

Kendal Town Council

Town Hall, Highgate, Kendal LA9 4ED
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Minutes of a meeting of the Allotments Committee held on Monday, 30 September 2024, in the Council Chamber at the Town Hall, Highgate, Kendal, at 7.00 p.m.

Kendal Town Council Members

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

Co-optees

Jon Cox (and Castle Hags Ext Representative)	Apologies
Chris Rowley (and Underley Road Representative)	Apologies
Ros Taylor (and Wattsfield Representative)	Present

Site Representatives present

Canal Head	Deborah Allison
Castle Hags	Gwen Tordoff
Crow Tree	Bryan Williams

In attendance: Chris Bagshaw (Town Clerk), Inge Booth (Democratic Services Assistant), Janine Holt (Council Services Officer), Pierre Labat (Townscape Officer) and Natalia Williams (Development and Delivery Manager (Deputy Clerk)).

A10/2024 Apologies

Apologies for absence were received and accepted from Kendal Town Cllr Hardy and from Co-optees (and Site Representatives) Jon Cox (Castle Hags Ext) and Chris Rowley (Underley Road).

A11/2024 Declarations of Interest

The Chair, Cllr Finch, and Ros Taylor, Co-optee and Site Representative, declared an interest in Agenda Item No.7 (Budget and Rent Review 2025/26), as outlined at Minute No.A16/2024 below.

A12/2024 Exclusion of Press and Public (Public Bodies Admission to Meetings Act 1960)

There were no confidential items included in the agenda.

A13/2024 Minutes of the Previous Meeting

Resolved: To receive and accept the minutes of the previous meeting of the Allotments Committee held on 5 August 2024 and to authorise the Chair to sign them as a true record.

A14/2024 Minute Action Sheet

The Council Services Officer presented a report on actions taken by officers on resolutions or recommendations made at previous meetings. She referred to recent confusion which had arisen with regard to the current status of the new tenancy agreement and reported that she would circulate the updated document to Committee members during the forthcoming week. In response to a query regarding the issue of surplus produce, the Council Services Officer explained that it had been felt that this could not work logistically, however, that this could be something that the Committee may wish to revisit in the future. She pointed out that there was, however, a surplus food box at Canal Head. In addition, the Council Services Officer reported that the Projects Officer was looking into the potential for a community apple pressing event.

Resolved: To note the report.

A15/2024 Review of Spend against 2024/25 Budget

The Council Services Officer presented a report reviewing spend against the budget as at 23 September 2024. There was currently £4,644 available in Allotments General Expenditure. The Council Services Officer drew attention to Agenda Item No.8 (Town View Pathway Improvements) (Minute No.A17/2024 below) and recommended that, should funds remain available, then consideration should be given to allocating them to these improvements.

Resolved: To note the report.

A16/2024 Budget and Rent Review 2025/26

Note - The Chair, Cllr Finch, and Ros Taylor, Co-optee and Site Representative, declared an interest in this item of business by virtue of being allotment holders. They remained in the room, however, took no part in the discussion or voting on the item.

The Committee was asked to consider a proposed draft budget for the forthcoming financial year, 2025/26, and the plot rental charges for 2026.

The draft proposed budget for 2024/25 was as follows:

Item	2024-25	Est outturn	percentage	Proposed 2025-26	Notes
Water	1,950	1,950	100%	2,100	
Rent	1,050	900	86%	1,050	Anticipated rental increase for Castle Hags Ext
Pest control	3,200	3,200	100%	3,300	
Maintenance	9,000	9,000	100%	9,200	
Total	15,200	14,640	96%	15,650	

The Town Clerk referred to the estimated rental incomes, which were intended to cover the general running costs of the estate, plus a contribution to the overheads. The Committee set the allotment rental fee 14 months in advance. The last rental increase had lifted the price per square metre from 41p in 2024, to 44p in 2025, in order to meet the additional costs of inflation, which had been running quite high alongside perceived volatility caused by international events. However, inflation had now stabilised, and an increase of 1p would seem like a realistic proposal for 2026, taking the rental price to 45p per square metre. The consequences of last year's rental increase was, as yet, unknown, though it was expected that there would be a small drop in demand as a consequence. Schemes remained in place to assist any tenant who required support.

The proposed estimated rental incomes were as follows:

	2024	2025	2026	Notes
Income	25,094 (Outturn)	26,000	26,500 (Proposed)	

The Town Clerk referred lastly to Allotment Reserves, explaining that there was a small draw down proposed on the allotment reserve in the current financial year to meet the investment required at Town View Field to maintain the site's viability. Subsequent draw-down on this fund would depend on the development of projects to increase the supply of allotment sites or to replace sites lost due to the development needs of the landowner (tenanted sites only):

	1 April 2024	Proposed 1 April 2025	Proposed 31 March 2026
Cash	68,225	62,000	64,000

The Town Clerk drew attention to a typographical error within the report, explaining that the last column in the table relating to allotment reserves should refer to 31 March 2026, and not 2025 as stated.

Attention was drawn to the proposed Maintenance Budget, which was up by only £200 on the previous year. It was questioned whether this was enough, with the Townscape Officer's list of tasks being so large. The Council Services Officer explained, however, that this general maintenance task list was not onerous and that it did not require additional funds. The Town Clerk, in response to a further query, explained the reason behind a cautionary proposed rental increase of 1p in 2026.

Resolved: To recommend the proposed budget requirements for the next financial year, as attached to the report and outlined above, for consideration by the Management Committee prior to presentation to Full Council.

A17/2024 Town View Pathway Improvements

The Council Services Officer reported that, whilst undertaking allotment visits, it was noted that the main internal pathway on Town View needed upgrading for health and safety reasons. The pathway was treacherous, especially when it was wet. The ground was slippery, uneven and very steep. After rain, the lower part of the site was rendered virtually inaccessible. The site layout was a legacy from the former South Lakeland District Council regime, which itself took on the former Kendal Borough estate. It seemed to have had little investment in the previous 20 years. A map of the site was attached to the report for reference.

Professional advice had been sought on how best to improve the pathway and boundary edges of the plots. Because of the difficulty of access, it is likely to be quite a time consuming task.

It was, therefore, being proposed to improve the main pathway from plots 6–12 on Town View allotments, as follows:

- introduce a hardcore layer onto the existing pathway;
- install handrails along the main pathway (plots 6-9);
- reinforce the pathway edge by installing retaining boards between the pathway and the allotment plots; and
- install steps and a handrail from the highest point (plot 10) to the lower section of the allotment (plot 12).

The approximate cost of this project was likely to be in the region of £7,000. At present only one contractor had agreed to quote for the work, indicating its peculiar difficulties. It was being proposed to use funds from the allotment general budget (around £4,000) with any shortfall being allocated from the allotment reserve fund. Further quotations were expected within the same price range.

The Committee was asked to approve the project and to consider the allocation of funds as described within the report and set out above.

Strong concerns were expressed by Committee members in relation to the immediate health and safety issues, particularly with nights now closing in. The Town Clerk undertook to visit the site as soon as possible to assess what temporary measures could be taken. In response to a query, the Council Services Officer stressed that officers had approached several contractors to come to examine the site, however, some had not wanted to come and some had not turned up. Committee members were of the opinion that, with the Council being able to provide evidence that steps had been taken to obtain three quotes for the work to be carried out, the company which had already submitted a quote should be awarded the contract. The Town Clerk indicated that the Committee could instruct him to address this suggestion in an appropriate manner through Financial Regulations, should it so wish. The Council Services Officer pointed out that three additional contractors had been approached earlier in the day, and it was suggested, therefore, that they be asked to get back within 24 hours.

Resolved: To approve the project and the use of funds of approximately £4,000 from the allotment general budget for the above-mentioned work at Town View, with any shortfall to be allocated from the allotment reserve fund, with officers assessing temporary measures and seeking additional quotations within the next 24 hours; should no further quotations be received, the Town Clerk to address acceptance of the current quotation in an appropriate manner through Financial Regulations.

A18/2024 Townscape Officer Update

The Townscape Officer provided a verbal update; a list of his current tasks was attached to the agenda. He explained that a number of his tasks remained pending due to recent wet weather resulting in additional grass cutting, however, that he would now be able to move forward on those items listed. He was pleased to highlight improvements made as a result of the new software system, this providing clarity with regard to the status of workload for both himself and the Council Services Officer. The system also enabled the Council Services Officer to more easily manage the administration of allotments. In addition, the Townscape Officer pointed out that, with the Town Council having ceased this year's Kendal in Bloom initiative, there had been more time to spend on allotments.

Resolved: To note the verbal update.

A19/2024 Allotment Statistics Report

The Council Services Officer presented a report which showed that the waiting list currently stood at 65 individuals. The list had decreased by three individuals since the last meeting. 11 plots were vacant, details of which were provided within the report. Seven plots had been let since the last meeting. The Council Services Officer was pleased to inform the Committee that the new software was enabling her to deal more effectively plots.

In response to a query, the Council Services Officer indicated that the Council was happy to support individuals facing hardship, although this offer had not been taken up by many people in recent months. The Town Clerk reported on forthcoming negotiations with regard to potential additional plots within the Town.

Resolved: To note the report.

A20/2024 Site Representatives

Deborah Allison, Canal Head representative, referred to the additional plots on the site and asked whether consideration should be given to recruiting an additional site representative. She explained that she had not had contact with the new allotment holders and felt that she required assistance. The Council Services Officer reported that she had already held conversations with one of the new allotment holders who was keen to work together with Deborah. She stressed the need, however, for both representatives to work together and ensure that Canal Head was one whole site. This, the Council Services Officer suggested, was something that could be discussed at the forthcoming Site Representatives' meeting. Deborah further referred to a plot on her site that continued to be unkempt. The Council Services Officer explained that she was dealing with the matter and closely monitoring the situation.

Bryan Williams, Crow Tree representative, questioned whether the site was fully let, referring to one plot which appeared to be empty, with no activity. The Council Services Officer advised that the plot was, in fact, let. She had, however, noted that no work had been carried out as yet and had drawn the matter to the tenant's attention.

Gwen Tordoff, Castle Hags representative, drew attention to the poor state of the wall alongside Castle Hags and Canal Head. The Council Services Officer explained that officers had looked at the wall on numerous occasions and undertook to revisit the matter; she suggested that she might meet with Gwen on site to look at the wall. The Townscape Officer reported that he had discussed the matter with the relevant officer at Westmorland and Furness Council and had been advised that that this was on the job list. He undertook to follow up the matter.

Ros Taylor, Wattsfield representative, enquired how to submit an item for inclusion on an Allotments Committee agenda. The Town Clerk advised that contact should be made with the Council Services Officer in the first instance, prior to her seeking agreement from the Chair.

Resolved: To note the verbal reports from Site Representatives.

The meeting closed at 7.40 p.m.