



**Rusthall**  
Parish Council

**Minutes of the Allotments Committee Meeting**  
**held on Thursday 1<sup>st</sup> June 2023 at 7.30pm**

**Members Present:** Cllr D Smith (Chairman); Cllr E Ellicott (Vice-Chair), Cllr P Gripper; Cllr D Funnell; Cllr A Funnell; Ms Suzanne French (Non-voting member); Mr Leon Banks (Non-voting member) and Mr Alan Farmer (Non-voting member)

**Officer Present:** Mr K Watson, Allotments Manager

**Members of the public:** 21

**No decisions were taken by the Parish Council on any item not on the Agenda.**

- 1. Enquire whether anyone present intends to film, photograph and/or record the meeting:** None.
- 2. To receive and approve apologies for absence:** None.
- 3. Election of Chair:** Cllr Smith was elected as Chairman.
- 4. Election of Vice-Chair:** Cllr Ellicott was elected as Vice-Chair.
- 5. Declaration of Personal and Prejudicial Interests:** Cllrs Smith, Ellicott and non-voting members Ms S French, Mr L Banks and Mr A Farmer are all allotment tenants. Cllr Gripper has a close family connection with an allotment tenant.
- 6. Declarations of Lobbying:** None.
- 7. Open session for questions from the public:** A question was raised regarding signage on the Southwood Road Allotments gate to negate parking in front of them thus preventing vehicular access. Cllr Ellicott highlighted Agenda items 12 and 13 as this would cover this matter anyway. A comment was made that one of the gate padlocks at Southwood Road Allotments was very difficult to operate. Cllr Smith confirmed the lock would be lubricated with special oil held by Ms French. **Resolved:** Officer Watson was authorised to order additional oil in case of need for both Southwood Road and Southwood Road Extension sites. A request was made for the tree surgeons to leave some of the woodchip at Wickham Gardens Allotments. Cllr Smith highlighted the challenge faced by our contractors in accessing this site for this purpose due to the height of the kerb and the double gates proximity of residents' opposite. Officer Watson was asked to show compassion for tenants who have failed inspections and received Eviction Notices. Cllr Smith and Officer Watson both confirmed no Eviction Notices have been issued so far this year and Officer Watson encouraged any plotholder to contact him if there are mitigating circumstances for lack of cultivation to their plot(s). A request was made to consider using the communal shed at Southwood Road Allotments for the selling of surplus food, seeds, flowers, etc. Cllr Smith declined the request but offered the allotment holders the option of forming an Allotments Association who would then be responsible for the management of any sales. It was highlighted by a plotholder that the

WhatsApp groups for Southwood Road (which includes Southwood Road Extension) and Wickham Gardens Allotment sites are for allotment related matters only and are not to be used for politics.

**8. Minutes of the last meeting**

i. **To approve the draft minutes of the meetings held on 20<sup>th</sup> March 2023:** The minutes from 20<sup>th</sup> March 2023 were approved and signed by the Chairman.

ii. **Any matters arising from these Minutes which are not already on the agenda:** **Resolved:** A trial period for new tenants will be included within the Agenda for the next meeting.

**9. Welcome to the new Allotments Committee and Allotments Manager:** Cllr Smith welcomed the new Committee, including our new Parish Cllr A Funnell and Officer Watson as our new Allotments Manager.

**10. To consider request for new chicken run on Southwood Road Allotments Plot 20:** **Resolved:** The application for the new chicken run on Southwood Road Allotments Plot 20 was approved.

**11. To consider request from Rusthall Bonfire and Fete Committee and make recommendations to the Parish Council for the location of a storage unit at Southwood Road Allotments:** Cllrs Smith and Ellicott have met Ms Lisa Coughlan from the Rusthall Bonfire and Fete Committee to discuss the request. Currently the Rusthall Bonfire and Fete Committee have a shipping container, refrigeration unit and shed located at Jockey Farm, Nellington Lane, Rusthall. It is becoming increasingly difficult to securely store all the items and it is also causing issues when needing to access and transport items from Jockey Farm. Cllr Ellicott advised the Rusthall Bonfire and Fete Committee the Southwood Road Allotments were not suitable as the Parish Council already had plans for the only available space at this site. Cllr Ellicott proposed the Southwood Road Extension Allotments site as an alternative solution. **Resolved** – The Parish Council are prepared, in-principle, to consider a request from Rusthall Bonfire and Fete Committee to site their storage requirements at Southwood Road Extension Allotments. The specific site to be the communal land situated in the north west corner which shares a boundary with the Southwood Road Recreation Ground owned by Tunbridge Wells Borough Council (TWBC). The in-principle agreement would be subject to subsequent agreement between Rusthall Parish Council and TWBC for new double gates being installed on the shared boundary so access to Southwood Road Recreation Ground would have minimal impact on the residents of Southwood Road.

**12. To consider seeking permission and costings to install dropped kerbs for vehicular gates at Southwood Road and Wickham Gardens allotments:** Cllr Smith requested this item be considered in conjunction with Agenda Item 13 as they are intradiscally linked.

**13. Working Party to look at feasibility of using north east area of Southwood Road Allotments for “All ability” plots:** Cllrs Smith and Ellicott highlighted the desire to convert part of the communal land at the Southwood Road Allotments to “All ability” plots. Fortunately, TWBC has just announced the UKSPF Community Grants Programme - Round 2 is open for applications by 29<sup>th</sup> June 2023. Grants of up to £3500 per application are on offer and the “All ability” plots plan would qualify for consideration. To ensure the “All ability” plots were fully accessible a dropped kerb would need to be installed at Southwood Road Allotments and this can be included within the application. Officer Watson advised the cost of applying for a dropped kerb through Kent County Council (KCC) is £441.00 per application of which £204.00 is refundable if the application is unsuccessful. The cost of installation cannot be accurately defined until after the application has been approved as only KCC approved contractors can complete installation. From personal experience Officer Watson estimated the cost would be £1500.00. A dropped kerb is also required at Wickham Gardens to negate the problems accessing the site by our contractors. **Resolved:** A Working Party consisting of Cllrs Smith, Ellicott and Gripper and Ms S French

will complete the application for UKSPF Community Grants Programme - Round 2 and make recommendations with regards Wickham Gardens dropped kerb at the next Allotments Committee Meeting.

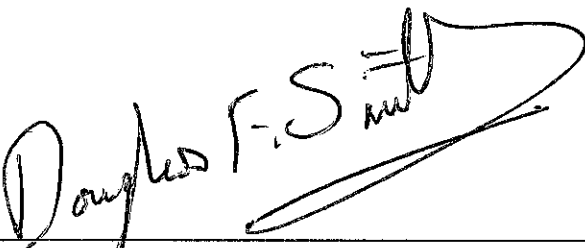
- 14. Current Waiting List and Vacant Plots:** Officer Watson advised there are currently 19 residents on the Waiting List and provisionally 12 vacant plots, which includes 1 chicken run at Wickham Gardens Allotments. Apart from 3 residents recently added to the Waiting List all the others have been contacted and 4 are due to be shown vacated plots in the next couple of weeks. Cllr Smith advised covering costs £150.00 per plot and should only be considered at the moment if it is known the plot(s) will remain vacant for a considerable length of time. Cllr Smith confirmed the strimming of vacant plots is to continue as it encourages take on by new tenants.
- 15. Consider request for one off clearance of weeds and overgrown undergrowth at boundary on north west side of Southwood Road Allotments (former dump): Resolved:** To consider a quotation from existing Southwood Road Allotments tenant, Mr D Maxwell, to weed spray the impacted area.
- 16. Review of 2023/2024 Allotments Budget and spend to date:** Cllr Smith confirmed £1000.00 has been received from Gatwick Airport for their Noise Monitoring equipment situated at Southwood Road Allotments. The total budget is £9000.00 of which £3100.00 has been spent, to date.
- 17. Final arrangements for Summer BBQ and Prize Giving – Saturday 8<sup>th</sup> July 1230pm for 1pm start at Southwood Road Allotments**
- I. Cllr Smith confirmed the prizes as Best Plot £25.00; Best Plot Runner-up £15.00; Most promising newcomer £25.00; Best scarecrow £10.00. The prizes to be the same for each allotments site other than Southwood Road Extension who will not have "Most promising newcomer". **Resolved:** The prizes to be in the form of "The Venture" (Rusthall High street shop) garden vouchers.
  - II. Officer Watson advised he has contacted Gemma Stapley, Common Conservators requesting Dan Colborne, Common Conservators Ranger and herself be the judges. Officer Watson is to arrange site visits to agree the prize winners during the week commencing 3<sup>rd</sup> July 2023.

Cllr Smith politely requested attendees bring some food e.g. salad, pasta, etc and confirm acceptance as soon as possible. The BBQ charcoal and meat will be provided by the Parish Council.

**Date of the next meeting: Monday 26<sup>th</sup> June 2023**

**Date of the next quarterly meeting: Monday 25<sup>th</sup> September 2023**

**The Meeting ended at 20.55**

  
Chairman

26-6-2023  
Date