

KENDAL TOWN COUNCIL

Allotments Committee

**Monday 24th September 2018 at 7.00 pm
in The Mayor's Parlour, Town Hall, Kendal**

PRESENT Councillors Alvin Finch (Chair), Dave Miles (Vice Chair), Giles Archibald, Michele Miles, Stephen Coleman and Carol Hardy

Also in attendance was Ros Taylor (Site Rep for Wattsfield)

APOLOGIES None

OFFICERS Janine Holt (Assistant to the Town Clerk), Pierre Labat (Townscape Manager) and Nicky King (Council Secretary)

348/18/19 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

John Veevers requested to speak on two matters:

Request to keep hens on Wattsfield Allotments

John Veevers pointed out that, although tenancy agreements permit site holders to keep hens, some allotment sites have always been kept for cultivation only. Wattsfield has always been one of those sites and he asked Committee to bear this in mind when considering the request.

Expenditure of money previously ring fenced for additional plots

John Veevers sought clarification in respect of minute reference 052/18/19 and the expenditure of £70k which had previously been allocated with the aim of finding new sites. He explained that a number of years ago Percy Duff sold what is now Romney Gardens estate and £300k was set aside with the agreement that Wattsfield allotments would be created as a substitute site. The monies reduced year upon year until the figure of £70k remained. John Veevers remarked that this money must not be put back into the general fund, but utilised for allotments.

After a general discussion it was confirmed that there was no intention to return the money to the general fund. Committee were seeking clarity as to what the £70k could be spent on, however the intention was to spend it on improvements to current sites.

349/18/19 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest made at this point.

350/18/19 MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 11TH JUNE 2018

The Chairman presented the minutes of the meeting held on 11th June 2018, which had been approved by full Council on 2nd July 2018. Councillor Archibald proposed that the minutes be approved as a

correct record. This was seconded by Councillor Coleman and carried unanimously.

RESOLVED That the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 11th June 2018 be accepted as a correct record.

MATTERS ARISING (Not on Agenda)

351/18/19 Minute Ref 048/18/19 – Approval to Keep Bees

Janine Holt advised that she had not had time to consider any necessary alterations to the tenancy agreement in respect of keeping bees. It was agreed to defer this to the next meeting.

RESOLVED That Committee consider any necessary alterations to the tenancy agreement in respect of keeping bees at the next meeting.

352/18/19 Minute Ref 050/18/19 – Addition of clause to tenancy agreements re verbal abuse

Janine Holt confirmed that she would look at this at the same time as reviewing alterations required for bee keeping.

It was noted that Committee are required to give six months' notice of any alterations to the tenancy agreement. Members discussed timescales and it was agreed that Janine Holt would seek clarification from the Town Clerk as to whether any proposed changes would need to be presented to Council for approval.

RESOLVED That Janine Holt seek clarification from the Town Clerk as to whether proposed changes to the tenancy agreement require Council approval.

353/18/19 Ref Minute 052/18/19 – Project update – expenditure of £70k

At the last meeting it had been resolved that Janine Holt would seek clarity as to what the £70k previously ring fenced for new sites could be spent on. She informed Members that advice from the Town Clerk was that a recommendation would need to be presented to Council for decision. Committee needed to work on a framework of what the money would be spent on.

Councillor Archibald commented that several plots are subpar and he would not like to see money unspent. He proposed that Council be asked to approve the expenditure of money previously earmarked for new allotment sites on the improvement of existing sites. This was seconded by Councillor Coleman and carried unanimously.

RECOMMENDATION That Council approve the expenditure of money previously earmarked for new allotment sites on the improvement of existing sites.

354/18/19 Minute Ref 053/18/19 – Voting Rights

Janine Holt had sought advice from the Town Clerk regarding the right to vote at Committee meetings. The Town Clerk had advised that several Committees have co-opted members. Such members can make their views known but cannot vote on matters relating to expenditure. They can however vote on matters not involving expenditure. Only elected representatives can vote on items relating to expenditure.

355/18/19 Minute Ref 055/18/19 – Abnormal water consumption

Janine Holt advised that she had contacted Water Plus to enquire as to the possibility of them alerting electronically when a significant amount of water was taken. They do not have this facility currently.

Members were informed by Janine Holt that photographic evidence had come to light of an individual taking water for personal use on Greenside allotments. A general discussion ensued and it was agreed that the information should be passed to the police.

Councillor Coleman proposed that the evidence be passed to the police with a request that they pursue the matter. This was seconded by Councillor Hardy and carried unanimously.

RESOLVED That new evidence of water being taken for personal use be passed to the police with a request that they pursue the matter with the individual concerned.

356/18/19 **PROJECT UPDATE**

Janine Holt advised that site visits had been rescheduled to 10th October. The following information was presented:

- 9 vacant plots.
- 57 people on the waiting list (including 15 for Greenside and 1 for Aynam Road).
- 13 plots let since the last meeting.

Demand for plots was down slightly on this time last year.

357/18/19 **REQUEST TO KEEP HENS ON WATTSFIELD ALLOTMENTS**

Janine Holt had been approached by an allotment holder requesting permission to keep hens on Wattsfield Allotments. The person in question currently has several hens on Coley Barn but wishes to move to Wattsfield and retain 2/3 hens on the fallow plot. She advised that in the past Committee had approved 2 hens to be kept on Greenside. There has been an unwritten rule in force to allow poultry on certain sites only.

Ros Taylor (site rep for Wattsfield) advised that she had spoken to 3 allotments holders about the request who each held a different opinion. There was a general concern that it might alter the nature of the site, along with concern about noise and vermin.

Following a general discussion it was agreed that granting permission would not be appropriate on the grounds that the site is too close to residential areas and has previously been kept fallow. It may also set a future precedent.

Councillor Finch proposed that the request be declined. This was seconded by Councillor Coleman and carried unanimously.

RESOLVED

That the request to keep hens on Wattsfield Allotments be declined.

358/18/19

UNDERLEY ALLOTMENTS REQUEST TO FELL TREES

Janine Holt had been approached by Peter Thornton regarding the felling of verge large trees planted some time ago at Underley Allotments. It was noted that the trees are not on allotment land but on SLDC land and as such are SLDC responsibility. SLDC are not prepared to fell the trees.

Councillors Coleman and Archibald declared an interest at this point as SLDC Councillors.

Members discussed the matter and agreed that as the trees were not on allotment land it was not the responsibility of the Committee. Janine Holt to refer back to Peter Thornton with the Committee's decision.

RESOLVED

That Janine Holt advise Peter Thornton of the Committee's decision not to fell trees at Underley Allotments.

359/18/19

SITE REPRESENTATIVE MEETING FEEDBACK

The Townscape Manager said the first site representative meeting had been well attended. He talked about a composting event which several reps had expressed an interest in. He was due to attend the course in October and would report back to site reps.

He reported some requests for trees to be lopped, an additional water tap at Wattsfield and for more information on people visiting sites. Various improvement requests have been made on Castle Drive. The Townscape Manager will obtain quotes for the work and work on a 1-3 year plan.

Councillor Archibald commented that certain plots are not very fertile and difficult to let due to their poor quality. He asked that the 1-3 year plan include upgrading those plots. He was hesitant to agree to tree felling and stated that there would have to be replacement plantings for any trees that were felled. Janine Holt added that KTC would need to liaise with SLDC. The Townscape Manager clarified that it was more a matter of maintenance.

Work to make certain footpaths safer by replacing with gravel was also taking place. This would reduce long term maintenance.

Ros referred to the matter of composting and said it would be good to encourage people to build wildlife habitats. However one issue for consideration would be the potential for untidiness. She had written Janine Holt suggesting that the Committee encourage people by the way the allotments competition is judged.

Councillor Coleman remarked that it would be useful if the Townscape Manager could prepare a written report following site reps meetings for Committee's information. Townscape Manager to action.

RESOLVED

That the Townscape Manager prepare a written report following site reps meetings for Committee's information.

360/18/19**SITE MAINTENANCE QUARTERLY REPORT**

The Townscape Manager reported that work carried out at Town View had been very successful. Work included clearing an overgrown area, drainage work and an extra gate installed which allows wheelchair access.

Janine Holt observed that Sandylands site needs tidying up. This is a priority that needs tackling over the winter and could create an additional 4-5 plots.

Members discussed the need for a priority list for necessary works to enable Committee to decide what work is carried out where. Janine Holt suggested a baseline be developed to work from. Evidence and data to be collected to assist in decision making process. Councillor Archibald pointed out that even though a site may be good in general, there may still be degraded plots within it.

RESOLVED

That the Townscape Manager prepare a written quarterly maintenance report for Committee's information.

361/18/19**ALLOTMENT RENT SETTING**

Janine Holt informed Members that allotment rent is reviewed each year. It is currently 36p per square metre. Demand for plots is down slightly. Last year rent was increased by 1p per square metre (approximately 3%) in line with inflation. It was noted that any change to rent needs to be recommended to Council for approval.

Councillor Archibald felt it reasonable to increase in line with inflation again this year. He commented that expenditure is increasing and could see no reason to freeze rent costs. He said that it was important to acknowledge the social element allotments bring.

A general discussion ensued and the implications of increasing the rent were considered.

It was proposed by Councillor Finch to increase the allotment rent by 1p per square metre in year 1. The intention, subject to circumstances, was then to freeze rent in year 2 and increase by 1p in year 3. This was seconded by Councillor Archibald and carried with 1 abstention.

RECOMMENDATION That allotment rent be increased by 1p per square metre in year 1. The intention, subject to circumstances, was then to freeze rent in year 2 and increase by 1p in year 3.

362/18/19

2019/20 BUDGET – REVIEW OF BUDGET REQUIREMENTS AND PROPOSALS FOR ONE-OFF DEVELOPMENT FUND BIDS

Members considered the 2019/20 Budget Proposals paper that had been circulated. This is reviewed each year and Committee consider any projects for development. A wish list of projects is included in the Action Plan.

Committee agreed there was no requirement provided Council approved the recommendation for the expenditure of £70k previously discussed. When presenting the recommendation to Council it would be made clear that Committee were not looking for any further monies from the Development Fund.

It was noted that there is £6,500 in budget for site maintenance which was considered sufficient.

Vehicle running costs were highlighted as being unusually high. Janine Holt reported that it had been an abnormal year with unexpected costs, however she did not consider it necessary for this to be increased.

Waste removal costs had also been quite high this year. It was noted that there is now a skip at the garage. This cost £180 and there should not be more than one needed per year. This should reduce waste removal costs.

The issue of supplying compost was raised. Ros Taylor commented that access to leaf mould would be welcomed. The discussion lead on to the matter of bonfires and there was a general concern amongst Members that these are permitted in the tenancy agreement. Councillor Archibald commented that bonfires are not environmentally friendly. Councillor Coleman proposed a full review of the tenancy agreement at the next meeting. This was seconded by Councillor Finch and carried unanimously. Janine Holt to highlight specific areas for consideration such as bonfires.

RESOLVED

Committee to carry out a full review of the tenancy agreement at the next meeting. Janine Holt to highlight specific areas for consideration such as bonfires.

363/18/19

REVIEW OF SPEND AGAINST BUDGET 2018/19

It had been resolved at the last meeting that Janine Holt would obtain costings for noticeboards to be placed on every site. She advised

that prices ranged from £424 to £485 each. This was for lockable noticeboards with the KTC logo. A total of 16 would be required. Councillor Coleman suggested a trial on certain sites. It was agreed to consider the matter further at the next meeting.

Members were informed that the Townscape Manager had commenced a chainsaw course. It was noted that, due to timescale, the course had been booked prior to authorisation being granted by the Town Clerk. Committee were asked to consider how to fund attendance. Janine Holt advised that the Town Clerk would be addressing the failure to adopt correct procedure. Councillor Archibald requested a report from the Town Clerk in this respect.

Councillor Coleman proposed that approval be granted for the Townscape Manager to attend the chainsaw course, to be funded from the Maintenance Budget. This was seconded by Councillor Finch and carried unanimously.

Councillor Coleman further requested that the Townscape Manager present Committee with a report following completion of the course.

RESOLVED

That Committee grant approval for the Townscape Manager to attend a chainsaw course, to be funded from the Maintenance Budget. Townscape Manager to present Committee with a report following completion.

364/18/19

ITEMS FOR THE NEWSLETTER

It was noted that the autumn edition is now full.

Items for spring 2019 edition:

- Composting scheme (following training by Townscape Manager)
- Bees.

Items for annual Allotments newsletter:

- Water charges.
- Bees

Janine Holt requested suggestions for other articles for inclusion in the Allotments newsletter.

365/18/19

ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Janine Holt advised that Horticare had enquired about the possibility of having a site on Crow Tree (a plot difficult to let). The idea was to use the plot to grow veg, harvest and make soup etc. A gate for disabled access and a tap would be required, but this could be done within budget. Horticare had undertaken a risk assessment and dealt with insurance issues. Janine Holt confirmed that she had agreed to let the plot to Horticare. Members agreed it was a good idea.

Ros Taylor extended her appreciation for the work carried out by Janine Holt.

The Chair commented that Committee would like to see site reps attend meetings more regularly.

366/18/19

DATE OF NEXT MEETING

10th December 2018 at 7pm.

The meeting closed at 8.43pm.

Summary of Information, Resolutions and Recommendations to Council

Min	Subject	Information/Resolution/Recommendation to Council	
351	Approval to keep bees	RES	That Committee consider any necessary alterations to the tenancy agreement in respect of keeping bees at the next meeting.
352	Tenancy agreement amendment re verbal abuse	RES	That Janine Holt seek clarification from the Town Clerk as to whether proposed changes to the tenancy agreement require Council approval.
353	Expenditure of £70k	REC	That Council approve the expenditure of money previously earmarked for new allotment sites on the improvement of existing sites.
355	Abnormal water consumption	RES	That new evidence of water being taken for personal use be passed to the police with a request that they pursue the matter with the individual concerned.
357	Request to keep hens on Wattsfield	RES	That the request to keep hens on Wattsfield Allotments be declined.
358	Underley Allotments request to fell trees	RES	That Janine Holt advise Peter Thornton of the Committee's decision not to fell trees at Underley Allotments.
359	Site Representative Meeting Feedback	RES	That the Townscape Manager prepare a written report following site reps meetings for Committee's information.
360	Site maintenance quarterly report	RES	That the Townscape Manager prepare a written quarterly maintenance report for Committee's information.
361	Allotment rent setting	REC	That allotment rent be increased by 1p per square metre in year 1. The intention, subject to circumstances, was then to freeze rent in year 2 and increase by 1p in year 3.
362	2019/20 Budget	RES	Committee to carry out a full review of the tenancy agreement at the next meeting. Janine Holt to highlight specific areas for consideration such as bonfires.
363	Review of spend against budget 2018/19	RES	That Committee grant approval for the Townscape Manager to attend a chainsaw course, to be funded from the Maintenance Budget. Townscape Manager to present Committee with a report following completion.