

KENDAL TOWN COUNCIL

Allotments Committee

**Monday 9th December 2019 at 7.00 pm
in The Mayor's Parlour, Town Hall, Kendal**

- PRESENT** Councillors Alvin Finch (Chair & Mayor), Dave Miles (Vice Chair) and Michele Miles.
- Councillor Chris Rowley was present for item 8 on the agenda (Biodiversity on Allotments) and Chris Banks, an allotment holder from Town View for item 6 (Rabbits on Town View).
- Site Reps:
Elizabeth Kelly - Castle Drive
Deborah Allison – Canal Head
- APOLOGIES** Councillor Stephen Coleman and Janine Holt, Assistant to the Town Clerk.
- OFFICERS** Pierre Labat (Townscape Manager) and Nicky King (Council Secretary)
- 640/19/20 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**
- Members of the public were in attendance for item 7 on the agenda (Rinkfield Plot Allocation). See below.
- 641/19/20 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**
- The Chair declared an interest in item 9 on the agenda (Approval to Keep Bees on Coley Barn Allotments). Being the person who had made the request to keep bees he stated he would remain in the room but would not speak on the item.
- 642/19/20 MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 23RD SEPTEMBER 2019**
- The Chairman presented the minutes of the meeting held on 23rd September 2019, which had been approved by full Council on 4th November 2019.
- RESOLVED** That the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 23rd September 2019 be accepted as a correct record.
- MATTERS ARISING** (Not on Agenda)
- 643/19/20 Site Reps Attending Meetings**
It was pointed out that the names of site reps attending Committee meetings are not generally recorded in the minutes. This will be included in future.
- 644/19/20 Minute 386/19/20 – Unsatisfactory Plots**
Janine Holt has taken photographs of every unsatisfactory plot.

645/19/20 Minute 388/19/20 – Electric KTC Van
Janine Holt will provide costings for a new electric van at the next meeting.

RESOLVED Janine Holt to provide costings for a new electric van at the next meeting.

646/19/20 Minute 390/19/20 – Managing Allotments in an Environmental Way
Janine Holt has been in contact with Gareth Candlin from SLDC who will pass the request on to the Development Management Team.

647/19/20 Minute 397/19/20 – Noticeboards
Two noticeboards have been purchased and installed at Sedbergh Road and Castle Hags.

648/19/20 **OFFICER PROJECT UPDATE**

Members considered and noted the Project Update prepared by Janine Holt.

649/19/20 **PROGRESS REPORT ON RABBITS AT TOWN VIEW**

Members considered a report prepared by Janine Holt regarding the problem of rabbits on Town View Allotments. Professional advice has been sought with a company with over 30 years' experience in rural pest control. The advice received is that two day clearance would be required at a cost of £1,225 plus VAT. Members were asked to consider the funding request.

A general discussion then ensued. Pierre described the work that has been carried out to the fence line and advised the rabbit fence is now secure, however the rabbits are still very active. It was noted that no company is able to guarantee 100% that the rabbits will not return to site following eradication. Concern was expressed at the cost, especially when no guarantee can be given that the problem will be solved. Councillor Rowley also had a concern that a precedent may be set in future if other sites experience a problem. It was noted that the breeding season for rabbits is Feb-Sept. Members decided that if the rabbits are not eradicated now they will breed and multiply again in the spring. The Chair proposed that approval be granted on this one occasion in order to show a commitment to the tenants, however the success of the clearance will need to be reviewed. The work should be carried out in January before the breeding season starts. This was seconded by D Miles and carried unanimously.

RESOLVED That the funding request of £1225 be approved to clear Town View of rabbits. The work to be arranged to take place in January before the breeding season starts.

650/19/20 **RINKFIELD PLOT ALLOCATION**

The following members of the public were in attendance for this item:

- Tony Hayton, a long-standing tenant of plot 3 at Rinkfield
- Neil Peace who has been at the top of the waiting list for six months

Committee were asked to consider the allocation of a relinquished plot at Rinkfield (plot 17). Each individual site has a waiting list and vacant plots are allocated as and when they become available to the person at the top of the list. Prospective tenants are offered the new available plot and are not permitted to identify individual plots they require.

An unwritten policy exists allowing existing tenants to swap plots to another one on the same site. The reasoning behind this policy is that a plot is being relinquished and does not affect the waiting list. In the past existing tenants who have expressed a desire to swap plots have taken priority over prospective tenants, especially if there are good reasons.

Members were advised that plot 17 on Rinkfield has been relinquished. Neil Peace has been top of the waiting list for 6 months and had contacted Janine to express his desire for this particular plot due to disability issues. Janine was also approached by Tony Hayton, a longstanding tenant, who wished to swap his plot for the relinquished plot. He wished to swap plots due to deteriorating health and a requirement for a smaller sized plot.

Both interested parties were granted the opportunity to make a representation and put forward their case for being allocated plot 17.

Tony Hayton commented that it has always been practice that when a plot is relinquished existing tenants may swap plots. He explained that due to disability issues he is finding it difficult to manage his current plot which is very large and would like a smaller one.

Neil Peace, the gentleman at the top of the waiting list, explained that he assumed he would be offered a plot as soon as one became available. He had only become aware of the unwritten policy a couple of months ago and had questioned the fairness of the approach. He had a particular preference for plot 17 as he has mobility issues and the plot has raised beds and disability access is good. There is also a water pipe on the plot.

During the representations Members became aware of new information; that the tenant of plot 19 would also be relinquishing their plot.

Members were presented with two options for consideration:

1. To allow the existing tenant to swap allotments. The relinquished plot (plot 3) to be offered to the next on the waiting list.
2. To not allow the swap of allotment and to offer the vacant plot (plot 17) to the gentleman at the top of the waiting list.

Following a general discussion the Chair suggested that, before a final decision is made, Neil Peace attends Rinkfield site to look at plot 19 and consider whether it would be suitable for his needs. He added that the plot could be split if it was too big. He explained that he was endeavouring to reach a compromise and ensure both parties are allocated the most suitable plots for their requirements.

It was highlighted that written notice to quit is required from the tenant of plot 19. The matter will be considered again and a final decision made in the next few weeks, rather than waiting for the next Committee meeting.

Elizabeth Kelly raised her concern regarding unwritten rules and asked how this could be addressed to avoid a similar situation arising in the future. The Chair shared her concern and will address the matter with Janine.

RESOLVED

1. That the gentleman at the top of the waiting list will visit Rinkfield site and consider whether plot 19 would be suitable for his needs. Final decision regarding plot allocation to be made following that visit.
2. The Chair will address the issue of unwritten rules with Janine Holt.

651/19/20

PROMOTING BIODIVERSITY ON ALLOTMENTS

At the September Allotments Committee meeting it was agreed to move to a more diverse approach towards keeping allotments. Historically tidy, traditional looking allotment plots have been encouraged, however Committee acknowledged this view is outdated and wished to encourage biodiversity. A working group was subsequently formed to discuss the matter further. Elizabeth Kelly, site rep for Castle Drive and a member of the working group, explained to Members the work undertaken so far. She talked about what is meant by the term 'biodiversity' and the difference between biodiversity and a neglected plot. Councillor Rowley, also a member of the working group, explained the aspiration to reduce digging and work towards a no dig policy.

Deborah Allison (site rep for Canal Head) queried whether part of the strategy would be to increase the flowering element on allotments such as fruit plants. Councillor Rowley commented that biodiversity is a very complex concept. Whilst the working group would want to promote flowering plants, they would not wish to see this take over the growing of produce. He added that one task would be to produce guidelines to distinguish between neglected sites and ones which are biodiverse.

The use of slug pellets was also discussed. Councillor Rowley commented that on the whole the use of blue pellets would be discouraged, adding that slugs would be less of a problem on a biodiverse site. He acknowledged that there is a balance to consider.

Deborah Allison also queried the stance regarding bee keeping and expressed an interest in this respect. The Chair advised that she would need to apply. Whilst some plots are suitable, others are not.

The working group will shortly be meeting again. Deborah Allison was invited to attend and details will be provided to her prior to the meeting.

652/19/20 APPROVAL TO KEEP BEES ON COLEY BARN ALLOTMENTS

Due to his earlier declaration of interest, the Chair handed over to Councillor D Miles for this item.

Members considered the request to keep bees on Coley Barn allotments. It was noted that tenants have been approached and no objections have been received. The local beekeeping association has visited the site and approved the location. The tenant will undergo training before purchasing the bees. He will work in partnership with the other tenant on Coley Barn who has approval to keep bees.

Members agreed they wished to encourage bee keeping and granted approval. The amount of hives permitted on one site is an item for future consideration.

RESOLVED That Committee approve the request to keep bees on Coley Barn allotments. The amount of hives permitted on one site to be considered.

653/19/20 RINKFIELD FENCING

Pierre advised that he had obtained two quotations for the fencing at Rinkfield (a third had been requested but was unable to quote due to personal reasons):

1. Hanafin & Sons Ltd - £8,729.35.
2. AK Fencing - £8,040.00. This will include the supply of rabbit fencing. A separate cost of £665 for a new gate had also been quoted.

Pierre explained that a substantial amount of work is required. Standard fencing is not suitable and the site requires 2.4m fencing to ensure security due to ground levels. He will need to clear existing fencing regardless of which quotation is accepted.

The Chair proposed that the quotation from AK Fencing be accepted. This was seconded by Councillor M Miles and carried unanimously.

RESOLVED That the quotation in the sum of £8,040 from AK Fencing be accepted for Rinkfield fencing.

654/19/20 ITEMS FOR THE NEWSLETTERSpring edition

News from the biodiversity working group (date of meetings/invitation to attend). Pierre requested that the promotion of bee keeping be emphasised.

655/19/20 REVIEW OF SPEND AGAINST BUDGET 2019/20

Members noted the Budgetary Control Statement to 30 November 2019.

ANY OTHER BUSINESS**656/19/20**Castle Haggs Extension

Pierre reported a problem with youths causing damage at Castle Haggs Extension. The problem is getting worse and has been reported to the police.

Members were advised that fencing to the back of the allotments adjacent to the cemetery is in need of repair. Pierre has discussed new posts with a contractor to make the fencing more secure and advised that £300 plus VAT would be required to renew the posts. The Chair proposed that this expenditure be approved. This was seconded by Councillor M Miles and carried.

Two options were also put forward for the replacement of 25m of fencing at Castle Haggs. One option was for stock fence with barbed wire, or deer fencing which was the more expensive option at £750. Members disliked the idea of barbed wire. Councillor D Miles proposed the use of deer fencing. This was seconded by Councillor M Miles and carried.

The total cost of both items of work will be £1,050, this may be reduced if both elements are carried out together. Janine Holt will be asked to consider the budget allocation.

Composting

Councillor Rowley thanked Pierre for his time and assistance in establishing a compost bin for use by the People's Café. Pierre noted that there is now a site at Sedbergh Road allotments for Age UK which will be used to promote composting to the public.

RESOLVED

That expenditure of £1,050 be approved for new posts to fencing at Castle Haggs Extension and replacement of 25m of fencing. Janine Holt to consider budget allocation.

657/19/20**DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

Monday 23rd March 2020 at 7pm

The meeting closed at 8.40pm.

Summary of Information, Resolutions and Recommendations to Council

Min	Subject	Information/Resolution/Recommendation to Council	
645	Electric KTC Van	RES	Janine Holt to provide costings for a new electric van at the next meeting.
649	Rabbits at Town View	RES	That the funding request of £1225 be approved to clear Town View of rabbits. The work to be arranged to take place in January before the breeding season starts.
650	Rinkfield Plot Allocation	RES	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. That the gentleman at the top of the waiting list will visit Rinkfield site and consider whether plot 19 would be suitable for his needs. Final decision regarding plot allocation to be made following that visit. 2. The Chair will address the issue of unwritten rules with Janine Holt.
652	Approval to keep bees on Coley Barn Allotments	RES	That Committee approve the request to keep bees on Coley Barn allotments. The amount of hives permitted on one site to be considered.
653	Rinkfield fencing	RES	That the quotation in the sum of £8,040 from AK Fencing be accepted for Rinkfield fencing.
656	Castle Haggs Extension	RES	That expenditure of £1,050 be approved for new posts to fencing at Castle Haggs Extension and replacement of 25m of fencing. Janine Holt to consider budget allocation.