

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE ALLOTMENTS COMMITTEE HELD ON 9th SEPTEMBER 2015
IN THE COMMITTEE ROOM AT THE CIVIC CENTRE AT 6.00PM.**

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

Knapp Road Representative A Didcott.

IN ATTENDANCE Mrs D Hyam.

93. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE: I Jones, S Todd, N Pinnegar, P Smith, B Elloway, N Clement.

94. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD 22nd JUNE 2015. Proposed by T Luker and seconded by P Barton of the Allotments Committee that the minutes of the meeting held on 22nd June 2015 to be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman P Barton. Agreed all in favour.

95. MATTERS ARISING:

a) FOOD BANK: It was noted that an article had been published in the Gazette detailing the success of the Food Bank project co-ordinated by W Lomas.

b) BEST KEPT ALLOTMENT COMPETITION: Mrs Hyam confirmed that prize winners had received their awards either by post or at the Knapp Road Association BBQ. Mr David Wilson Chairman of the Gardening Club presented the prizes and judged the best produce box of Knapp Road Allotments in memory of Mr C Smith a former tenant of the allotments. This was won by A Didcott.

c) PATHS AT NEW ROAD: Following an inspection of the allotments a request was made that tenants of plots 36-38 move their boundary fence back by 12" as soil slipped down the slope on to the path. Mrs Hyam confirmed that tenants had been contacted and that they had agreed to move the fence by 18" as soon as possible. P Barton added that some of the paths are in a very poor state and shuttering would be needed to keep the soil contained and some would need levelling off. He saw this as a priority and this would be discussed further under the budget item on the agenda.

d) WATER PRESSURE AT NEW ROAD: The proposed plan for dip tanks was circulated and it was confirmed that the tanks would have a ball cock system to refill the tank when the water level drops. A Burns said that this would help the problem of some areas of the allotments not able to get water when taps are in use nearest to the water main.

e) BUILDING DEVELOPMENT IN FIELD ADJACENT TO NEW ROAD ALLOTMENTS: P Barton confirmed that he was not aware of any plans being submitted for the site so no comment could be made until such time that plans are available, and the best way forward would be to form a New Road Allotment Association. He remarked that it had been an allotment site for many years and this may prove difficult for development. The proposal for the field as he understood it would be for housing along with 100 car park spaces and provision for 2 coach parking bays. Many felt that the site would be too far from the town centre and would be clearly visible on the approach to the town.

f) BOUNDARY WALL NEAR PLOTS 2-8: P Barton explained that the wall had been inspected and there was a concern that if the ivy was removed it may cause the wall to collapse.

However the overhanging branches of ivy next to the apple tree could be removed. Mrs Summers said that she was unable to cut these herself she would need some help to complete this task. D Hyam to enquire if the Buildings Manager could assist.

g) POPLAR TREES TO BOUNDARY OF THE CHIPPING SURGERY: P Barton expressed concern in the way the trees had been pollarded and especially as they had been seen as a community asset and he added that they should be monitored for any adverse effects. G Martin said that the bank in front of the new development should also be monitored as it is very steep and consists of loose soil.

h) SHEDS ON ALLOTMENTS: A Burns confirmed that following the recent thefts from the New Road site of produce and equipment the tenants do not want sheds as they could be easily broken into. T Luker agreed that this may lead to more thefts if sheds were erected especially as the site is relatively remote. A Didcott said that tenants of Knapp Road Allotments would like to have sheds and his interpretation of the covenant suggested that temporary structures would be acceptable and would be willing to obtain photos of a shed that would have to be uniform for the site. P Barton said he could see the need for a shed and the benefit of it being a more social aspect for tenants. Mrs Hyam explained that this issue had been brought up before and sent to a solicitor for a view on the legal aspect of the covenant. The advice to the Council was not to allow any buildings permanent or temporary on the site and she could not see the Council going against this advice. P Barton requested a copy of the covenant so he could read it before bringing it up with the Town Council.

i) NEW ROAD ALLOTMENTS MAIN GATE: It had been noted that the main gate had been replaced by Colburn Developments but the materials used were not of the same quality of those damaged. Mrs Hyam confirmed that she had contacted Colburn Developments and they had agreed to replace it with materials of the correct specification.

96. THEFTS FROM NEW ROAD ALLOTMENTS: A Burns explained that the site had been subject to a number of thefts of tools, vegetables and fruits. It was remarked that the quantities taken have been significant with fruit bushes being stripped of fruit and damaged in the process. These thefts had taken place under the cover of darkness and access had been gained to the site via the field behind the Fire Station. It was noted that this path is not a recognised footpath and does not appear on the GCC map. P Barton added that signs had been erected detailing that trespassers will be prosecuted and the fence had been repaired with extra barbed wire by the Buildings Manager. The tenants will continue to report any thefts to the Police.

97. BUDGET 2016/17:

a) KNAPP ROAD ALLOTMENTS: Plans are in place to improve the top path by the bank that runs along the edge of the site with Knapp Road. P Barton asked if the Knapp Road Association would consider leaving the nettles on the bank if the Town Council could arrange for them to be cut regularly during the year. His concern is loss of habitat for wildlife especially butterflies. A Didcott said that he would discuss the proposal at the next Knapp Road Association Meeting as the scheduled work on the top path is due to go ahead this autumn and the bank was going to be completed in conjunction with this by the contractor supplying the mini digger.

b) BRAMBLES ON PLOT 36: T Luker suggested that the brambles on plot 36 should be cleared as the council may need extra plots to accommodate tenants of Coombe Allotments should their eviction take place. Mrs Hyam explained that a costing for the work would be needed for the Town Council to consider it.

c) PATHS AT NEW ROAD ALLOTMENT: A Burns remarked that the paths at New Road Allotments are in a very poor state and in need of attention. Some are very uneven and in places narrow. P Barton said he felt that this would be a priority to bring the paths into an acceptable state. Following much discussion it was concluded that the water supply and alterations to the underground pipe system should be completed so it complies with water regulations before any work to the paths. P Barton to meet with contractor and site representatives so that costing and quotes can be submitted to the Town Council. It was suggested that a working party could be formed to help with certain tasks such as levelling paths and fitting edge boarding. A Didcott said that Knapp Road Allotment Association have a working party and they have achieved a lot over the past 9 years. The New Road site representatives will form a group with support of Knapp Road Allotment Association. T Luker said that the Town Council would consider funds towards the cost of materials but not necessarily towards some of the work. Knapp Road Association had received grants towards materials to improve the paths but the association working party had installed shuttering, weed proof membrane etc themselves.

d) TREE ON PLOT 1 NEW ROAD ALLOTMENTS: It was agreed by the Allotment Committee that a quote should be obtained for the removal of the sycamore tree. P Barton and site representatives meet contractor to obtain quote for works.

e) PATH TO MAIN GATE AT NEW ROAD ALLOTMENTS: H Summers raised concern regarding the slope to the gate from the pavement being very slippery when it is damp. T Luker suggested that a hand rail be installed rather than shallow steps as this would prove difficult for tenants with wheel barrows. Buildings Manager to be contacted for advice and costing to be obtained if required.

f) NOTICE BOARD FOR NEW ROAD ALLOTMENTS: G Martin suggested that the New Road allotments have a notice board for posters and other information. Notices have been pinned to the gates giving contact details causing problems with nuisance calls. P Barton agreed that this would be much better for the site. Mrs Hyam to ask if any materials available from the Town Council.

98. INSPECTION DOCUMENTS: Committee members had received copies of the proposed new documents for site inspections. All were in agreement that these be used to improve the standard of both sites. It was noted that it was important for tenants to notify the Town Council if they were struggling to maintain their plots as assistance could be given by the Allotment Associations. Mrs Farmer pointed out that the Allotment Committee should be careful with the eviction of tenants and be mindful that the waiting list is very short at present and that the Town Council might be left with more plots vacant.

99. NEW TENANTS: It was proposed by G Martin that new tenants should be offered a half plot and then progress to a full plot if they kept it up to a satisfactory standard. New tenants sometimes take on plot and due to lack of experience and time find it hard to maintain. Mrs Hyam explained that new inexperienced tenants are usually given a half plot and suggested

that perhaps an information sheet giving simple advice to new inexperienced tenants could be produced. P Barton said that to help clear a plot in the spring potatoes could be planted to help keep the weeds down for example. Mrs Hyam compile an advice sheet. Some plots are left in an overgrown state and new tenants are offered them free of charge for a year to clear it themselves. P Barton asked if plots were cleared ready for tenants in the past, Mrs Hyam explained that the Buildings Manager did clear some plots but with his extra responsibilities this can prove difficult. The previous groundsman contracted by the Town Council to cut grass in areas of the town had cut plots ready for new tenants usually free of charge but with the contract being awarded to a different contractor this has understandably stopped. Mrs Hyam said strimming a plot would cost around £50 and perhaps the plots could be covered with membrane until a new tenant takes on the plot. A Didcott said that the Knapp Road Association had invested in a strimmer and mower for the allotments and offered to strim vacant plots for £10 each. D Hyam to make enquires to ask if this arrangement would be acceptable to the Town Council. As most plots become available when rents are collected it was suggested that tenants that have decided to give up during the year should be entitled to a refund. This may encourage tenants to surrender their plots sooner rather than waiting for the end of the annual rent period. P Barton to consider with the Town Council.

99. FORMING AN ALLOTMENT ASSOCIATION FOR NEW ROAD: Following much discussion it was agreed that it would be beneficial to form an allotment association for New Road. The association could then benefit from buying items in bulk and forming working parties. The four co-opted members would take on the task of forming a committee. A Burns asked if the Knapp Road Association would be willing to join forces on certain projects to benefit both sites. A Didcott welcomed the proposal. The suggestion was made that the Knapp Road Association cover both sites but the Committee felt that it was important to have separate associations for each site to keep their own identity. T Luker pointed out that there might be more opportunity for an association to apply for grants rather than the Town Council. It was decided that the four co-opted members from New Road Allotments would meet with a view to form an association and elect a Chairman. Mrs Hyam to research guidelines for settling up an association and to put up signs for interested tenants to contact A Burns. A Didcott explained that it was important to hold regular meetings and to have an annual BBQ or similar get together in the summer months to encourage community involvement.

100. REPORT FROM KNAPP ROAD ALLOTMENTS:

- a) The Knapp Road Allotment Association held the annual BBQ in September and it was well attended.
- b) There will be a meeting of the Knapp Road Association to make final arrangements for the levelling of the top path with contractor D Howes.
- c) A Didcott raised concerns with the condition of plot 23A he believes that the plot has not been visited this year but is covered with a weed proof membrane. Mrs Hyam to check condition and write letter of concern if required.

d) WATER REGULATIONS: A Didcott asked if the allotments at Knapp Road needed any alterations to comply with the current regulations. Mrs Hyam explained that the taps at Knapp Road would need replacing with dip tanks and she understood from a previous Councillor Mr C Galbraith that the pipe work had been laid at an acceptable depth. A Didcott raised concern for older tenants as using buckets and watering cans may prove difficult. Mrs Hyam said that the location of the dip tanks would have to be reviewed and extra ones might be needed to give better coverage.

e) KNAPP FIELD: T Luker pointed out that if more plots were needed to accommodate tenants from Coombe Allotments, new housing developments in the town and interest following Television programmes, Knapp Field might be considered for allotments. He could remember that the field had been used for approximately 15 plots in the past before it was let for grazing.

f) COMPOST AREA AND HEDGE: A Didcott said that recently there has been a lot of the tenants garden waste put on the communal compost heap by plot 35. Some of the waste has spilled out onto the path. Mrs Hyam to put up sign requesting that tenants ensure that garden waste is not allowed to cover the path. T Luker said that this area may have to be cleared to accommodate new plots in future. A Didcott said that he had tried to clear plot 36 when there was a demand for more plots but this proved to be difficult due to the amount of brambles. Mrs Hyam confirmed that the hedges surrounding the allotments are now cut annually during the autumn.

g) MISUSE OF WATER: A local resident had been seen using a hose pipe from the allotments to clean his car. A Didcott said that tenants have been made aware and will report any further misuse of the supply.

101. REPORT FROM NEW ROAD ALLOTMENTS:

a) Concern was raised with condition of plots 25, 22A and 22B A Burns added that plot 12 had been covered with weed proof membrane this year and he not seen much progress Mrs Hyam to check these plots and write letters of concern if necessary.

G Martin left the meeting.

102. WAITING LIST: Mrs Hyam confirmed that there are four names on the waiting list two from Wotton-under-Edge and two outside the parish.

103. Next Meeting of the Allotments Committee is to be confirmed.

104. This complete the business of the Allotments Committee.

SignedChair of the Allotments Committee

Date.....

