

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE ALLOTMENTS COMMITTEE
HELD ON 15th July 2010 at 6.30pm
HELD AT THE PARK PAVILION BOARD ROOM, BARRACK LANE, HARWICH, ESSEX

Present: **Chair:** **Councillor A Colbourne**

Councillors: **Councillor D Rutson (Vice Chairman), Councillor G Calver,**
 Councillor D McLeod, Councillor J Brown and Deputy Mayor,
 Councillor B Brown

Co-opted Members: **Mr M Button, Mr W McCoy, Mr F Mesher and Mr S O’Hara**

Assistant to the Clerk to the Council: Ms L Keeley

Also Present: One member of the public

Public Question Time: **Mrs J Brown mentioned that her watering can (s) left out at Boatswains Call had been removed.**

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A17/10 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies received from Councillors J Wares, Mr N Inglis and Mr Steward.

A18/10 DECLARATIONS OF MEMBERS’ INTERESTS

None.

A19/10 MINUTES OF LAST MEETING

RESOLVED: that the minutes of the Allotments Committee meeting held on 13th May 2010, (previously circulated), be accepted as a true record.

A20/10 MATTERS ARISING FROM MINUTES

Further to Minute A05/09 Councillor Calver said that he has not been informed of any further news from TDC regarding the plot 5 King Georges Avenue and potential for additional allotment land.

Further to Minute A07/10 Mr McCoy said that number 34 Long Meadows is being advertised for sale. Councillor Calver reminded the Committee it was agreed at a previous meeting for no action unless the access gate to the allotments at Long Meadows became problematic.

RESOLVED: It was agreed for the Assistant to the Clerk to contact the estate agents who are advertising the property for sale and inform them that the gate is not for use as access to the allotments.

Further to minute A08/10 – Repair of the boundary fence at Boatswains Call boundary is completed.

Further to minute A13/10 – Clearance of plot 9 The Redoubt is completed and now tenanted.
Encroachment at plot 31 The Redoubt – Mr Inglis has notified the Assistant to the Clerk that the matter is now settled and encroachment was minimal (barely the width of the fence posts)

Plot 13 Dunns Meadow is re-let.

Further to minute A14/10 - Plot 13A Boatswains Call is re-let.

A21/10 REPLACEMENT TAPS

Taps at all allotment sites are now replaced with the DETR Schedule 2 Section 6.3 Regulation bib tap non-return valves for backflow prevention. As per minute 09/10 lockshield type taps have been fitted at more “open” sites, e.g., The Redoubt, Tower Hill, Dunns Meadow and King Georges Avenue. Standard hose union taps at Long Meadows and Abdy Avenue. The Assistant to the Clerk reported that the total cost at these sites is £271 (inc. VAT) and replacement taps at Boatswains Call (undertaken earlier this year) is £108.64 (inc. VAT). An additional cost incurred of £528 (inc. VAT) for keys/hose pipe attachments which have been obtained on a sale or return basis and tenants may purchase these at the Town Clerk’s office. *Note:* Tenants are aware that should they terminate tenancy and no longer require their key/hosepipe fitting then they will be reimbursed (subject to their being in a good and workable condition).

RESOLVED: To pay invoices as above.

A22/10 CLEARING OF PLOT 8 LONG MEADOWS

A skip has been hired and the plot cleared.

RESOLVED: To pay invoice of £150.75 (inc VAT).

A23/10 VACANT PLOT/WAITING LIST/NOTICES TO QUIT

The Assistant to the Clerk reported no vacant plots, 49 on the waiting list and 2 notices to quit were issued (2 King Georges Avenue and 13 Dunns Meadow).

A24/10 CO-OPTED MEMBERS

Long Meadows - Mr McCoy said that he has nothing to report

The Redoubt/Tower Hill – (Mr Inglis submitted his comments via the Town Clerk’s office prior to the meeting):-

- Plot 54 Tower Hill – continues not to be worked and it was **RESOLVED** to send standard letter to tenant giving notice to quit
- Plot 11a The Redoubt – grasses/weeds are at least a metre high
RESOLVED to write to the tenant referring to Clause 5A of the Tenancy Agreement
- Plot 38 The Redoubt – continues not to be worked and it was **RESOLVED** to write to the tenant referring to Clause 5A of the Tenancy Agreement
- Plot 12 The Redoubt – continues not to be worked and **RESOLVED** to send standard letter to tenant giving notice to quit

Boatswains Call

- Mr Button said that several plots continue not to be worked although appropriate letters were sent to the tenants and valid responses received in some cases. In the case of Plot 35a it was **RESOLVED** to write to the tenant giving notice to quit.
- The Town Clerk’s office has been notified that some tenants are watering directly from the hosepipe rather than filling containers. Mr Button referred to the model tenancy agreement discussed by the Committee some time ago which included a clause regarding water being used sparingly from water tanks on site and hoses may only be used for the filling of water butts and spot watering and no sprinklers or attachments along with unattended hoses are permitted whatsoever. The current Harwich Town Council Tenancy Agreement does not specify restriction although it is generally understood the taps/hose pipes should be used to fill containers only. It was agreed that the matter should “self-police” because water meter costs are charged independently at each site and cost will reflect usage.

King Georges Avenue

- Plot 2 is currently being offered for new tenancy. Mr Mesher said that the plot is large and perhaps consideration may be given to dividing the plot should a suitable tenant not be found.
- Plot 5 – Mr Mesher said that Taylor Wimpey may have taken the fence/pathway in a different direction to that originally suggested. Councillor Calver said that he has not been made aware of a change to the original plan by David Hall (Assistant Head of Leisure Services at TDC).

RESOLVED: The Assistant to the Clerk to contact David Hall.

Dunns Meadow

- Plot 9A – Mr O’Hara said that there has been no change in the condition of this plot since communications in June and July.
RESOLVED: Write to tenant giving notice to quit.
- Mr O’Hara asked that an additional water stand pipe be installed at this site.
RESOLVED: Permission was granted and Mr O’Hara to manage/co-ordinate.

A25/10 CHAIRMAN’S REPORT

The Chairman said that the rate of rental charged by HTC is low in comparison to many towns. Discussion ensued as to whether low rental charges could undervalue tenancy and responsibility. In May 2009 a review of rental charges was discussed when it was agreed for a full review in 3 years.

RESOLVED: To raise the matter at an early meeting in the year 2012.

In all cases where grasses/weeds are solely being cut back instead of proper use as an allotment the Chairman suggested the tenant be notified that it is not acceptable and be referred to Clause 5A of the Tenancy Agreement.

RESOLVED: The Assistant to the Clerk to write to the tenants accordingly on receiving this information at the Town Clerk’s office.

A26/10 MATTERS RECEIVED IN THE POST OR INFORMATION ITEMS RAISED BY MEMBERS

A communication was received from Mr Brendan Sullivan regarding garden land at the rear 37 Marine Parade Dovercourt (currently divided into 4 flats) and owned by Mr Sullivan. The area is presently unmaintained by his tenants and, therefore, he asks that the Committee may consider this area for use as an allotment. The Committee appreciated the suggestion but would not undertake management of the tenancy.

RESOLVED: The Assistant to the Clerk to contact Mr Sullivan suggesting we offer the land to a potential tenant (s) on the HTC waiting list but tenancy is for him to arrange.

Councillor Calver said the Committee may like to consider organising an exchange forum which offers the opportunity for allotment tenants to share experience and issues they may have. He said that a similar event was discussed on BBC Essex Gardeners Question Time.

RESOLVED: Itemise on Agenda for next meeting.

Further to Minute A31/09 Councillor Barry Brown said that Petrochem Carless Limited Harwich no longer hold redundant plastic containers for use as water butts by allotment tenants but his contact at the Refinery will check with the depot at Scunthorpe as to whether they may have some. *Note:* The suggestion was originally raised by Mr Mick Button originating from a “wish-list” by tenants to source a supply of free water containers locally).

A27/10 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of the Allotments Committee will be held on Thursday **19th August 2010** at the Park Pavilion Board Room Barrack Lane at 6.30 pm.

Meeting closed at 7.20 pm.

DATE:

CHAIRMAN: