



**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE TOWN COUNCIL'S ALLOTMENTS COMMITTEE HELD ON 25<sup>th</sup> MAY 2016 AT NEW ROAD ALLOTMENTS AT 6.00PM.**

**PRESENT:** Councillors; P Barton (Chairman), N Pinnegar, P Smith (Town Mayor) T Luker, L Farmer, Co-opted members: A Burns, Mrs H Summers, C Mitchell, G Martin .

**IN ATTENDANCE** Mrs D Hyam.

**117. TO ELECT A CHAIRMAN:** It was proposed by P Smith that P Barton continue to be Chairman of the Allotments Committee seconded by N Pinnegar agreed all in favour.

**118. TO ELECT A VICE CHAIRMAN:** It was proposed by P Barton that N Pinnegar be elected as Vice Chairman, it was seconded by T Luker agreed all in favour.

**119. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE:** None received.

**120. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD 9<sup>th</sup> March 2016.** Proposed by P Barton and seconded by P Smith of the Allotments Committee that the minutes of the meeting held on 9<sup>th</sup> March 2016 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman. Agreed all in favour.

**121. PATH TO MAIN GATE NEW ROAD ALLOTMENTS:** P Smith has viewed the area and concluded that the slope would be approximately a 1 in 10 drop which is quite steep. He suggested that a series of shallow steps be installed of no more than 3" and the steps made of concrete with a brushed finish or black top (tarmac). P Barton pointed out that brushed concrete would be more hard wearing and give better grip in damp conditions. P Smith to draw up plans for quotes. A Burns suggested that tenants could be consulted when the plan is available for their views.

**122. NOTICEBOARD FOR NEW ROAD ALLOTMENTS:** Mrs Hyam has completed some research on weather proof notice boards and found that prices for boards with metal posts ranged from £360 to £422 with fitting of £140. She would investigate further to see if a noticeboard fixed to wooden posts would be practical and asked if a working party would be agreeable to erecting the noticeboard. The representatives confirmed they would be willing to form a working party to cut the cost of having it installed by a contractor and suggested that its ideal position would be between the second and third poplar trees near the main gate but not visible from the pavement. Mrs Hyam to formulate costings of noticeboards to be put forward for consideration.

**123. SYCAMORE TREE ON PLOT 1:** The tree has now been removed.

**124. WAITING LIST AND VACANT PLOTS:** It was noted that there are 5 half plots available at Knapp Road and 9 half plots at New Road. Two half plots are under offer and there are no names on the waiting list. Mrs Hyam has produced some posters that are to be put up on the town's noticeboards, One Stop Shop window and the Town Council website. It was suggested that the information could be sent to the Gazette in hope that it is published in the In Brief Section. It was noted that the information could be given to the two doctor's surgeries to help promote exercise and wellbeing.

**125. ALLOTMENT OFFICERS FORUM REPORT:** P Barton and D Hyam attended the forum on 28<sup>th</sup> April 2016.

**a) WATER:** P Barton said that there was some discussion on the water regulations and the suggestion made by Mr C Smith of using a large tank/cistern at the top of the site was raised. Mr Alan Cavill of NAS said that as long as the regulation fittings are used up to the valve and the 25cms gap is implemented he could see no reason for this system not to be used. He went on to say that low pressure valves should be fitted and if a large tank was installed rain water catchment could be considered for the cover of the tank to supplement water stored. He added that push button taps have also proved to be effective in conserving water. P Barton added that some sites are implementing the new regulations and Mr Cavill advised that in some areas grants were available from water companies. Last year when quotes were being obtained for up-dating the system the contractors had difficulty in locating the water main supply pipe to the New Road site. D Hyam confirm that the stop cock for the supply was located near the entrance to the Chipping Surgery.

**b) VACANT PLOTS:** Many councils are facing a surplus of vacant plots. Some have offered them to existing tenants free of charge to plant potatoes as they are good for ground cover with the provision that the council can request the plot back in 12 months or after the crop has been harvested. Others are looking at planting orchards or renting land out for grazing. Some have invested in weed proof membrane to cover plots to reduce strimming and maintenance. Mr Cavill had found that Tool Station had the cheapest membrane available on the market.

**c) RAISED BEDS:** Bristol have introduced raised beds in some allotment sites for disabled gardeners. This has been successful but the officer did warn that this leads to offering extra facilities such as toilets, access, and parking for disabled tenants.

**d) WEED CONTROL:** It was stressed at the meeting that carpet should not be used on plots as the dyes and treatments used contain tonic chemicals that contaminate the soil. Therefore weed proof membrane should be encouraged. Bristol are trialling the use of vinegar to control weeds without using weed killers.

**e) ANNUAL SKIP:** Most councils provide an annual skip for tenants to dispose of rubbish and broken equipment from their plots. This has proved successful in keeping the site tidy and an act of goodwill to tenants.

**126. ALLOTMENT INSPECTIONS:** P Barton reported that inspections have taken place on both sites and D Hyam confirmed that letters to remedy have been sent to four tenants at New Road Allotments. Knapp Road Allotments were inspected on 23<sup>rd</sup> May and nine letters to remedy will be sent to tenants. At Knapp Road Allotments it was noted that the brambles near the main gate need cutting back along with brambles near to plots 32 to 35 P Barton will request that the Buildings Manager strim the area along with the top path where it has become overgrown due to vacant plots and the metal rubbish needs clearing near the main gate.

**127. BEST KEPT ALLOTMENTS:** C Mitchell asked if the system for entry to the competition could revert back to all plots being judged without tenants having to put their names forward. D Hyam explained that Mr Wilson had suggested that tenants enter the competition as not all tenants want their plots to be judged and it would take some considerable time to judge each plot. As Mr Wilson and Mr Morrow give their time voluntarily it would be far better to have a targeted visit. All agreed that the format remain the same as last year and D Hyam to ask if Mr Wilson and Mr Morrow

would be available to judge the competition again. The judging criteria was circulated to interested members for information.

**128. REPORT FROM NEW ROAD REPRESENTATIVES:**

**a) TOILET.** A Burns explained that there had been concern raised by tenants as there are no toilet facilities at the allotments or nearby and especially for female tenants. With the new houses at the Chipping Surgery overlooking the site there is very little cover. He wondered if a toilet could be installed on the site. P Smith said that this would prove to be very costly laying sewerage pipes etc and the covenant on the land must be considered. T Luker explained that the covenant covers the Stephens Trust land but not the land nearest New Road. L Farmer suggested that a compost toilet could be considered as a more cost effective solution.

**b) THEFTS FROM THE SITE.** Following many thefts from the site last year the representatives raised concern that it would be repeated this year. A Burns was pleased to report that a resident of the housing development at the Chipping Surgery has become an allotment tenant. The tenant will have a good view of the site and will monitor any activity. This may lead to more accurate evidence gathering and may deter intruders. P Barton explained that a hawthorn hedge had been discussed previously to create an effective barrier and this should be reviewed. A Burns added that many dog walkers use the field adjacent to the allotments and this was the route used by the offenders last year. G Martin added that signs were put up on the fence to deter offenders and D Hyam will produce replacements.

**c) UNEVEN PATH:** H Summers raised a concern with the path that runs from plot 1 to plot 5. It has become very unstable and uneven. She is concerned that tenants will fall over and injure themselves due to the difficulty in using the path. The committee proceeded to inspect the path and agreed that it was in very poor condition. P Barton said that he felt it should be attended to as soon as possible and it will need shoring up to prevent the path falling away. P Barton will ask if the Buildings Manager can assist.

**129. REPORT FROM KNAPP ROAD REPRESENTATIVES:** Mr Mitchell said there was nothing to report.

**130: FUTURE MEETINGS:** D Hyam confirm that the next meeting will be held on Wednesday 13<sup>th</sup> July and P Barton proposed that all future meetings should be held in the Civic Centre as it is difficult to find an area for the committee to congregate and easier for papers etc to be circulated.

**131:** This completed the business of the Allotments Committee.

Signed.....Chair of the Allotments Committee

Date.....