

BERKHAMSTED TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of the Meeting of the

ALLOTMENT MANAGEMENT TEAM

held in the Council Chamber, Civic Centre, Berkhamsted on

Monday 11 July 2016 at 10 am

PRESENT:

Councillors: A Armytage, in the Chair
F Earl
B Newton

**Allotment
Representatives:** John Eaton, Sunnyside
John Fisher, Butts Meadow
Lin Phillips, Sunnyside
Diana Reay, Dellfield
Keeley Siddiqui Charlick, Sunnyside Rural Trust

Officers: Christine Jerram, Finance and Allotments Officer
Janet Mason, Town Clerk

OPENING MATTERS

AMT 12/16 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence had been received from John Bushby, Town Warden.

AMT 13/16 Minutes of previous Meeting

The minutes of the previous meeting held on 8 February 2016 were agreed and signed as a true record.

Matters Arising

At previous meetings it had been agreed that AMT meetings should whenever possible be synchronized to fall shortly before a Full Council meeting. This would enable any proposed expenditure to be discussed and, if appropriate, approved at an early opportunity. Therefore, the Town Clerk agreed to review the date of the next AMT meeting (currently 17 October) and suggest a revised date (to be agreed by e-mail). It was particularly important to schedule the date so that any proposed projects could be considered by the Town Council during its budget setting process. **(Action Town Clerk.)**

AMT 14/16 Chairman's Communications

Update on the conclusion of discussions with MCPC: It was noted that the Town Council had paid the outstanding invoices in full. The Town Clerk would be contacting a member of MCPC's management team to resume discussions on the possibility of read only facility for allotment representatives. In the meantime allotment representatives were of the view that the reports they currently received were satisfactory and they knew that they could approach the Finance and Allotments Officer for any further reports or information on an "as and when" basis.

AMT 15/16 Public Participation

No members of the public were present.

FINANCE MATTERS

AMT 16/16 Income and Expenditure Report and Allotment Rents

To consider the allotment income and expenditure and reserves to 30 June 2016: The reports were circulated and discussed. It was noted that the costs incurred to date (£1,170) covered strimming, grass cutting the repair of the water leak at Dellfield. It was **AGREED** that allotment **rents would not** be raised for the following year.

ALLOTMENT MATTERS

AMT 17/16 To consider allotment and plot inspection reports on:

- (i) *Dellfield:* It was noted that all allotments are occupied with 7 people on the waiting list.
- (ii) *Sunnyside Old and New:* It was agreed that the inscribed memorial bench on A road was a fitting tribute to Ted Dyer. Many friends had attended the recent bench unveiling ceremony and shared fond memories of Ted. An inspection had been carried out during the previous week and a list of allotment holders requiring letters would be forwarded to Town Council staff for action.

It was also noted that deer coming down from Ashridge were a problem at the moment at Sunnyside New. Deer fencing was discussed and it was agreed that John Eaton would liaise with Keeley Siddiqui Charlick so he could see the fencing at Northchurch.

The Town Clerk will ask Frank Cooper and Sons to trim the edges more thoroughly to stop bramble encroachment onto the last allotment at Sunnyside New from the car park and path edges. Similarly, at Sunnyside Old, the inside faces of the hedge need cutting between the Ivy House Lane entrance and the railway. **(Action Town Clerk.)**

- (iii) *Butts Meadow:* The waiting list is 18 and there are a couple of problem plots where no work had been done. It was agreed to incorporate a suggestion that these tenants might want to consider giving up their tenancies when the appropriate letters were sent.

Dogs were getting onto the site because of a gap in the boundary near the old gate. The Town Warden will be asked to look at this. **(Action Town Warden.)**

- (iv) *Sunnyside Rural Trust:* All was going well. It was hoped that a new eco toilet would soon be installed and this would be available for all allotment holders to use. This proposal was supported and welcomed by the AMT.

Funding had been secured for keeping bees and the Chalfont bee keeping group had proved a fantastic source of advice.

AMT 18/16 Allotment Management System

Nothing further to discuss.

AMT 19/16 Community Right to Bid (Assets of Community Value), Localism Act 2011

To consider in relation to the allotment sites: John Eaton had raised this item because of a shared concern to protect the allotment sites. The Town Clerk explained that the sites were treated as community assets in the accounts with a nominal value of £1. This reflected the fact that the Town Council viewed the sites as a valued community benefit which would not be disposed of. The Localism Act gave groups the power to register sites or buildings as community assets. In brief, should the asset then be put up for sale, a moratorium of roughly 6 months would be set in place to enable funds to be raised to buy the asset for the community.

It was agreed that six months would be too short a time to raise the level of funding required should the allotments be registered and should the very unlikely scenario come to pass that the Town Council decided to sell. It was noted that allotments were further protected as set out in a DCLG document entitled "Allotment Disposal Guidance: Safeguards and Alternatives." The Town Clerk will circulate this to AMT members for information. **(Action Town Clerk.)**

AMT 20/16 Weed Suppressant Matting on Unoccupied Plots

To consider the feasibility of and funding for the provision of matting on unoccupied plots to inhibit nuisance weed growth: Following a discussion it was agreed that £250 would be provided by the Town Council to purchase a supply of matting to suppress weeds on vacant plots. This year weeds were growing at a tremendous rate due to the wet weather. The need to control them to avoid contamination was very urgent. It was further agreed that the small supply of matting in the Town Council garage could be commandeered for this use. John Eaton will speak to Keely Siddiqui Charlick to obtain the name of her supplier. Diana Reay also recommended the Dagnall Garden Society. **(Action John Eaton/Town Clerk.)**

AMT 21/16 Allotment Risk Management

To consider any allotment risks and agree required mitigating actions: There was nothing to discuss currently. It was noted that the Town Clerk was currently working with the Council's insurance providers to enhance all aspects of the Council's risk assessments, including allotments.

AMT 22/16 Date of Next Meeting

Monday 17 October 2016 at 10 am but to be reviewed.

AMT 23/16 The meeting closed at 12.15 am.

Signed.....

Date.....