

Kendal Town Council

Town Hall, Highgate, Kendal LA9 4ED
www.kendaltowncouncil.gov.uk



Minutes of the meeting of the Allotments Committee meeting held on Monday, 28 March 2022 at the Town Hall (Georgian Room), Highgate, Kendal, 7.00 pm.

Cllr G Archibald (Vice Chair)	Present	Cllr A Finch (Chair)	Present
Cllr S Coleman	Present	Cllr C Hardy	Absent
Cllr J Cornthwaite	Present	Cllr D Miles	Absent

Site Representatives present

Canal Head	Deborah Allison
Underley Road	Chris Rowley
Wattsfield	Ros Taylor

In attendance: Chris Bagshaw (Town Clerk), Janine Holt (Council Services Officer), Pierre Labat, (Townscape Officer).

A27/21/22 Apologies

None

A28/21/22 Declarations of Interest

Cllr Finch reminded the Committee of his existing interest in item 6 (poly tunnels). All present councillors observed their interest in item 7 (Nobles Rest), because they are also members of South Lakeland District Council (SLDC).

A29/21/22 Exclusion of Press and Public (Public Bodies Admission to Meetings Act 1960)

No issues were considered for exclusion.

A30/21/22 Minutes of the Previous Meeting

The Committee received the minutes of the previous meeting held on 29 November 2021

Resolved: To accept them as a true record.

A31/21/22 Review of Spend against Budget

Councillors welcomed the latest format of the report, which answered the queries from previous meetings. The Council Services Officer reported that she expected a slight overspend on water, due to unforeseen and excessive use at Greenside. The Committee considered the nature of this use, and the difficulty of monitoring it. Two proposed controls were discussed – a cattle trough system and a push-tap system. The Council Services Officer confirmed that she would be writing to tenants to remind them of their duty not to use water excessively. It was agreed that up to six new push-taps should be installed to reduce

the risk of water loss. The Townscape Officer estimated around £40 per tap with additional costs for infrastructure.

Resolved: To fit new push-taps at Greenside to reduce water use.

Resolved: To accept the report.

A32/21/22 Poly Tunnel Policy

The Committee considered an update to the Poly-tunnel policy which allowed for slightly larger structures, and devolved the power to determine whether a structure was compliant to Council officers. There was some discussion about the sustainability of some plastics, and it was noted that it remained policy for all structures to be removed at the end of a tenancy. The Council Services Officer confirmed that she would be monitoring the extent of poly-tunnel use across the estate during her site visits, including an assessment of any legacy structures which might be considered anomalous.

Resolved: To accept the amendments and adopt the Policy.

A33/21/22 Nobles Rest/Town Head View boundary

The Clerk reported an issue which had arisen with the Council's landowner at Town Head View allotments. A wall forming the boundary of the Nobles Rest park has collapsed and SLDC officers are suggesting that it forms part of the boundary of the allotment and therefore is the liability of the Town Council. A figure of £1,400 has been suggested as a likely cost. However, the Clerk has observed that the wall does not form the boundary of the allotment – this being an adjacent post and wire fence. Noting their conflict of interest as SLDC councillors, too, the councillors on the committee were of the view that a third party determination of the issue would be required. Similar issues might also arise at other sites – Canal Head, Castle Higgs, Wattsfield and Underley were cited as potential problem sites where the boundary was effectively a party wall. The current tenancy with the District does not specify any boundary treatments.

Resolved: To recommend that the Town Council seeks legal advice on the precise extent of the liabilities for boundary maintenance on all the allotments where SLDC is either the landowner or the neighbouring party, and to work with colleagues at SLDC to resolve the issue.

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A34/21/22 Site Representatives Reports

The rep from Canal Head reported a failure in the rabbit fence in a corner of the site. The Townscape Officer confirmed he would attend and fix as required.

The Wattsfield rep sought clarification of the timescale for the fencing installation. The Council Services Officer confirmed it would be in May for the side quoted. Subsequent sides of fencing were subject to the quoting process, which was causing delays. The committee confirmed that it was happy for the Council Services Officer to complete their best endeavours in obtaining the necessary value for money, and that the subsequent quotations can be approved by the Chair if within the required parameters of Financial regulations.

The Underley rep queried whether the Town Council had been asked to pay for the tree damage caused by Storm Arwen. The Council Services Officer confirmed that no request for payment had been received from SLDC.

Resolved: To note the reports and delegate the decision on Wattsfield fencing appropriately.

A35/21/22 Project Updates

The Council Services Officer reported that the Waiting List was static, with new applicants roughly equal to the recent letting of plots. Five plots were currently vacant, 15 had been let since the last meeting and 7 tenants were in arrears with their rent. Appropriate termination notice letters will be sent out at the year end if these accounts are not settled.

- A quote was awaited from a firm specialising in soil surveys for the extent of asbestos contamination at Underley Hil.
- The gabions at Coley Barn had been successfully installed.
- A new pest control contractor has been commissioned to deal with the backlog of complaints about rats across the estate.
- Regular meetings with Site Reps are to be re-established, and the Waste into Wellbeing project will be one of the issues considered.
- The Canal Head project had been revisited, and a revised specification had trimmed £8,000 from the cost. Following trial soil quality pits, it had been suggested that the full import of new top soil was unnecessary, and the necessity for heavy tractor work was much less than first thought. The new cost was £16,843 ex VAT. There was some discussion about the desirability of maintaining a light touch across the new plots, in terms of machinery, but it was suggested that some of the saving could be deployed to ensure any particularly problematic roots or stumps could be ground out.
- It was suggested that new tenants might be offered a time limited concession if they were taking on a plot that was not spade-ready.

There was some discussion about the necessity and imminence of regular site visits, and the Council Services Officer that these would take place in conjunction with the Chair and any councillors who were interested during April.

Issues were raised about tyres and the use of black plastic as a weed barrier, and it was noted that this was usually picked up in inspection if it was problematic. An issue with a tenant displaying anti-social behaviour was considered, and this too would be picked up during inspections.

Resolved: To note the report and accept the revised costings for Canal Head with the additional resource for grinding and the time limited concessions as required.

A36/21/22 Project Updates Cockerels

The Council Services Officer reported that she had received some serious complaints about the nuisance of cockerels on Coley Barn. It was noted that although the Council did not generally allow cockerels on the estate, a dispensation had been given to two tenants on Coley Barn in 2015, because they were considered to be keepers of nationally or regionally important rare breed stock. Since then, there had been no further complaints until recently.

She was unaware of the reason, and efforts to identify which cockerels were causing the nuisance had been difficult. The Chair confirmed that there were a number of unauthorised cockerels on the site and that it may be necessary to revisit the ruling which allowed some but not others. The Committee agreed that this matter should be dealt with with some urgency and that it would be appropriate to hold an additional meeting of the Committee with this issue as the sole item. Councillors on the Committee with a specific interest in hens and cockerels on the site would be considered to have a pecuniary interest for the purposes of the Localism Act 2011.

Resolved: To arrange an extraordinary meeting of the Committee with the presence of cockerels on the allotment estate as the single agenda item. Background papers covering the legal position and history of the Council's provision would need to be prepared. A date would be arranged in April.

The meeting closed at 20.40