

KENDAL TOWN COUNCIL

Allotments Committee

**Monday 28th September 2020 at 7.00 pm
(Via Teleconferencing)**

- PRESENT** Councillors Alvin Finch (Chair & Mayor), Dave Miles (Vice Chair), Giles Archibald, Michele Miles and Stephen Coleman
- Also in attendance:
Gwen Tordoff – Castle Hags Site Rep
Deborah Allison – Canal Head Site Rep
Ros Taylor – Wattsfield Site Rep
Charlotte Wight – Allotment holder, Plot 12 Rinkfield
Councillor Chris Rowley – Allotment holder, Underley Road
Jason Rushworth – Reporter, Newsquest
- APOLOGIES** None.
- OFFICERS** Janine Holt (Assistant to the Town Clerk), Nicky King (Council Secretary) and Pierre Labat (Townscape Manager)
- 270/20/21 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**
- None.
- 271/20/21 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**
- Councillors Coleman and Finch declared an interest in item 10 on the agenda (Annual Rent Review) as allotment holders.
- 272/20/21 MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 22ND JUNE 2020**
- The Chairman presented the minutes of the meeting held on 22nd June 2020, which had been approved by full Council on 3rd August 2020.
- Councillor Finch proposed that the minutes be accepted as a correct record of the meeting. This was seconded by Councillor Coleman and carried unanimously.
- RESOLVED** That the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 22nd June 2020 be accepted as a correct record.
- MATTERS ARISING (Not on Agenda)**
- 273/20/21** Minute Ref 087/20/21 – Noticeboards/Rat Problem
Councillor Coleman asked whether the press release had been issued in respect of the rat problem and control measures being undertaken. Janine will action as soon as possible.
- Minute Ref 088/20/21 – Polytunnels
Janine advised that she had met with a tenant in respect of a greenhouse which is over the permitted size. The tenant had not

realised permission was required and will submit a retrospective application.

RESOLVED

Janine to action a press release in respect of the rat problem and control measures being undertaken asap.

274/20/21**ANNUAL REVIEW OF THE TERMS OF REFERENCE**

Members considered the Terms of Reference for the Committee. One point raised was clarity around the issue of site reps voting at meetings. The Terms currently refer to 'co-opted members' and it was agreed to amend the wording to make it clear that site reps can vote on any matters other than expenditure.

RESOLVED

Terms of Reference to be amended to ensure clarity around the issue of site reps voting at meetings.

275/20/21**PROJECT UPDATE**

Janine presented the Project Update and highlighted the following points:

- Increase in people joining the waiting list. Currently the list stands at 215, an increase of 54 from the last meeting.
- Site visits have been undertaken on 2 occasions with a further visit scheduled for 14th October.
- 4 notices to quit have been issued since the last meeting.
- There are no vacant plots currently. 7 plots have been offered with a deadline of 30th September. To date only 2 have replied. If replies are not received by the deadline the plots will be offered to the next person on the list. Ros Taylor has been asking tenants on Wattsfield whether they want to split plots.

Rats

A large increase in rat activity has been experienced this year. Castle Hags and Castle Hags Extension is currently experiencing a very high volume of rats. It is thought that they are attracted by the presence of sunflowers.

There is no longer rat infestation at Coley Barn.

The Pest Control Officer has been requested to maintain Rinkfield, Castle Hags, Castle Hags Extension and Coley Barn on a routine basis. Regular reports have also been requested.

Anti-Social Behaviour

Castle Hags and Extension have seen previous problems of anti-social behaviour, stolen produce is a particular problem. The idea of a combination lock on the gates has been floated.

Rabbits at Town View

Following the last meeting Janine contacted SLDC to request permission to allow a marksman on site to shoot the rabbits. To date permission has not been granted.

New Tenants are informed about the problem and advised to rabbit proof their own plots. The Townscape Manager regularly checks the integrity of the fencing.

Allotment Maps and Numbering

Simon Unsworth (Mayor's Attendant) will commence mapping the allotments and produce an accurate map of each site. Following this exercise the database will be updated and new plot numbers issued if required.

Bonfires on Allotments

Janine advised she had contacted the National Association for guidance following the last meeting. They referred back to the Local Authority. The clause currently in tenancy agreements relating to bonfires states:

4.9 The Tenant is only permitted to burn non-compostable garden waste from their allotment. Bonfires must be kept to a minimum and not cause a nuisance to other plot holders, neighbouring residents or neighbouring businesses.

It was agreed Committee need to consider their position further.

Abuse to Staff

Janine has spoken to CALC who advised they do not have a policy available in relation to abuse to staff. Advice from the National Association is to follow what is in the tenancy agreement. The clause currently included reads:

Verbal or physical abuse to Kendal Town Council staff will not be tolerated under any circumstances. This will result in immediate termination of your tenancy.

Janine will discuss the matter further with the new Town Clerk when they take up position. One point highlighted by CALC was the need for a lone worker policy. She will check this is in place also.

Councillor Coleman referred to the rats on Castle Hags and asked that information and advice in this respect be put on all sites which have a noticeboard. With regard to abuse to staff, he suggested a strong letter be sent to any individual that abuses a member of staff advising that if a further incident occurs they will risk termination of their tenancy.

Councillor Archibald reported the presence of rats on Greenside. He also commented that he would want to see the burning of waste on sites kept to a minimum given concern about climate change. In respect of the problem of verbal abuse to staff, he advised informing the individual they are being abusive and risk termination of their tenancy and ending the conversation.

Councillor Finch advised that no rabbits have been seen on Town View recently. He suggested any shooting of rabbits be put on hold for the time being.

Pierre updated Members in respect of works at Castle Hags Extension to remove sunflowers after rats were seen eating the sunflowers. Strimming work has also been undertaken at Town View to help control rabbits.

There was a general discussion in respect of bonfires on allotments and whether they should be allowed. Councillor Rowley commented that it is a very difficult issue which needs to be managed gently. Some piles of twigs etc are needed to support biodiversity. He suggested placing some articles on the subject in the newsletter. It was agreed to include an article on the topic of bonfires stating that Committee wish to keep them to a minimum but for various reasons will not be banning them altogether.

Deborah Allison asked whether it would be acceptable to lay small logs from fruit trees over the fence adjoining the wood at Canal Head instead of burning them. Janine advised that she would need to check and commented that wood piled up can attract rats and add to the problem.

Ros Taylor observed that the presence of bird feeders can also encourage rats. Janine will include this in information passed on to tenants.

RESOLVED

1. Janine to discuss the issue of abuse to staff with the new Town Clerk. She will also check a lone worker policy is in place.
2. Article to be included in the newsletter on the topic of bonfires.
3. Janine to advise re placing of logs from fruit trees on land adjoining Canal Head.

276/20/21

TOWNSCAPE MANAGER WORK UPDATE

The Townscape Manager informed Members of work at plot 8, Rinkfield which has been split and is now ready to let. Further work to split plots was carried out over the summer. He plans to carry out structural work to the fence at Crow Tree over the winter. As this will cost in excess of £1,500 an additional quote will be required which Pierre will present at the next meeting.

Pierre had spoken with a contractor in respect of asbestos on sites. He suggested that it is the wrong time of year to carry out a survey due to vegetation. The survey will therefore be undertaken in the New Year and a report will be presented to Committee. It was agreed that if anything particularly urgent was highlighted in the survey report Councillor Finch would have authority to action.

Janine commented that the fencing contractor for Crow Tree could also be requested to look at Castle Hags. Pierre will obtain quotes for the next meeting.

Councillor Archibald stressed the importance of the issue of asbestos removal and asked how site reps and tenants could be engaged in the exercise. He added that people should be informed the survey is being carried out and their input invited. Councillor Finch advised

that he had spoken to Janine about holding a site reps meeting and agreed to organise this as soon as possible.

Councillor Rowley thanked everyone who responded to the People's Café request for produce. A tonne and a half of fresh produce was received in July, August and September and a further half tonne from Low Sizergh garden. It was agreed to include an article in the newsletter. Councillor Rowley to forward details to Jason Rushworth for a possible article in the Gazette.

RESOLVED

1. Pierre to obtain cost for fencing at Crow Tree for the next meeting.
2. Asbestos survey to be carried out in the New Year and presented to Committee.
3. Pierre to obtain quotes for fencing at Castle Haggs from contractor working on Crow Tree for the next meeting.
4. Site reps meeting to be arranged asap.
5. Article to be included in the newsletter re donation of produce to People's Café. Details to be forwarded to Jason Rushworth also.

277/20/21**REQUEST FOR A POLYTUNNEL ON UNDERLEY ROAD**

Members considered a request for polytunnel at plot 25, Underley Road. It was agreed Janine will ensure all tenants on the site are agreeable. She will also write to residents whose houses back onto plot 25.

RESOLVED

Janine to contact all tenants of Underley Road to check they are agreeable and write to residents whose houses back onto Plot 25.

278/20/21**APPRENTICESHIP OPPORTUNITY**

Councillor Finch raised the possibility of offering an apprenticeship position to assist the Townscape Manager and asked Members to consider the idea. A general discussion ensued and several Members indicated their support in principle. The Townscape Manager agreed it would be useful to have assistance in the case of illness or emergency.

It was agreed Councillor Finch and Janine will explore the possibility further. Discussions to be had with the new Town Clerk and Kendal College.

RESOLVED

Councillor Finch and Janine to explore the possibility of an apprenticeship opportunity.

279/20/21**ANNUAL RENT REVIEW**

Councillor Finch abstained from this item and Councillor D Miles (Vice Chair) chaired the discussion.

Janine advised that it had previously been decided to increase rent by 1p per square metre in 2018, freeze rent in 2019 and increase by 1p per square metre in 2020. Members were asked whether they wished to continue with, or vary, this proposal.

It was noted that the annual rate of increase equates to around 2% per year which is approximately in line with inflation. Councillor Coleman proposed the increase of 1p per square metre and this was passed with 2 abstentions.

The matter of supporting tenants who experience financial hardship and who are unable to afford the rent was discussed. Ideas put forward included the reduction of rent or deferment for a certain length of time, splitting payments over the year to help with cash flow and a waiver scheme. Members agreed that allotments are important for mental health and it should not be the case that someone loses a plot due to poverty. It was agreed that Janine will research what other Councils do in this situation and take some guidance.

RECOMMENDATION That allotment rent be increased by 1p per square metre.

RESOLVED Janine to seek guidance in respect of supporting tenants who are experiencing financial hardship.

280/20/21

ITEMS FOR THE NEWSLETTER

It was agreed to include an article in the allotments newsletter thanking people for looking after allotment sites during a challenging year. Waiting list figures etc to be included. Other items for inclusion are:

- Bonfires.
- Rats.
- Donation of veg
- Advice if experiencing financial hardship
- Advice on aspects of biodiversity
- Asbestos project

281/20/21

REVIEW OF SPEND AGAINST BUDGET 2020/21

Members considered the Budgetary Control Statement for the period ended 31 August 2020.

Pest Control - budget will require increasing for next year as expenditure is going to be significant.

Water charges – water usage should decline throughout the winter.

Walls and fences – any remaining budget will carry into the next financial year as this is an Action Plan project.

Allotment fund – this has previously been earmarked for site improvements and could possibly be used for the asbestos project.

It was agreed to organise a site reps meeting asap so that site improvements can be discussed.

282/20/21**2021/22 BUDGET – REVIEW OF BUDGET REQUIREMENTS AND PROPOSALS FOR ONE-OFF DEVELOPMENT FUND BIDS**

Members discussed budget requirements for 2021/22 and the requirements for one-off Development Fund bids and agreed the following:

- Request Development Fund bid of £5k for the asbestos project.
- Request £1.5k increase in budget for pest control.

Councillor Finch proposed to submit the requests for consideration by Full Council. This was seconded by Councillor Coleman and carried unanimously.

The possibility of replacing the current KTC van with an electric vehicle was raised. It was noted that if the intention was to purchase this in 2021/22 the money would need to be included in this budget. Janine will seek advice from the Treasurer as to when the vehicle would normally be replaced.

Councillor Rowley referred to the Allotment Fund and suggested it would be useful to issue information as to its origin, purpose etc for those that were not aware. Councillor Coleman explained it was originally set aside for purchasing a new site however nothing suitable materialised. It was subsequently decided to utilise the money to bring all sites up to a certain standard.

RECOMMENDATION Request for Development Fund bid for the asbestos project and budget increase for pest control to be submitted to Council.

RESOLVED Janine to seek advice from the Treasurer re normal timeframe for replacing the KTC van.

283/20/21**ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

It was noted that a request to keep hens had been received from an allotment holder. The tenant has been informed that further guidance is being sought and the matter will be brought to Committee at the next meeting scheduled for December.

RESOLVED Guidance on the keeping of hens on allotments to be sought and discussed at the next Committee meeting.

284/20/21**DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

Monday 14th December 2020 at 7pm.

The meeting closed at 8.55pm.

Summary of Information, Resolutions and Recommendations to Council

Min	Subject	Information/Resolution/Recommendation to Council	
273	Matters Arising – Rat problem	RES	Janine to action a press release in respect of the rat problem and control measures being undertaken asap.
274	Annual Review of the Terms of Reference	RES	Terms of Reference to be amended to ensure clarity around the issue of site reps voting at meetings.
275	Project Update	RES	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Janine to discuss the issue of abuse to staff with the new Town Clerk. She will also check a lone worker policy is in place. 2. Article to be included in the newsletter on the topic of bonfires. 3. Janine to advise re placing of logs from fruit trees on land adjoining Canal Head.
276	Townscape Manager Work Update	RES	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Pierre to obtain cost for fencing at Crow Tree for the next meeting. 2. Asbestos survey to be carried out in the New Year and presented to Committee. 3. Pierre to obtain quotes for fencing at Castle Hags from contractor working on Crow Tree for the next meeting. 4. Site reps meeting to be arranged asap. 5. Article to be included in the newsletter re donation of produce to People's Café. Details to be forwarded to Jason Rushworth also.
277	Request for a Polytunnel on Underley Road	RES	Janine to contact all tenants of Underley Road to check they are agreeable and write to residents whose houses back onto Plot 25.
278	Apprenticeship Opportunity	RES	Councillor Finch and Janine to explore the possibility of an apprenticeship opportunity.
279	Annual Rent Review	REC RES	<p>That allotment rent be increased by 1p per square metre.</p> <p>Janine to seek guidance in respect of supporting tenants who are experiencing financial hardship.</p>

282	2021/22 Budget	REC	Request for Development Fund bid for the asbestos project and budget increase for pest control to be submitted to Council.
		RES	Janine to seek advice from the Treasurer re normal timeframe for replacing the KTC van.
283	AOB – Hens	RES	Guidance on the keeping of hens on allotments to be sought and discussed at the next Committee meeting.