

## **Report of the Allotment Sub Committee to the Parish Council**

The Committee met at 7.30 pm on **Monday 28th September 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, A Sosin, Mrs J Sosin and Mrs C Shaw.

In Attendance:       The Clerk of the Council  
                          The Administrative Assistant  
                          Vicarage Lane Allotment Site Representative Mrs A Reeve  
                          Towerfield Allotment Site Representative Mr T Hull  
                          Cllr G Jarvis  
                          The Grounds Manager  
                          The Deputy Grounds Manager  
                          One member of the public

### **360/09 Apologies**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor S Martin.

### **361/09 Declarations of Interests**

There were no declarations of personal or prejudicial interests.

### **362/09 Public Question Time**

One member of the public raised the following matters:

- Whether the area to the rear of the cemetery, next to allotment plot 1, was to be used for additional allotments. The meeting was informed that this area is being cleared to be utilised as an extension to the cemetery.
- That there is a large gap in the hedge by the ditch at the rear of the cemetery, which is being used by walkers as a cut through from the footpath. The Grounds Manager advised that Pyrocantha bushes would be planted in this area to prevent access.
- That the stumps of several trees in the area that had been cleared were still alive. The Grounds Manager advised that these stumps will be removed.
- Whether it was correct that plot 17 at Vicarage would not be re-let so that the space could be used to straighten the pathway that runs alongside it and why this plot was being removed when there is such a large waiting list. The Clerk advised that the pathway has to be straightened, as it will eventually form part of the cemetery. Once the work is completed, the plot may be re-let as a half plot. The general matter of half plots will be discussed under item 369/09.

The member of the public told the meeting that the quarterly newsletters that are now being sent to all allotment holders are a good idea.

### **363/09 Minutes**

The minutes from the last meeting held on 27<sup>th</sup> July 2009 were signed as a true record, proposed by Cllr T Miller and seconded by Cllr Mrs V Sadowsky with the following amendments: Item 241/09, third bullet point, insert the word 'reported' to read 'Mr Hull had reported that the condition of plots 10 and 23 appear to be

deteriorating'. Item 245/09, eighth line, the word 'stimmer' to be deleted and replaced by 'strimmer'.

### **364/09 To receive an update report on matters raised by the Allotment Representatives at the July meeting**

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

- The current waiting list over the two sites stands at 71.
- Following Mrs Reeve's report about allotment holders allowing their dogs to run around the site, further complaints have been received and the tenant responsible will be receiving a letter. It was also agreed that "No Dogs" signs should be installed.
- Following Mr Hull's query at the last meeting, a shortened copy of the tenancy agreement, outlining the responsibilities of the tenant has been displayed on the notice boards at both sites.
- Further to Mr Hull's report at the previous meeting, the tenant of plot 10 will not be renewing their tenancy agreement, and a letter will be sent to the tenant of plot 23.
- The report also includes recommendations relating to pathway cutting and the splitting of allotments to create half plots but these issues will be discussed further under items 369/09 and 369/09.
- It was also advised that since the circulation of the report, the Rotary Tiller had been delivered and the Grounds staff had begun work on preparing the new allotment plots at the Vicarage Lane site.

### **365/09 Report of the Towerfield Allotment Representative**

Mr Hull reported on the following items:

- Mr Hull thanked members of the Grounds staff for meeting with him at the Towerfield allotment site to survey and repair sections of the boundary fencing.
- Following a request at the previous meeting Mr Hull asked whether additional emergency numbers could be displayed on the Towerfield site notice board. The Administrative Assistant advised that she had requested new posters from the local PCSO but had so far received nothing. Mr Hull asked that the existing posters be amended with the additional telephone numbers.
- Mr Hull asked whether progress had been made with regards to ascertaining whether the Horticultural Society have keys to the Towerfield notice board. The Clerk advised that the office had not managed to do this yet.
- Mr Hull advised that he believed that plots 3 and 45 would be given up soon and stressed that as they are in good condition it was important that they are re-let quickly.
- Mr Hull also advised that plots 4, 5, 6, 20, 23 and 43 are not being cultivated in line with condition 4.3 of the tenancy agreement. The Administrative Assistant advised that plot 43 will not be re-let due to its condition and that as detailed in the update report a letter will be sent to the tenant of plot 23. The other plots will be inspected.

### **366/09 Report of the Vicarage Lane Allotment Representative**

Mrs Reeve reported on the following items:

- Mrs Reeve reported to the meeting that plots 116 and 78 are not being cultivated. The Administrative Assistant advised that she thought that the tenant of plot 116 will not be renewing the tenancy and that a letter had been sent previously to the tenant of plot 78 and the plot is being monitored.
- Mrs Reeve asked whether the Council would consider offering half plots to existing tenants who are struggling with a full sized plot. The Clerk advised that the matter would be discussed under item 369/09.

Cllr A Sosin queried as to why there was no budget item on the agenda relating to the allotments. The Clerk explained that it had been overlooked and apologised for the error but said that the item would be placed on the agenda for the Finance and General Purposes meeting on 5<sup>th</sup> October 2009.

### **367/09 Towerfield Security Questionnaire**

A report had been circulated before the meeting, outlining the results of the security questionnaire sent to all Towerfield allotment tenants.

It was proposed by Cllr A Sosin and seconded by Cllr B Heelis that no action be taken with regards to the installation of a lock on the entrance gate and that the fence is maintained and that planting takes place.

An amendment was proposed by Cllr K Ronaldson and seconded by Cllr Mrs J Sosin that the matter be reviewed in February 2010. The amendment was voted on and was passed unanimously.

The proposal as amended was then voted on and also passed unanimously.

### **368/09 Pathway Cutting**

A report had been circulated prior to the meeting. It was proposed by Cllr A Sosin and seconded by Cllr Mrs C Shaw that the recommendation be accepted. It was agreed that the Parish Council will retain responsibility for the pathway cutting and that allotment holders will be notified through the newsletter that they should not plant too closely to the pathways, to avoid damage to crops from strimming. The Parish Council cannot be held responsible for damage to overhanging plants.

### **369/09 Allotment Sizes**

A report had been circulated prior to the meeting. Although the splitting of allotments has been considered previously, the matter had not been progressed due to the fact that not all the allotments are suitable for splitting and also in consideration of the huge increase in the administrative work of the allotments that would result.

The Clerk recommended that the new plots at Vicarage Lane be let as half plots, as well as newly created ones at plots 17 and 87. This would make a total of 10 half plots. It was proposed by Cllr A Sosin and seconded by Cllr B Heelis that the recommendation be accepted.

It was also proposed by Cllr Mrs C Shaw and seconded by Cllr Mrs D Ronaldson that the half plots be advertised on the noticeboard for a short period of time to existing plot holders, who may wish to exchange their current plots for smaller ones.

### **370/09 Tenancy Agreement**

A request had been received from an allotment holder's spouse to take over the tenancy, due to the holder's illness and inability to attend the office. On the Clerk's recommendation, the sub committee agreed that the tenancy could not be transferred at the current time. It was proposed by Cllr Mrs C Shaw and seconded by Cllr Mrs D Ronaldson that the papers be sent to the allotment holder for signature.

**371/09 Matters for information**

- The Towerfield Allotment representative reported that plot 5 is not being cultivated and is causing problems for the adjoining plots. The matter will be investigated.
- Cllr A Sosin raised a matter relating to the budget. It appears that the projected income is the same as this year despite the fact that the rents will be increasing. The Clerk apologised for the oversight and said that it would be corrected.
- Cllr A Sosin asked that the meetings schedule be looked at because this meeting had severely overrun its allotted time.

**372/09 The next meeting will take place on 22<sup>nd</sup> February 2010.**

*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*

**373/09 Leases on Towerfield and other allotment sites in the parish**

The Clerk reported that she had met with officers from Chelmsford Borough Council on 18<sup>th</sup> August 2009. Several issues were discussed and will be investigated by the Borough. The two issues of access to the sites may mean that the Parish Council will have to enter into negotiations with Chelmer Housing Partnership. Unfortunately, since the meeting, the Clerk had been notified that the officer dealing with this matter will be away from the office on sick leave for some time, so there will be some further delay in progressing the matter.

**374/09 Additional Allotments**

The Clerk reported that she had been contacted by the landowner asking for an update on progress. A quote had been received for fencing and this and other matters relating to the establishment of an allotment site were discussed. It was agreed that negotiations should proceed and an amount of money should be budgeted for the works. The Clerk was asked to investigate the possibility of a loan from the Public Works Loan Board.

There being no further business, the meeting was closed at 9.20 pm

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