

KENDAL TOWN COUNCIL

Allotments Committee 3rd May 2011 at 7.00 p.m. In The Mayor's Parlour, the Town Hall, Kendal

- PRESENT** Councillors John Veevers (Town Mayor and Chairman) and Giles Archibald.
Co-opted Members Eric Ashton, Sandy Parker, Brie Wharf, Judy Palmer and Roger Palmer.
- OFFICERS** Liz Richardson (Town Clerk), Helen Kendal (Administrative Officer) and Margaret Graham (Secretary)
- APOLOGIES** Councillors Stephen Coleman and Alvin Finch; Co-opted Member Deborah Allison, and Mike Shaw (Town Handyman)
- Also in attendance was Councillor Graham Vincent, and members of the public.

774/10/11 MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON 29TH NOVEMBER 2010

The Chairman presented the minutes of the meeting held on 29th November 2010.

- RESOLVED** that, the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 29th November 2010 be accepted as a correct record.

MATTERS ARISING (NOT ON AGENDA)

775/10/11 Financial Statement (Minute 449/10/11)

Mr Palmer requested that a column for Income be included on future Financial Statements. The Town Clerk indicated that this would be starting for the Financial Year 2011/12.

776/10/11 Annual Rent Review (Minute 447/10/11)

Councillor Archibald asked if the Council had been pro-active in seeking out plots which were not cultivable, how many plots were affected, and what would be the level of lost revenue? The Town Clerk confirmed that a small number of plots had been identified as (partially) uncultivable and discounts had been applied, but that loss of revenue would not be significant.

777/10/11 Coley Barn – Repair to Walls (Minute 443/110/11)

Members were advised that the repairs to the wall at Coley Barn had been completed. It was understood that the damaged wall at Greenside had been repaired by one of the site tenants, and it was requested that the site representative pass on the Council's thanks.

778/10/11 ORDER OF BUSINESS

The Chairman proposed to take the Part II items (Agenda Items 10, 12 and 11 in that order) at this juncture, and this was agreed by the Committee.

779/10/11 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

RESOLVED that, in accordance with Section 100(B)(2) of the Local Government Act 1972, the press and public be excluded from the following items of business as they contain exempt information as described in Schedule 12A of the Act.

In accordance with Section 100(B)(2) of the Local Government Act 1972, the following reports were excluded from inspection by members of the public as they contain exempt information as described in Schedule 12A of the Act, as amended by the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006, as follows:-

- *Information relating to any individual [Paragraph 1]*

780/10/11 CROW TREE ALLOTMENT SITE (Paragraph 1)

There was a discussion over a proposal for the alternative use of approximately one half of the Crow Tree allotments site. Councillor Graham Vincent gave the Committee details. Members were reminded that the Crow Tree site is in the ownership of South Lakeland District Council. Members asked if other possibilities had been investigated. Efforts had been made to identify suitable alternative allotment land, without success

The Chairman said that Kendal Town Council would struggle to find quality land to replace any sold at Crow Tree, a large and productive allotment site. The site representative said that the quality of the allotment land was not the only factor. As well as access to the allotments, the path alongside the site provided a leisure and exercise facility for local people.

The Chairman invited the proposers to address the Committee to give them the opportunity to elaborate and answer specific questions.

In summing up, the Chairman pointed out that the Committee existed to protect and enhance the allotment land within the management of the Council, and alternative land had not been identified. There was also a significant waiting list.

After further deliberation it was proposed by Mr Eric Ashton and seconded by Mr Roger Palmer that the land be retained for allotment purposes.

RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY, that the land at Crow Tree be retained for allotment purposes.

RECOMMENDED that, notwithstanding any community benefits, but taking into account the quality of the land and the number of applicants on the waiting list, Council approve that the entire site at Crow Tree be retained for allotment purposes.

781/10/11 UNDERLEY HILL PLOT (Paragraph 1)

There was discussion over the rent for an allotment plot at Underley Hill.

RESOLVED that the tenant be offered the continued tenancy of the plot at £120 per annum, with an annual review, and that the thanks of the Council and the Committee be passed on for the work he had done on the site.

782/10/11 RE-ADMISSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

RESOLVED that the press and public be re-admitted for the remainder of the meeting.

783/10/11 FEEDBACK FROM ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING : 17 FEBRUARY 2011

Councillor Giles Archibald said that the event had been well attended and the Chairman had handled the proceedings with authority.

The Town Clerk said that feedback had been very positive. Mrs Kendal suggested that the event should include a guest speaker next year, and that more time should be allowed for the popular Workshop Sessions.

Councillor Archibald expressed concern that some sites were without representatives, but the Town Clerk pointed out that there was only room for a limited number on the Allotments Committee. Mrs Kendal said that all sites have, at least, an informal representative who can feed comments etc to the elected Co-opted Members or directly to herself.

The Chairman expressed thanks to Mrs Kendal for all her hard work in organising the event.

RESOLVED that the Feedback Report be noted.

784/10/11 SITE VISIT REPORT

Mrs Kendal had prepared notes of the site visits undertaken by the Allotments Committee on 11th and 18th April 2011.

Ms Brie Wharf felt there had been a general overall improvement since the site visits last year. The Chairman commented that he and Mike Shaw agreed things were moving in the right direction. Councillor Archibald asked how sites are monitored and if the Committee could have a "progress report". He was advised that the monitoring and reporting role lies with the Handyman and Administrative Officer.

It was confirmed that, as a result of the site visits, letters had been sent to some tenants on various issues. Mr Wayne Rawlinson was present at the meeting as he had received a letter about the presence of tyres on the allotment site. He said that he had started off with nine tyres and had been the first on the site to successfully grow carrots (within the tyres) following advice from Gardeners World. Since then he had moved the tyres around and had passed some on to other tenants so that, although there were no more tyres than originally, they were dotted around the site and probably more conspicuous.

The Chairman pointed out that unused tyres on sites should be removed, but that the Council is charged for taking these to the tip while private citizens can dispose of them free of charge. Councillor Archibald suggested that a letter should be sent to all tenants asking why tyres are present on their plots, and outlining the problems faced by the Council in disposing of tyres and other unwanted items.

Tenants should also be advised that the Tenancy Agreement is being re-written to take account of issues such as huts, untidy sites, etc. Any changes to the Agreement require twelve months' notice to tenants. The Town Clerk said that a comprehensive review of the agreement would include issues such as the site being left in a tidy and lettable condition when it is vacated, and no rubbish, carpets, etc to be left on the plot. One solution is to hire skips for rubbish, but there is a cost implication for the Council. New tenants should be made aware of these conditions, and asked to take on responsibility for maintenance and disposal if this becomes necessary.

The Chairman said that letters had been sent out about broken greenhouses, glass etc because of safety concerns. Again the problem for the Town Council is the disposal of such items.

RESOLVED that

- (1) letters be sent to tenants as necessary in regard to the presence of tyres on allotment plots, and means of disposal of unwanted items;
- (2) tenants be given notice that the Tenancy Agreement is being revised, to take account of the issues raised above and any other relevant matters; and
- (3) Mrs Kendal be asked to provide an updated progress report, based on her notes of site visits, to subsequent meetings of the Committee.

785/10/11 ASBESTOS CEMENT SHEETING

The Town Clerk reported that, while the presence of asbestos cement sheeting on allotment sites was a concern, there was actually less than had been thought – 1 plot at Greenside, 3 sheets on 1 plot at Castle Drive (which Mr Parker undertook to check), and a shed at Castle Hags. Sandylands site had the most asbestos cement sheeting. The Town Clerk pointed out that the Council has taken a policy decision to remove asbestos cement sheeting, which should be replaced with fencing. Councillor Archibald felt that there should be no tolerance for asbestos, and tenants should be informed. It was agreed that affected tenants should be sent a letter seeking removal of the asbestos and advising that, while the Council will help with removal/double bagging on request, tenants should take the materials to the tip for disposal free of charge. The Council is charged for disposing of all items at the tip, and costs could be significant.

RESOLVED that all affected tenants be sent a letter indicating that the asbestos cement sheeting needs to be removed and that the Council will assist with this, although tenants will be requested to take the materials to the tip for disposal free of charge.

786/10/11 MAINTENANCE ISSUES**Fixing of Boundary Walls**

The Town Clerk said that, for the future, a contractor had been identified who could offer more competitive rates for walling repairs. Outstanding repairs had been completed.

Castle Haggs Extension / boundary with Fletcher Park

It was reported that a group of volunteers had offered to help with the erection of a 6' fence at this location. In the end it was thought that only one tenant had been able to help Mike Shaw, and thanks were recorded to Mr Fielden. Judy Palmer suggested there might have been a communication issue with other tenants.

Crow Tree

July Palmer reported that the main problem currently is children climbing on/through the hedge and on to buildings. The hedge has never been layered and is hard to maintain.

The ideal alternative would be to reduce it to ground level, allowing it to regrow and be layered as it grew. However, this would mean fencing the area until the hedge reached a reasonable height. Councillor Archibald asked if Ms Palmer could talk to plot holders to get an idea of what they think is needed and possible solutions, and report back to Mike Shaw and/or Helen Kendal. Helen Kendal agreed to provide Ms Palmer with a list of allotment tenants.

Wattsfield

It had been reported that the wooden surround on the water tap was rotten. The Chairman said that this had been noted and was on the Handyman's repair list.

RESOLVED that the reports on Maintenance Issues be noted.

787/10/11 NEW SITES

The Chairman reported that he had not had an opportunity to speak to the owner of the one site identified, which still needed to be surveyed. There had been no other offers from the SLDC agents, NPS.

RESOLVED that the situation be noted.

788/10/11 FINANCIAL STATEMENT

The Town Clerk presented a financial statement for the financial year 2010/11, showing actual spend, commitments and balance remaining. She drew attention to the following:-

- The Staffing budget was slightly underspent (mainly due to overtime allocation not being required)
- Vehicle running costs will be split 50/50 with Kendal in Bloom in 2011/12, which should mean that the Allotment budget will be around £1,000 better off

- Pest Control costs were contained within budget
- Skip Hire was well controlled, hence the underspend
- Water Charges and rents payable were also underspent, although it was anticipated that outstanding accounts for such items would be submitted for payment
- There is a commitment of £675 against the ring-fenced Reserve for the creation of new allotments

The Town Clerk confirmed that the Treasurer had been asked to create an "Income" Column for the Financial Statement from 2011/12

The Town Clerk reported that, from 2011/12, Staffing costs will be 48% and 40% to Allotments and Kendal in Bloom respectively (previously 60% and 25%), so there should be a "saving" to the Allotments Committee budget of around £3,000. This would help towards achieving a "break-even" position. Councillor Archibald commented that "break-even" was not realistic.

The Chairman commented that the budget was under better control because more jobs were being done "in house".

RESOLVED that the Financial Report be noted.

ANY OTHER BUSINESS

789/10/11 Kendal in Bloom Award

Mr Palmer asked what was the amount attached to the "Best Allotment Site" award won by Wattsfield in 2010 and was advised that the sum was £50. He was asked to get the winner's trophy back to the Council office for the end of July for the next awards ceremony.

790/10/11 Waiting List

Mrs Helen Kendal presented a written report on the state of the waiting list and allocations since September 2010. She reported that there were now 129 applicants on the waiting list, a considerable reduction on the previous year and partly due to the creation of 30 additional allotments from splitting larger plots. However there were currently no vacant plots available for letting. She also pointed out that waiting time on the list can vary between 8 months to 4 years, depending on the site.

RESOLVED that the waiting list report be noted.

791/10/11 Canal Head Plots Nos.13 and 14

The Town Clerk reported that the two plots at Canal Head which had been repossessed by the Council had not been tidied up by the former tenants. They had now been given 28 days to pay the costs of the Council having to bring the plots back to a lettable condition.

The Town Clerk said that the former tenants had been given every opportunity to sort out the situation and the matter would be placed in the hands of a debt recovery agent if they did not pay. The condition of the plots was now very much improved, and they had been successfully relet.

RESOLVED that the situation be noted.

792/10/11 New Tenants

The Chairman said there was a feeling that, as reported via Mike Shaw, there was a better attitude prevailing among new tenants which could only be to the good of the allotment community. He indicated that a Sub-Group was to be set up to deal with issues at Aynam Road.

RESOLVED that the situation be noted.

793/10/11 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

RESOLVED that the next meeting be held in the Mayor's Parlour on Monday, 12 September 2011 at 7.00 p.m., and that items be placed on the agenda in respect of the Tenancy Agreement and a Site Progress Report.