

ASHFORD ALLOTMENT COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting 22 January 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 Mr P Baldock-Henwood
Mr M Chandler- Burton Field Ms S Haste- Musgrove Farm
Ms G Puckett- Publicity Officer
Ms V Lawson- Christchurch, Jemmett, William Road, Musgrove new
Carol Ridings- Secretary Julie Thomas – ABC
4 tenants

1. Apologies
Mr R Taylor- Orion Way- Everyone wished him a speedy recovery. Ms B Raggett
2. Chairman's Opening Remarks

'Welcome to our first meeting of 2014. Although last year was declared the wettest on record, we have already eclipsed this, according to forecasters who agree December saw the most rainfall in a month resulting in terrible flooding over Christmas. Some allotments are severely affected and under water, others just saturated, and making digging impossible.

The new appointment of a publicity officer, Gilda has meant we now have a good, well maintained web site, and I hope this will improve information for plot holders.

Meetings have been held with Anne Davies and Julie Rogers to share and discuss ideas and concerns about provision of allotments in the Ashford area, and how to plan ahead for the next one to five years. Currently time pressures have meant any forward strategic planning has been delayed.

Our allotments are a precious resource and those who spend the effort and time to work and improve their plot should be commended. We should therefore respect the privilege of being a tenant and commit to working the plot. It still seems a too long and timely process to remove tenants who do not put in the hours required and holds up a potential new member from the long waiting list.

The year ahead could be an important one for all of us, whatever the weather may bring, and I hope you are able to enjoy the considerable benefits that allotment gardening brings.

In view of what could be a challenging year ahead I would like to ask for a proposal and second for authority to contact the area rep for support and guidance.

Proposed –Gilda Puckett

Seconded- Tony Fagg

Carried unanimously

3. Minutes
Agreed

4. Bulk Buying Managers Report

A poor sale of autumn onions and garlic, and £80 was written off.

£1096.74 in Account 1

4 Trees in the school are overhanging the drive to the seed shed and the potato lorry will not be able to make the delivery.

Ms Puckett asked about attracting non plot holders to the seed shed.

Julie stated that in the terms of the seed shed lease the shed has to be for community use. Mr Fagg confirmed that non allotment holders were buying goods from the shed.

Mr Button explained that if there were more volunteers, then the shed could have extended opening hours.

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Ms Puckett asked about waiving the joining fee.

Mr Button confirmed that there is just an annual fee.

5. Publicity Officers Report

Ms Puckett telephone number is 621352. If anyone wants anything put on the web, or anything publicised please let her know.

She has met Anne Davies and Eileen Law with the Chairman today. Julie Rogers was unable to attend but Dean Spurrell attended.

The following matters were discussed:-

The forum having tenants email addresses. It would appear that when tenants were asked to give their email address to the forum they thought that it was an internet chat room. It was therefore considered that there should be a change in name to Ashford Allotment Society and the Forum is the Committee.

Mr Fagg explained that the name forum had to be changed to society when the seed shed opened.

The change of name was therefore agreed.

Funding- The Council spends £45,000 on admin and general expenses relating to allotments- not including the water bill, therefore @ £90 per plot. Ms Puckett has asked to look at these figures.

Eileen had given a run down of what happens when a plot becomes vacant. Some people on the waiting list cannot be contacted, and some names don't tally with the waiting list. Eileen is being asked to look again at the list and confirm the numbers. Also looking at asking perspective tenants if they are still interested in having a plot if they have been on the list for more than a year.

At present 280 on the list and 540 plot holders.

Non cultivation notices- This system does not seem to be working. Anne and Eileen agreed to look at this again but not before March as the plots are too wet at present to cultivate. It was brought up that some plots have not been cultivated for years.

Pumpkin Show- unfortunately not many people attended as the weather was so poor.

The web site is receiving a number of hits and is growing. It has a news and whats on page which needs more information. There will be photos of all the site. There is also a face book page.

If anyone has any suggestions to make the show more attractive these will be gratefully received.

The Council does not have any more money for the allotments so all the money we have comes from the seed shed or the show. In future the Council will only do 1 mail shot to tenants per year- 6th March. The Committee could look at sponsorship and grants. We could attract a low level of sponsorship to help hire halls, publicity etc. Companies like Wyevale and Sainsbury's may be interested in providing sponsorship. A motion was proposed to see if Members were happy to attract discreet and sensitive sponsorship. This was seconded by Ms Lawson. Unanimous vote carried.

Mr Fagg said that if we are going down the sponsorship route a treasurer is required.

The Chairman said that there was a request for a treasurer on the web and a request will be added to the mail shot..

6. Treasurer's Report

There is still no Treasurer

7. Show Secretaries Report

The Show will be on 23 August at the Baptist Church Hall, Hythe Road, Willesborough. The schedule will be going out in March- earlier than usual. It will also be on the web site. There is a need to make a point that this is a fun show- not serious. On the schedule it will state how

The show will be on 25 August at the Baptist Church Hall, Hythe Road, Willesborough. The schedule will be going out in March- earlier than usual. It will also be on the web site. There is a need to make a point that this is a fun show- not serious. On the schedule it will state how much an entry is.

Reps should encourage tenants to show, especially new plot holders.

8. Site Representatives Report

Burton Farm-Not much going on. There was a break in, in December, a few sheds were broken into but it appears that nothing was stolen. This was reported to the police and a crime number was obtained. Fences from gardens surrounding the allotment have fallen down. 2 plots are under offer.

Musgrove Farm- Not much going on. 1 new plot holder, 1 person handed back their keys and 1 vacant plot but there maybe others.

Christchurch etc- Sever flooding which also resulted in water into back gardens of the properties in William Road. This maybe due to a ditch filling in. Lots of wind damage to sheds and greenhouses.

Repton Manor- There was a question over who was responsible for the fences surrounding the allotment. These are the responsibility of the house owners not the Council. Members could go through the Council who will ask house owners to repair fences if they are being left.

Henwood- This is the 3rd year running that the water taps have not been turned off. Mr Baldock was told that someone must be turning them back on. He was also concerned that he had rung up a number of times about plots not being cultivated and had no response. A few plots had not been cultivated since the summer. He has also phoned up about posts being put back to stop vehicles driving onto the site. He was told that this was for an invalid but he disagreed. There are rut being formed by the vehicles, and if this freezes it will be a health and safety matter.

He would like the hedges adjacent to the school cut back as the plots there are losing sun. Mr Chandler commented that whenever he emailed Eileen he had a response. Julie explained that there was no longer a dedicated member of staff who deal with allotments.

The question of Perspex for the notice boards came up. On some sites there is no Perspex or it is too small. Julie said that the council will laminate posters if necessary.

Cryol Road- Julie will meet Mr Fagg on site. There are 2 new tenants. Problem with plot 10, and ivy is overhanging the water tank which needs to be cut severely.

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Bybrook –Suffering from 2 plot holders doing nothing, however the hedges have been cut and in the gales 2 poplar trees fell over. These have been removed. Julie stated that the rest of the poplars would be felled.

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9 Allotments Officers Report

There are currently 262 people on the waiting list.

Current vacancies

1 under offer on Burton Farm, 1 under offer Beaver Field

2 under offer Westrees and 2 under offer Musgrove

Lettings since 1st October -11

Non cultivation letters will be sent out after the plots have dried out. As soon as the weather improves and plots are not cultivated please let your allotment officer know.

Ms Haste expressed concern that some tenants waste water and just putting in a few plants and nothing else

The next financial year 2015/2016 will be even tighter.

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Julie was concerned over the negativity of the meeting tonight, but the Chairman pointed out that the meeting was the only opportunity for members to express their views.

11. AOB

Ms Haste said that a few plot holders had suggested holding coffee mornings at the seed shed to get more people interested and also selling produce.

Mr Fagg explained that we could only sell surplus not produce and in the past there have been plant sales and machinery sales in the seed shed.

The Chairman said that people could come and use the shed and also volunteer.

Mr Fagg suggested a trip out for members to a garden.

Ms Puckett asked how tenants could be contacted, need email addresses. We will be reliant on posters and Musgrove new has no notice board.

Mr Fagg mentioned out and about in the K E as a way of advertising what is going on.

The seed shed is open every Saturday in February

DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING- 6.30 WEDNESDAY Mid April.

Committee Room 1