

**ALTON TOWN COUNCIL
ALLOTMENTS SUBCOMMITTEE
MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 11th SEPTEMBER 2019 AT 17:00**

Present:	Councillor Sharon Cullen	-	Chairman
	Councillor Pam Jones		
	Pat Harris	-	Finance & Admin Manager
	Alexandra Bond	-	Property & Grounds Administrator
	Marcus Van Hagen	-	Alton Allotment Association Chairman
	Maggie Martin	-	Alton Allotment Association Treasurer
	Mike Penn	-	Site Representative, Borovere
	Yvonne Thorne	-	Site Representative, Wooteys
	John Pritchard	-	Site Representative, Whitedown
	Marion Morgans	-	Site Representative, Hawthorns

1 **Apologies**

Apologies were received from Kate Quick, site representative at Whitedown, and Pat Harding, site representative at Borovere.

2 **Minutes of meeting held on 19th June 2019**

The minutes of the meeting held on 19th June 2019 were accepted.

Mrs Harris reported that she had been speaking with the grounds team and the reason why not all notice boards purchased were installed is that they were suitable for main gates only as smaller gates and fencing are not strong enough to support them. It was suggested that free standing posts could be used, which Mrs Harris will investigate.

Mr Pritchard was grateful for the swiftness with which the Council had handled a recent water leak in Whitedown. Mr Van Hagen was concerned that taps were often repaired but broke again shortly afterwards and asked if a formal inspection of the equipment could be undertaken following fixes. Mrs Harris confirmed that this is something the Council could arrange.

3 **Update on inspections, vacant plots and waiting lists**

Mrs Bond gave an update on the situation with regard to inspections, vacant plots and waiting lists, also detailed in a document sent earlier to the subcommittee. There are currently two vacant plots, one at Spitalfields and one at Whitedown and Mrs Bond expects there will be two additional by the end of the month, to be strimmed and rotovated by the grounds team during the winter before being reallocated in the new year. Inspection letters were sent this year to 46 plot holders, 14 of which received a notice of termination. The last inspection of the season scheduled in October will confirm how many plots have been vacated accordingly. About waiting lists, there are currently

16 applicants of which 8 have expressed a preference for Borovere, 3 for Whitedown, 2 for Spitalfields or Wooteys and 3 for Hawthorns.

Following a query from Mr Van Hagen and at the request of Councillor Cullen and Councillor Jones it was agreed that Mrs Bond would communicate the dates of the last inspections of the season so that members of the subcommittee can come along.

4 **Site representative role specification**

The Town Clerk having recently issued a role specification for site representatives, Mrs Bond distributed copies for site representatives to read and sign. Site representatives who could not attend the meeting can collect their copy at the Town Hall.

5 **Green waste collection**

As per last year a non-compostable green waste collection will be organised starting in October. Dates will be communicated to the subcommittee and signs will be put up in sites' notice boards as well as on the trailer itself to advise what can be disposed of. Alton Allotment Association will advertise the collection to plot holders through social media although it is noted that this channel of communication may only reach a few people.

Mrs Harris communicated figures for the costs related to waste collection by Alton Town Council including contamination costs when the wrong item is put in the trailer.

6 **Rent renewals**

It was reminded that as agreed at the Policy and Resources Committee Meeting held on 19th September 2018 Alton Town Council allotment fees will increase in 2020 as follows: £27 yearly rent for a full plot and £30 one off admin charge for new plot holders.

Alton Allotment Association confirmed that their fee will increase to £6 in 2020 and that a new membership form was being prepared by the association's Secretary Mrs Harding who will send the form to Mrs Bond to be included with the rent renewal letters.

Mr Pritchard raised a complaint from a plot holder at Whitedown about the fact that new tenants have to pay the rent on any given plot notwithstanding the fact that a former tenant may have already made a payment for the same period before vacating the plot. Mrs Harris explained that the yearly fee does not just cover the rental of a piece of land but also goes towards the costs incurred by the Council in reallocating the plots.

Mrs Martin said there should be a discount for new tenants who take a plot later during the year. Councillors Jones and Cullen said no-one should pay from September. Mrs Harris responded that the Council needs to be clear about what they do and that therefore the charge shall stand.

7 **Encouraging mutual support between plot holders**

Mrs Bond reported that a lot of plot holders encountered either health issues or needed to go away at some point during the year leaving their plots untended for several weeks.

While the Council usually advises the people concerned to contact their site representative if they need help caring for their plot while they are unwell or away, site representatives are not necessarily expected to look after the plots themselves but rather help liaising with other tenants or volunteers from the allotment association who may be willing to lend a hand. Mr Van Hagen confirmed that Alton Allotment Association gathers a community of plot holders keen to help each other and therefore the Council shall encourage tenants who struggle to contact them. Mrs Martin said the allotment association could put a note in their newsletter to encourage people to talk to each other.

Mrs Harris advised that retired people are often fit at the start of their tenancy but as they age a whole plot becomes too much and therefore a solution may be to give people the opportunity to move to a smaller plot – or have their original plot split in half. Mr Van Hagen asked if a process could be put in place so that people who struggle have other options rather than the termination of their tenancy. Mrs Harris said she will investigate what the Council can offer.

8 Any other business

Mrs Morgan said that the paths need to be refurbished and flattened at Hawthorn's as they currently present a trip hazard.

Mr Van Hagen asked if the subcommittee could apply for particular maintenance works or improvements, such as having electricity on site. Mrs Harris, Councillor Cullen and Councillor Jones said any such request need to be submitted to the subcommittee and advised that the allotment association send any such suggestion to Mrs Bond by the first week of November so that this can be discussed at the next budget workshop.

Mrs Martin informed the subcommittee that the allotment association did not have the keys to the National Lottery shed at Wooteys and therefore were not able to carry out the repair works required on the roof. Mrs Bond advised that the Council did not possess any set of keys either and that as far as she was aware the Council had never been responsible for the maintenance of the shed. Mrs Harris said she will investigate the shed's ownership.

Mr Van Hagen asked if the association could organise a bonfire on one of the Council's open spaces. Councillor Jones advised that bonfires are not permitted on the Council's land and this shall apply to all.

Mr Pritchard advised that both the southern and northern boundaries of the Whitedown allotment site required hedge cutting works including maintenance of a number of overhanging trees. Pictures taken by Mrs Bond during her last inspection were passed on and Councillor Cullen agreed the hedge needed to be cut back. Mr Pritchard then raised security concerns due to gaps in the hedge and informed the subcommittee that small gates also needed attention. Finally Mr Pritchard asked if the Council could do something about children observed running on the site. Councillor Jones responded that, speaking as a former teacher, it is very hard to stop children to run around now and then even under strict supervision.

Mrs Morgan mentioned a dog owner causing problem at Hawthorn. Mrs Harris advised that if site representatives want to pass on the details of specific plot holders causing

problems then the Council can contact the trouble makers individually. Mrs Morgan also shared a picture of the fencing damaged by the cattle grazing.

Mr Penn informed the subcommittee that Mrs Harding, association secretary and site representative at Borovere, had been unsuccessful at contacting Home Havant regarding the hedge overhanging from Vicarage Road onto Borovere boundary and damage sustained to the retaining wall. Mrs Harris said she will contact Home Havant. Mr Penn also said the hedge needs to be cut on the allotment side. Mrs Harris confirmed this would be discussed with the grounds team along with seasonal hedge cutting works.

Mrs Thorne asked if the Council could contact plot holders to advise them about Council's rules regarding trees on plot. Here again Mrs Harris advised that site representatives report any problematic plot to Mrs Bond so that she can contact the tenant.

Councillor Jones raised the existence of Four Marks Allotment Association and suggested Alton Allotment Association may want to get in touch.

Mrs Morgan said the top of the bushes needed to be cut off at Hawthorn and asked if the subcommittee could apply for additional bushes to be planted. Mrs Harris said such requests shall be communicated to Mrs Bond together with other requests to be considered at the budget workshop.

Mr Pritchard said the plot numbers were fading on the stakes put in a year ago. Mrs Harris responded that the Town Council was aware and that this would be taken care of.

9 **Date of next meeting**

Members of the subcommittee expressed a preference for meeting in the morning as in the past and therefore it was agreed that the next subcommittee meeting scheduled on Wednesday 29th January 2020 would be held at 09:30.

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The meeting closed at 18:18.