



Mrs Sharon Henley, Clerk to the Parish Council

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Minutes of a Meeting of the Allotments Committee held on Thursday 24th September 2020 at 7.00pm

Those present: Cllr MacKeith (Chairman) Cllrs Bolder (part of meeting), Dowie, Fairclough & Kay

In Attendance: Sharon Henley, Clerk

Members of Public: 0

1. Apologies for Absence: There were no apologies.
2. Declarations of Interest in Items on the Agenda: There were none.
3. Minutes of Allotments Committee Meeting 16th April: The Committee noted that these had previously been approved by full Council.
4. Questions from Members of the Public: There were none.

Cllr Bolder joined at this point and confirmed she had no declarations of interest.

5. Tree survey - implications for allotments - action and budget (PAPER 1): Cllr MacKeith confirmed the recent tree survey had not highlighted anything urgent for action in the Allotments or Nature Reserve and circulated a list of proposed actions to eight trees in the Allotments – Trees 1, 2, 3, 6, 7, 8, 9 and 10. These were discussed and actions agreed unanimously as follows:

T1 Willow by Seacourt Stream, branch near the river. Recommended to pollard every two years. Contractor to review and make recommendations.

T2 the Contorted Willow between plots 34 and 35 was very large and Cllr MacKeith proposed to fell it. As ploholder, Cllr Dowie confirmed that he was in agreement to this tree being felled or pollarded.

T3 Walnut – a crown reduction was recommended but it was agreed to ask the ploholder of number 21 and discuss at the next meeting whether just to cut off the large branch.

T6 Cherry plum tree overshadows plots 99 and 101 – discuss with ploholder(s) as not urgent.

T7 mature cherry suffering from drought – to be mulched following work to T8.

T8 oak by the well required two lowest branches to be cut off – a contractor had quoted and it was agreed to go ahead with this work.

T9 cherry was suffering from drought during August and bark mulch to be added from oak tree T8.

T10 Eucalyptus in private garden. Arrange for removal of large dead limbs by negotiation with the owner. The Clerk to work with Cllr MacKeith to identify which property then write to the homeowner and inform them of a danger of limbs falling onto the allotments. Request that the homeowner arranges for dead limb removal as they are responsible for removing hazards to people in the area. Cllr MacKeith to confirm which property to write to following the October inspection. If no action was subsequently taken then the Clerk to contact the Tree Officer at VoWH.

6. Therapeutic allotment for Botley Medical Practice: Following a request, Cllr Dowie had shown a representative from the medical practice around to discuss what might be possible. He confirmed that they were looking for a plot for people referred from the social prescriber. They were keen to gather support from those running the allotments, and looked for a plot, ideally for next spring, and awaited confirmation of which plots were available.

Cllr MacKeith confirmed that they sought a plot near the Seacourt Stream and that a representative from their organisation would need to be responsible for the plot and take on the tenancy. Cllr Fairclough suggested additional conditions, such as numbers of people accessing plot. Cllr MacKeith Proposed that the Committee agree in principle to the plot being provided, with detailed arrangements made once a plot became available, this was seconded by Cllr Fairclough and all were in favour.

The Clerk was asked to write to the Medical Practice to welcome the initiative and confirm that no plots were currently available next to the Seacourt Stream. Further contact to be made when a suitable plot became available but they should be aware that there was a waiting list and would have to join the waiting list. It should be mentioned that plots may become available sooner in the other allotment areas.

7. Vacant plots :
 - (a) Waiting List. Four people have applied for plots, but one of these has not moved into the parish yet. There are three plots currently available: plots 53, 103A and 118.

Cllr MacKeith had contacted several tenants to ask if they wanted to continue with plots. They had all expressed the wish to keep going, although possibly Plot 27 could become vacant if the tenant did not intend to bring its condition up to an acceptable state. Cllr Dowie thought it inappropriate to contact tenants to ask if they still wanted their plots and that previous plot inspections had not been fairly carried out. Cllr Fairclough objected and confirmed that he had participated in previous inspections which, in his opinion, had been completed in a fair manner and which he personally had carried out to the best of his ability. In his opinion, if a plot showed neglect for 12 to 18 months then the Committee should write to the plot owner if plots were not maintained in the correct manner. Cllr Dowie thought contact with plot owners should be linked to plot inspections and asked to see inspection records. Cllr Fairclough raised the issue that Cllr Dowie had not volunteered to participate in any recent inspections himself, and then asked Cllr Dowie to withdraw his statement about the inspections being unfair. Cllr Dowie was not willing to do so and Cllr Fairclough asked for this matter to be minuted.

Cllr Kay confirmed that, in his opinion, the Allotment Rules allowed for the Committee Chairman to contact plot holders to determine plot vacancies and raise concerns about regular maintenance in between Committee meetings based on conditions noted in both formal and informal inspections, as the Rules on these matters need to be enforced.

Cllr MacKeith understood that four or five plots could become vacant if taken back from multiple plot holders. It was confirmed the Allotment Rule 2 stated "If the waiting list subsequently increases, the Allotments Committee reserve the right to take back any multiple plot, provided the tenant is given 12 months' notice".

Cllr MacKeith Proposed that, as a near neighbour of the plothead, Cllr Fairclough should contact the tenants of Plot 27 to determine their future intentions. This was Seconded by Cllr Fairclough. Cllrs MacKeith, Fairclough, Kay and Bolder were in favour with Cllr Dowie voting against so the motion was passed.

(b) how to deal with vacant plots (could we trim and cover?) Cllr MacKeith suggested purchasing rolls of weed suppressant for approx £100 plus storage. As no plots were currently vacant this would not be required until next year so Cllr MacKeith Proposed that the cost and implications were investigated with a view to including a request for funds in next year's budget. This was Seconded by Cllr Fairclough. Cllrs MacKeith, Fairclough, Kay and Bolder were in favour with Cllr Dowie voting against so the motion was passed.

8. NHL hardstanding by main gate - skip? There had been a previous proposal to make hardstanding by the 5 bar gate for and skip and deliveries. Additional shrubs had been purchased for the hedge but they were planted in the hardstanding and took root there. Cllr MacKeith suggested that monies in the allotments maintenance budget were used to action the previous proposals. After discussion it was unanimously agreed to seek plotheaders views on the proposals at the next get-together meeting.
9. Tenants' get-together in lieu of annual meeting: The Committee discussed the best way to provide a Covid-secure means to discuss current proposals and obtain feedback from tenants in lieu of the usual physical meeting. It was agreed that a video conference meeting would be the easiest method. Cllr Fairclough proposed a provisional date of Monday 9th November in the evening. The agenda to be set by Cllr MacKeith, based on subjects raised in this meeting and agreed with the Committee via email within the next two weeks. This was Seconded by Cllr MacKeith with Cllrs MacKeith, Fairclough, Kay and Bolder voting in favour, Cllr Dowie against, so the motion was carried.

10. Nature reserve:

(a) planting memorial garden and refurbishing seats : A dangerous tree in the middle of the garden had been felled and the stump ground out but it was not planned to replace it at present. Cllr MacKeith had sourced a quote for the benches to be cleaned for £25 per bench and materials and this was agreed unanimously.

(b) winter reduction of hedge next to W.I. This work had been suggested by OCV at a cost of £120 and Cllr MacKeith Proposed for the work to go ahead. This was Seconded by Cllr

Fairclough with Cllrs MacKeith, Fairclough, Kay and Bolder voting in favour and Cllr Dowie abstaining so the motion was carried.

(c) planting along ditch : A budget of £100 was available for the planting and it was agreed to go ahead as per the plan.

(d) benches and bins: The recent ROSPA Report on the Nature Reserve was discussed.

Timber walkway and bridge: *Timber is rotting – replace (some top planks are rotting)*. Graham Sillman replaced many sections after last inspection but further work required.

Barrier to Pond: *Timber is rotting*. Graham replaced some after last inspection. Further work required.

Gates: *Timber top bar is decayed – replace affected parts. Vegetation obstructing sign or causing hazard*.

The Tree mentioned in the report had been removed.

Bench: *Litter on site. Timber preservation in poor condition*. To be included with work to benches in the Memorial Garden

Cllr MacKeith Proposed that Graham Sillman be asked to complete this work in principle, pending a quote, to be reviewed and approved by the Committee by email following the meeting. This was Seconded by Cllr Fairclough and all voted in favour.

Cllr MacKeith outlined the requirement to replace the bench in the Community Orchard which had been removed after becoming unsafe. A cost and specification for a bench at £310 had been circulated which was within budget. It was thought that a more heavy-duty bench may be required and Graham Sillman should be asked to provide other options before a decision was made. Cllr MacKeith Proposed that options for the bench specification were circulated to the Committee following the meeting and the decision to purchase to be taken to a full Council meeting. This was Seconded by Cllr Fairclough and unanimously approved.

11. How can Allotments respond to the climate emergency? Deferred due to lack of time.

12. Any Other Business – discussion items only. There were no items.

There being no further business the meeting closed at 20.05 hours.