

## **BERKHAMSTED TOWN COUNCIL**

### **Minutes of the Meeting of the ALLOTMENT MANAGEMENT TEAM**

**Held in the Council Chamber, Civic Centre, Berkhamsted on**

**Tuesday 9 May 2017 at 10 am**

#### **PRESENT:**

**Councillors:** B Newton (Chairing the meeting)  
F Earl

**Allotment Reps:** John Eaton, Sunnyside  
Diana Reay, Dellfield  
Lin Philips, Sunnyside  
Keely Siddiqui Charlick, Sunnyside Rural Trust

**Officers:** John Bushby, Town Warden  
Christine Jerram, Finance and Allotments Officer  
Janet Mason, Town Clerk

#### **OPENING MATTERS**

##### **AMT 11/17 Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were received from John Fisher (Butts Meadow allotment representative) and from Cllr A Armytage. In Cllr Armytage's absence Cllr Newton chaired the meeting

##### **AMT 12/17 Minutes of the previous Meeting**

- i. The minutes of the previous meeting held on 20 February 2017 were signed by Cllr Newton as a correct record although John Eaton commented that there had in fact been vacancies at Sunnyside New at the time (minute 6/17 refers).
- ii. Update on actions from the last meeting not covered elsewhere on the agenda: None.

##### **AMT 13/17 Chairman's Communications**

Affinity Water - Water resources update (circulated to AMT members 020517): The impact of low rainfall since July 2016 on aquifers and rivers was noted.

## **AMT 14/17 Public Participation**

To invite any public participation: Not applicable as no members of the public were present.

## **FINANCE MATTERS**

### **AMT 15/17 Income and Expenditure Report**

The allotment income and expenditure figures from 1 February 2017 – 31 March 2017 were received. It was noted that the figures were subject to further year end processes and audit. John Eaton pointed out the assumption made in the proposed budget for 2017/18 that there would be a rent increase in September. The income and expenditure figures indicated a surplus at year end. The Town Clerk referred to discussions at the previous meeting under AMT 5/17.

### **AMT 16/17 Allotment Rental and Other Charges**

*To consider current charges and to make a recommendation for discussion and decision at the Full Council as to whether there should be any increase:*

The Town Clerk was of the view that there could be an increase in rentals in September. She reiterated the point made above and at the previous meeting that reserves could be wiped out by a single project. She had researched previous minutes and the last increase had been in September 2011. Looking at CPI and RPI over the intervening years indicated to her that an increase in rental of 50p per pole might be reasonable. There were other costs incurred by the Town Council that are not factored into rents such as bank charges on payment transactions and staff time. For example, in addition to the Finance and Allotment Officer's time, she could often spend several hours a week arranging works, liaising with contractors and dealing with day to day queries. The Town Warden of course regularly visits the sites and attends to various jobs as necessary. Allotment representatives undertook a tremendous amount of vital work at the sites, in particular liaising with plot holders, which was very much appreciated by the Town Council.

Since the last meeting the Allotment and Finance Officer had undertaken a thorough exercise comparing the Town Council's costs with a number of other parish and town councils in the area. Of the twenty one other councils included in her survey only one charged less than Berkhamsted.

Allotment representatives strongly refuted the pertinence of the figures and statements made above. They were of the view that reserves were adequate to cover costs. The Town Clerk on several occasions reiterated the points already made.

Following further discussion, it was acknowledged that having such a long period without any increases meant that subsequent increases were a shock rather than a smooth incremental progression. It was suggested that, bearing in mind bank and other costs, an administrative charge of £1 a year could possibly be charged in addition to rental. Turning to allotment projects, John Eaton was of the view that the water project should not go ahead if this would be used as the justification for a rent increase. He was advised that a tree survey and work arising would also be undertaken over the course of the next year (AMT 6/17 (iii) also refers). Keely Siddiqui Charlick suggested that a three year plan of projects should be drawn up with projects graded 1 - 3 in order of importance/necessity.

Cllr Newton drew discussions to a close and summarised the key points that would be given consideration by the Town Council in relation to this matter: the level of allotment reserves; drawing up a three year list of prioritised projects and the feasibility of charging an administration fee.

#### **AMT 17/17 Making Payments and Office Opening Hours**

Further to a recent e-mail the Town Clerk thanked representatives for drawing allotment holders attention to the office opening times. She undertook to forward to them the Town Council's bank details for making payments, for ease of reference.

**Action: Town Clerk.**

#### **ALLOTMENT MATTERS**

**AMT 18/17** To consider, as appropriate, allotment and plot inspection reports on:

- (i) Dellfield (Diana Reay) – Three warning letters regarding untidy plots were requested and the Finance and Allotment Officer took the relevant details. Six people are on the waiting list.

**Action: Finance and Allotment Officer**

One water tank is not filling up properly and the Town Warden undertook to look at this.

**Action: Town Warden.**

The Town Clerk advised that she is liaising with an asbestos removal specialist in Watford with a view to removing the dumped water tank. Another option might be to bury the tank (subject to advice) if the removal costs are too expensive.

**Action: Town Clerk.**

- (ii) Sunnyside Old and New (John Eaton) – JE was of the view that one waiting list for both sites was more practical. Summarising current vacancies he added that there were very few people waiting for allotments. Good progress is being made in clearing the wood piles.

(iii) Butts Meadow (John Fisher) – JF’s report dated May 2017 was received.

(iv) Sunnyside Rural Trust – No issues to report.

**AMT 19/17 Allotment Publicity**

*To consider whether this is an issue that needs to be addressed given recent reductions in waiting list lengths.*

There were no comments on this issue.

**AMT 20/17 Allotment Maintenance Work**

*To review recent works.*

The Town Clerk reported that the works were almost finished. The levelling of the roads was nearing completion although a new gate post was required at Butts Meadow and two additional steps would also be installed there.

John Eaton said the matting laid over the drainage work at Grantham Mews entrance was smaller than in the specification. The new gate posts were, however, of a good standard.

**AMT 21/17 Notice board at Sunnyside adjacent to Grantham Mews**

*To discuss possible replacement*

The Town Clerk advised that the resident adjacent to Grantham Mews entrance had offered to pay for a replacement. John Eaton will discuss with his Committee and advise if a replacement is needed and, if so, the cost.

**Action: Town Clerk/John Eaton**

**AMT 22/17 Meeting dates 2017/18**

Received.

**AMT 23/17 Date of Next Meeting:** Tuesday 22 August 2017 at 10 am

**AMT 24/17** The meeting closed at 11.25 am.

**Signed**.....

**Date**.....