

Report of the Allotment Sub Committee to the Parish Council

The Committee met at 7.30 pm on **Monday 27th July 2009**, in Committee Room 1 at the Parish Hall, Great Baddow. Cllr T Miller chaired the meeting.

Present: Cllrs T Miller, Mrs D Ronaldson, K Ronaldson, Mrs V Sadowsky, B Heelis and Mrs C Shaw.

In Attendance: The Administrative Assistant
 Vicarage Lane Allotment Site Representative Mrs A Reeve
 Towerfield Allotment Site Representative Mr T Hull
 The Grounds Manager
 The Deputy Grounds Manager
 Two Members of the Public

236/09 Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors S Martin, A Sosin, Mrs J Sosin and Mrs M Miller (substituting for Mrs J Sosin).

237/09 Declarations of Interests

There were no declarations of personal or prejudicial interests.

238/09 Public Question Time

There were two members of the public were present who asked questions about the possibility of travellers sites being established in the Vicarage Lane area of Great Baddow, as outlined in an article published in the latest edition of the Essex Chronicle. Cllr T Miller briefed the meeting about the current government proposals relating to the provision of sites in the Chelmsford area. Mrs Reeve told the meeting that allotment tenants have spoken to her about their concerns about having a traveller's site in the vicinity of the Vicarage Lane allotments.

239/09 Minutes

The minutes from the last meeting held on 22nd June 2009 were signed as a true record, proposed by Cllr T Miller and seconded by Cllr Mrs C Shaw with the following amendments: Item 158/09, penultimate line, the word 'liase' to be deleted and replaced by 'liaise', and Item 157/09, the word 'meting' to be deleted and replaced by 'meeting'.

240/09 To receive an update report on matters raised by the Allotment Representatives at the February meeting

A report was prepared by the Administrative Assistant and had been circulated before the meeting. The following items were discussed:

- Mrs Reeve raised the issue of dogs being allowed to run around either loose or on very long leads. An article will be included in the next allotments newsletter reminding tenants that all dogs must be kept on a suitable lead at all times. The Administrative Assistant also informed the meeting that the Clerk will be investigating the problem of dog walkers using the cemetery and allotment sites.

- Following the report of non-cultivation plot 15 has now been re-let and the tenant of plot 17 will be giving up shortly. Plots 117 and 78 will continue to be monitored.
- Further to the issue raised by Mr Hull relating to the mowing of the pathways on the Towerfield allotment site, the Clerk has compiled a report outlining the current situation with regards to maintenance, for consideration under item 10 of the agenda.
- Following Mr Hull's report of plot 43 being very overgrown another letter has been sent to the tenant advising that if the plot is not fully cultivated by 30th September 2009 the tenancy will not be renewed. In the interests of the other allotment tenants, the plot has been strimmed by the Grounds staff. The Grounds staff have now strimmed plot 36.
- Further to Mr Hull's request, the Administrative Assistant has contacted the local PCSO to ask if she can provide a Crimestoppers poster for the Towerfield allotment notice board. The Administrative Assistant is making enquiries with the Horticultural Society about whether it has a key to this notice board.
- Following a query raised by Cllr Mrs D Ronaldson at the previous meeting, the first round of judging for this years Allotment Competition has now taken place. Cllr K Ronaldson and Sid Bass accompanied the judges. Cllr K Ronaldson told the meeting that when he attended the allotment judging he noticed that there are some plots at the Vicarage Lane site that appear to be larger. The Administrative Assistant advised the meeting that there are one or two plots that are one and a half times the size of a normal plot and the annual rent is set higher accordingly. The Administrative Assistant also advised that as some tenants rent more than one plot, these are often next to each other and as such may appear to be double sized plots.

241/09 Report of the Towerfield Allotment Representative

Mr Hull reported on the following items:

- Mr Hull reported that at a previous meeting it had been agreed that the tenancy agreement would be displayed on the notice board, with a view to advising allotment holders of the terms and conditions to which their plot must be kept. The Administrative Assistant will check this and update the notice boards accordingly.
- Mr Hull told the meeting that youths are still entering along the wall at the rear of plot 36, via a damaged section of fence. Mr Hull will meet the Grounds Manager on site to discuss repairs to the fencing.
- Mr Hull that the condition of plots 10 and 23 appear to be deteriorating and the Administrative Assistant will monitor these over the next few months.

242/09 Report of the Vicarage Lane Allotment Representative

Mrs Reeve reported on the following items:

- Further to the discussion under item 238/09, relating to an article in the Essex Chronicle about a possible travellers site in Vicarage Lane, Mrs Reeve reiterated that other allotment tenants have come to her with concerns. In particular the tenants are worried about a potential rise in thefts and antisocial behaviour as the allotment site is relatively open and un-overlooked.

- Following a discussion at the previous meeting about dogs on the allotment site, Mrs Reeve told the meeting that she had approached one tenant whose dog was causing a nuisance, and no further incidents have arisen. However, non-allotment holders still continue to walk their dogs in the cemetery and around the allotment site, and it was suggested that signs could be erected. The Administrative Assistant advised the meeting that following similar complaints from cemetery users, the Clerk is aware of the situation and will be taking steps to address the problem.

243/09 Allotment Holder's Meeting arranged by Essex Police

A draft questionnaire was circulated prior to the meeting. The Administrative Assistant informed the meeting that a quote has now been received for the provision of new boundary fencing and this will be included in the final draft of the questionnaire. The final draft of the questionnaire will be sent out with the next Allotment newsletter following the Committee's decision. It was proposed by Cllr T Miller and seconded by Cllr K Ronaldson to approve the draft questionnaire for distribution to the Towerfield allotment tenants.

244/09 Rotary Tiller for the Allotments

A report had been circulated prior to the meeting detailing prices for the hire and purchase of a suitable rotary tiller to prepare new plots at the Vicarage Lane site. The Grounds Manager briefed the meeting further about the nature of the equipment and confirmed that the smaller of the two Rotary Tillers quoted would be fit for purpose. It was proposed by Cllr T Miller and seconded by Cllr B Heelis that a recommendation is put to the Finance and General Purposes committee to purchase the smaller of the two Rotary Tillers. The Clerk will advise whether there are sufficient funds in the Grounds machinery budget to make this purchase.

245/09 Pathway Cutting

A report had been circulated prior to the meeting detailing the current situation with regards to path cutting at the Towerfield allotment site. Further to a discussion at the previous committee meeting it was confirmed that there is no clause in the current tenancy agreement requiring allotment holders to cut the pathways of any part of them. The report explained that although the Grounds Staff used to cut the pathways they are now too narrow due to encroachment, making it impossible to use a mower in these areas. The use of a strimmer is not possible as allotment tenants plant close to the path edging and there is no guarantee that they would not sometimes trim the planting.

Cllr K Ronaldson suggested that the tenants should be warned that strimming could take place at any time and as such should be reminded not to plant too close to the boundary of their plot. The Grounds Manager told the meeting that the Grounds Staff would have difficulty strimming the site regularly due to other duties.

It was agreed that an item would be placed on the next agenda to consider the inclusion of a condition on the tenancy agreement stating that tenants will be responsible for cutting pathways around the allotments at the Towerfield site.

246/09 Matters for information

There were no matters for information.

247/09 The next meeting will take place on 28th September 2009.

It was resolved under the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960 to close the meeting to the public and press for the following item

248/09 Leases on Towerfield and other allotment sites in the parish

A report had been circulated by the Clerk prior to the meeting detailing some recommendations relating the leases on five allotment sites in the parish. The Clerk had also detailed in the report a number of issues relating to access, expenses toward upkeep, boundary fencing, right of way maintenance and water provision.

It was proposed by Cllr T Miller and seconded by Cllr Mrs D Ronaldson to agree in principle to a 15-year term on four of the sites and a 30-year term on the Towerfield site, providing all of the outstanding issues are resolved. The Clerk will meet again with officers of Chelmsford Borough Council to discuss these issues.

249/09 Additional Allotments

A progress report had been circulated detailing the current situation relating to the provision of additional allotments. A further update will be brought back to the next Committee meeting on 28th September 2009.

There being no further business, the meeting was closed at 8.40 pm

Signed.....Chairman.....Date