

## **BERKHAMSTED TOWN COUNCIL**

### **Minutes of the Meeting of the**

### **ALLOTMENT MANAGEMENT TEAM**

Held in the Council Chamber, Civic Centre, Berkhamsted on

Monday 14 October 2019 at 10 am

#### **PRESENT:**

##### **Councillors**

Garrick Stevens (Chair)  
Paul de Hoest  
Nicky Woolner

##### **Allotment Reps**

John Eaton, Sunnyside  
John Fisher, Butts Meadow  
Diana Reay, Dellfield  
Jenny Sippings, Sunnyside  
Keely Siddiqui Charlick, Sunnyside Rural Trust

##### **Officers**

Janet Mason, Town Clerk  
John Bushby, Town Warden

#### **OPENING MATTERS**

##### **AMT 30/19 Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Geoff Halls, Sunnyside.

##### **AMT 31/19 Minutes of the previous Meeting**

- (i) The minutes of the previous meeting held on 8 July 2019 were approved as a correct record and were signed by the Chair.
- (ii) To review action arising from the previous meeting not covered on the agenda:

AMT 25/19 –Warning letters requested had been circulated;

AMT 21/19 (AMT 06/19) - A response was awaited from Agripower about the drainage at the end of B Road

##### **AMT 32/19 Chairman's Communications**

Notice from MCPC (Colony allotment software) - "We are thrilled to announce that we, MCPC Systems, have recently been acquired by IT software company Kogitas Limited...."

## **AMT 33/19 Public Participation**

There were no members of the public present.

## **FINANCE MATTERS**

### **AMT 34/19 Income and Expenditure Report**

- (i) The allotment income and expenditure at 31 August 2019 was **circulated and considered**. The Town Clerk advised that this was the first report that had been produced following the recent transfer of the Town Council's accounts from the Sage software package to Rialtas Omega (a bespoke system for Local Councils). Rialtas uses a system of cost centres and nominal codes, with the allotment cost centre being 301. It was **noted** that the expenditure shown under 301 4061, software support (ie allotment software) is £251 overstated in the report as this extra amount is a prepayment for 2020-21 because these costs cover the year September 2019 – September 2020. This adjustment will be made and the amended report will be recirculated. **Action Town Clerk**
- (ii) It was **noted** that at 31 August 2019 Allotment Reserves stood at £15,016.

## **ALLOTMENT MATTERS**

### **AMT 35/19** To consider, as appropriate, allotment and plot inspection reports and other current matters at:

- (i) General

The Colony reports had been circulated by e-mail the previous week. It had been noted, for example, that some of the waiting lists dated back many years. It was **agreed** therefore that it would be a good idea to reconcile the Colony computer database against allotment reps' spread sheets/records and local knowledge. This could be done by e-mail or a visit to the Town Council offices. **Action Reps/Town Clerk**

The issue of dog fouling remains a problem at various sites. The Town Warden would be requested to ensure that "no fouling" and "keep your pet on a lead" notices were posted on all entrances and refreshed regularly as required. **Action Town Warden**

- (ii) Dellfield (DR)

DR had, or would be having, informal discussions with some plot holders about the states of their various plots. She would advise the Town Clerk of any warning letters that would be required if there were no improvements. **Action DR/Town Clerk**

(iii) Sunnyside Old and Sunnyside New. (JE)

The Town Clerk advised that tree work to a garden in Millfield would be taking place on 8 November. As agreed with JE she had allowed the contractors access to the site to ensure the work is carried out safely. She had also received copies of the company's PL insurance and RAMS. All removal of timber would be via the property.

(iv) Butts Meadow (JF)

Regarding the supply of coffee grounds for horticultural purposes from Quanta Business Solutions (7-10-19 e-mail from Town Clerk refers) JF advised that it would be very difficult to resource the collection and distribution required. It was noted that grounds could increase the acidity of soil. The Town Clerk will advise Quanta, thanking them for considering the allotments.

The waiting list was discussed and JF would contact the Town Clerk to reconcile the records, as already noted.

**Action JF/Town Clerk**

There was a discussion about the vacant plot to the left of the entrance adjacent to the trees. It was suggested that all or half of this plot could be used as a wildlife meadow. The Town Clerk said she **would ask a contact** at the Box Moor Trust if he would be able to look at the grasses and plants in situ to ascertain the extent to which the site was impacted by previous efforts to improve the soil, which could affect the success or otherwise of sowing wild flowers and a wider variety of different grasses.

**Action Town Clerk**

No warning letters were required at present and it was noted that the wet weather was delaying the usual manure delivery.

(v) Sunnyside Rural Trust (KSC)

KSC, apropos the discussions about wild flowers, said she was very pleased to have attended a recent Habitats Working Party of the Town Council and supported the aspiration to create wild life corridors across the area. Recent planting scheme improvements undertaken/being undertaken for the Town Council at London Road and Coombe Gardens had been designed at the request of the Town Council with wild life (particularly bees, insects and butterflies), in mind. Town Councillor members of AMT strongly supported such initiatives.

**AMT 36/19** Update on Town Council staffing

Interviews had been held for the Finance & Allotment Officer post on 9 October.

She also advised that her own post would be advertised later that week although she would still be around until the end of March.

**AMT 37/19** Date of next meeting

Monday 27 January 2020

**AMT 38/19** EXCLUSION OF PRESS & PUBLIC

To **RESOLVE** that under Section 1 of the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960 the public and press be excluded for the remainder of the meeting, because it is likely that publicity would prejudice the public interest by reason of the confidential nature of the business or for other special reasons stated in the resolution, arising from the nature of the business or proceedings.

**AMT 39/19** Tree inspections

Quotations for proposed works following Arborcare's visit to all sites and Birtchnells Copse on 25 September 2019 were circulated and discussed. The Town Clerk advised that the Town Warden and she had attended, meeting also with JE and a plot holder when at Sunnyside Old. She was very pleased to report that in general the trees were in a good and safe condition. It was noted that work previously undertaken in 2015 had been significant and the sites were still benefitting from that project. She thanked all allotment reps for the work they undertook in reporting back on trees and also thanked the working groups at Sunnyside Old/New and Birtchnells Copse. The stacking of fallen branches and path safety work at Birtchnells Copse was particularly in evidence and much improved the area both for walkers and wildlife.

Although no work was required at Dellfield, costs had been received for two items (G1 7 G2) at Sunnyside Old. It was **agreed** that the felling and removal of the two ash trees (G2) could not be sanctioned. These are healthy trees and although tall are not dead, dying or dangerous. Their removal would also be contrary to the Town Council's objectives to improve habitats and increase tree planting. The work to remove an elder and 4 ash trees **was agreed** subject to the Town Clerk receiving a revised quote excluding the G2 items and double checking the trees' locations. **Action Town Clerk**

At Butts Meadow the majority of the work was raising crowns and cutting back overhanging branches. Ivy on the trees adjacent to the path to Chesham Road would be severed as it was now endangering the trees by

inhibiting photosynthesis. There was also a shoulder high oak tree on plot 40 which looked as though it had been cut back by the owner. Only fruit trees are allowed on plots. A forest tree is totally inappropriate. JF undertook to mention to the potholder that it is the intention to remove the tree and confirm to the Town Clerk when he has done this. The dead elder on plot 38 will also be removed; he would mention this likewise. **Action JF**

Also at Butts Meadow, it was felt that the flailing work quoted for along the boundary of plots 1 - 21 was relatively rather costly. The Town Clerk will obtain more specifics about this work and discuss further with JF before agreeing any work along the boundary. **Action Town Clerk/JF**

The Town Clerk also advised that Butts Meadow is in the Conservation Area so planning permission is generally required for work to trees so located. She would check, however, whether the works fell within the Town Council's permitted development rights.

JS also asked whether a sycamore stump, which was now sending out prolific shoots, could be removed from SSN45. KSC would be happy to quote for this and advise the Town Clerk of the cost. **Action KSC**

**AMT 40/19 Removal of chippings heap from Sunnyside New**

To **consider** quotations received to date and review further action/other solutions.

The Town Warden had been seeking quotations although contractors appear reluctant to provide them for this particular job. The one that had, continually increased their estimate which was now well over £1,000.

The Town Clerk asked if anyone had any further suggestions. KSC advised that Sunnyside Rural Trust had a digger and would be happy to undertake the work subject to a price being agreed. The chippings could be used on paths and along boundaries.

**Action Town Clerk/KSC**

**AMT 41/19 Close of meeting**

The meeting closed at 11.20 am

Signed.....

Date.....

