

# **BERKHAMSTED TOWN COUNCIL**

Minutes of the Meeting of the

## **ALLOTMENT MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE**

held in the Council Chamber, Civic Centre, Berkhamsted on

**Thursday 17 July 2014 at 10.30 am**

### **PRESENT:**

Councillors: J Laws Chair  
E Collins

Allotment  
Representatives: John Eaton, Sunnyside  
Jenny Sippings, Sunnyside  
Diana Reay, Dellfield

Town Council: John Bushby, Town Warden

**ALSO PRESENT:** 1 member of the public.

**OFFICER:** Gary Cox - Town Clerk

Before the start of the meeting, Committee members offered condolences to Mrs Earl, on being advised that former Councillor Victor Earl passed away on 16 July 2014.

### **AMT 24/14 Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence had been received from Councillor Armytage, John Fisher, Geoffrey Wallington, Lin Philips and Keely Charlick

### **AMT 25/14 Minutes of the Last Meeting**

The minutes of the last meeting held on 24 April were agreed.

### **AMT 26/14 Public Participation**

There was no public participation.

### **AMT 27/14 Income and Expenditure Reports**

The Committee noted the budget outturn for 2013/14, with a surplus of £1,599 being added to the allotment reserve, which currently stood at £8,066; and the budget variance for 2014/15 as at 31 June 2014.

## **AMT 28/14 Allotment Rent and Water Rates 2014/15**

Following discussion members agreed to a proposal not to increase land and water rent for 2014/15 and would propose to Finance and Policy Committee that they remain at:

- Land rent: £0.098845 per square metre (equivalent to £2.50 per pole)
- Water rent: £0.059307 per square metre (equivalent to £1.50 per pole)

The Committee noted that allotment fees were due on 29 September and that invoices would be sent out to tenants from mid-September.

Allotment representatives agreed that inspections and notification on any tenant evictions should be completed and sent to the Town Clerk in August, in advance of invoices being sent out. **Action: Allotment Representatives**

## **ALLOTMENT MATTERS**

### **AMT 29/14 Allotment Reports**

#### ***Dellfield***

It was agreed that Water Tank 3 should be painted with fluorescent paint to make it highly visible to a regular tractor driver. **Action: Town Warden**

Following discussion, it was agreed that the warning letter to tenants concerning non-cultivation of their allotment should ask that they keep their allotment in a 'state of good cultivation for the remainder of the gardening year'.

**Action: Town Clerk**

A tenant had expressed an interest in keeping bees on the site and had discussed proposals with the Clerk and Allotment representative. The allotment holder had decided not to keep bees on the site at this time.

#### ***Sunnyside Old and New***

It was agreed to clarify in the water supply application form that only hoses (and not sprinklers) can be used. **Action: Town Clerk**

The Committee noted that work to merge the two Sunnyside Rural Trust leases would be completed by September 2014.

#### ***Butts Meadow***

The report was noted. It was confirmed that the non-cultivation warning letter had been sent.

In considering comments on water usage on the site, the Committee agreed that letters accompanying allotment invoices would advise tenants that 'the Town Council is striving to keep allotment water rates as low as possible and those with hose licences are asked to water plots sensibly and not excessively.'

The Clerk would also provide a link to the Sunnyside website on watering good practice. **Action: Town Clerk**

***Sunnyside Rural Trust***

There was nothing to report.

**AMT 30/14 Allotment Risk Management**

The Town Warden reported on potential allotment risks, including an assessment of risks to children on allotment gardens.

The main risk was to children falling into uncovered water tanks. The taller, deeper tanks already had covers in place, but there was a risk children might fall into the lower-level tanks.

It was agreed to install covers to the lower-level tanks to mitigate this risk.

**Action: Town Clerk and Town Warden**

The Warden reported that there were increasing numbers of rabbits causing damage on Sunnyside New Allotments.

The Clerk advised that Mr Stout, a tenant on SSN, had asked for permission to shoot rabbits and pigeons on the allotment. Mr Stout was a member of The British Association for Shooting and Conservation; had public liability insurance and had agreed to comply with health and safety requirements required to ensure the safety of allotment holders and the public at all times.

The Committee agreed that Mr Stout be given permission to shoot rabbits and pigeons on SSN and to be asked to consider a similar approach to controlling the number of rabbits on SSO. **Action: Town Clerk**

Councillor E Collins disagreed with this approach and was of the view that wild animals on the allotment should not be culled.

**AMT 31/14 Allotment Maintenance Programme**

The Committee agreed to explore the potential, scope and costs for work to improve the entrance to Butts Meadow to allow vehicle access. That work would be subject to the impact on the public footpath at the entrance. **Action: Town Clerk**

The Committee noted outstanding work on removal of trees lining the railway line at SSN. This work was dependant on the electricity supply to the railway line being switched off. As yet Network Rail has not confirmed if or when the supply will be switched off for proposed line maintenance.

It was agreed to contact Network Rail for advice on the conditions under which they remove or trim trees on the railway embankment. **Action: Town Clerk**

## **AMT 32/14 Butts Meadow Centenary Celebrations**

The Committee noted initial suggestions for Centenary celebrations, including planting a tree and a communal meal using produce from the site.

One tenant had asked if there was a budget available to pay for an 'event'.

The Committee agreed as for other allotment sites, events should, be paid for by tenants. It was suggested that Butts Meadow Allotmenters, as with all groups in the town, could apply to the Town Council for a small grant towards costs of an event.

### **Allotment Administration**

**AMT 33/14** The Committee noted an update on improvements to allotment administration:

- Revised warning and eviction process was in place
- Gate and water keys could be sold rather than returnable with refund. The Committee agreed that approach should be adopted from now on
- Work to amalgamate all forms into one composite form was underway, to be followed by a re-drafting and simplification of allotment rules

The Committee agreed that proposals for the purchase of a new Allotment Management System should be put to the next Finance and Policy Committee meeting. Indicative Costs are £4,200 in Year 1 and £445 in Year 2 onwards

The Committee considered a proposal to move away from accepting cash as payment of allotment rent and rates, as this was expensive to administer and to consider installation of a chip and pin card machine as an alternative.

Following discussion, the Committee considered costs and ongoing charges to be too high. Instead, the Committee proposed that the Town Council consider accepting a cheque or on-line payment rather than cash as methods of payment. This proposal would be put to the Finance and Policy Committee.

**Action: Town Clerk**

### **Date of Next Meeting**

**AMT 34/14** The Committee noted the date of the next meeting is arranged for 10.30am on Thursday 16 October 2014.

### **AMT 35/15 Close of Meeting**

The meeting closed at 11.45am.