

ASHFORD ALLOTMENT COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting 23 April 2014 Committee Room 2 Civic Centre

Present: - Mrs P Winston-Chairman and Bybrook Cemetery
Mr T Fagg- Cryol Road Mr B Shrubsole- Repton Manor
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
Ms V Lawson- Christchurch, Jemmett, William Road, Musgrove new
Carol Ridings- Secretary
Julie Rogers Environmental and Customer Service Manager- ABC
Eileen Law -Allotment Officer
2 tenants

1. Apologies
Ms B Raggett
2. Chairman's Opening Remarks

'Welcome to this spring meeting and despite my concerns about challenging times since January a lot of welcome progress continues to be made. Several meetings were held in January between myself, Gilda and Tony at various times involving Anne Davies (ABC), Eileen (ABC), Julie Rogers (ABC) and Dean Spurrell (ABC). These have culminated in very helpful and positive links between us, as a committee, and the team at ABC to promote our society. Julie is new in post and is keen to ensure her department which includes allotments is both effective and responsive. Eileen, now responsible for all allotment sites, will manage all day to day admin for allotments and tenants which will really help to ensure a consistent and timely approach.

We have been working hard together to create a viable and realistic action programme which includes

- links from the Council's web site to ours (excellent and informative website) (thanks again to Gilda for its maintenance)
- Better and consistent approach to uncultivated plots. Eileen has visited sites and with site reps has a list of poorly/ uncultivated plots to send out letters to tenants
- more up to date information on the waiting list
- improved dialogue between reps- so please tell Eileen about tenants who even recently have been allocated a plot but do not appear to be cultivating it
- improved/ new notice boards which at least are being refitted so that all notices and information can be clearly displayed without damage from weather, wind/ rain
- Greater use of emails between ABC, the society and tenants
- Greater interest /sales at the trading store. As Geoff will verify in his report we have been very busy this year, and hope the increased awareness continues.
- There have also been a meeting between us and our area rep Steve Clements who gave us many ideas to become more relevant, efficient and a representative society to benefit all allotmenters in any future developments.

So overall many positive initiatives and much to look forward to including

3 August- Pilgrims hospice fete

23 August- Summer show

September- a trip to Wisley- Stage Coach costs @ £4.00 per person plus entry

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We have also made links with Boughton Aluph allotment society which may lead to future benefits for us both'.

3. Minutes

Agreed

4. Bulk Buying Managers Report

The seed shed has been very busy.

Between September 2012 and August 2013 sales were around £3,000, Between September 2013 and April 2014 sales have already passed that figure. There is £2,400 balance in the bank, and payments to business have been @£2000.

More volunteers are required for the seed shed.

The shed needs some repairs following on from an earlier break in. Frank volunteered to have a look at the damage to assess the work.

Ms Puckett has a number of people who have volunteered to help at the shed.

5. Treasurer's Report

There is still no Treasurer, although Martin Marsh who was present at the meeting maybe interested.

6. Show Secretaries Report

Thanks to Ms Puckett for organising the prizes for the show. The Show will be on 23 August at the Baptist Church Hall, Hythe Road, Willesborough. The schedule has already gone out, it is also on the web site and there will be copies at the Seed shed. Mr Fagg will need help on the day.

7. Publicity Officers Report

There has been a tentative offer to provide posters for the show from Kent Woolgrowers or alternatively William Sinclair. At present there are about £400 of prizes though more are welcome.

Ms Puckett advised members to look at the website which also has local links.

Approx ½ plot holders are on e mail, this has borne results for notifying people about clearing sites of rubbish, and letting people know about shed break ins.

There is also a face book group though this is not as successful as the web site.

There needs to be a small amount of expenses for the show to provide rosettes or posters if the sponsorship is not forthcoming. Possibility of a jumble/ bring and buy sale at the seed shed in June with all monies going to the show. Should this be open to the general public or just plot holders?

The Chairman thought that this was a good idea but it should only relate to gardening goods.

Ms Puckett proposed that a bring and buy sale go ahead

Mr Fagg seconded the motion

8 in favour, 1 abstention

Mr Heathfield was concerned whether there would be enough goods to sell.

The Chairman felt that it should give it a go and see if it is successful. A date will be decided by people who help out at the trading store.

Photos of the best plots- Mr Fagg volunteered his daughter to take these. Mr Fagg also felt that the judging of plots should not be by only one person.

The Chairman explained that the site rep should also be there and Ms Haste has volunteered to help and possibly Eileen. It takes about a day to complete the task and it will be during the week beginning 22 June.

Mr Heathfield asked whether site reps should produce a short list of say 3 plots for the judging, this would save time.

Mr Fagg said that this could cause problems for plot holders whose plots are not put forward.

Ms Lawson felt that being a new rep, she does not feel experienced in choosing the best plots.

Ms Puckett felt that the process needs to be transparent

The Chairman confirmed that when undertaking the judging she walks round all the sites so all plots are viewed.

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8. Site Representatives Report

Christchurch etc- The plots are looking good. A drainage ditch is due to be dug through the allotments and it was wondered when this was happening. Eileen explained that plot holders who will be affected had been written to, (One tenant has to move a polytunnel), but as yet there is no date as the ground is still too wet, it needs to dry out.

There has been a recent break in of sheds; a rotavator and lawn mower were lifted over the gate of the William Road allotment. There is concern over the height of the gate and as it is by a footpath the site is in public view. The gate needs to be higher and stronger. Julie and Eileen will go and visit the site.

Gas House Fields- There has been damage to a fence that needs fixing; this fence has only recently been repaired. There is a lack of cultivation of some plots, and some tenants need to be evicted.

Repton Manor- Problem of 2 trees in the rear garden of a property in Chart Road. This is a Council house and the tenant has just moved out. Eileen will check with the Housing Department. There needs to be a non cultivation letter for 1 plot.

Cryol Road- 1 plot needs a non cultivation letter. The leak in the water pipe was mended by 1 of the plot holders.

Musgrove Farm- A rubbish problem has been resolved. 3 vacant plots and 4 under cultivated plots. There is a problem with people digging into the paths making them too narrow. It was confirmed that there is no minimal width for a path. A poster will be produced for the notice boards about this issue and there will be a comment put on the web site to remind plot holders.

Burton Farm-Everything is ok. 2 plots are suffering from poor cultivation.

Westrees- 4 break ins so far this year, people are coming through the cut fence that has already been mended. 3 plots have not been cultivated for over a year. Would it be possible for the Council to trim non cultivated plots in order to provide weed control and improve the appearance of the site?

Bybrook –Still improving, the hedges and grass have been cut. There is a security issue with the fence and 1 plot has been repossessed.

Orion Way- So far this year a number of people have not done much work on their plots.

Ms Puckett said that site reps should let Eileen know which plot numbers are causing issues and how long they have been uncultivated.

Eileen asked that reps hold fire until after she has carried out an inspection of the sites, there then may first be a dialogue with tenants. It was explained that Eileen now does all the work rather than having 3 people looking after a number of sites.

Mr Heathfield felt that the eviction programme is too long winded and months roll by. The policy needs changing; a more reasonable time frame is needed.

Ms Puckett felt that sometimes tenants give excuses to the Council who accept them, but there should be more of a dialogue with site reps who may have a different picture.

9 Allotments Officers Report

There are currently 272 people on the waiting list.

Current vacancies

2 vacant Beaver Field- 1 under offer

4 vacant Gas House Fields

4 vacant Musgrove

2 vacant Christchurch

1 vacant Wye

2 vacant Christchurch
1 vacant Wye

In total 5 are under offer and 18 vacant.

10. AOB

The Wisley trip maybe the 3rd/4th Sunday in September

DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING- 6.30 WEDNESDAY 24 SEPTEMBER

Committee Room 1