

Minutes of The Allotments Committee held on

Monday 20th September 2021 7.30 pm at The Rackliff Centre

Members Present:

Cllr D Smith Chairman; Cllr E Ellicott Vice-Chair; Cllr B Edwards; Miss S French and Mr L Banks, Committee Members

Officer Present:

Ms L Neusten

Members of the Public:

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1. Enquire whether anyone present intends to film, photograph and/or record the meeting:

No-one present intended to film, photograph and/or record the meeting.

2. To receive and approve apologies for absence:

Cllr Funnell and Officer Mr K Watson.

3. Declarations of Personal and Prejudicial Interests:

Cllrs Smith, Ellicott and Committee Members Miss French and Mr Banks declared Personal and Prejudicial Interests as they are all existing plot holders.

4. Declarations of Lobbying:

None.

5. Minutes of the meeting held on 8th June 2021:

These were agreed, and it was **RESOLVED** that the Chairman signed them as a true record

5.1 Matters outstanding from these minutes (not listed as separate agenda items):

None.

5.2 Matters outstanding from previous minutes:

None.

6. Open session for questions from the public:

Question: Why is there no combination lock on the Southwood Road main gate?

Answer: Cllr Smith - Not a problem and we will address this.

Question: Could locks be larger at Southwood Road allotments so combinations are clearer?

Answer: Cllr Smith – Yes. Very good ones were fitted at Wickham Gardens and we will arrange for similar to be fitted at Southwood Road.

Question: Are hedges adjacent to plot 7 on Southwood Road Extension to be cut back?

Answer: Cllr Smith - Hedges are owned by Tunbridge Wells Borough Council. We will contact them.

Question: Mgmt. of abandoned plots which are overgrown?

Answer: Cllr Smith – Covered in Tenancy Agreement Terms and Conditions No. 10

Question: Why don't we charge a security deposit which is withheld if plot not returned in condition it was taken over in?

Answer: Cllr Smith - Covered in Tenancy Agreement Terms and Conditions No. 10.

Question: Could age limit for taking over a plot be dropped to 15 years?

Answer: Cllr Smith – No, tenants must be over 18years.

Question: What is being done to address the problems with children on Southwood Road

Answer: Committee member Miss French –It is in the Terms and Conditions that children should not be unaccompanied. The Committee will write to plot holders instructing them not to pass on the padlock code to children. Cllr Smith: When we replace the padlocks at Southwood Road we will change the combination.

7. Tenancy Agreement revisions – Cllr Smith

7.1 Cllr Ellicott: Proposed revised wording to clause amendment and for letters to be sent following June inspections to provide clarity. Proposed wording to be added to existing phrasing of clause 4.3 *“if after the June inspection a plot has not been cultivated satisfactorily a warning letter will be issued”*.

Cllr Smith: Common sense must be applied – No plot holder should feel anxious or stressed if they have extenuating circumstances. The Council must be approachable and flexible. ANY issues please contact the Clerk or Deputy Clerk.

The proposal was approved.

7.2 Proposal to reduce notices of change within the Tenancy Agreement from 6 to 3 months. The proposal was approved.

8. September inspections update – Cllr Smith, Ellicott and Committee Member French

Inspection outcomes to reviewed with the Clerk on his return from holiday on 27th September 2021. Where possible, plot holders who have failed inspection, will receive a letter offering an alternative reduced sized plot. Cllr Ellicott - We will become stricter about implementation of the inspection rules as we have a waiting list of approximately 28 residents.

9. Agenda Item withdrawn

10. Working Group Update – Cllr Smith and Cllr Ellicott

i. Cllr Smith - Mapping of plots is currently illogical and very difficult to administer. We have limited opportunity to amend the plot numbers due to the software system that was originally provided to support allotments management. The Clerk is currently arranging quotes for replacement plot numbers to be made that will be placed on the edge of every plot. A proposal regarding costs will be prepared for the next meeting.

Cllr Smith confirmed that all/any machinery can only be used Monday-Friday 9am-7pm; Weekends and Bank Holidays 10.30am-5pm.

ii. The Committee confirmed the wording of signage for Wickham Gardens machinery restrictions.

11. Southwood Road Update

i. Cllr Smith – Complaints have been received about anti-social bonfires. Terms and Conditions currently allow bonfires from 1st September – 1st May, 2pm to dusk. Clerk had previously reminded the Committee they could consider a revision to these rules. Cllr Smith - The problem has increased this summer due to TWBC suspending the garden waste collection service. Cllr Ellicott - Strongly objected to any changes be made as they would be too much of a burden to plot holders and not reasonable. Committee Member Banks – Introducing a restriction would be ridiculous. Cllr Smith – As an alternative, it was proposed we write to plot holders to ask those with plots adjacent to residential properties to be particularly considerate. The proposal was approved.

12. Items for information

Cllr Edwards – Emphasised plot numbers should be displayed on all plots.

13. Date of December 2021 Meeting

Monday 6th December 2021, 7.30pm start.

14. Allotments Competition 2021 Winners & prize Giving – Cllr Smith

Cllr Ellicott, Chair of the Parish Council, presented certificates and vouchers to the following: -

Southwood Road

- Plot 3 – Winner – Mrs B Shaw
- Plot 39A – Runner Up – Mr J Bridger
- Plot 12 – Scarecrow – Mr E Wadey

Southwood Road Extension

- Plot 7 – Winner - Mrs P Travis
- Plot 6A – Runner Up – Mr J Tapp
- Plot 6A – Scarecrow – Mr J Tapp

Wickham Gardens

- Plot 23A – Winner – Mr M Camus-Smith
- Plot 24 – Runner Up – Rusthall Scout Group (Mrs J Henderson)
- Plot 38B – Scarecrow - Ms J Sullivan (absent – certificate and voucher to be posted after the Meeting).

The meeting closed at 8.25pm

..... Chairman

Dated