

ASHFORD ALLOTMENT COMMITTEE MEETING

Tuesday 18th November Ashford Cinema, Elwick Square

Present Annette Woodhouse- Chair and William Road.
 Marina Kuzina- Deputy Chair
 Jo Perkin- Buying Manager Steve Rooker - Deputy, Cryol Road
 Jo Willes- Beaver Fields. Jill Fuggle- Treasurer and Repton Manor
 David Woodhouse- Christchurch and Jemmett
 Alan Sandom-Westrees. Carol Ridings- Secretary

Also present Cllr Hallett, Mike Markham, Nicola Easton, Andrew Horvath and 3 tenants from William Road.

1. Apologies

Heather Ahern, Mark Cole, Jonathan Goodwin, Elena Rooker

2. Chair's Opening Remarks

Whilst the cinema was free to use for a one off meeting, it normally costs £40 to hire the room, so there is a need to see if Tesco can be used again in the future.

Cllr Clive Hallett has been helping facilitating meetings between the Society and the Council. There has been a meeting with Claire, Annette, David and Jonathan- more on this later.

Annette also introduced 3 new possible members of the committee- Mike Markham, Nicola Easton and Andrew Horvath.

3. Minutes

These were agreed.

Items on guest speakers and the produce show were carried forward to the next meeting. An Article written by Lisa about Brenda's Rose has now appeared in the Council's magazine. The rose is now outside the trading store with a plaque. It appears that no monies for this have been forthcoming from the council despite being promised.

4. Elections for vacant posts

Mike Markham- Mike works in the Metro bank on the charities. He was proposed by David as the treasurer and seconded by Steve.

Nicky Easton- has had a plot on William Road for a year though has been on the waiting list for a few years. She can do basic admin and excel spreadsheets. She was proposed by David as the Marketing manager and seconded by Jill.

Andrew Horvath lives in Wye and has had a plot for 9 years. He has been showing prospective tenants around the site already. He was proposed as the site rep for Wye by Marina and seconded by Jo.

5. Environmental Departments Officer's Report

Claire did not attend the meeting.

Jo P explained that she never gets a response from Claire on e mails. In particular in response to the repair of the trading store roof, and the removal of the container. This lack of response seems

to be a common issue amongst members. Since the loss of a dedicated allotment officer there is no person apart from Claire to email if there is no response from the general e mail address. Occasionally there has been a response from Elaine.

Annette has put forward a wish list for Section 106 monies. However it is not known how much money is in the pot. The list includes replacing the trading store doors, installing water, electricity, insulation and replacing the container.

Claire has sent through an estimate of items however from the information provided it is not clear what these mean.

She has also provided a list of vacant plots and waiting lists - see attached.

6. Site Rep's reports

Beaver Fields- No massive issues. A list has been sent to Jo W of prospective tenants however Jo has no up to date plan of the vacant plots and this is unlikely until the new year. There has been a theft of a bench even though the site is padlocked and fenced.

The police have told us in the past to report all crimes to get a crime number, so they know where to target resources.

Wye- There are 10 plots, 2 of which are uncultivated. Andrew has shown 4 people around but they have not been interested, probably because the plots are overgrown. There is a possibility that 1 of the plots will be taken. Possibility of 1 or 2 plots uncultivated.

Repton- Jill has shown 1 person a plot, and thinks that they are interested. The new tenants have been very keen on clearing plots.

Westrees- Brenda's rose is now secure. The cost of the works was £30. Alan thought about a raised bed but that proved problematic. Several tenants have vacated plots. Plot 27 was 10 1/2 perches which the tenant was said was too large. They are waiting for Aspire to resurvey it even though Alan has measured it, they will have to check his measurements. It then will be divided into 2. There are 2 small plots which will never be used. Alan has also been asked to show prospective new tenants plots, where people are still working. The payment system when paid via the customer contact centre does not seem to tie up with records held by the allotment officer. The notice boards need new polycarbonate covering, this is a continuing problem that has been highlighted. There have been problems with padlocks and people have been locked in the site. Alan has now cleared most of the brambles at the carpark which Aspire were asked to do.

Cryol Road- At least 3 plots are not cultivated. One of the tenants has put in a complaint against Elena, which the Council were less than helpful about. A number of people have been shown uncultivated plots. Elena and Steve have cleaned and pruned the 'orchard'. This will not now be offered as a plot.

Christchurch/ Jemmett- A couple of plots need checking.

William Road-The ditch has been dredged There have been a number of viewings. The trees have not been cut down but pruned. Again issues with payments and vacant plots.

Musgrove- 5 plots which the Council said were vacant have already been paid for. 1/2 plots have been amalgamated to 1 plot, despite the council saying this would not happen. Heather's husband has been verbally abused from a plot holder in relation to the theft of crops. It was felt that ABC were not supportive.

7. Formal complaint

This is in 4 parts

- 1- No formal consultation on rent rises and loss of OAP's discount
- 2- Rent
- 3- Data Protection
- 4- Section 106 funding

A meeting has been held with Councillors, Claire and Contractor Manager together with Annette, David and Jonathan on 13 October. The main discussion was on the first 2 points. Cllr Bartlett has suggested that there are 2 meetings a year, with the rent discussed in December, so tenants know what the rent rise is likely to be before the budget is agreed by full council on 28 February.

David gave a breakdown of the expenditure/ income in relation to the allotment service eg water, admin, grass cutting. The Council are subsidising tenants by £2 per perch.

Data sharing- There is no reason why ABC cannot share data on plot holders with us. Jonathan has done a presentation on this and has sent it to Claire who is sending it to their Data Protection Officer who has yet to come back to us.

Section 106 funding- There is approx £67,000 outstanding.

The National Allotment Society have suggested that we do not go down the judicial review course of action and feel that we should work with the council. However we still have the option of going to the Ombudsman.

8. On line presentation by Jonathan

This was showing how membership could be done online. 2 points came out of this. Could the membership cards go in the electronic google wallet. Mike says that using Stripe is expensive and there are other options.

Would it be possible to have a spreadsheet on the website so that site reps could record problems with their sites.

9. Trading store

The trading store is well stocked at present. The next opening date- subject to weather and delivery of potatoes is 24th January.

10. Treasurer's report

Total expenditure £1600 on new stock for the trading store. There are 81 members/ renewals. When this year is finished the bank account will be changed from Lloyds to Metro Bank. The account will need 3 signatories.

AOB

Question over whether committee members pay for their own NASLG membership or paid from the current finances.

Thanks to Jo for her work with Facebook after Lisa left.

The meeting ended at 9pm

