

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE ALLOTMENTS COMMITTEE HELD ON 19TH NOVEMBER 2014 AT THE CIVIC CENTRE AT 6.00PM.

PRESENT: Councillors Mrs C.V Galbraith (Chairman), C. J Galbraith, T.G Luker, Co-opted members: I Jones, C Mitchell, B Elloway.

IN ATTENDANCE Mrs D Hyam.

63. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE: R.P Claydon, P Barton. Mrs Hyam informed the committee that Mr M Kingscote had sent his apologies along with an email containing a letter of resignation with immediate effect. The Chairman proposed that the Allotments Committee send a letter of thanks as he had been a member for many years and the Town Council are grateful for his valuable contribution to the allotments over the years. Mrs Hyam to send a letter of thanks.

64. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD 18th June 2014.

Proposed by C.V Galbraith and seconded by I. Jones of the Allotments Committee that the minutes of the meeting held on 18th June 2014 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman. Agreed all in favour.

65. MATTERS ARISING

a) THE TOP PATH. The Chairman confirmed that £200 had been approved by the Town Council to go towards the proposed improvements to the top path, by the Knapp Road Allotments Association.

b) THE BANK. Following a recent budget meeting the Chairman informed the Allotments Committee that she has requested £1,700 to be allocated for the range of improvements to the bank. This proposal has to be agreed by the Town Council and the money may have to be reallocated should an urgent need arise due to many other pressures on the budget.

66. KNAPP ROAD

a) PERIMITOR HEDGES. The Chairman confirmed that the hedge running along the edge of Knapp Road has been trimmed and the hedge dividing the allotments and Knapp Field will be cut in the next few weeks.

b) HOLE ON PLOT 18. I Jones has recently inspected the hole that appeared on the allotments some time ago. It is now partly filled with large rubble but needs to be filled further with smaller stone to ensure it is completely sound so the allotment can be used again. Mrs Hyam to liaise with the Buildings Manager.

c) EXCESS RUBBLE. It was confirmed that the Knapp Road Allotments Association do not require any of the rubble situated by the gate and request that it be removed as soon as possible along with the rubbish removed from plot 9. Mrs Hyam to Liaise with the Buildings Manager. As a precaution I Jones proposed that the gate be locked with a combination lock to deter fly tipping. All were in agreement and I Jones would supply the Town Council with the access number.

66. NEW ROAD.

a) NEW REPRESENTATIVE. The Chairman remarked that a new representative would be needed for New Road Allotments. She asked B Elloway if he could find any interested tenants that would be willing to be a co-opted member. B Elloway said that he would make enquires, but he may not have any names until the New Year.

b) TREES ON BOUNDARY TO BUILDING DEVELOPMENT AT THE CHIPPING SURGERY. Cllr Galbraith informed the Allotments Committee that the trees on the boundary to the building development at the Chipping Surgery may have to be removed. Unfortunately, SDC did not approve a TPO status request for the trees. He went on to say that is matter was still under dispute and many towns people would be upset at their removal. The Allotments Committee will be advised on the outcome in due course.

b) PLOT BOUNDARIES. B Elloway had been approached by a tenant who was unclear about a boundary edge. He asked what was the usual procedure if new tenants were unsure. Mrs Hyam explained that if a request is made the Buildings Manager would mark the boundary with tape. Any tenant with a query should contact her in the One Stop Shop so this can be arranged.

c) ACCESS ON ALLOTMENTS. It had been noticed by B Elloway that the access on site for disabled people is poor with some paths being uneven and sloped. He was looking for a more accessible route for his wife to visit his allotments as she is disabled. He noticed that there is a gate from the OK path in New Road. He wondered if a path at some stage ran along the wall to the other end of the site. If so could this path be reinstated? The Chairman felt that a site meeting would be the best way to investigate the matter. She pointed out that the paths were laid a few years ago by a working party from Leyhill prison. I Jones explained that there was a large emphasis on health and fitness being promoted by a local Doctors Surgery. Could a grant be found that promotes gardening as a valuable aid to better health both physically and mentally? It was suggested that Active Together may have some money still available or SDC may have access to such grants Mrs Hyam to enquire.

67. REPORT FROM ALLOTMENT MANAGEMENT SEMINAR 21st JULY 2014. The report had been circulated prior to the meeting. Mrs Hyam raised several points for the Allotments Committee to consider.

a) At present the requests for rent payments are sent to tenants in March. It was highlighted that if the requests are made in October, this would give new tenants a complete growing season, and enable them to prepare their plot during the Autumn and Winter. C.J Galbraith commented that the Allotment Agreement would need to be amended to allow for the change and 12 months' notice given. Following the discussion all were in agreement that the change should take place. Mrs Hyam to confirm procedure and prepare for the changes.

b) Some Councils take a deposit when a new tenant takes on an allotment to cover costs of strimming an overgrown plot or disposing of rubbish. It was suggested that a cost of £15 could be applied but this would not cover the cost of strimming. It was felt that if the

deposit was too high this would deter new tenants. Following the discussion it was proposed by T Luker that the system should remain as it is at present, as most plots have been maintained to an acceptable standard. I Jones added that in some cases the Knapp Road Allotments Association had helped new tenants to clear overgrown plots and the policy of not charging for the first year was a good incentive for new tenants.

c) B Elloway asked for more detail regarding Myplex covering. The Chairman said that Mr A Cavil an advisor of the NSALG gave an overview on the use of the membrane as he used the system on his allotments. Myplex can be used on an over grown plot by cutting down the weeds and laying the covering on top. Holes are then cut to allow for planting. It can be expensive but could be reused over several seasons due to its good quality.

68) PLOT RENTS. The Chairman confirmed that rents for 2015/16 had been agreed to increase to £22 for a full plot and £11 for a half. It is proposed that rents will increase again for 2016/17 to £25 for a full plot and £12.50 for a half. The reason for this is to cover costs of annual hedge maintenance and other maintenance costs. She hoped that any further increases would be in line with inflation. C.J Galbraith added that the Town Council budget was under great pressure from demands of other services in the town that had lost funding from the District and County Councils such as the Wotton Pool, Library and Synwell Playing Field.

69) BEST KEPT ALLOTMENTS. A tenant had asked the Chairman what was the criteria for the judging of plots? Mrs Hyam explained that Mr Paul Grimes along with his father Mr Roger Grimes judged the allotments under headings of: variety of plants grown, condition of plants and quantity of plot cultivated. It was suggested that the judges have sheets so that marks and comments can be recorded for each plot should there be a dispute. All were in favour of this being implemented. Mrs Hyam explained that Mr Grimes had indicated that he would not be offended if the Town Council wanted a change of judges for the competition and this may give the Committee the opportunity to introduce a new system along with judges. All were in favour. The Chairman commented that she had found judging the produce boxes at the Knapp Road Allotment Association barbeque in the summer as being very difficult. She felt it was important to ask a person with a good knowledge of gardening. Suggestions were put forward as follows; Mr David Wilson (Chairman of the Gardening Club), Ms Barbara Adams of Charfield (wealth of knowledge in growing flowers and crops). Any further suggestions to be made to Mrs Hyam with a view to finalise nominations at the next meeting. I Jones pointed out that timing of the judging could be brought forward. Following the first Produce Box Competition for the Cecil E Smith Cup it was felt that May/June would be a better time of year as there is a large variety of crops maturing.

70) The next meeting of the Allotments Committee will be on Wednesday 15th April 2015

This completed the business of the Allotments Committee

Signed..... Date.....

Chairman of the Allotments Committee

