



**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE ALLOTMENTS COMMITTEE
on Tuesday 22nd June 2021 at 6.30pm
at Colne Town Hall**

Councillors in attendance: Cllr. A Mann (Chairman), Cllr. M Chung and Cllr. P Howarth.

Others in attendance: Mr. B Kibble (Plot holder), Mr. E Dennison (Allotments Officer)

1. Welcome

The Chairman welcomed all to the June meeting of the Colne Town Council Allotments Committee.

2. Apologies

To report and record apologies for absence from Members of the Allotments Committee.

No apologies had been received for the meeting.

Absent: Cllr. B Wildman

3. Minutes

To approve as a correct record the Minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday 9th March 2021

The Minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday 9th March 2021 were accepted as a true and accurate record.

Proposed: Cllr. M Chung

Seconded: Cllr. P Howarth

Approved by the Committee.

4. Election of Co-opted Members

To elect co-opted members on to the Committee.

Mr. Bill Kibble was nominated to be a co-opted member of the Allotments Committee.

Proposed: Cllr. P Howarth

Seconded: Cllr. M Chung

It was agreed that Bill Kibble would be a co-opted member of the Committee.

5. Declarations of Interest

To receive any declarations of interest from Members relating to any item on the agenda in accordance with the provisions of the Code of Conduct and/or indicate if S106 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 applies to them.

No declarations were received.

6. Public Forum and Plot Holders Requests

To consider questions, statements, or petitions from members of the public who are welcome to the meeting and have a total collectively of 15 minutes to make their representations to the Committee. (For information only)

The Chairman invited Gillian Bennett to speak to the Committee via a Zoom link.

Gillian had received a letter regarding two cockerels on her allotment. She advised that the cockerels, small silkies, did not make any noise. She had spoken with the neighbours near to the plot and they have advised that they do not hear them. Whilst she accepted that cockerels were not permitted, they had been acquired accidentally, believing that they were hens when she first got them. She said that she was not breeding off them. She requested that the Committee allow her to keep them on her plot. She was reluctant to have them slaughtered and she would struggle to rehome them.

The Allotment Officer advised that the Council did not consent to cockerels on allotment plots and consequent to have cockerels on the site was a breach of the allotment agreement.

They advised that they would be visiting the plot in one month to do a formal inspection. If the cockerels were found to be present, arrangements would be made for a notice advising of a breach of the allotment conditions to be served on the plot holder giving them one month in which to resolve the breach. Provided the breach of conditions was resolved within that time no further action would be taken. Should the plot holder remain in breach of the allotment conditions, a final notice would be served requiring the plot holder to give back the plot. Once served, such a notice would bring the agreement to an end one month from the date of service.

7. Exclusion of the Public

To determine during which items, if any, the public are to be excluded from the meeting. Such an exclusion would need to be on the grounds that, in view of the nature of the business to be transacted, if the public were present, there would be a disclosure to them of exempt information within the meaning of schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972.

There were no items on the agenda from which the public needed to be excluded.

8. Allotment Awards 2021

To receive a verbal report updating Members on the progress of the Allotment Awards Photo Competition.

On the 16th April Plot holders were notified by letter that the Committee would be holding an allotment photo competition due to the then ongoing restrictions managing the Covid 19 pandemic. Entries for the competition would close on the 4th July, followed by a period of public voting for the Best Allotment Photo. To date two had been received including photos for several categories. Recent conversations with plot holders revealed several intend to send in their entries in the next few weeks.

The Chairman indicated that they were aware that several plot holders had asked why the Committee was not judging individual plots as in previous years. The Committee agreed that whilst they would like to see a return to the original plot judging competition, with the restrictions in place at the time of organising the competition, it was not felt prudent to encourage unnecessary contact which might put plot holders or the judging panel at any additional risk.

9. Sutherland Street Water Supply

To discuss the implications of installing an additional settlement tank into the system to reduce the likelihood of water pipe blockages.

There had previously been a problem with the tank overflowing into the allotments and leaching through the bottom of the site into the builder's yard at the bottom of Sutherland St. This had been rectified by the installation of a wider diameter overflow pipe which was less prone to blockages. Over time the supply pipe to the allotments has become blocked because of the sediment build up in the tank. The contractor advises that is likely to be a recurring problem due to the amount of soil being carried by the stream.

The installation of a settlement tank would reduce the amount of sediment in the main water tank feeding the allotment supply and reduce the likelihood of further blockages provided the settlement tank is appropriately maintained.

The tanks are located on Pendle Borough Council land outside the top fence of the allotments.

Prior to approving any works, the committee would need agreement from Pendle Council to install the tank on their land and agree the terms for its ongoing maintenance and repair. It was likely that there would be additional recurring costs to the Committee to cover the ongoing maintenance of the system including regular safety checks. It was anticipated, depending on the nature of the checks needed, the on costs might range from between £350 to £500 per year. The committee would need to identify within its existing budget, where both the installation costs and the yearly on costs could be attributed within the overall budget for allotments. It might also be reasonable to assess what, if any, portion of the yearly costs might be recovered from service users.

The relatively small size of individual plots on Sutherland Street limits plot holders ability to harvest water onsite from shed roofs etc. Consequently, plot holders have been bringing water from off site to water their plots.

It was proposed that: a report addressing the issue identified should be put to the Committee at the earliest opportunity and that, if necessary, an emergency meeting be called to consider proposals for the installation of a settlement tank and to restore the water supply to the Sutherland Street Allotments

Proposed: Cllr. A Mann

Seconded: Cllr. P. Howarth

Approved by the Committee.

10. Allotment Notice Boards

To agree proposals for the installation of noticeboards on five allotment sites.

It was suggested that a previous meeting to look at erecting a Notice board at Alkincoates and possibly other sites. Basil Street already has a notice board which requires some maintenance. Broken Banks, George V, South Valley and Sutherland Street might also make good candidates for a notice board. Whilst Carry Lane has a significant number of plots, the number of separate entrances makes the placement of a noticeboard more difficult.

An estimate had been obtained for a branded post mounted A2 notice boards. It was unlikely that the Committee would have sufficient funds to do all the sites within the existing budget. Funds to cover the purchase of one noticeboard for Alkincoates Allotments could be covered from the Allotments Marketing and Promotions budget but only because they had not been committed for the Allotment Awards.

The Committee was of the view that the prices obtained for the boards was high and that there was a need for a cheaper alternative.

It was proposed that the Allotment Officer look at more cost-effective solutions for a notice board at the Alkincoates Allotment site utilizing the side of the allotment hut at the entrance to the site.

11. Allotment Hedging

To agree proposals for the purchase, installation, and management of hedging on allotment sites

The Woodland Trust produces a hedging starter pack which including the cost of spirals and supports would cost around £93 for between three and five meters of hedging.

Consideration may need to be given to the cost of installing and maintain the hedging and any impact of hedging may have on plot size and the available light. It was suggested that Broken Banks might be considered as a potential location for hedging as only one plot had put up boundary fencing at present. It would be important to establish if plot holders were in favor of the proposal and the likely planting and yearly maintenance costs.

Any additional yearly commitments from the Allotments Budget would require funding approval from the Council's Finance, Employment & Services Committee.

The initial plants were around thirty centimeters high and it was likely to take some time before the hedge became established requiring yearly maintenance. The small size of the initial hedging plants would mean that they could be easily damaged or vandalized prior to them becoming established.

The Committee asked for a report for its next meeting addressing the issues identified.

12. Allotment Committee Documents - Microsoft Teams

To review progress of adding allotment documents on to the Councils Microsoft

A Microsoft Team has been set up for Councilors on the Allotment Committee to share information on allotments. Several documents including general site information and plans along with plot inspection reports had already been added to the Allotment Team files and more will be added shortly.

13. Allocations Policy Review

To review and update the Allotment Allocations Policy

The policy should be reviewed on a yearly basis. A lot of the amendments were quite minor corrections to spelling and grammar. More significant changes include adding a clause restricting entry onto the waiting list where the applicant owes money to the Council or has failed in carrying out an obligation or agreement with the council such as a previous breach of the allotment conditions.

General allocations the had been amended to take into account any preferences stated by the applicant. In addition, transfer applicants would not be excluded by the one plot per household restriction provided they agree to give up their existing plot before taking a new plot. References to the Chief Executive Officer had been amended to Town Clerk to reflect the current title of the post holder.

It was proposed to recommend acceptance of the Allocations Policy as amended to the Finance, Employment & Services Committee for adoption by the Council.

Proposed: Cllr. M Chung

Seconded: Cllr. P Howarth

Approved by the Committee.

14. Livestock Consents Policy Review

To review and update the Allotments Livestock Consents Policy

A lot of the amendments were minor corrections to spelling and grammar. The committee was asked to approve an additional amendment to correct reference the RSPCA as the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals. The insistence on the use of treadle feeders was not appropriate for all fowl and the policy had been updated to limit this requirement to chickens. Cockerels had been added as a named exclusion to animals for which consent could be sought to clarify this further within the policy.

An additional requirement had been added to the conditions which are to be met when applying for an exemption from the livestock restriction, requiring that the plot holder is a member of a recognized professional body or association in relation to the keeping of livestock for which the consent is being sought.

The register of Livestock Consents had been updated to reflect plot changes in the last year and to indicate the date when consent was granted and the date it would expire.

It was proposed to recommend acceptance of the Livestock Policy as amended to the Finance, Employment & Services Committee for adoption by the Council.

Proposed: Cllr. P Howarth

Seconded: Cllr. M Chung

Approved by the Committee.

15. Allotment Updates

To receive a verbal report to update Members in relation to general issues arising since the last meeting.

The Committee were advised that a further two plots had been allocated one on High Garth and the other on Basil Street. Two plots were due to come vacant on Sutherland Street and one had been handed back on Carry Lane. It was likely that the Carry Lane plot would be divided into a number of smaller plots to make it more manageable and help reduce the waiting list.

Several notices had been served on plot holders where they had failed to cultivate their plots sufficiently. The majority of the notices would expire on the 12th July when the plots would be inspected again, and action taken appropriately.

Allotment land transfers are progressing. We had recently got back land registry plans for the South Valley Allotment site which were been checked of approval after a site visit in June.

Councilors were aware of an issue with trees adjacent to the Alkincoates Allotment Site which were restricting sun light from plots on the western boundary making it difficult to successfully cultivate. The trees were on private land and had at the Councils request been inspected by a tree surgeon who advised there were no safety issues with the trees in question.

It was suggested that the concern over the height trees by the boundary be referred on to Pendle Councils Tree Officer, and that a letter be sent to the plot holder advising what investigations had taken place.

16. Items for next month's Agenda

Points raised under this item are for information only, any debate should be limited to five minutes only and to consider them for the agenda for the next month.

There were no supplementary items proposed for inclusion on the next scheduled meeting of the Committee.

17. Date & Time of Next Regular Meeting

The next Allotments Committee meeting was scheduled for 14th September 2021 at 6.30pm.