



**Rusthall**  
Parish Council

**Minutes of the Allotment Committee Meeting  
held on Monday 20<sup>th</sup> March 2023 at 7.30pm**

**Members Present:** Cllr D Smith (Chair); Cllr E Ellicott, Cllr P Gripper; Cllr D Funnell; Suzanne French; Leon Banks.

**Officer Present:** None.

**Members of the public:** 19.

**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:** No-one.
2. **To receive and approve apologies for absence:** None
3. **Declaration of Personal and Prejudicial Interests:** Cllrs Ellicott and Smith, Suzanne French and Leon Banks all have allotments, and Cllr Gripper has family connections with an allotment tenant.
4. **Declarations of Lobbying:** None
5. **Open session for questions from the public:** No questions were raised.
6. **Minutes of the last meeting**
  - i. **To approve the draft minutes of the meetings held on 26th September 2022 and 21st November 2022:** The minutes from 26th September were approved and signed by the Chair. The minutes from 21st November were not available and will be signed at the next Allotment Committee Meeting.
  - ii. **Any matters arising from these Minutes: 15iii:** An inspection was held and it was decided that there was no need for the Committee to organise a remedy.
7. **To consider the proposal to invite a lay representative from each allotment site to future committee meetings:**  
This was agreed and Alan Farmer from the Southwood Rd Extension took his place on the committee.
8. **To discuss boundary issues at Wickham Gardens:** Cllr Smith read a statement (attached) updating the committee on recent developments.  
**Resolved** – to install fencing at the bottom of the steps on Plot 28 in order to prevent any incursion from the adjoining property.
9. **To discuss action to prevent slippery paths on all sites during the wet winter months.**  
**Resolved:** To assess, along with the contractors, the success of using woodchips at Southwood Rd. If found to be successful this can be tried at the other 2 sites.

- 10. Installation of water troughs – update:** A total of 9 troughs have been successfully installed across all 3 sites. Cllrs Gripper and Smith will be installing stand pipe covers in early April.
- 11. Update on the waiting list and vacant plots:** Several enquiries about allotment availability have been made as a result of the article in Rusthall Life. There are now 4 vacant plots – 1 at Southwood Rd, 1 on Southwood Rd Extension and 2 at Wickham Gardens. 6 new tenants have been accepted over the last 2 weeks. There are 5 people on the waiting list.

Suggestions for the Rusthall Life included;

- A feature article in Rusthall Life allotments.
- Tunbridge Wells in Bloom article.
- Prize Giving article in September.
- Crossways – is to feature in May.

- 12. Tenancy of Plot SR32A at Southwood Rd Allotments:** The tenants currently holding plots 40 and 41 are keen to take over Plot 32A as they need more space.  
**Resolved:** To create 2 new plots to be called 32A and 32B, and allow each of the 2 plot holders to rent a quarter plot at £15. The tenants will decide between themselves how to split the plot.
- 13. To discuss Crossways' request to sell produce outside the Kitchen Table Café in Camden Rd:** The representative from Crossways told the meeting that this would not be to make a profit, just to cover some of their costs. In addition to fruit and vegetables they hope to sell some of the craft objects that they make on the allotment e.g. wreaths, bird boxes etc.  
**Resolved:** That this would be a good idea
- 14. To consider whether or not to email a current copy of the tenancy agreement to each plot holder after renewal in October:**  
**Resolved:** That a copy of the tenancy agreement will be sent out with the invoices, and that a note will be added that by paying the rent the tenant agrees to the terms of the agreement.
- 15. To discuss the proposals for additions to the existing tenancy agreement:**  
**Resolved:** That a new clause be added – Conditions of Use 2.6: "A previously permitted access from a tenant's home on to their plot will be honoured until that tenancy expires. The boundary must then be re-secured. No such new direct accesses on to any of the Council's allotment sites, will be permitted."  
Cllr Smith read a statement to explain the addition of a new clause under Inspections. His statement was accepted by the committee, and it was.  
**Resolved:** that a new clause be added – Inspections 4.6: "If a tenancy is terminated by the Council or if the Council refuses to renew a tenancy, any future application by the tenant for an allotment plot must be unanimously approved by the Parish Council Allotment Committee"  
**Resolved:** To change the wording of the rules concerning bonfires "Bonfires are allowed between 1<sup>st</sup> October and May".
- 16. To consider the quotations received for additional security measures at the Southwood Road allotments:**  
**Resolved:** To accept the quote for spikes on top of the gate and to requisition this work immediately.
- 17. To confirm the process and procedures for the 2023 inspections.** It was confirmed that the inspections would take place as usual in May, June and September. After the initial inspection in May any plot holder who had not achieved an acceptable standard of cultivation, as set out in the tenancy agreement, would receive a letter

advising them on how to make progress ready for a re-inspection in June. The committee were informed that Officer Kevin Watson would be returning as Allotment Manager, making the inspections more standardised.

**Resolved:** To discuss at the next Allotment Committee meeting the suggestion that we have a trial period for new tenants.

**18. To discuss 'No Mow May':** The committee unanimously agreed that 'No Mow May' was not suitable for practice on allotment sites.

**Resolved:** To send a letter informing all tenants that 'No Mow May' is not to be observed.

**19. Date of Summer Prize Giving and BBQ – Saturday 8th July 2023:** The BBQ will start at 12.30 - for 1pm. People are asked to bring a dish. The Council will pay for burgers, sausages and bread rolls. Cllr Gripper has agreed to cook. We will ask Dan Colborne and Gemma Stapeley to be judges. Prizes will be given for Best Allotment, Best Newcomer and Best Scarecrow on each of our 3 sites. Prizes will be a Venture voucher.

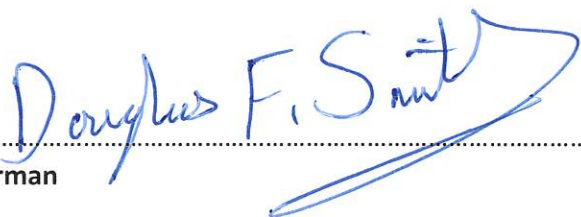
**20. To consider tree surgery at Wickham Gardens:** We have received 3 quotes from our local tree surgeon Matt Page who has been delivering wood chip to our Southwood Road site.

**Resolved:** to accept all 3 quotes so that the trees can be made safe. The payment for this will come out of the tree surgery budget, not the allotment budget.

**21. Date of the next meeting; Monday 12th June**

The Meeting ended at 20.46

Chairman



Date



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**STATEMENT FROM COUNCILLOR SMITH – MINUTE 8**

**Due to the Council's history with this tenant I would ask that the following words be accepted as an addendum to the minutes of this meeting.**

**Back in November the Allotment Committee upheld the inspector's decision not to renew the tenancy of plot 28 Wickham Gardens.**

**Some year's ago the Council granted permission for the tenant to erect a flight of steps to gain direct access from their back garden.**

**Following the Council's decision not to renew their tenancy, a boundary issue was created. The Council has a plan of the former tenant's land showing distances from their house. The Council very politely asked if we could engage an independent surveyor to mark exactly where the boundary lies. The former tenant refused permission for this. They have, as Committee members can see from the photograph, placed their own boundary markers strung with do not enter tape.**

**It is Liz and my belief that this boundary is not accurate, and favours the former tenant's property, but it is not worth the cost of a legal fight.**

**However, with the retention of the steps, we feel a suitable fence will have to be erecteds to keep our site secure. As Chairman, I therefore propose we seek quotations for fencing the western perimeter of our Wickham Gardens site.**