members. After due consideration of the comments and concerns raised by members, the final decision on proceeding rests with the committee.

3.22 All container keys and shop keys to have spares lodged with a keyholder such as a Trustee.

Membership

4.1 Only members of the Society may rent plots on the allotment field, and those plots may not be sub-let. Persons renting plots become full members of the Society for the time they rent land. Persons who do not rent plots may become 'Associate Members' [of the Society] in order that they can use the Society's trading store.

4.2 The annual membership fee (not rent) for all members shall be agreed by the AGM. The membership fee entitles members to rent plots and to purchase items from the Society's trading store.

4.3 Plots cannot be transferred from one full member to another without the consent of the Committee. All such requests for transfer should be made in writing to the Committee.

4.4 The membership fee must be paid by 31 October each year. Because the Society is required to supply information about its members to the Council (such as age, ethnicity, and gender) members should also complete and return the request for such information with their subscription. The council does not receive any personal details of individual members (address, names etc.).

4.5 A member shall cease to be a member in any of the following eventualities:

- (a) Failure to pay their membership fee &/or rent by the 31 October of any year
- (b) Their resignation
- (c) Their expulsion/termination

4.6 The Society has a general duty of care to its members and so it reserves the right to exclude persons from membership of the Society who have engaged in anti-social or criminal behaviour on the allotment field to the detriment of the safety or enjoyment of the site by other members. Non-members who exceed the speed limit of 5 mph on site or otherwise engage in anti-social behaviour may be banned from the site by the committee.

Withdrawal, Expulsion and Termination

5.1 The Committee may expel any member who it agrees, by majority vote, has so seriously breached the rules of the Society that they should no longer be allowed to be a member provided that at least 30 clear days' notice is given in writing to the member concerned of the intention to expel them and an opportunity given for the member's case to be stated in person before the next available Committee of the Society

5.2 The Trustees may terminate the membership of any person who has breached rule 7.1

5.3 Any member who withdraws their membership is not entitled to a refund.

5.4 Any member expelled from the Society for breach of Rules 7.2 or 7.8 will not be allowed to apply to join the Society's waiting list. Any member expelled from the Society for disciplinary reasons in respect of all rules, except 7.1, may only be allowed to apply to join the Society's waiting list after 10 years have elapsed from the date their membership was formally terminated. Any person whose membership was terminated under the terms of rule 7.1 (failure to properly cultivate) will not be allowed to apply to join the Society's waiting list for 5 years after their membership was terminated.

Rents, water, and other charges

6.1 The rents for individual plots will be based on plot size. The overall rate per rod will be agreed annually by the Committee.

6.2 Rents are payable from 1 October each year and must be paid by 31 October in the same year.

6.3 Disputes over rents will be dealt with in the first instance by the Committee whose decision will be final.

6.4 Any person who terminates the rental of their plot, has had their membership terminated or been expelled shall not be entitled to a refund.

6.5 All rent arrears shall be recoverable from the defaulting member.

6.6 The Committee reserves the right to re-let the allotment plot of any full member who is in rent arrears after 1st November in any year.

6.7 Charges for tap water are included in the rent for each plot and the committee has the right to levy additional charges. Charges for the use of hosepipes and sprinklers are the subject of an additional charge to be set each year and agreed by the Committee. The charges will be publicised to members as soon as possible after they are determined.

6.8 Charges for the use of hosepipes and sprinklers are payable upon first use of such equipment. Upon first use, the full charge for the full year must be paid even where that would amount to a retrospective payment. Only one hose pipe (and associated sprinkler) may be in use on each plot at any one time. Members must not use more than one hose on their plot, nor may they use a hose pipe while at the same time as using another hose pipe and sprinkler. In respect of this rule, using a hosepipe by laying it on the ground or supporting it by any means other than being held by a person will be considered as use of a sprinkler. The use of a hosepipe to fill up containers of any sort will require the payment of the hosepipe fee pertaining to that plot.

6.8.1 Use of a hosepipe or the use of a sprinkler without payment of the appropriate charge as soon as is reasonably practicable will constitute a breach of the Rules. Continued use of a hosepipe or sprinkler without payment of the appropriate fee will be considered a serious breach of the Rules and will result in the termination of membership of the member(s) concerned.

6.8.2 Anyone found to be using water to wash their vehicles on the site may be evicted from the Society without notice.

Conduct

7.1 Cultivation of plots. For a plot to be considered as cultivated at least 70% of the plot should be used for the growing of vegetables, fruit, flowers (including wildflowers) or green manure. Plots will be formally assessed by members of the Committee at least once a year. Any member who has a plot that is found to be uncultivated or overgrown will be given a written notice to get the plot back into cultivation within 28 days.

If following inspection, a plot holder's plot is found to have fallen below the required standard of cultivation, having already been the recipient of a 28 day notice during the same growing season, said plotholder will receive 14 days notice to remove their possessions and vacate their plot.

Mitigating circumstances that temporarily prevent the cultivation of a plot will be considered by the committee on a case-by-case basis. A member who is unlikely to be able to cultivate their plot for more than one growing season may be asked to give up their plot. At the end of the 28 day period the plot will be re-inspected and if the plot remains uncultivated or overgrown the member will be given two weeks to remove their possessions from the plot and the plot will be re-let. Failure to comply with such a notice can result in termination of their rental agreement and the re-letting of their plot.

7.1.1 New Members. To join with a 3-month probation period, at the end of which the plot is to be approximately 50% cultivated or clear progress towards this is to be demonstrated. Otherwise their membership will be terminated.

7.1.2 Storage of materials. Plots must not be used for the storage or the depositing of materials which are not associated with the cultivation of the plot. Plots are not to be used for the large-scale cultivation of trees or for trees intended to be harvested as a timber or fuel crop.

7.1.3 Carpets. The use of carpets and rugs as weed suppressant is not allowed on the site. This is because the removal of old carpets from abandoned plots is both time consuming and expensive.

7.1.4 Composting and water butts. Every plot holder should be encouraged to have a compost bin and some form of water harvesting.

7.2 Behaviour. Members must not physically or verbally assault other persons on the site, or otherwise use abusive, derogatory, or threatening language or behaviour to other persons while on the site. Such behaviour is to be considered to be a serious breach of the Rules and is likely to result in the termination of membership of the Member(s) concerned.

7.2.1 Members who invite non-members on to the site will be responsible for their guest's behaviour at all times as set out in rule 7.2 any breach of this rule may in, some circumstances, result in the termination of the membership of the members(s) concerned

7.3 Fires. Under the terms of our lease no fires are allowed on the site except on or close to November 5th subject to the Council's final permission.

7.4 Buildings, Sheds, Greenhouses & Other Structures. Plot holders must obtain permission from Havering Council Parks & Open Spaces department through the Committee to place structures on their plot/s. Structures exclude low tool lockers, compost enclosures, cold frames & plant supports which are not of excessive proportions but include sheds, greenhouses, polytunnels etc.

7.5 Parking. Members may only park in the specifically designated parking areas within the site, on their own plots or on others with the express permission of the respective plot holder(s). Vehicles can only be left unattended overnight if they have become immobilised and it is not practical to have it removed during the day. Such vehicles must be removed as soon as possible. Parked vehicles must not protrude into the roadways, this is to ensure that the roadways are unobstructed at all times; obstructing passing places, or the roadway makes access difficult and may hinder emergency vehicles. Parking restrictions may be put in place as necessary by the Committee.

7.6 Watering. Members using hose pipes will allow those persons using watering cans, buckets etc., to fill up those containers or, where there is a static water container by the standpipe, that container must be allowed to be refilled as soon as the water level within it reduced to the point that watering cans or buckets can no longer be used to collect water. This is to ensure that as many people as possible have access to water at all times; however, this may mean that during periods of high-water demand hosepipe and sprinkler use cannot be continuous.

7.7 Hosepipes. Members must not leave hosepipes extended across other person's plots or paths or roadways when the hoses are not being used. Hoses must not be left connected to taps when not in use. This is because hosepipes are a trip hazard and can siphon unclean water back into the mains if left connected. Members must not leave their plots whilst using a sprinkler or hosepipe.

7.7.1 Water hygiene. Hosepipes must not be stored coiled if they contain water; this is to reduce the risk of bacterial contamination and legionnaire's disease.

7.8 Theft. The unauthorised removal of any produce, plants or other materials from plots other than the plot holder's is theft. Such behaviour is to be considered a serious breach of the Rules, and anyone found guilty of stealing is likely to be expelled by the Committee.

7.9 Pathways. Paths and trackways between plots must be maintained in a generally level and safe condition; they must not be dug into or have objects or materials placed within them. Paths must not be eroded by cultivation or other means to a width less than 24 inches. Neither may objects be placed on or in the pathways which hinder their use. Trees and bushes must not be planted so that they obstruct paths or encroach into them or over neighbouring plots. Any open supports placed to grow beans, vine fruits etc. must be set in from boundary paths by at least 24 inches. This is because unobstructed access to plots is needed in order to allow the cultivation of the allotment field and to allow access by emergency services.

7.10 Noise. No amplified music or announcements may be played on the allotment field except during events organised or approved by the management committee. This is to ensure that excessive levels of noise are not experienced by other members or the occupants of nearby residential properties. Members using their plots for recreational purposes must bear in mind that other plot holders nearby may wish to work on their land at the same time without undue interruption.

7.11 Speed of vehicles. Vehicle speed must not exceed 5 mph anywhere on the site and must slow to walking speed when passing over hose pipes laying on the roadway. Driving at speed over hose pipes laid on roadways can cause them to be forced off taps damaging the standpipes and resulting in a needless waste of water and expensive repairs to pipework.

7.12 Use of chemicals. Care must be exercised at all times when using chemical sprays (especially weed killers) to ensure that the spray does not drift onto neighbouring plots. All chemicals must be mixed up well clear of the static water containers by the standpipes to avoid contamination of the water supply to non-hose pipe users.

7.13 Site security. The entrance gates to the site must not be left open or unlocked. All users of the site are responsible for locking the access gates immediately after their entry or departure from the site without exception; this is to ensure unauthorised persons are prevented from entering the site. Keys for the gates to the site must be returned to the Committee upon ceasing to be a full member.

7.14 Unauthorised depositing of materials. With the exception of the depositing of compostable material on member's own plots, no materials are to be deposited on the site without the Committee's permission. No materials associated with trade are allowed to be stored on plots. Any member who stores material for trading activities or who carries out dumping of waste material or who invites or facilitates the unauthorised depositing of material on the site will be responsible for removing the material or the cost to the Society for doing so. The carrying out of unauthorised storage, the invitation or facilitation of unauthorised depositing of materials or the failure to remove such materials or to pay the Society's costs in the matter will be considered to be a serious breach of the Rules and is likely to result in termination of membership of the person(s) concerned.

7.15 Notice boards. The site's notice boards are only for official notices of the Society which have been approved by the committee. Unauthorised notices will be removed.

7.16 Hedges. Where hedges already exist on the allotment field and surrounds any plot, they are to be respected by the adjacent plot holders and any ditches associated with them kept clear. Materials must not be deposited within the base of hedges. Existing hedges within the site may only be cut back with the express consent of the management committee.

7.17 Composting. Members must compost all their green waste on their own plots or dispose of it off site. Compost heaps should be managed so that they do not contain any putrescible material or any waste foodstuffs likely to attract vermin.

7.18 Trading. The privilege of the sale of goods on annual open days is restricted to the Society itself or to persons acting on its behalf and the profits of such sales are to be retained by the Society unless agreed otherwise.

7.19 Livestock. No livestock (including bees) except those statutorily exempt from prohibition, may be kept on the allotment field without the management committee's consent.

7.20 **Dogs.** Dogs must be kept on a leash and under control at all times when on the allotment field. Dog handlers are responsible for cleaning up any fouling caused by their animals. Any person found not to be clearing up their dog's fouling may have their membership terminated.

7.21 **Shooting.** The use of guns (including air weapons) is not allowed on the allotment except with the management committee's consent in exceptional circumstances (e.g. to control vermin)

7.22 **Trees.** No new trees other than dwarf or stepover varieties to be planted.