

BERKHAMSTED TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of the Meeting of the

ALLOTMENT MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

held in the Council Chamber, Civic Centre, Berkhamsted on

Thursday 29 January 2015 at 10.30 am

PRESENT:

Councillors: A Armytage Chair
E Collins

Allotment
Representatives: John Eaton, Sunnyside
Diana Reay, Dellfield
Geoffrey Wallington, Butts Meadow
Jenny Sippings, Sunnyside
Gary Sinfield, Sunnyside Rural Trust

Town Council: John Bushby, Town Warden

OFFICER: Gary Cox - Town Clerk

ALSO PRESENT: 1 member of the public

AMT 1/14 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence had been received from Councillor Laws, John Fisher, Lin Philips and Keely Charlick. Gary Sinfield attended for Sunnyside Rural Trust.

AMT 2/14 Minutes of the Last Meeting

The minutes of the last meeting held on 16 October 2014 were agreed.

Progress on actions from that meeting were as follows.

i ***Trees at SSO and SSN***

Network Rail had advised that trees close to the railway line at SSO and SSN should only be felled when power to the lines had been cut.

The Town Clerk was exploring with Network Rail if they might fell trees abutting the railway line during their next planned maintenance on the line.

ii ***Income and Expenditure Report***

The latest report included information on budget/expenditure variances.

- iii ***Rabbit Fencing of Plots***
John Eaton advised that a proposal for rabbit fencing around some individual plots need not now be taken forward.
- iv ***Allotment Management System***
The Town Clerk reported on invoicing issues with the supplier for work that had not been satisfactorily supplied on training and data transfer onto the new allotment management system.
- The Committee noted that arrangements to provide secure web access to the system for Allotment Representatives was on hold until those invoicing issues had been resolved.
- The Town Clerk undertook to confirm if the tenancy database could be transported to other application such as Excel, to help resolve problems with producing reports in the right format and content. **Action: Town Clerk**
- v ***Allotment Termination Form On-Line***
The allotment termination form is now available on line.
- It was agreed to include an allotment application form on-line to sit alongside the waiting list form; and for there to be clear signposting on the website that applicants must have an agreed waiting list application and be assigned a plot before submitting the application form. **Action: Town Clerk**
- vi ***Access to Butts Meadow Allotments***
Arrangements are in place for DBC to provide vehicle access into Butts Meadow and new access arrangements had been posted on the Butts Meadow Allotment Notice Board.
- vii ***Sunnyside Rural Trust Lease***
Work was underway on a combined draft lease SSRT allotment plots.
- viii ***Water Rates***
The Town Council was receiving the most competitive water rate charges, from Affinity Water.
- ix ***Wood Chippings at Sunnyside***
A notice that anyone wishing to spread chippings on either Sunnyside site should contact the Town Council in the first instance had been placed on noticeboards.
- Chippings had been over-piled onto the car park and needed to be moved to cover parking bays. It was agreed to contact DBC to see if it had a small digger that might be borrowed to move the wood chippings. Failing that, the Town Warden would obtain a quote for hire of a small digger. **Action: Town Warden**

x ***Sunnyside Plots***
John Eaton and Keely Charlick had discussed two potential plots on SSN that were difficult to let and might be suitable for Sunnyside Rural Trust. would consider options for those plots. **Action: John Eaton/ Keely Charlick**
The confusion over ownership of one plot on Sunnyside New close to Sunnyside Rural Trust rented land had been resolved.

xi ***Butts Meadow Noticeboard***
John Fisher was considering options for a Centenary Noticeboard for Butts Meadow.

AMT 3/15 Public Participation

Mr Dyer, a local resident and allotment holder asked:

- When would the Allotment Officer become a Town Council employee?

The Town Clerk advised that following the Full Council decision, arrangements were in hand for the Finance and Allotment Officer to transfer to Town Council employment.

- Might a combination lock on the vehicle gate at Sunnyside New ensure those tipping wood chippings ask permission and deposit the chippings in required and appropriate places?

The Committee agreed to this suggestion. **Action: Town Warden**

AMT 4/15 Correspondence from the Public

The Committee noted emails from the public and responses regarding

- allotment measurements in imperial v metric system
- a concern over risks of water tanks at Dellfield

FINANCE MATTERS

AMT 5/15 Income and Expenditure Report

The Committee noted the allotment income and expenditure and reserves for 1 April 2014 to 31 December 2014 and the projected outcome at 31 March 2015.

AMT 6/15 Allotment Budget 2015/16

The Committee noted that Full Council has approved the budget for 2015/16, including the proposed allotment budget.

AMT 7/15 Allotment Rent Collection Report

The Committee noted the outcome of the rent and water rate collection/renewal for 2014; and that the invoicing resulted in £8,389 allotment income being collected.

ALLOTMENT MATTERS

AMT 8/15 Allotment Reports

The following issues were raised in allotment reports.

Dellfield

The entrance gate damaged in the high winds had been replaced.

Diana Reay would investigate if the combination lock at the Billet Lane Gate could be repaired and re-used to lock the gate. **Action: Diana Reay**

The Town Warden would check on a possible leak on the Normandy Road ends water tank, before the water was turned back on after the winter months. **Action: Town Warden**

Sunnyside Old and New

Warning letters had not been sent out for three plots as they would have coincided with invoices being sent out. The next plot inspections would take place in the spring.

A waiting list application seems to have been received from a resident from Amersham. The Town Clerk would review this as allotments could only be let to residents who lived in, or no more than 1 mile outside, the Berkhamsted Parish boundary. **Action: Town Clerk**

Butts Meadow

It was agreed that any 'undercultivation' of plots should be dealt with informally by the Allotment Representative. If the cultivation does not improve, then the tenant should be reported to the Town Council under existing breach of tenancy warning letter and eviction arrangements.

Sunnyside Rural Trust

Plots were being worked, kept tidy and well managed by site co-ordinators. There were no issues to raise. It was agreed that Sunnyside Rural Trust would submit an allotment report for future meetings.

It was agreed that in future the information on allotment plots, vacancies and waiting list numbers in reports should be provided from the allotment management system. **Action: Town Clerk**

AMT 9/15 Allotment Risk Management

The Committee noted that no risks had been identified from the Ti9wn Warden's review of allotments.

AMT 10/15 Allotment Rules

The Committee consider a redraft of the allotment rules towards plainer English and greater clarity on tenant responsibilities, without losing any of the rules from the previous draft.

The re-draft was agreed subject to the following underlined amendments:

4. If you plant and cultivate fruit trees and bushes, they must not exceed 4 metres in height and must be kept in a manageable condition.
6. Only burn diseased plants and dry material that will burn easily. (It is not illegal to have a bonfire, but creating smoke that causes a nuisance is an offence).

As a plot holder, you must not:

22. Bring any rubbish onto the site. (specified rubbish items removed)

The new rules were agreed and would be placed on the website, on all new allotment application forms and posted on allotment noticeboards, to come into force with immediate effect.

AMT 11/15 Date of Next Meeting

The Committee noted the date of the next AMT meeting at 10.30am on Thursday 23 April 2015.

AMT 12/15 Close of Meeting

The meeting closed at 11.48am.