

BERKHAMSTED TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of the Meeting of the

ALLOTMENT MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

held in the Council Chamber, Civic Centre, Berkhamsted on

Thursday 24 April 2014 at 10.30am

PRESENT:

Councillors: A Armytage Chair

Allotment

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

ALSO PRESENT: 1 member of the public.

OFFICER: Gary Cox Town Clerk

AMT 14/14 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence had been received from Councillors E Collins and Laws and from Geoffrey Wallington, Lin Philips and John Bushby, Town Warden.

AMT 15/14 Minutes of the Last Meeting

The minutes of the last meeting held on 9 January 2014 were agreed.

Progress Reports

Butts Meadow

AMT7/14 It was confirmed that Butts Meadow Allotments had been gifted to the then Urban District Council on 19 October 1914.

John Fisher would discuss options for centenary celebrations with Allotment Holders and report back to the Management Team. **Action: John Fisher**

Sunnyside

AMT 8/14 ii Vacancies at Sunnyside New had been advertised on Town Council noticeboards and website. There had been a number of applications received.

Details of the DBC Footpaths Officer had been provided for eek advice on appropriate footpath repair material.

The Town Clerk continued work to find ways to reduce rabbit numbers on Sunnyside Old.

Butts Meadow

AMT 8/14 iii Non-organic waste was being recycled and the need or a skip diminishing.

AMT 9/14 Risk assessments included potential risks from inclement weather. The Town Council insurance included provision for claims by allotment holders for accidents that were caused by items under Town Council responsibility. Regular risk assessments sought to mitigate any such accidents.

Tree Maintenance

AMT 11/14 Work to trees at Sunnyside had been completed to a good standard. Work was still required to trees at the boundary of the railway track and awaited confirmation of dates of any rail line closures so that the work could be safely carried out.

Sunnyside Rural Trust Lease

AMT 12/14 Work to amalgamate leases would be completed by September 2014.

AMT 16/14 Public Participation

Mr Dyer, a local resident and allotment holder asked to raise points on Item 22/14.

AMT 17/14 Income and Expenditure Reports

The Management Team noted the latest income and expenditure report and variance analysis for 2013/14 and that an estimated surplus of £1,116 was likely to be added to allotment reserves.

AMT 18/14 Allotment Financial Principles

The Management Team reviewed financial principles and agreed there should be no changes to arrangements, where allotments were financially self-standing, with income, mainly from land and water rents covering expenditure such as on repairs and maintenance; and with any surplus being kept in a ring-fenced allotment reserve fund to cover unanticipated or exceptional costs.

AMT 19/14 Allotment Reports

The Committee received allotment reports (attached to these minutes). The following issues were raised.

Dellfield

A new tenant had requested that he keep bees on his plot, which was permissible use of allotment land, and was taking reasonable steps to ensure the bees presented no risks to other tenants. The Clerk was asked to meet with the tenant to review proposals. **Action: Town Clerk**

A number of allotment holders were bringing children onto the site. It was agreed the Town Clerk and Town Warden would review potential risks to children at the site, particularly an open water tank. **Action: Town Clerk and Town Warden**

The tap repair on Water Tank 1 had been completed but the standpipe was more susceptible to being damaged by a tractor making deliveries. The Town Clerk and Town Warden were asked to consider ways of reducing risk of damage to the standpipe. **Action: Town Clerk and Town Warden**

AMT 20/14 Allotment Risks

The Management Team noted that the child's trampoline on SSN-7 had been removed. SSN62a had a number of unsafe pallets covering the plot, which should be removed.

AMT 21/14 Public Rights of Way

The Management Team noted that the annual allotment closure under Section 31(6) took place 15 April 2014 and that the next closure would be on 6 May 2015.

It was agreed that the Town Clerk and Town Warden should make proposals for annual closure days for 2016 onwards to the Management Team.

AMT 22/14 Review of Allotment Administration

The Management Team considered initial suggestions to improve allotment administration.

Mr Dyer sought clarification on a number of points regarding suggestions for improved allotment administration and said that:

- The 'no discount' proposals should also apply to Sunnyside Rural Trust
- The additional water charges for those using hoses should remain
- All annual rents should continue being collected at the end of September for all tenants rather than phasing annual collection over the year (such as one site per quarter)
- The cost of any proposed new allotment management system should be borne by the Town Council, not the allotment reserve.

Following discussion, the Management Team agreed that the most effective way to improve administration is to invest in a new allotment management system. The Town Clerk was asked to arrange a demonstration of the proposed system and to determine if funding could be sought from asset renewal funds. **Action: Town Clerk**

The Management Team also agreed to:

- A revised approach to allotment warning and eviction letters – one initial enquiry, one warning letter and an eviction letter with that process restarting after two years rather than open ended as at present
- Investigate whether tap and gate keys could be sold to tenants rather than given on deposit.
- Encourage payments by cheque or on-line than by cash in the next round of annual invoicing tenants for rent.
- Clarify the role of the allotment representatives
- Seek to simplify allotment rules.

AMT 23/14 Dates of Meetings in 2014/15

The Management Team agreed dates AMT meetings over the next year to be at 10.30 am on Thursday:

17 July 2014
16 October 2014
29 January 2015
24 April 2015.

ALLOTMENT REPRESENTATIVES REPORT TO AMT April 2014

Name of Site Representative	<i>John Fisher</i>
Site(s) covered by this report	<i>Butts Meadow</i>
Date of AMT meeting	<i>09/01/2014</i>

ALLOTMENT VACANCIES & WAITING LIST APPLICATIONS

NB: entries are for changes since date of last meeting	Total Nr allotment plots	Vacant Plots	Nr of waiting list applicants
B/F total from last meeting date	66	3	10
Add plots created by subdivision	0		
Add Nr plots vacated/evicted		1	
Add Nr new waiting list applicants			5
Deduct plots 'lost' by amalgamation	0		
Deduct Nr plots let to new tenants		1	1
Deduct Nr of withdrawn applications			0
Total C/F to next meeting	66	3	14

SITE INSPECTIONS UNDERTAKEN (PLEASE STATE PLOT REFERENCES)

Watching briefs being kept on 18 and 35A, which were not well-gardened in 2013 (#18 has already received two warning letters). Plot 26a is also being 'ignored' and an email has been sent to the new tenant

LETTERS TO BE WRITTEN TO TENANTS

	Plot reference(s)
Overgrown warning letters	<i>None at this stage but, if there is no progress over</i>
Letters of eviction due to non-cultivation (based upon the spread sheet showing list of tenants sent allotment warning letters)	<i>None</i>

OTHER ISSUES:

ALLOTMENT REPRESENTATIVES REPORT TO AMT

Name of Site Representative	<i>John Eaton</i>
Site(s) covered by this report	<i>SSO SSN</i>
Date of AMT meeting	<i>24/04/2014</i>

ALLOTMENT VACANCIES & WAITING LIST APPLICATIONS

NB: entries are for changes since date of last meeting	Total Nr allotment plots	Vacant Plots	Nr of waiting list applicants
B/F total from last meeting date	<i>193</i>	<i>13.25</i>	<i>0</i>
Add plots created by subdivision			
Add Nr plots vacated/evicted		<i>0</i>	
Add Nr new waiting list applicants			<i>9</i>
Deduct plots 'lost' by amalgamation			
Deduct Nr plots let to new tenants		<i>3.5</i>	<i>4</i>
Deduct Nr of withdrawn applications			
Total C/F to next meeting	<i>193</i>	<i>9.75</i>	<i>5</i>

4 specific

SITE INSPECTIONS UNDERTAKEN (PLEASE STATE PLOT REFERENCES)

All inspected 22/04/14

LETTERS TO BE WRITTEN TO TENANTS

	Plot reference(s)
Overgrown warning letters	<i>B28 N27B N31B</i>
Letters of eviction due to non-cultivation (based upon the spread sheet showing list of tenants sent allotment warning letters)	

OTHER ISSUES:

<i>Non-Fruit Trees, SRT Lease, Thefts</i>

ALLOTMENT REPRESENTATIVES REPORT TO AMT

Name of Site Representative	Diana Reay
Site(s) covered by this report	Dellfield
Date of AMT meeting	24/04/14

ALLOTMENT VACANCIES & WAITING LIST APPLICATIONS

	Total Nr allotment plots	Vacant Plots	Nr of waiting list applicants
Brought forward total	3	2	5
Add plots created by subdivision	1		
Add Nr plots vacated/evicted		1	
Add Nr new waiting list applicants			1
Deduct plots 'lost' by amalgamation	0		
Deduct Nr plots let to new tenants	-2		
Deduct Nr of withdrawn applications			-1
Carried forward total	2	3	5

LETTERS TO BE WRITTEN TO TENANTS

	Plot reference(s)
Overgrown warning letters	nos P and S
Letters of eviction due to non-cultivation (based upon the spread sheet showing list of tenants sent allotment warning letters)	none

OTHER ISSUES: