

ASHFORD ALLOTMENT COMMITTEE

Minutes of the Open AGM 11 February 2015 followed by Committee Meeting, Committee Room 2 Civic Centre

Present: - Mrs P Winston-Chairman and Bybrook Cemetery
Mr T Fagg- Cryol Road Ms Raggett- Westrees
Mr G Button- Bulk Buying Manager Ms C Green-Henwood
Mr M Chandler- Burton Field Ms S Haste- Musgrove Farm
Ms G Puckett- Publicity Officer Mr S Heathfield- Gashouse Fields
Mr R Taylor-Orion Way Mr B Stamp- Treasurer
Ms V Lawson- Christchurch, Jemmett, William Road, Musgrove new
Carol Ridings- Secretary
Jonathan Longley- Operations Manager- ABC
Eileen Law -Allotment Officer
Mr M Tucker-Orion Way, Mr & Mrs M Pentecost- Henwood, Mr D Mitchell-
William Road, Mr & Mrs Diprose- Musgrove new

1. Apologies
None

2. Chairman's Opening Remarks:-

'Constitutional Issues: - Officers in post on the Committee are willing to stand, bar one- more of this to follow.'

A welcome was given to our new Treasurer Brian Stamp.

The Chairman then asked if there were any nominations or seconds for the post of Chair- none received.

'As I duly remain in the post for a further term of office, I will be speaking in the actual committee for a new post to be created, and for us to finally (he has said this before) to accept Tony's resignation as Show Secretary. He has fulfilled this role for many years with no fuss, and great modesty, encouraging and supporting competitors to enter the show- and fittingly that this is a final decision, he bows out after our most successful show ever last summer. I take this opportunity to wish him well and thanks for many years in office. A small token of our appreciation will follow'

Jonathan Longley was introduced; he has recently joined the Council and has the responsibility of allotments with Eileen. We are looking forward to working with him.

There are site rep vacancies at Beaver Road and Wye.

'Since a year or so ago this society is in a stronger position, and evolving positively as a group of people working together, in partnership for the benefits of allotment gardening. Behind the scenes much has been done to enhance our relationship with ABC- thanks to Julie Rogers and Eileen Law for their support. We have continued to build on our strengths, creating a really good web site, email addresses and better communication, all key priorities, and thanks to Gilda for her energy.

I wish to publicise a forthcoming trip to Sissinghurst 12 April £20.00 per person. There will be a tour (private and exclusive) prompt at 10.00 which last 1 hour and then you will be free for the rest of the day. There will be car share, 15 minimum on the trip. Final payment in advance only.'

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- Summer Show- 18th July at Kennington Junior School
- Pilgrims Hospice Fete 1 August

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- The Trading Store is open each Saturday in February and then alternate Saturdays; Volunteers are needed for 2 hours or so from 10.00 until 2-00pm. See Geoff, Gilda, The Chairman or the web site.

The floor was then open for Questions to the Committee and ABC

Q- Mr Stamp- Wondered when the water supply would be reconnected in Christchurch

A- Eileen- Still waiting for Quotations

Mr Stamp pointed out that one of the tenants knew where the leak was and Jonathan said that he will make contact with the plot holder and try and resolve the matter. There was a £700 bill for the leak of water

Q-Mrs Pentecost wanted to know if she needed permission to enter her allotment into the Kent Wildlife Trusts Competition for Wildlife

A- If she wanted to enter her own plot then that would be acceptable and everyone would be supportive, but not the whole of the Henwood site. It would however need to be cleared with the media team at the Council.

Ms Puckett would like to put any information about this competition on the web site with photographs.

That was the end of the AGM and matters proceeded to the Committee Meeting

2. Minutes of the Last Meeting

Agreed

Ms Puckett wondered if the AGM should move permanently to February- was this a better time than November?. This was agreed.

3. Bulk Buying Managers Report

The Kings Order had a commission of £87. No outstanding bills. £1438 left in the account. There was a plea for Volunteers and there will be a plea on the web site.

Thanks were given to Mr Button

4. Treasurer's Report

Mr Stamp has been sorting out the signatories for the cheque books. There is £500 in Bank Account 1

5. Show Secretaries Report

The show went very well.

The Chairman explained that for the show in July there is plenty of parking at Kennington Junior School and space for plenty of tables.

This year there will be a special class/ category in recognition of the work of Tony Fagg

The schedule will be sent out via Eileen in March, it will also be on the web and copies will be at the trading store.

6. Publicity Officers Report

Very disappointed that so few plot holders have turned up to the AGM despite the publicity. The Chairman felt that fewer people meant that there were fewer issues for people to complain over.

Ms Puckett has a list of email addresses, she is unable to give them to site reps but if there was an issue on a site she can email that person to see if they want to email their site rep. She will start sourcing prizes before the new show secretary is in post. There needs to be someone to sponsor rosettes.

The schedule has been done in association with Mr Fagg. Classes have been changed this year to reflect that the show is earlier in the season.

The Chairman then proposed a new post to manage the annual membership of the trading store. Ms Puckett seconded this motion and it was carried by all members.

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The vacancy will be advertised on the web

7. Site Representatives Report

Christchurch etc-The drain was put in last year at William Road, this seems to have stopped the flooding. There have been a number of new tenants.

Henwood-No outstanding issues

Bybrook –A number of the larger plots have been split into 2. Most people are working their sites and there have been no issues since the poplars were cleared.

Musgrove Farm- 2 new plot holders. There is an issue with people who do not do anything.

Cryol Road- 1 plot – there is a problem. Eileen has had the key returned

Westrees- There have been a lot of break-ins. However fences have been mended and some trees removed.

Gas House Fields- A visit is required by Eileen as there are a number of tenants who have not done anything. The 4 plots in the playing field should be removed. Eileen agreed with this.

Orion Way- 1 or 2 plots have not been cultivated. The hedge has not been cut and the water was not turned off.

Eileen explained that there was a problem with people turning the water back on in the autumn. Ms Puckett wondered if site reps should be given a tap to turn the water off/on. The Chairman felt that there should be more discussion with the Council over this matter especially liability if the pipe was fractured. There needs to be a look at water management at the next meeting

Ms Haste pointed out that lots of people wasted water

Ms Puckett said that most people did not need to water and perhaps a poster should be put out.

Mr Heathfield felt that there should be new taps that can only be pressed down for a limited period. This would prevent the use of hoses on sites.

Burton Farm-The site is in hibernation. No vacant plots. The raised beds are ok.

8 Allotments Officers Report

Mr Longley explained that the Council were undertaking a review of allotments across the Borough, this will take place between February and June with the recommendations being presented in July. This is because the costs of £51,000 far exceed revenue £6,500. That limits what can be done.

The costs are ABC staff, grounds maintenance, trees, hedges, locks keys (a new style of lock is being tested at Westrees)

The Council want to provide improved allotment services, with a quicker turn round of vacant plots.

The scope of the review is

- Cost reduction- especially ABC costs
- Increased income- maybe charge a deposit for a plot
- Service Charges- Water especially
- Looking at other delivery options- some councils ask allotment societies to look after plots

A questionnaire will be sent out to all allotment holders shortly by post and/or email. The allotment forum will be involved as well as the National Allotment Society- the local rep has already been contacted. The proposal will be presented to an extraordinary general meeting in July, the date to be confirmed.

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The Chairman asked who would be carrying out the review and if there would be a representative from the society. Site reps will need to encourage plot holders to fill out the questionnaire.

Jonathan- The Review will be done internally apart from the representative from the NASLG. The Chairman will be able to look at the questionnaire before it is sent out.

Mr Chandler wondered if the number of sites would be reduced.

Jonathan- No, it would be difficult for the council to get rid of allotments, the review is to provide a better service

Ms Puckett wondered whether sites which had been mothballed would be opened up. Fears that ABC views allotments as costing money. People should assess the benefits to the community's health and well being, not just a gardening hobby. Lots of people on a very low income have an allotment. She felt that other professionals in health and education should be involved in the review.

The Chairman felt that there should be a question on how you felt your allotment improved your well being

Ms Green asked about new allotments for new developments.

Jonathan-There is provision for this in the Local Plan.

There are currently 188 people on the waiting list with vacant plots in Bybrook, Musgrove New, Christchurch, William Road and Wye.

9. AOB

Ms Puckett wondered about when some hedges are cut and others are not

Eileen explained that if the hedge is not Council owned it will not be cut

DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING- 6.30 WEDNESDAY 20th May (Due to elections)

Committee Room 1