



BOGNOR REGIS TOWN COUNCIL

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MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE ALLOTMENTS SUB-COMMITTEE **HELD ON MONDAY 17th JUNE 2024**

PRESENT:

Cllrs: K. Batley, J. Brooks, D. Dawes, P. Ralph (until Min. 14) and P. Wells (until Min. 12)

IN ATTENDANCE:

Mr. M. Greenfield (Allotments & In Bloom Officer)
Mr. P. Goodchild, Mr. C. Penfold and
Mrs. L. Russell (Tenants Representatives)
1 Member seated in the public gallery
1 member of the public

The Meeting opened at 6.34pm

1. TO APPOINT A NEW CHAIR AND VICE-CHAIR OF THE ALLOTMENTS SUB-COMMITTEE

As Chair of the Environmental and Leisure Committee, Cllr. Batley took the Chair for this Agenda item.

Members were advised that, although absent from the meeting, Cllr. Woodall had expressed an interest in being appointed as the Chair of the Allotments Sub-Committee. With there being no other nominations, it was unanimously **AGREED** that Cllr. P. Woodall be elected as Chair, and Cllr. K. Batley elected as Vice-Chair of the Sub-Committee for 2024-2025.

Due to the absence of the Chair, Cllr. Woodall, it was **AGREED** that Cllr. Batley was to act as Chair for this meeting.

2. WELCOME BY CHAIR

The Chair welcomed those present and read the Council's Opening Statement with particular attention drawn to the evacuation procedure in the event of the fire alarm sounding.

3. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND THEIR APPROVAL, SUBJECT TO MEETING THE AGREED CRITERIA

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs. Mrs. J. Warr and P. Woodall, and from Mr. P. Fortin (Tenants Representative) with the Clerk recommending that the reasons given were acceptable. These absences were **APPROVED** by Members.

There were no apologies received from Cllrs. J. Barrett, R. Nash and M. Stanley, and these could not therefore be approved.

4. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The Chair addressed those Members present to ask if they wished to confirm any declarations of Disclosable Pecuniary, Other Registrable and/or Ordinary Interests that they may have in relation to items on this Agenda.

As noted on the Agenda, Members and Officers should make their declaration by stating:

- a) the item they have the Interest in
- b) whether it is a Disclosable Pecuniary, Other Registrable or Ordinary Interest
- c) the nature of the Interest
- d) if it is an Ordinary Interest whether they intend to temporarily leave the meeting for the discussion and vote
- e) if it is a Disclosable Pecuniary or Other Registrable Interest, they must temporarily leave the meeting for the discussion and vote.

They then need to re-declare their Interest and the nature of the Interest at the commencement of the item or when the Interest becomes apparent. They should request that it be recorded in the Minutes that they will leave the meeting and will neither take part in discussion, nor vote on the item.

As per the Agenda, it is each Member's own responsibility to notify the Monitoring Officer of all Disclosable Pecuniary, Other Registrable or Ordinary Interests notifiable under the Council's Code of Conduct, not already recorded on their Register of Interests Form, within 28 days.

The Chair reminded Members to declare their Interests as any arise or again at the relative point in the meeting if they have already.

There were no declarations of Interest at this time

5. TO RATIFY THE APPOINTMENT OF MR. PAUL GOODCHILD AND MR. PHILIP FORTIN AS CO-OPTED NON-VOTING MEMBERS OF THE SUB-COMMITTEE, AND TO NOTE THE RECOMMENDATION TO COUNCIL OF MRS. LOUISE RUSSELL AND MR. COLIN PENFOLD AS CO-OPTED NON-VOTING MEMBERS AT THE ENVIRONMENTAL AND LEISURE COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 20th MAY 2024 (MIN. 8.1 REFERS)

The Sub-Committee Clerk's report was **NOTED**.

It was **NOTED** that the Environmental and Leisure Committee had recommended the co-option of Mr. C. Penfold and Mrs. L. Russell as a non-voting co-opted Members of the Sub-Committee at their meeting held on 20th May 2024 (Min. 8.1 refers).

The Sub-Committee **AGREED** to **RECOMMEND** to the Environmental and Leisure Committee, the co-option of Mr. Paul Goodchild (Original Site) and Mr. Phil Fortin (Re-Established Site) as additional Tenant Representatives for the remainder of the 2023-2024 allotments year.

6. TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 6th NOVEMBER 2023

The Sub-Committee **RESOLVED** to **APPROVE** the Minutes of the Meeting held on 6th November 2023 as an accurate record, and these were signed by the Chair.

7. CLERK'S REPORT

7.1 6th November 2023 – Min. 23 Graffiti

Two more cases of graffiti at the Allotments were seen during an inspection on 6th December 2023. These were immediately reported to the Town Force Manager and were removed soon after.

7.2 6th November 2023 – Min. 23 Taps

Town Force have replaced the three taps on the Original Site with sturdier taps and new plumbing. Each tap site now has two separate taps to double the amount available on the Site. New taps have also been installed at the six standpipes on the Re-Established Site.

7.3 6th November 2023 – Min. 30 Removal of well pump on Plot 20C

Following the meeting, the Tenant of Plot 20C was written to, expressing the Sub-Committee's decision. No further contact has been received on this matter since, and the pump has not been touched.

7.4 Matters that have arisen since the last meeting:

7.4.1 Rats were reported by a Tenant on the Original Site on 10th January 2024, causing damage to items stored in a shed two days previously. No signs of rats were seen on inspection that same afternoon, but the CC contacted three pest control companies in the local area for quotes. One completed an examination of the site (at no cost) and said that there were no signs of any recent activity on the Allotments, and the incident was likely a one-off. Advice was provided to the Tenant concerned to protect against further incidents.

7.4.2 The Original Site continued to be affected by flooding following heavy rainfall during the winter months.

7.4.3 The Tenant of Plot 28 was written to regarding a hosepipe left connected to a tap and unattended, filling up a water butt. The Sub-Committee Clerk disconnected the hose at the time this was discovered.

7.4.4 Since late May, a number of reports from Tenants had been received regarding children gaining entry to the Original Site at weekends. The Sub-Committee Clerk had replaced a lock on one gate that broke on 8th June

and proposed to replace the keypad lock on another gate with a padlock in order to improve the security of the site.

A Member asked whether unauthorised access by children was a major problem to which the Sub-Committee Clerk responded by saying that complaints about this had been received approximately every other weekend since late May.

8. RATIFICATION OF EXPENDITURE AND RECOMMENDATION OF APPROVAL TO THE ENVIRONMENTAL AND LEISURE COMMITTEE INCLUDING: -

The Sub-Committee Clerk's report was **NOTED**.

The following costs were **RATIFIED** by the Sub-Committee:

- Twelve new taps and PTFE tape - £98.06 plus VAT (charged to Gravits Lane Maintenance Budget)
- Key safe for use as an emergency toolbox - £9.99 plus VAT (charged to Gravits Lane Maintenance Budget)
- Purchase of two spare padlocks - £35.48 plus VAT (charged to Gravits Lane Maintenance Budget)

Sub-Committee Members **RESOLVED** to **RECOMMEND** the approval of the above expenditure to the Environmental and Leisure Committee.

9. TO RECEIVE A REPORT ON UNAUTHORISED ACTIVITY ON THE ORIGINAL SITE

The report from the Sub-Committee Clerk, regarding unauthorised buried water pipes on the Original Site, was **NOTED**.

Members were pleased with the action that the Sub-Committee Clerk had taken.

10. TO NOTE THE STATUS OF PLOT 4/4A AND THE PROPOSED COMMUNAL COMPOST AREA

The Sub-Committee Clerk's report was **NOTED**.

An update was given to Members on correspondence received after the Agenda had been issued, stating that the reason why Arun District Council (ADC) had refused permission in principle for a new vehicular access gate to serve a communal compost area was because the land in question was allocated to the Housing Revenue Account and was designated as tenant parking only.

A lengthy discussion followed, with several Members expressing dissatisfaction with ADC's reasoning. Cllr. Wells offered to follow this up with ADC in person, for future review.

With regards to the proposed communal compost area, Members questioned if there could be a way around the legislation and requirement to obtain planning permission. The Sub-Committee Clerk advised that this was unlikely but agreed to carry out additional research and report the findings to all Sub-Committee Members by email.

11. ANNUAL REVIEW OF RENTAL CHARGES

The Sub-Committee Clerk's report was **NOTED**.

Following a question as to why the maintenance expenses had been so high in 2023-2024, the Sub-Committee Clerk explained that a large part of this was due to the replacement of all taps and plumbing as a large one-off cost.

A Member highlighted that the rents last year had been increased by 10% and that the Precept for 2024/25 had been kept at 2023/24 levels and asked that Members be mindful of this when considering any rent increase this year.

Following discussions, it was proposed to implement an increase for 2024/2025 with the rent to be set at 30p per m² from October 2024 to return to an equal flat rate, and this was **RESOLVED** by all Members.

The Tenant Representatives were asked, hypothetically, if they thought Tenants would be happy to pay a one-off surcharge for any large projects that the Town Council undertook to improve the allotments sites. All three Representatives present did not think that Tenants would be happy to pay for this.

Cllr. Wells left the Meeting at 7.13pm

12. TO NOTE A REVIEW OF THE TENANCY AGREEMENT AND CHANGES TO THE RENTAL YEAR FROM 2025

The Sub-Committee Clerk's report, detailing the outcome of a review of the Tenancy Agreement and changes to be made to the rental year from 2025, which will now run from April to March rather than October to September as at present, was **NOTED**.

13. TO DISCUSS THE ADMINISTRATION OF THE WAITING LIST AND AGREE ANY ACTION

The Sub-Committee Clerk's report was **NOTED**.

A lengthy discussion followed, during which Members asked if changes to the waiting list rules would be made retroactively and if an amnesty could be offered to Tenants to give up untidy plots if they cannot manage. The Chair and Sub-Committee Clerk stated that any changes would not be retroactive, and that there was not really an issue with struggling Tenants

opting to give up plots as they were generally pro-active in vacating if they are unable to continue.

Cllr. Ralph left the Meeting at 7.22pm

After a debate on restricting the maximum number of plots any one Tenant can rent, Members unanimously **AGREED** not to place any restrictions on the maximum number of plots any one Tenant (or household) can occupy.

With regards to Tenants voluntarily vacating part-way through the year, a question was raised about refunding part-year rent as a way of encouraging those wanting to vacate but withholding any refund until the end of the rental year. The Sub-Committee Clerk would look into whether any remaining full months of rent remaining on a Tenancy could be refunded, although this was not a significant issue in freeing up openings for the waiting list.

On the matter of a probationary period for new Tenants, it was suggested that a short document for prospective new Tenants be made available outlining the costs, time and work required in taking on an allotment in an attempt to avoid them being overwhelmed and falling into difficulties. All Members **AGREED** that this would be a good idea.

Furthermore, the issue of some Tenants going away for several months at a time was raised and Members **AGREED** that a clause be included in the Tenancy Agreement with Tenants requiring them to carry out monthly activity on plots.

A proposal of introducing a three-month probation period for new Tenants, with leeway at the Officer's discretion to account for issues such as extended periods of poor weather, be introduced. This was unanimously **AGREED**.

NOTE – having liaised with the Town Clerk, it is recommended that further consideration be given to this proposal by the Sub-Committee prior to implementation. Therefore this will be referred to the next meeting

Members also unanimously **AGREED** to maintain the first come, first served basis of the waiting list, with no preference given to new Tenants over existing Tenants.

Finally, on the matter of non-response to offers from those on the waiting list, the Sub-Committee Clerk was instructed to only make one offer to applicants, with a three-week response period allowed. If no response had been received in this time, then that person would be moved to the bottom of the list and an offer made to the next person. This was **AGREED** by all Members. The Sub-Committee Clerk was also asked if the three-week response period could be added onto the application form so that all new applicants were aware of this rule.

14. Members **RESOLVED** to extend the meeting by fifteen minutes in accordance with S.O. 3z.
15. **ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE JUDGING OF THE ANNUAL AWARDS AND TO NOTE ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE COMBINED AWARDS EVENING 2024 BY THE BOGNOR REGIS IN BLOOM WORKING GROUP**

The Sub-Committee Clerk's report was **NOTED**.

The Chair proposed that judging of the allotments takes place in the week commencing 8th July. The Sub-Committee Clerk was asked to contact all elected Members of the Sub-Committee by email to ask for two volunteers, with a deadline of 28th June for responses. This was **AGREED** by all Members present. The Sub-Committee Clerk was also asked to produce a document with judging criteria so that the judges would know what to assess.

It was acknowledged that whilst the Bognor Regis in Bloom Working Group wished to include more allotments Tenants in the 2024 Awards Evening, due to budget constraints, they had decided to keep arrangements for the 2024 event the same as for the 2023 event, namely, to invite the fifteen Allotments Awards winners (and guests) and the Tenant Representatives (and guests). However, the Allotments Sub-Committee only has £100 available for competition expenses in 2024-2025, and this would not be enough to cover the inclusion of additional allotments invitees. Therefore, in order to accommodate this, the Working Group were requesting an additional £300 in funding from the Environmental and Leisure Committee's Publicity and Promotion Budget.

Following a discussion about inviting more allotments Tenants than the number proposed by the In Bloom Working Group (BRiB), Members **RESOLVED** to ask the Environmental and Leisure Committee for an additional £500 from the Publicity and Promotion Budget to help cover the costs of the 2024 Awards Evening and allow for an increased number of Tenants to be invited, in addition to the £300 being requested by the BRiB Working Group.

16. **TO CONSIDER ANY OTHER EVENTS OR COMPETITIONS FOR ALLOTMENTS TENANTS**

The Sub-Committee Clerk's report was **NOTED**.

The Tenant Representatives for both sites did not think that there would be any interest from the Tenants for any competitions or events, except maybe for an Allotments Community Day. The Sub-Committee Clerk was asked to contact all Tenants to see if there would be any demand for an Allotments Community Day to be held for two or three hours on a Saturday.

It was suggested that a section be included on the Town Council's website to 'Shine a Spotlight' on particular allotment plots, with sponsorship/donations sought from local businesses.

17. REPORT ON THE ANNUAL HEALTH & SAFETY INSPECTION HELD ON 20th MAY 2024

17.1 The Sub-Committee Clerk's report, including the appendices relating to signage and the proposed Accident Report Form and Health & Safety Guide, was **NOTED**.

17.2 Members **AGREED** to **APPROVE** the use of the accident report form and the Health & Safety Guide as drafted by the Sub-Committee Clerk.

17.3 Members **RESOLVED** to **AGREE** the following, to be funded from the Gravits Lane Maintenance Budget:

- Replace the five out-of-date emergency contact signs on the gates with new signs as per the proposed design included in the report.
- Obtain two new 'slippery when wet' signs for the Sandringham Way gate as per the proposed design included in the report.
- To obtain quotes for a lockable noticeboard for the shelter on the Re-Established Site to include a list of key contact numbers for the emergency services, PCSOs, Sussex Wildlife Crime team and similar organisations. A similar noticeboard to be erected on the Original Site also. The quotes would then be referred to the next meeting.

17.4 The Chair also suggested that two Health & safety inspections are carried out annually.

18. Members **RESOLVED** to further extend the meeting by another fifteen minutes in accordance with S.O. 3z.

19. TO CONSIDER A REQUEST TO BAN SONIC CAT REPELLERS FROM THE ALLOTMENTS

The Sub-Committee Clerk's report was **NOTED**.

Members **AGREED** to ban sonic cat repellents from the allotments. A clause to this effect would be added to the Allotments Information Leaflet.

20. TO CONSIDER MATTERS RAISED BY TENANTS AT THE AGM

The Sub-Committee Clerk's report was **NOTED**.

Members asked that the quarterly allotments newsletter be sent to all Sub-Committee Members in addition to Tenants. The Sub-Committee Clerk was also asked to investigate the possibility of placing 'please do not obstruct' signs at the vehicular entrances in Gravits Lane.

21. TO CONSIDER A REQUEST FOR FLOORING IN THE SHELTER AT THE RE-ESTABLISHED SITE

The Sub-Committee Clerk's report was **NOTED**.

The Chair proposed that weed control membrane and paving slabs be used to floor the communal shelter. Cllr. Dawes offered to source the materials at no cost and Members **AGREED** to delegate this matter to the Sub-Committee Clerk, in liaison with Cllr. Dawes.

22. REPORT ON LETTINGS

The Sub-Committee Clerk's report was **NOTED**.

Members were informed that since publishing the report, additional applications had been received and the waiting list for allotments now stood at forty-one.

23. ANNUAL REVIEW OF THE ALLOTMENTS INFORMATION LEAFLET

The Sub-Committee Clerk's report, including the appendices showing the current and proposed leaflet, was **NOTED**.

Members unanimously **AGREED** to **APPROVE** the draft updated Allotments Information Leaflet, to include the additions decided in Min.13 and Min.19 of these minutes.

Members further **AGREED** that the minimum area of cultivation be set at 70%, with no restriction on structure size – within reason and without overshadowing neighbouring plots – up to the maximum permissible area of 30%. Permission would now also be required to plant trees, with a prohibition on plots becoming orchards going forward.

Members **AGREED** to an amnesty on banned structures (including play equipment, summer houses and other large structures unrelated to the cultivation of plots) already located on the allotments sites, but that any new structures erected without permission going forward would be removed.

The Sub-Committee Clerk would make these amendments and issue the new Allotments Information Leaflet to all Tenants.

24. TO AGREE THE DATE OF THE ANNUAL MEETING OF ALLOTMENT HOLDERS AND TO CONSIDER ARRANGEMENTS

The Sub-Committee Clerk's report was **NOTED**.

The Chair suggested that the proposed date, although traditional, was not appropriate due to being in the half-term holidays. After a brief discussion

on the best date, Members **AGREED** to Thursday 24th October at 7pm. Members further **AGREED** a budget of £50 for refreshments.

The Sub-Committee Clerk was also asked to look into the possibility of streaming a future Plot Holders' AGM to allow those unable to attend to join in, and to ask Tenants to submit questions in advance.

25. CORRESPONDENCE

There was no correspondence.

The Meeting closed at 9.04pm