

Kendal Town Council

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



20 September 2021

To Members of the Allotments Committee

Cllr G Archibald (Vice Chair)	Cllr C Hardy
Cllr S Coleman	Cllr D Miles
Cllr A Finch (Chair)	

You are invited to a non-statutory Working Group meeting of Kendal Town Council Allotments Committee on Monday 27 September 2021 at 7.00pm via Zoom. Kendal. Details of the meeting can be found on the Town Council's website at www.kendaltowncouncil.gov.uk.

Distributed to other members of the Council for information only.

Yours faithfully

Chris Bagshaw
Town Clerk

AGENDA

Public Participation

Any member of the public who wishes to ask a question, make representations or present a deputation or petition at this meeting should apply to do so before the commencement of the meeting. Information on how to make the application is available on the Council's Website - <http://www.kendaltowncouncil.gov.uk/kendal-town-council/statutory-information/guidance-on-public-participation-at-kendal-town-council-meetings/> or by contacting the Town Clerk on 01539 793490.

1. Apologies

To receive and accept any apologies. If accepted, apologies will be considered to be for reasons approved by the council under the terms of local government act 1972, s85.

2. Declarations of Interest

To receive declarations by members and/or co-optees of interests in respect of items on this agenda.

3. Exclusion of Press and Public (Public Bodies Admission to Meetings Act 1960)

To consider whether there are any agenda items during consideration of which the press and public should be excluded.

4. Minutes from the Last Meeting

To receive the minutes of the meeting on 22 March, and affirm them as a true record.

5. Review of Spend against Budget

To consider a report on budget spending.

6. Canal Head Development

To receive an update from the Council Services Officer on the reappropriation of currently unused allotment land at Canal Head.

Background

The Council identified an area of unused allotment land at Canal Head last autumn. The timing coincided with the District Council, as landowners, undertaking some major tree management work in the area, which resulted in the unused land being cleared of tree cover. The Council has commissioned a plan for the site, and in July it was the subject of a site visit. The Council Services Officer will outline the next steps for the project and the Committee will be able to consider the budgetary implications.

7. Rabbit Strategy

To consider a report on the management of rabbits at Wattsfield.

8. Waiting List Update

To consider a report on the waiting list status for all allotments.

9. Projects**a) Tree Works**

Removal of dead tree on plot 5 Shaws Brow and overgrown fruit trees on plot 12, Town View (new tenant).

Estimated cost: £800

b) Coley Barn subsidence

To install stone gabions at Coley Barn, to stabilise the bank between plots on the south east boundary, improve drainage, and allow for the reinstatement of fencing lost through the removal of asbestos panelling.

Estimated cost: £1,500

c) Town View Field extension

To consider a proposal to extend the Town View Field allotment site into the adjacent disused play area.

Background

On the opposite side of the access path, at Town View Field, an enclosed children's play area has been determined as unsuitable for renovation by South Lakeland District Council. The District Council, and the Town Council's Environment and Highways Committee, are investigating alternative locations for a local play area in this ward. The site, in the meantime, has been identified by SLDC as suitable for re-use as an allotment. It is not large, but would be practical for the installation of a number of raised beds, which in turn would be suitable for 'starter plots'. The site is screened from the neighbouring hostel by a new fence, which sit outwith the boundary of the surrounding bow top fence.

Decision Required

Authority is sought to investigate the site further. Costs would be determined by subsequent recommendations based on access, ground conditions and layout.

10. Future Allotment Rents

To consider the allotment rents for the coming year, and to consider the timing of allotment rent calculations for future years.

Background

The Council usually considers the rate of the allotment rents in the September meeting, which precedes the sending out of invoices in November. The allotment year runs from January to December. However this creates a budgeting issue, since the rents are collected in the financial year that is actually planned the previous November, meaning the budget is not based on actual forecast income.

To rectify this, it is suggested that Committee sets a rent for 2022 as usual at this meeting, but that it then sets a rent for 2023 at its meeting in November 2021. In subsequent years the rents should be set 14 months in advance, which allows for more accurate budgeting, and also gives allotment holders more notice of this variation in their tenancy agreements.

It is suggested the rents for 2022 are increased in line with inflation at around 2%.

Allotments Committee

**Monday 22nd March 2021 at 7.00 pm
(Via Zoom)**

PRESENT

Councillors Alvin Finch (Chair & Mayor), Giles Archibald, Michele Miles and Stephen Coleman

Also in attendance:

Councillor Chris Rowley – Allotment holder, Underley Road
Gwen Tordoff – Castle Haggs Site Rep
Elizabeth Kelly – Castle Drive Site Rep
Deborah Allison – Canal Head Site Rep
Tilly and Tim Nicholls – item 7 on Agenda
Kim Baker – Allotment Holder, Greenside (item 7 on Agenda)

APOLOGIES

Councillors Dave Miles and Carol Hardy

OFFICERS

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

708/20/21

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

None.

709/20/21

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

710/20/21

ORDER OF BUSINESS

The Chair proposed that item 7 on the Agenda (Approval of Hens on Greenside) be taken as the next matter. This was agreed.

711/20/21

APPROVAL OF HENS ON GREENSIDE

At the last meeting it was resolved to defer making a decision on the request by Kim Baker to keep hens on Greenside. The reason for the deferral was so that Tim Nicholls and his daughter, Tilly, could be present since Tilly had been instrumental in forming the idea of keeping hens and carrying out research.

Members considered a paper which outlined the background and current policy. It presented options for consideration as (1) to not permit hens on Greenside (withholding currently KTC policy), (2) to allow hens on Greenside, (3) to allow hens with suitable conditions attached and (4) to defer a decision pending findings on the research of the Kendal Fell Acts of 1861 and 1907.

It was noted that the Assistant to the Town Clerk has written to tenants on Greenside. She reported 5 positive responses, 4 negative and 7 expressing concern about vermin. She also advised that the Kendal Fell Act Project Officer is currently unable to access the

archives, therefore the existence of a byelaw for the regulation of activities on Kendal Fell is still unknown. Avian Flu restrictions are to be lifted on 31st March so is no longer a consideration.

Tilly spoke about her research into keeping hens. She outlined the benefits such as increasing biodiversity and reducing carbon footprint and talked about the plan to use chicken feeders designed to prevent other animals accessing the feed and avoid attracting vermin.

The Town Clerk raised the outstanding issue with Kendal Fell Act. He read out an extract from The 1950 Allotments Act which states that on Council land there is an expectation that hens and rabbits may be kept. It further states that Councils can impose restrictions to manage the site properly and ensure the keeping of such animals is not prejudicial to health.

Following a general discussion Councillor Archibald proposed adopting option 3 “to allow hens with suitable conditions attached”. The conditions would include regular monitoring of the vermin situation and consideration of other tenants. A probation period would be set to allow this to take place and Committee would review the situation in 6 months’ time. A maximum of 2 hens was agreed initially and it was stressed that no cockerels will be allowed at any time. The proposal was seconded by Councillor Coleman and carried.

RESOLVED

That Committee agree to allow hens to be kept on Greenside with suitable conditions attached.

712/20/21

MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The Chairman presented the minutes of the meeting held on 14th December 2020.

Councillor Coleman proposed that the minutes be accepted as a correct record of the meeting. This was seconded by Councillor Archibald and carried.

RESOLVED

That the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 14th December 2020 be accepted as a correct record.

713/20/21

PROJECT UPDATE

The Project Update was noted. The Assistant to the Town Clerk reported that sites are generally looking good and the number of problem plots have diminished. The demand for sites has levelled off this quarter, although still remains high. The waiting list currently stands at 234, a decrease of 33 since the last meeting.

The Project Officer is currently undertaking site mapping and tree survey work and a report will be circulated at the next meeting.

Tenants Experiencing Financial Hardship

The Assistant to the Town Clerk presented a draft policy for consideration. The policy set out the procedure for supporting allotment tenants who are experiencing financial hardship. It allows tenants in such circumstances to apply to split their annual invoice into 3 smaller payments. Members were advised of an amendment recommended by the Town Clerk to incorporate clauses relating to GDPR and appeals process.

There was a general discussion during which Members discussed what further support might be offered and the legality of requesting the reason for tenants wishing to give up their plots. The Town Clerk commented that support should be offered "at the discretion of the Council" and suggested having a discretionary fund.

Councillor Coleman proposed that the draft policy be approved with the addition of clauses relating to GDPR and appeals process. This was seconded by Councillor Archibald and carried.

RESOLVED

That the draft policy for Tenants Experiencing Financial Hardship be approved, with the addition of clauses relating to GDPR and appeals process.

714/20/21

ASBESTOS SURVEY

Committee considered results from a recent survey of asbestos on allotments in Kendal. The survey highlighted the presence of asbestos at Rinkfield and Shaws Brow. It recommended the collection and disposal of the profile cement roof sheets forming boundary fences and from shed roofs on these sites.

There is a further issue at Underley Hill where asbestos is known to be present in the ground which makes it hard to easily assess the extent of the problem. The contaminated area has been cordoned off and a specialist contractor is required to carry out further investigative work. The Town Clerk commented that this site requires treating as a special case and advised he will be visiting the site tomorrow.

During a general discussion Members discussed timescale and the implications of the survey results. It was noted that removal of roofs of the pigeon lofts concerned is a major project. As the roofs are currently solid Members debated whether to remove and replace immediately, or upon the tenants of the plots concerned vacating.

Councillor Finch proposed that all asbestos found present on Rinkfield and Shaws Brow be removed as soon as possible. A timetable for removal to be set. This was seconded by Councillor Coleman and carried. It was agreed that budget from the Allotment Fund would be used.

RESOLVED

That all asbestos found present on Rinkfield and Shaws Brow be removed as soon as possible. A timetable for removal to be set. Budget from the Allotment Fund to be used.

715/20/21**APPROVAL OF POLYTUNNEL ON CASTLE HAGGS EXTENSION**

Committee considered a request to erect a polytunnel on Castle Haggs Extension. The size proposed was 4m wide x 7m long.

It was noted that the proposed size is below the current policy of no more than 20% of the size of the plot.

There was a general discussion regarding current policy and whether this presented a fair approach to all sizes of plots. There was a suggestion to set a standard size which would also avoid the necessity of Committee considering individual requests. It was felt this would be unfair of holders of large plots which can accommodate a larger size polytunnel.

Councillor Coleman proposed that the request be approved, subject to the normal provision of contacting other tenants. Tenant to be advised that the polytunnel must not be placed on hardstanding. This was seconded by Councillor Miles and carried with 1 Member against.

The Town Clerk advised that the site is inside the Conservation Area, the implications of which will need checking.

RESOLVED

That Committee approve the request for a polytunnel at Castle Haggs Extension, subject to other tenants being contacted. Conservation Area implications to be checked.

716/20/21**FENCING AT CROW TREE**

Committee were asked to consider three quotes received for fencing at Crow Tree allotments. Councillor Coleman proposed that AK Fencing be chosen as the preferred contractor to carry out the works. This was seconded by Councillor Archibald and carried.

RESOLVED

That AK Fencing be appointed to carry out installation of fencing at Crow Tree allotments.

717/20/21**ADDITIONAL ALLOTMENT LAND**

The Town Clerk reported that work is underway at Canal Head to form new plots. This became a viable project much sooner than anticipated due to SLDC tree management work in the area. The land is currently being cleared and marked out and will provide at least 20 new plots. It was noted that there is currently 21 on the waiting list.

There was a discussion regarding associated costs of the work. The Townscape Manager reported projected costs of £8,980. Extras would bring the total to approximately £10k for all ground work required, including water points. Fencing costs are expected to be in the region of £20k (same specification as at Rinkfield and Wattsfield), bringing the total to around £30k. The Townscape Manager talked

about the removal of tree roots on the land and a method which would avoid costly waste removal.

The Town Clerk commented that post and wire fencing would be a more cost effective alternative to security fence. He also said that the footpath running through the land would need consideration. It was agreed that the Town Clerk will prepare a management plan to include costings, planting regime etc. Vehicle access is to be borne in mind.

Deborah Allison reported some tenants of Canal Head being upset by the lack of notice of planned tree felling. She asked that Committee communicate any such plans with advanced notice in future. The Town Clerk replied that under normal circumstances notices would have been displayed on site, however due to the short notice given by SLDC this had not been possible on this occasion. A discussion ensued regarding the need for a noticeboard at Canal Head. Councillor Finch proposed that this be installed. Councillor Archibald seconded the proposal and it was carried.

RESOLVED

1. Town Clerk to prepare a management plan to include costings, planting regime etc.
2. That a noticeboard be installed at Canal Head Allotments.

718/20/21

REPORTS FROM SITES

Councillor Finch thanked those site reps present for attending and commented that he would encourage reps to attend Committee meetings.

The Assistant to the Town Clerk reported an increase in the number of rats on sites in the last couple of weeks. Reports of rats are responded to immediately and Pest Control routinely visit certain sites. This is likely to be an ongoing problem. Global warming is thought to be the cause of wildlife changing their habits which is seeing an increase in moles, rats and rabbits.

The Townscape Manager commented that allotments have brought much needed wellbeing for tenants during lockdown.

719/20/21

ITEMS FOR THE NEWSLETTER

Items suggested for the summer edition included:

- Canal Head update
- Waste into Wellbeing Scheme
- Facebook page

720/20/21

REVIEW OF SPEND AGAINST BUDGET 2020/21

Members considered the Budgetary Control Statement for the period ended 28th February 2021.

The Assistant to the Town Clerk will request a breakdown of figures in respect of water charges.

Budget remaining under boundary walls and fences heading to be utilised for fencing at Crow Tree.

RESOLVED

The Assistant to the Town Clerk will request a breakdown of figures in respect of water charges.

721/20/21

DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Monday 14th June 2021 at 7pm.

The meeting closed at 9.07pm.

Summary of Information, Resolutions and Recommendations to Council

Min	Subject	Information/Resolution/Recommendation to Council	
711	Approval of hens on Greenside	RES	That Committee agree to allow hens to be kept on Greenside with suitable conditions attached.
713	Tenants experiencing financial hardship	RES	That the draft policy for Tenants Experiencing Financial Hardship be approved, with the addition of clauses relating to GDPR and appeals process.
714	Asbestos Survey	RES	That all asbestos found present on Rinkfield and Shaws Brow be removed as soon as possible. A timetable for removal to be set. Budget from the Allotment Fund to be used.
715	Polytunnel on Castle Haggs Extension	RES	That Committee approve the request for a polytunnel at Castle Haggs Extension, subject to other tenants being contacted. Conservation Area implications to be checked.
716	Fencing at Crow Tree	RES	That AK Fencing be appointed to carry out installation of fencing at Crow Tree allotments.
717	Additional allotment land	RES	1. Town Clerk to prepare a management plan to include costings, planting regime etc. 2. That a noticeboard be installed at Canal Head Allotments.
720	Review of spend against budget 2020/21	RES	The Assistant to the Town Clerk will request a breakdown of figures in respect of water charges.

Kendal Town Council 2021-21 Budget**Allotments**

	<u>Budget</u>	<u>Additional Funding</u>	<u>Actual Exp April - Aug</u>	<u>Remaining Budget</u>	<u>Projected Yr Exp</u>
<u>ALLOTMENTS</u>					
Capital Spending (Asbestos Removal)	£5,000		£1,807	£3,193	
Allotment Exp From Reserves		£7,203			
Landscape Design & Site			£311		
Canal Head Landscape Design			£1,000		
Crow Tree Allotment Fencing			£5,892		
Revenue Spending/Main	£7,806			£3,878	
Improvements & Developments/Repairs			£1,921		
Waste			£307		
General Exp/Equip/Maint			£1,700		
Water	£1,792		£644	£1,148	
Rent	£900		£840	£60	
Pest Control	£2,500		£1,575	£925	
<u>Total</u>	<u>£17,998</u>	<u>£7,203</u>	<u>£15,997</u>	<u>£9,204</u>	<u>£0</u>

June 8th 2021**DRAFT****Strategy for Control of Rabbits at Kendal Allotment Sites****Prepared for Kendal Town Council by Rosalind Taylor (Wattsfield Site Representative)****1. BACKGROUND**

I undertook to write this draft strategy for Kendal Town Council (the council) as a result of rabbits invading Wattsfield Allotment site. The result, at this critical time of year for allotmenters (who are establishing all this year's annual crops) and also in a year when establishment has been challenging due to the cold spring, has been much damage to young plants. Everyone has had to invest in netting to protect young plants where they can, but it is getting harder as plants outgrow their protective netting.

In spite of having informed the council on March 3rd 2021 about the situation, to date no action has been taken to exclude them, resulting in the intense frustration of allotmenters.

Rabbits are now on several allotment sites. Rabbits are also rife around Kendal. For example, on a recent visit to the field below Queen's Road, and above South View Lane, 32 rabbits were counted and many holes are apparent. There are many on the fields at Maudes Meadow and St Thomas' Church. The 'do nothing' option is no longer acceptable to allotment holders. I believe the council needs a rabbit control strategy.

In the same way that governments will now prepare for future pandemics, the council needs to prepare to act when needed – which is NOW.

This draft aims to outline the options available to Kendal Town Council as a discussion paper (but excluding the 'do nothing' option).

1. SUMMARY
<p>The council should have a written policy for dealing with rabbits on allotments which can be initiated as soon as a problem is detected.</p> <p>The council should open discussions with interested groups</p> <p>It is recommended that a fact sheet is put together to inform relevant land/property owners and interested members of the public of the impact that wild rabbits in town have, and of everyone's rights and responsibilities. This can also be posted on the council website and relevant social media sites.</p> <p>The council must ensure that they have the complete cooperation and support of SLDC so that control measures can start immediately.</p> <p>Methods of control should be carried out in this order of priority:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Electric netting 2) Long netting 3) Permanent wire-mesh netting

The council should own the equipment needed for electric and long netting. They should have a list of people who can be called upon to erect the netting as soon as a problem is reported.

The council should include allotmenters in the implementation of the chosen control method, with the expectation that they will assist where possible. These expectations should be made clear to all allotmenters through consultation. Although not all will be able to undertake heavy manual tasks, help can also be provided for checking traps every day and so on.

The Tenancy Agreement should include the council's obligation to take all reasonable measures to provide a vermin proof plot.

2. KENDAL CITIZEN'S JURY

The recent Citizen's Jury recommendations came out strongly in favour of more allotments for the town:

1) Allotments: we need more space for people to grow their own food:

a) We must develop more allotments. The council must identify more land suitable for use as allotments.

<https://www.kendalclimatejury.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/KendalClimateChangeJuryRecomendations.pdf>

At Canal Head, 25 new allotment sites are in the process of being developed, but Canal Head has a well-known rabbit problem, too.

How is the council going to manage an additional 5% of sites when they are not in a position to manage the ones they have?

3. THE PROBLEM

It is not necessary to say that wild rabbits and allotments do not mix – they don't. However, it seems that there are recent developments which exacerbate the problem:

- a. Rabbit burrows are rarely on the allotment site, so rabbit control has to be done with the property owner's consent, unless they can be caught on the allotment site.
- b. Local property owners/occupiers, who have not grown up in the countryside, may not wish to see or hear of rabbits being harmed.
- c. As significant landowners/managers of allotment sites and/or adjoining land, SLDC has taken the attitude that they will not cooperate in removing/controlling rabbits.

4. GOVERNMENT GUIDANCE

The Government has issued clear guidance about wild rabbits, responsibilities, and options for control. The extracts below are taken from:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/rabbits-how-to-control-numbers>

a. LANDOWNERS' RESPONSIBILITIES

Government Guidance states that "You must obey the law to control rabbit numbers on your property or land. England ... was declared a rabbit clearance area under the Pests Act 1954.

You must control rabbits on your land in this area. If this is not possible you must stop them causing damage to adjoining crops by putting up rabbit proof fencing. If you don't take action the Secretary of State for the Environment can [enforce control and prosecute](#) if this action is not taken."

As such it is the land/property owner's responsibility to ensure that rabbits originating on their property are controlled, and it is an offence not to do so. However, it is not the modern way to be heavy handed about issues such as this, which can be quite emotive.

It is recommended that a fact sheet is put together to inform land/property owners and interested members of the public of the impact that wild rabbits in town have, and of everyone's rights and responsibilities. This can also be posted on the councils' (KTC and SLDC) websites and relevant social media sites.

SLDC should also be informed of their responsibilities and should share in the development and costs associated with the campaign.

It is recommended that the council open discussions with interested groups. These groups will also have an interest in the smooth operation of allotment sites.

b. CONTROLLING RABBITS

You can control rabbits using these methods:

i. Gas

Excerpt from: HSE - Gassing of Rabbits and Vertebrate Pests

<https://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/ais22.pdf>

All moisture-activated gassing compounds are classified as 'very toxic' chemicals and will expose operators to health risks when used. Before using these compounds, you should consider other methods of pest control or other pesticides which present a lower risk. For example: Rabbits – shooting, lamping, ferreting or fencing.

It is recommended that gassing is NOT an option for control

ii. Traps and Snares

Government Guidance states that "it is an offence to cause unnecessary suffering to a rabbit caught in a trap or snare."

Furthermore it says:

You can use cage traps, drop box traps or spring traps, but you must:

- check traps once a day
- humanely despatch any rabbits you catch
- only use [approved spring traps](#)

You must not:

- place traps where they will be exposed to severe weather
- place them near a fox earth or badger sett
- use self-locking snares

Another very effective trapping method (although not included in the Government Guidelines) is known as '**Long Netting**' or '**Gate Netting**'. This is described in <https://www.evergreenrabbitcontrol.co.uk/methods-of-rabbit-control/longnetting-for-rabbits/>

"Large lengths of especially designed nets are strategically placed to trap rabbits as they pass from one area to another. Once trapped by the meshes of the net, they are humanely dispatched. This method can be used during the day and at night, in a variety of circumstances with great results." ... "This method of catching rabbits has the advantage of causing virtually no disturbance whatsoever, as no lights are used, and under the cover of darkness the job is carried out silently."

There are allotmenters who grew up catching rabbits and know how to trap and snare them.

It recommended that the council identify and contact these allotmenters, ensure that they are able to trap or snare in a humane way, and put them on a 'watch list' of people to contact at first sign of rabbits.

It is recommended that the council further investigate 'long netting' as it is a system that can be used on council land with little public impact and is humane. The council should own long nets and have a list of operators to call on as soon as a problem is reported.

Payment and rolling 'zero hours' type contracts should be offered to these operators.

iii. **Ferreting (associated with Shooting)**

Government Guidance states that "You can send ferrets into the burrow system. The ferrets drive rabbits into nets, which are placed over the burrow entrances or to waiting guns that shoot them as they bolt from tunnel entrances."

The council has a problem with this, as private landowners can, and do, refuse access to their land. SLDC appear to be particularly unhelpful (See Shooting, below). Therefore, it is not considered to be a realistic option.

iv. **Shooting**

Government Guidance states that "If you are the occupier of land you can shoot rabbits on your land during the day and can authorise in writing one other person to do so. That person must be part of your household, one of your staff, or be employed for reward to specifically control the rabbits.

If the owner of the shooting rights for your land does not agree to destroy the rabbits themselves or allow you to use extra shooters, you can apply to Natural England for authority to do so.”

This guidance suggests that it is only possible for the occupier or owner of land to shoot rabbits, unless Natural England provides authority. Therefore, it is not considered to be a realistic option.

v. Fencing

Government Guidance states that: There are 3 types of fencing:

- *electric netting*

Electric netting is said to be very easy to erect (simply unroll and tread in the built-in posts) and take down. They can be mains, battery powered or solar powered. They have the benefit of being movable and cheaper than steel fencing.

Allotmenters need to be aware when this fencing is being used.

The council should have a ready supply of electric netting and batteries/energisers available for immediate use.

<https://www.electricfencing.co.uk/efd/products/electric-netting/>

- *electric strained wire (similar to the kind used to manage cattle and sheep)*

The wire needs to be close to the ground where the grass and vegetation must be kept short, otherwise the electric shorts out. Allotmenters need to be willing to trim grass away from the wire when necessary.

They can be mains, battery powered or solar powered. They have the benefit of being movable and cheaper than permanent wire mesh netting.

- *permanent wire-mesh netting*

This is the first, and, at the moment, only method adopted by the council.

The benefits are:

- It is permanent (but subject to wear and tear, and vandalism)
- It is humane
- Does not require landowner approval (assuming it can be erected on the allotment itself or on council land)

However, the disbenefits result in complete inaction by the council:

- It is the most expensive option
- It requires a contractor to quote for and do the job

- It requires committee approval, which only meets quarterly (and not at all, at the moment), meaning that the response time to any rabbit infestation is too long.

c. MAKING A COMPLAINT ABOUT RABBIT DAMAGE

Government Guidance states that “If you’re suffering damage from rabbits coming from neighbouring land, you should contact the landowner concerned first, to agree how to resolve the issue.”

If your neighbour fails to control them, you can make a complaint to Natural England using form A02:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/rabbits-make-a-complaint-about-them>

5. ALLOTMENTEERS AND HOW THEY CAN HELP

Allotmenters have the most to gain from rabbit control. However, at the moment they are told what they are not allowed to do, and are given no indication of what they can do.

The current Tenancy Agreement is a long list of obligations by the tenant. There is nothing in there about the obligation of the council to provide a rabbit-proof plot.

The only control allotmenters have available is to net crops during the growing season, and this usually means plastic netting. The council have provided no advice as to what type of netting is appropriate or what crops are, or are not, particularly vulnerable.

There are rabbit repellent products such as liquids and sonic scarers. Reviews show that they have limited effect, and liquids are chemicals that have to be sprayed onto the crops themselves which is environmentally undesirable and not acceptable to anyone growing crops organically.

Most allotment sites would have able bodied tenants who, if asked, would be keen to help with whatever form of control is decided, and the council should enable this through providing a contract digger and the netting/posts to get the job done.

Allotmenters should be told what control measure has been decided upon, and rallied to help.

The Tenancy Agreement should be changed to include the council’s obligation to provide a rabbit proof plot.

6. ACTION AND TIMESCALE

In order to be effective, this strategy needs to be agreed and put into action within an agreed timescale. With no allotments committee meeting scheduled, an extraordinary meeting should be called as soon as possible.

Action required:	Action by:	Action completed by:
Strategy discussed, amended and agreed	Allotments Committee Chair	July 31st 2021
Allotment Tenancy Agreement amended to include council's obligations	Allotments Committee Chair	tbc
Find responsible person in SLDC and open discussions	Town Clerk	Immediately
Open discussions with interested groups	Town Clerk	July 31st 2021
Draw up fact sheet and confirm content	Draw up by: tba Confirmed by: Allotments Committee Chair	July 31st 2021
Draw together information about contractors and allotmenters who can implement control measures	Assistant to the Town Clerk	Begin immediately
Purchase electric netting and energisers (power sources)	Townscape Manager	Begin immediately
Inform allotmenters of: - the strategy, - of short-term measures to protect crops, - what allotmenters should expect to offer, - what they should expect the council to provide	Agreed by Allotments Committee Actioned by Assistant to the Town Clerk	July 31st 2021 August 2021

Allotments Committee 27th September 2021

Waiting List Update

The demand for allotments has significantly decreased since the last meeting in March. The waiting list currently stands at 164 individuals which is a decrease of 70. I am finding that when I approach people, they are no longer interested in renting an allotment. I think this is a consequence of life slowly returning to normal after the lockdown.

Allotment site	Number of plots per site	Number on the waiting list
Aynam Road	3	7
Canal Head	20	37
Castle Drive	9	9
Castle Haggs	33	43
Castle Haggs Ext	47	40
Coley Barn	44	19
Crow Tree	24	19
Greenside	48	29
Natland Road	19	18
Rinkfield	32	24
Sandylands	25	12
Sedbergh Road	42	16
Shaw's Brow	22	15
Town View	19	6
Underley Hill	27	10
Underley Road	36	9
Wattsfield	42	20

Vacant Plots

There are currently 10 vacant plots.

Number of Plots Let Since Last Meeting

I have let 17 plots since the last meeting.