

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE ALLOTMENT COMMITTEE HELD AT THE ALLOTMENT GARDENS, PIKES HILL, LYNDHURST ON MONDAY, 24 OCTOBER 2008 AT 5.30 PM

- Present Mrs E A Butcher (Chairman), Mr F Alexander, Mr G Bisson, Mr M Rollé and Miss H Palmer.
- In Attendance Mrs M Weston – Clerk to the Council.  
2 allotment holders – Ms Jeannette Owens and Mr Richard Madder (part of the meeting).
- Presentation The meeting commenced with a presentation by Ms Jeannette Owens, an allotment holder. The presentation was brought about by the fact that Ms Owens and Mr Richard Madder had received a letter requesting that they reduce the number of chickens they were keeping at the allotment gardens to bring them within the allotment guidelines. Ms Owens stated that her chickens were well cared for and she did not consider that they were causing any rat problems. She gave the Committee copies of chicken care guidelines that could help to safeguard against rats and showed examples of bait boxes that could be used to combat any problems.
- It was pointed out by the Committee that according to allotment guidelines only six chickens were allowed per tenant and, in any case, it was not considered compatible with the ethos of allotment gardening to have a large amount of chickens on one plot. It was accepted that although the guidelines stated that six chickens were permitted per tenant, in the past tenants had been led to believe that six chickens could be kept on each plot. However, each group of six chickens should be kept separately.
- Ms Owens and Mr Madder were thanked for attending the meeting at which point they withdrew.
- Apologies for Absence None.
- Disclosures of Interest None.
- Election of Chairman It was proposed by Mr Bisson and seconded by Miss Palmer that Mrs Butcher be elected Chairman of the Allotment Committee for the ensuing year.
- Minutes **RESOLVED:** That the minutes of the Committee meeting held on 28 April 2008 be confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a true and accurate record.
- Matters Arising (a) **Plot Numbering**
- Mr Bisson stated that he had enquired about the possibility of providing metal stakes with laser printed numbers for this purpose but the price was considered too high for further consideration at this time.

## Chickens

This agenda item was brought forward for discussion at this point due to the presentation earlier in the meeting. Lengthy discussion took place but it was unanimously agreed that the fact remained that it was considered inappropriate to have more than six birds on each plot and per tenant. It was noted that the tenants who had made the presentation were keeping their birds in a manner not to cause problems but this might not be the same with other allotment tenants or future tenants if a precedent were to be set or the guidelines were changed at this point.

### **RESOLVED:**

- (a) That retraction letters be sent to the three allotment tenants who had been asked to reduce their birds to six per plot, informing them that the guidelines stated six per tenant and apologising for this discrepancy.
- (b) That Ms Owens and Mr Madder be regarded as two individual tenants and therefore be allowed to keep six birds each and that a special dispensation be made, due to the efforts they had made, to allow them to keep 12 birds on one site.
- (c) That all allotment tenants be informed that they would be given 12 months to reduce the number of birds kept to six per tenant.

## Plot inspections and follow ups

The Allotment Committee Chairman and Clerk had made regular plot inspections throughout the year. Following the most recent inspection letters had been sent out to four allotment tenants stating that their tenancies would not be renewed as they had received previous warnings that they were not working their plots in accordance with the guidelines. Three letters had been sent to owners of chickens. Eight letters had been sent to allotment tenants asking them to contact the Clerk regarding the Parish Council's concerns on the condition of their plots. One tenant had been asked to clear his ditch as he was in breach of guidelines. A further letter of thanks had been sent to an allotment tenant who was giving up his plot and returning it to the Council in good order.

The Clerk had received a telephone call from the tenant of Plots 87 and 88 stating that she wished to continue tenancy of both plots. The allotment inspections showed that these plots, which had been rented for four years, had not been worked in accordance with guidelines and the tenant had previously been invited to reduce to one plot in 2006 but had declined.

**RESOLVED:** That the tenant on Plots 87 and 88 be informed that the Parish Council now insisted that tenancy be reduced to one plot but the choice of which to keep would be left to the tenant.

## Vermin Control

NFDC Environmental Health had visited the allotment gardens and carried out a programme of vermin control. The cost for this service had been £438.02. The officer concerned had stated that he felt the problems caused were due to the keeping of chickens on the allotment gardens and some tenants not controlling undergrowth or keeping/stacking rubbish on their plots.

It was noted that two large infestations of rats had been identified on Plot No 61 and the officer felt these were due to undergrowth and rubbish stacked on site. The Clerk had contacted the tenant who had stated that the rubbish had been left by the previous tenant and they were not in a position to undertake any work on the plot at the present time due to ill health.

**RESOLVED:** That the Clerk contact the tenants and inform them that work must be undertaken or the tenancy would not be renewed.

Plot Numbers 58/59 The Clerk reported that Plot No 58 continued to be occupied by the previous tenant even though the tenancy had not been renewed in October 2007. Appropriate correspondence had been sent to the tenant but the tenant's chickens still remained on site. Both plot 58 and 59 were severely overgrown and complaints had been received from other allotment tenants. The tenant had been informed that tenancy of Plot No 59 would not be renewed for the year October 2008 to September 2009.

**RESOLVED:** That an appropriate figure be added to the budget request to cover possible legal fees.

Plot Clearance Tree roots had been cleared from Plot No 98 and the ground levelled. There was a shed at the back of this plot with an asbestos content that would need to be removed. Estimates for the work were being sought. It was also noted that asbestos was lying on the ground on Plot No 23.

Plot measurements and fees 2009/2010 It was noted that plots were now being described as starter, half and full plot due to the fact that exact measurements had changed over the years.

Discussion took place on the necessity to increase plot fees in order to help finance budgeted items and eventually to make the allotment gardens self sufficient.

**RESOLVED:**

(a) That fees for the allotment year October 2009 to September 2010 be increased as follows:

Starter plot - £20.00      Half plot - £30.00      Full plot £60.00

(b) That new allotment holders would be charged one year's fees as a deposit which would be returned if they relinquished their plot in a condition within the terms of the Allotment Regulations.

Allotment Guidelines **RESOLVED:** That Miss Palmer study the present Allotment Guidelines and circulate suggested amendments to the Allotment Committee and Clerk for further discussion. The name would be changed to Allotment Regulations. Separate regulations would be made for allotment tenants who kept chickens.

Budget  
Request for  
2009/2010

**RESOLVED:** That the following budget request be made at the Finance and General Purposes Committee meeting:

	<b>Income</b>	<b>Estimated Expenditure</b>
Possible Rent	1,790.00	
Asbestos Clearance		
Room Hire		20.00
Water – Colin Payne		60.00
Southern Water		300.00
Grasscutting – Paths		350.00
Remedial drainage		258.50
Rent		450.00
Hedging & Ditching		600.00
Pest Control		500.00
Noxious weed clearance		100.00
Plot clearance		500.00
Fencing		1500.00
Possible legal fees		1000.00
	1,790.00	5638.50
<b>Budget Request</b>		<b>£4,000.00</b>

Any Other  
Business

In the absence of any other business the Chairman thanked those present for attending and closed the meeting.

Chairman \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_