

Kendal Town Council

Town Hall, Highgate, Kendal LA9 4ED
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Minutes of a meeting of the Allotments Committee held on Monday, 12 June 2023, in the Council Chamber at the Town Hall, Highgate, Kendal, at 7.00 p.m.

Cllr G Archibald (Vice Chair)	Apologies	Cllr J Cornthwaite	Absent
Cllr L Edwards	Present	Cllr A Finch	Present
Cllr C Hardy	Apologies	Cllr L Hendry	Present

Site Representatives present

Castle Haggs	Gwen Tordoff
Castle Haggs Ext	Jon Cox
Underley Road	Chris Rowley
Wattsfield	Ros Taylor

In attendance: Chris Bagshaw (Town Clerk), Inge Booth (Democratic Services Assistant) and Janine Holt (Council Services Officer).

A1/2023 Apologies

Apologies for absence were received and accepted from Cllrs G Archibald and C Hardy, and from Site Representative Ali Paddle (Greenside).

A2/2023 Declarations of Interest

Cllr Finch, for the purpose of transparency, reminded the Committee of his previously-declared interest as an allotment holder. In addition, also for transparency and in relation to Agenda Item No.7 (Request to Keep Bees on Wattsfield Allotments), he informed the Committee that he was himself a beekeeper.

A3/2023 Exclusion of Press and Public (Public Bodies Admission to Meetings Act 1960)

There were no confidential items included within the agenda.

A4/2023 Minutes of the Previous Meeting

Resolved: To receive the minutes of the previous meeting of the Allotments Committee held on 27 February 2023 and to authorise the Chair to sign them as a true record.

A5/2023 Minute Action Sheet

The Committee considered a report on actions taken by officers on resolutions or recommendations made at previous meetings.

A number of updates were provided, including:-

A32b2022 (Budget 2023-24 and Rental Charges 2024) – The Committee had questioned the apportionment of interest on the allotment reserve. The Town Clerk would revisit this now that interest rates were rising.

A40/2022 (Site Signage) – The Council Services Officer reiterated that she would be meeting with the Town Clerk and the Development and Delivery Manager, within whose remit community engagement lay, after Britain in Bloom.

A42/2022 (Site Representatives) –

The Council Services Officer believed that the issue of the lock at the Castle Hags Extension had not yet been dealt with but that the Townscape Officer would shortly be meeting with the tenant who was unhappy about it.

The Council Services Officer further undertook to meet with site representatives on the matter of newly-let allotments following Kendal and Britain in Bloom.

With regard to the potential for litter picking on allotments sites, the Council Services Officer reported that the Projects Officer had put together a schedule of litter picks and would be discussing with site representatives the matter of what type of litter needed collecting.

A43/2022 (Town Council Allotments) – The Town Clerk informed the Committee that there was nothing further to report at this stage.

Resolved: To note the report and additional updates provided at the meeting and outlined above.

A6/2023 Review of Spend against 2023/24 Budget

The Council Services Officer presented a report reviewing spend against budget as at 5 June 2023. Whilst the report showed no spend so far in the current year, the Town Clerk explained that there had, in fact, been spend but that it had not yet been processed and so did not appear within the document. The spend so far in 2023/24, he said, was less than £332.

Resolved: To note the report.

A7/2023 Request to Keep Bees on Wattsfield Allotments

A report was presented advising that a tenant from Wattsfield allotments had requested permission to keep a colony of bees on their allotment plot. Details of the supporting information provided by the tenant were contained within the report. This was an experienced beekeeper who already had five hives within Kendal. The tenant had discussed the matter with the allotment holders on either side of their plot, both of whom were supportive of the proposal. The tenant, within their application, had addressed a number of concerns which people may be likely to raise, in relation to proximity, risk of injury, regulation and bee welfare, emergency handling, livestock and the need for splitting of hives.

It was further reported that the tenant had contacted all the local residents, via a flyer through each door, to ascertain if there were any objections or people with bee allergies. No one had raised any concerns. The Council Services Officer would be contacting all the

tenants on Wattsfield to ensure that they were happy to have a colony of bees on site - approval would not be granted if any tenant on Wattsfield objected to the proposal.

The Committee was being asked to consider the request for permission to keep a colony of bees on Wattsfield allotments.

The Council Services Officer was now in a position to report positive responses from all of the allotments holders. She referred to a letter received earlier in the day expressing concerns in relation to swarming and bees moving into the residential area. The Council Services Officer herself expressed reservations as to what may happen in the future and whether the Town Council may find itself with a legacy of bees. She drew attention to the fact that whilst there was an element of livestock on Wattsfield, livestock was not really allowed on this site.

The Chair, having earlier indicated that he was a beekeeper, explained that now was the swarming season and how it was part of nature, how bees could swarm anywhere and how it was simple enough to retrieve a swarm.

The matter was discussed at length. Members of the Committee were, on the whole, supportive of the request, acknowledging the benefits bees brought in relation to cross pollination and biodiversity. The matter as to whether this may set a precedent was discussed, however, it was felt that each application had to be considered on its own merit. During discussion, the question was raised as to whether people in general planted enough pollinator flowers, it being felt that this should be encouraged both in gardens and on allotments. The potential for a condition for dedication of a proportion of the plot to pollinator flowers to be built into the beekeeper's agreement, as well as all tenancy agreements, was raised, particularly in light of the recent adoption by Council of its own Biodiversity Policy. Also suggested was the need to encourage companion planting in order to assist in a reduction of the use of pesticides, potentially through the publication of advice to allotment holders. The Committee as a whole supported the idea of redrafting all tenancy agreement conditions, including details relating to hens, vermin, rabbits, invasive species, etc. The Town Clerk undertook to address the matter.

Resolved: To grant the request to keep bees on Wattsfield allotments, subject to the provision of a condition for the dedication of a proportion of the plot to pollinator flowers.

Resolved: The Town Clerk to re-draft the Town Council's standard Allotments Tenancy Agreement as outlined above.

A8/2023 Allotment Statistics Report

The Council Services Officer presented a report which showed that the waiting list currently stood at 198 individuals. The list had reduced by 41 since the last meeting. 12 plots were vacant, details of which were provided within the report. 53 plots had been let since the last meeting.

The Council Services Officer informed the Committee that she would shortly be carrying out site visits, using her new app., and answered questions raised by Members and site representatives.

Resolved: To note the report.

A9/2023 Site Representatives

Chris Rowley, Underley Road Site Representative, referred to a plot on the site where glass bottles were being used as edging. Whilst pointing out that the plot was very well maintained, the use of glass bottles as edging, he felt, was of concern and may set a precedent. He enquired if a Council policy existed in this regard. The Council Services Officer said that there was currently no such policy, however, acknowledged that this was a health and safety risk. The Town Clerk undertook to address this within his current work on policies, both from a safety and pollution point of view. The Council Services Officer undertook to approach the tenant during her forthcoming site visit.

Chris further referred to a plot on the site which he felt may have been abandoned. The Council Services Officer, however, advised that this was not the case and undertook to approach the tenant of the plot during her visit to the site.

Resolved: The Town Clerk to address the issue of use of glass bottles as edging on allotments plots within his current policy update.

Resolved: The Council Services Officer to approach the tenant with regard to use of glass bottles as plot edging during her forthcoming site visit.

Resolved: The Council Services Officer to approach the tenant of the plot referred to as appearing abandoned during her forthcoming site visit.

Ros Taylor, Wattsfield Site Representative, referred to a gap in the fence on the site which the Council Services Officer had previously undertaken to look into. The Council Services Officer explained that she first needed to discuss the matter with the Town Clerk to check ownership of the panel which had been removed. It was her understanding that boundary was the Town Council's.

Resolved: The Council Services Officer to discuss the matter of the gap in the fence on Wattsfield allotment with the Town Clerk prior to addressing the issue.

Gwen Tordoff, Castle Hags Site Representative, referred to reports of rats on the site. The Council Services Officer informed the Committee that she had spoken earlier in the day with the Pest Control technician who intended to bring another colleague with him next time he visited for a second opinion. She referred to the problems associated with rat control and to the laws with regard to use of poison, which were soon to become even tighter. This was a continuing struggle and there were limitations as to what could be done. The fact, however, that more plots were being let was acknowledged, which meant that there were less hiding places for rodents.

Resolved: The Council Services Officer to raise the matter with the Pest Control technician.

Jon Cox, Castle Hags Extension Site Representative, informed the Committee of a rabbit problem along the bottom fence line of the site, where one keen allotment holder had lost all of his produce. This committed tenant had, sadly, suggested that he may give up his plot, and Jon had promised to discuss with the Committee the possibility of replacing that fence line. The Council Services Officer undertook to re-visit the matter and potentially to work on this in partnership with Cemeteries, although the question was raised as to whether Cadent should also play a part in discussions. The Council Services also referred to "Grazers" rabbit repellent, an organic spray, which Ros Taylor had suggested worked successfully, and for the potential for the Council to provide this to those tenants affected. She further suggested that tenants may need to consider netting their plots themselves, pointing out that allotments would never be free of rabbits. The Town Clerk referred to the expense of

fencing land which was not owned by the Town Council. He felt that, moving forward, there was a need to discuss the ownership of the land, which currently belonged to Westmorland and Furness Council.

Resolved: The Council Services Officer to re-visit the matter of rabbits on Castle Haggs Extension and potentially to work on the matter in partnership with Cemeteries.

Resolved: Moving forward, the Town Clerk to discuss the ownership of allotment land with Westmorland and Furness Council.

Cllr A Finch took the opportunity to seek an update in relation to cockerels and noise from Coley Barn. The Council Services Officer explained that, although noise could still be heard, it was not as bad as it had been in the past.

Cllr Finch also asked about the tap which the Townscape Officer had been going to install at Greenside. The Council Services Officer did not think that the work had been carried out as yet and undertook to follow up the matter. The Town Clerk drew attention to the fact that the water troughs at Canal Head were working well and had been very much welcomed by the tenants on that site. The Council Services Officer added that officers were being more proactive with regard to water meter readings on all sites.

Resolved: The Council Services Officer to follow up the matter of the installation of a tap at Greenside.

Resolved: To note the verbal reports from site representatives.

The meeting closed at 7.45 p.m.