

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE ALLOTMENTS COMMITTEE, HELD ON
WEDNESDAY, 3RD MARCH 2010, IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER,
KING'S HOUSE, THETFORD, STARTING AT 6 P.M.

Present:

Councillor M G Spencer, Chairman

Councillors:

G P Balaam
J A Harding

T J Lamb
A Paines

In attendance: Councillor S H Chapman-Allen

459/09 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None made.

460/09 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

An apology was received on behalf of Councillor Mrs P P Quadling.

461/09 MINUTES OF LAST MEETING

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Committee's meeting held on 8th July 2009 (as received by the Council at its meeting on 29th July 2009 under minute 149/09b) be confirmed as a true record and signed/initialled by the Chairman.

462/09 FINANCIAL REVIEW OF THE YEAR TO DATE

The Town Clerk and Finance Manager were present to respond to questions prompted by the document included in the agenda papers. This included a year-to-date budget report, with detailed information under the following key headings: water rates, general maintenance, miscellaneous (the latter item included the water pipe laying cost at the Mundford Road site, amounting to £2,450). Some of the discussion that developed at this point in the meeting is recorded under 'Other Matters' below (item 466/09 refers).

RESOLVED that the expenditure report (section 1 of the aforementioned document referred) be noted.

463/09 ALLOTMENT INSPECTION

Appendix B to the document referred to above proposed an annual regime of up to four inspections (March, June, September and, if required, December).

RESOLVED that the inspection regime, as set out in Appendix B, be adopted, with Tuesday 8th June 2010 agreed as the next inspection date.

A paper was tabled, proposing action points arising out of the previous day's site inspections.

RESOLVED that the proposed actions be endorsed.

464/09 WORKING RELATIONSHIP WITH THETFORD GARDEN & ALLOTMENT CLUB

There was a brief discussion, touching on one or two of the points first raised at the informal meeting on 29th January 2010. These included the possibility of the Council's agreeing to provide sheds and/or water butts under some form of bulk purchase arrangement. The Town Clerk agreed to look into the feasibility and cost-effectiveness of this, but wondered whether this might be better arranged through the Club.

What was agreed by the Committee was that the Council should arrange for skips to be delivered each year in April (sometime after the Easter weekend) to each site, 'inviting' plot-holders - within reason - to clear their plots of pre-seasonal clutter and any other related detritus.

As there would be only one skip per site (Mundford Road and British Rail would count as separate sites in this context), the Council would rely on plot-holders showing a degree of selective restraint!

465/09 LETTER FROM MUNDFORD ROAD ALLOTMENT CLUB

The club's letter, dated 2nd December 2009, had been included in the agenda papers. In response to this, it was:

RESOLVED that the Committee – having first noted that the Club would seek funding for both projects - approve the installation of:

- (a) the proposed step and hand-rail.
- (b) the water line extensions.

466/09 OTHER MATTERS

(a) Water Supply Cost: Consideration of cost recovery from plot-holders.

Section 2 of the afore-mentioned document referred. The Committee considered the officers' proposal to double the amount currently paid by ploholders for water consumption; this would result in the current £5 charge for full-sized plots increasing to £10. The Committee was disinclined to agree to this until an explanation was to hand regarding the high water bills for the Bury Road site (for the year-to-date, the Mundford Road site had cost the Council £292 compared with £1,237

at Bury Road). All supplies to the different sites were metered and the possibility of a leaking supply to Bury Road could not be ruled out.

RESOLVED that no recommendation to increase the water charge to plot-holders be contemplated for the time being pending an explanation of the high water charge at the Bury Road site.

(b) Keys to be issued under a refundable deposit arrangement: to consider introduction of this

Section 8 of the afore-mentioned document referred. The officer recommendation to introduce such an arrangement had been supported by the Finance & General Purposes Committee at its most recent meeting.

RECOMMENDED that the arrangement set out in section 8 be introduced without delay.

(c) Multi-Plot Holding: to consider 'fairness' of this.

This issue was addressed in section 6 of the afore-mentioned document (under the heading 'Waiting Lists and allocations'), with the possibility raised of introducing additional charges for multi-plot holders at a time when there continued to be waiting lists for all sites.

The Committee, whilst acknowledging the situation, did not want to make what might turn out to be a premature move. It preferred to await the outcome to ongoing discussions about the need to provide, as part of the 'growth agenda', additional allotment sites in the town. That might be the best means of reducing waiting lists rather than in any sense 'penalising' holders of more than one plot, most of whom had chosen to take these on at a time when there was a significantly reduced demand .

RECOMMENDED that multi-plot holders not be subject to any additional charges.

(d) Cockerel update: responses received

There was a brief update received in respect of recent enforcement action taken.

(e) Revised Tenancy Agreement

There was no time to look at this in any detail. It would be included on the agenda of the Committee's next meeting, which was now scheduled for Wednesday, 9th June 2010, starting at 6 pm.

Chairman