

ANDOVER TOWN COUNCIL

Allotments Committee Agenda

Friday 13 December 2019



To the Members of the Allotments Committee:

You are hereby summoned to attend a meeting of the ALLOTMENTS Committee to be held in the **RENDEZVOUS, Union Street, Andover** on **Friday 13 December 2019 at 5.30pm** when it is proposed to transact the following business: -

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Wendy R Coulter'.

Wendy R Coulter

6th December 2019

ANDOVER TOWN COUNCIL

Allotments Committee Agenda
Friday 13 December 2019



MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC ARE WELCOME TO ALL MEETINGS: In line with Andover Town Council's "Recording at Meetings" Policy, Members and the public are requested to note that this meeting will be recorded by the Council, and may also be subject to the recording by members of the public.

5.30pm SURGERY TIME FOR ALLOTMENT HOLDERS

The Allotment Committee meeting will start at 6pm.

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Item 1: Apologies for Absence

To receive and accept apologies for absence.

Item 2: Declarations of Interest

To receive and note any declarations of interest relevant to the agenda.

Item 3: Minutes of the Last Meeting

To agree the Minutes of the Allotments Committee meeting held on Friday 11 October 2019 – attached at **Appendix A**.

Item 4: Public Participation

There is an opportunity for members of the public to make statements or ask questions on items on the agenda or on other items relevant to the Town to which an answer may be given in the meeting and recorded in the minutes or, if necessary, a written reply will follow or the questioner will be informed of the appropriate contact details. Each person is limited to 3 minutes and the total amount of time set aside will be 15 minutes.

Item 5: Picket Piece Allotments (Ox Drove)

To update Members on the transfer of the Picket Piece Allotments (Ox Drove) – report attached at **Appendix B**.

Item 6: Request for Allotments – North Side of Andover

The Town Council has received a request to provide an allotment site at the North Side of Andover. Papers submitted to the Town Council will be available at the meeting. Report attached at **Appendix C**.

Item 7: Allotment Officer's Report

To receive the Allotment Officer's report – attached at **Appendix D**.

Item 8: Committee Work Programme

To receive the Committee Work Programme and to make additions or amendments as necessary – attached at **Appendix E**.

Item 9: Date of Next Meeting

Members are requested to note the date of the next meeting: **Friday 14 February 2020 at 5.30pm**, in the **Upper Guildhall, Andover**.



ANDOVER TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of Allotments Committee **Surgery**

Time and date

5.30pm on Friday 11 October 2019

Place

The Upper Guildhall, High Street, Andover

Cllr A Watts (Chairman) (P)

Cllr M James (Vice Chairman) (P)

Cllr L Banville (A)

Cllr D Treadwell (P)

Cllr G Davis (A)

Cllr R Rowles (P) (arrived at 5.34pm)

Officers Present:

Wendy Coulter (Town Clerk)

Michelle Young (Committee & GDPR Officer) (Taking the Minutes)

Allotment Wardens Present: 4

Members of the Public: 6

Allotment Holders Surgery

Cllr A Watts (Chairman) opened the surgery at 5.30pm and welcomed all attendees.

The Chairman

Asked if anyone had any suggestions, questions or concerns.

Long term plans for an allotment on Picket Twenty. There are large spaces on both sides of the site.

Would it be better at the beginning of the development to look at a larger site to combine the 2 potential sites?

The developers are looking at more housing, however, its public ground at the moment and it's easy to get to.

The Town Clerk advised that there were different rules and regulations with Planning and that there was a proposed allotment site at Picket Twenty which will be in place in 2 years. The Town Council would have to talk to Test Valley Borough Council to see if the suggestion was possible.

Wonderful job on the new gates at Vigo Road Allotment. Where the old gates were, would it be possible to turn that space into a carpark, if we do it ourselves?

Allotment Officer advised that quotes are being obtained as part of phase 2 and to utilise plot 45, as it is right on the track. Once the bushes are removed and gravel put down, it will be perfect for parking cars on.

How is it going with Pest Control?

Allotment Officer advised that pests would never be completely eradicated. Barlows Lane has had a reduction on reports of rats and complaints. Site visits are planned soon with the Pest Controller and his dog. All the allotment sites have visit timesheets up on the boards to show when the Pest Controller has been to the sites. It's the best it's been in the last 18 months. Both of the Allotment Officers would be attending training on Pest Control, in particular the use of chemicals. The Pest Controller had also been asked to attend an Allotment Committee meeting to provide another talk.

Additional quotes for alternate Pest Controllers have been sought, however, these have shown to be more expensive.

Cllr A Watts (Chairman) closed the surgery at 5.41pm



ANDOVER TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of Allotments Committee

Time and date

5.41pm on Friday 11 October 2019

Place

The Upper Guildhall, High Street, Andover

Cllr A Watts (Chairman) (P)

Cllr M James (Vice Chairman) (P)

Cllr L Banville (A)

Cllr G Davis (A)

Cllr R Rowles (P) (arrived at 5.34pm)

Cllr D Treadwell (P)

Officers Present:

Wendy Coulter (Town Clerk)

Michelle Young (Committee & GDPR Officer) (Taking the Minutes)

Allotment Wardens Present: 4

Members of the Public: 6

Members of the Press: 1 (arrived at 5.57pm)

AC 45/19 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies received. Cllr L Banville advised she would be late.

AC 46/19 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

AC 47/19 MINUTES

It was proposed by Cllr R Rowles and seconded by Cllr M James that the Minutes of the Allotment Committee Meeting held on Friday 16 August 2019 be signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

A vote was taken which was unanimous.

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the Allotment Committee Meeting held on Friday 16 August 2019 be signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

AC 48/19 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Member of Public 1:

"I wish to speak to appendix C – the draft allotment budget for 2020/2021 and in particular to the proposed increase in rents.

This increase is proposed on the grounds that (a) there has been no increase since 2013 and (b) the taxpayer is subsidising allotment holders to the sum of £15 per plot. The first point is irrelevant. The second statement is totally outrageous and a gross misrepresentation of the true facts. I will return to this point later.

The increase suggested is 12p per sq metre from 40 to 52. This is an increase of 30% and would only be justified if council costs had also increase by a similar amount. In fact costs are almost static. Even the projections given use an inflation rate of just 1.8%. An increase of 30% is an act of extortion on the 500 – 1000 customers of the council and totally unjustified.

If you are to justify an increase you must show a corresponding increase in costs or evidence of similar rates charged and paid elsewhere. Neither of these appear in this report.

Also missing from the report is any assessment of the number of allotment holders (customers) who will be lost as a result of the swingeing increases. A 20% loss of customers would wipe out any increase in income. I certainly will review my expenditure if such an unjustified increase is implemented. And yet this important factor is ignored in the calculations.

When we look at the services supposedly provided a large proportion of the costs are not services to allotment holders. They are base running costs which this council would need to meet even if it had no allotment holders. Anyone who has spent anytime working in agriculture or related industries would understand that there is a basic management cost for land even if it is is unused. Sadly this understanding appears missing from the report.

If we look at the figures for 2019/2020 – a massive 73% of the £31,380 costs are for maintenance, repairs and pest control. Services provided to allotment holders amounts to just £8,550. Income from allotment holders is £26,000. Allotment holders are subsidising this council not the other way round. The value of the time, effort and money they put into managing and maintaining this land far exceeds any council input.

This council is obliged by law to provide allotments if required. It is also obliged to maintain the existing allotment land on behalf of the local community who ultimately own it. Even if you had no allotment holders you would still need to maintain the land, its fences and hedges and ensure adequate pest control. These allotments are part of the green space, the lungs, of the town and a public amenity. It is your responsibility as a council to ensure they are maintained to an adequate standard and your responsibility to raise funds from the community as a whole to cover the costs. It is not acceptable to try and raise that

money from the 500 or so residents who by holding allotments are actually reducing your responsibility and costs.

Providing allotments is a public service and a key responsibility of this council. Making a profit is not and neither should it be. The so-called deficit of £8500 is a justifiable expense in provided this service and is peanuts compared to the thousands this council is squandering on its own pet projects, favourite charities and self aggrandisement. I strongly urge you to reject these proposed increases.”

Chairman’s Responses:

It is only a proposal at this stage.

Cllr R Rowles commented that the purpose of generating the report was to simplify things for members of the public, in order to show where the costs come from. It is important to show what is happening with the monies.

Member of Public 2:

As the Town Council runs 500 to 600 allotments in Andover, would you consider running a small gardening competition for non-allotment holders next year? There used to be a “Test Valley in Bloom years ago. What I am suggesting would not need to have a monetary prize. It could have 20 different classes.

Cllr R Rowles requested that everyone who would be interested in attending a meeting to discuss it further to submit their email addresses.

AC 49/19 PICKET PIECE ALLOTMENTS (OX DROVE)

Members noted the updated report on the transfer of the Picket Piece Allotments (Ox Drove).

AC 50/19 DRAFT ALLOTMENT BUDGET 2020/2021

Members considered the draft Allotment Budget for 2020/2021.

It was agreed that value for money should be sought and that there were many ways in which it could be done. It was suggested that members of the public have a responsibility to present ideas of how to achieve this and not just the council.

Councils will always loose money, however, they have a duty to cover costs, which are always increasing and as yet have not increased the allotment rents. The issues with rats will never be completely gone, however the present Pest Controller is the most cost effective and reports of rat issues have lessened. The council has a duty to provide the monetary information to the public and its important to highlight there have been no increases since 2013.

It was proposed by Cllr R Rowles and seconded by Cllr A Watts that the Allotment Budget 2020/2021 be recommended to the Budgets and Staffing Committee for inclusion in the Town Council Budget 2020/2021.

A vote was taken which was unanimous.

RESOLVED: That the Allotment Budget 2020/2021 be recommended to the Budgets and Staffing Committee for inclusion in the Town Council Budget 2020/2021.

AC 51/19 ALLOTMENT OFFICERS REPORT

Members noted the Allotment Officers' report.

It was suggested that diary dates were set on a six monthly basis for all councillors to attend allotment site visits.

AC 52/19 COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME

Members noted the Committee Work Programme.

There were no additional items or amendments made.

C 053/19 DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING

Members noted that the next Council meeting would take place on **Friday 13 December 2019**, in the **Rendezvous, Union Street, Andover**, starting at **5.30pm**.

C 054/19 EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

It was proposed by Cllr R Rowles and seconded by Cllr A Watts that the Press and Public be excluded from the meeting at item 11, due to the confidential allotment issues.

A vote was taken which was unanimous.

RESOLVED: That the Press and Public be excluded from the meeting at item 11, due to the confidential allotment issues.

The Chairman closed the meeting at 6.22pm.

Chairman

Date

Appendix B: Picket Piece (Ox Drove) Allotments Update

B

Purpose of the Report

To update Members on the Transfer of the Picket Piece (Ox Drove) Allotment Site from David Wilson Homes to Andover Town Council

Background

The Town Council has been in negotiations with David Wilson Homes for the past 2 years regarding the transfer of the new allotment site at Picket Piece (Ox Drove) to the Town Council.

In April 2019 the final plan, layout and provision of services was agreed with the developers.

Current situation

On instruction from the Town Council, the Town Clerk engaged the Town Council's Solicitors to make arrangements for the transfer of the site.

The Town Clerk received confirmation from the representative of David Wilson Homes in late November 2019 that the final plans for the site and access had been approved by Test Valley Borough Council in accordance with the 106 Agreements.

The Town Clerk has instructed the Town Council's solicitors to complete the transfer of the Allotment Site.

Financial Implications

The cost of the transfer to the Town Council will cost in the region of £2,500 for Solicitors fees.

Legal & Policy Implications

The Allotment Site is being registered as a Statutory Allotment which will ensure that it is protected from development. The Town Council is the Allotment Authority and complies with the following Acts: the Small Holdings and Allotments Act 1908, the Land Settlement (Facilities) Act 1919, The Allotments Act 1922, The Allotments Act 1950, the Local Government Act 1972 and the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.

Recommendations

To note progress of the transfer of the Picket Piece (Ox Drove) Allotment Site.

Note: The person to contact about this report is Wendy Coulter (Town Clerk & RFO)

Andover Town Council, 68B High Street, Andover, Hampshire. SP10 1NG

Tel: 01264 335592

Email: townclerk@andovertc.co.uk

Website: www.andover-tc.gov.uk

Appendix C: Request for Allotments – North Side of Andover

C

Purpose of the Report

To consider a request by residents of Andover to provide an allotment site on the North Side of Andover.

Background

The Town Council has received a request from residents of Andover to provide an allotment site on the North Side of Andover. The request has come about following the Community Governance Review of the Andover Parish Boundaries during 2017 and 2018 which resulted in the Parish Boundaries being amended and Augusta Park being included in the Andover Town Council boundary.

How many allotments does the Town Council need to provide for Andover?

There is no legal national minimum provision standard for the provision of Allotment Plots. However most allotment strategies quote the 1969 Thorpe Report which recommends a minimum provision equivalent to 15 plots per 1000 households.

The area covered by the Town Council's boundary has approximately 20,000 households.

Therefore the provision of allotments for the Andover Town Council area is as follows:

20 (thousand households) x 15 (allotment plots) = 300 (allotment plots)

Andover Town Council currently has approximately 520 allotment plots across the Andover Town Council area.

Current situation

The Town Council currently has 7 allotment sites across Andover. An additional site at Picket Piece will be transferred over the next few months. However, most of these sites are situated in the Central, Eastern, Western and Southern areas of Andover.

The Town Council has been approached by developers to offer a site at the old East Anton School site.

However, details about this site are limited as discussions have not progressed since March 2019.

The housing development at Augusta Park was supposed have been provided with an allotment site but no details on this have been received.

Further investigation is required as to whether S.106 Agreements were made and what provisions were set out for allotment sites.

Legal & Policy Implications

There are many laws which cover the provision of Allotments.

Section 23 of the 1908 Act, states that the express duty of every allotment authority, where there is demand for allotments in their area, is to provide a sufficient number of them to persons resident in the area.

The 1908 Act further states that if a representation is made by any six registered electors or council tax payers resident in the area, it is the duty of the allotment authority to "take proceedings" for the provision of allotments.

This action is however now rarely done as provision for allotment sites is normally included within new development sites under Section 106 Agreements which provides Allotment Authorities with sufficient provision of allotment plots to cover requirements.

There are various ways in which the Town Council can provide additional allotment plots. The Term is "Powers of Acquisition of Land" and they are as follows:

1. Acquire by agreement an existing freehold or leasehold interest in the land;
2. Take an lease or tenancy of the land
3. Acquire an existing freehold or leasehold interest in the land compulsorily;
4. Enter on, without acquiring, unoccupied land
5. Acquire land in advance of requirements, in anticipation of it subsequently being required for allotments purposes

As the Town Council already has more than the required number of allotment plots per 1000 households it would not be possible to justify legally a submission for a compulsory purchase of land.

Therefore as there are no existing leasehold agreements for further allotments the Town Council will need to consider the purchase of any additional land.

The Town Council made an agreement, when it was first formed, that any land it held for allotments would be registered as "Statutory Allotment Land" which means it cannot be sold or used for any other purpose but the provision of Allotments, even if the Town Council ceased to exist.

It is expected that this will continue for all land provided to the Town Council for allotment sites. Therefore any transfer of land goes through a process to be registered as 'Statutory Allotment Land'.

Options for consideration

Option 1

The Town Council has already been approached by a developer to consider an allotment site at the old East Anton School site. This should be further investigated as this may provide allotments under a 106 Agreement in the Northern Area of Andover. This would mean that the Town Council would not need to purchase the land, it would be transferred under a 106 Agreement. Dependent upon the provisions included in any 106 Agreement, the developer would potentially prepare the land, for example providing and installing fencing, paths, water and providing sheds.

Option 2

Officers investigate land costs in the Andover area. Currently the Town Council has no budget or specific monies set aside for the purchase of allotment land, as the Town Council already provides the required number of allotment plots for the number of households.

Officers investigate possible potential allotment sites and approach landowners to establish whether they would be willing to sell any land to the Town Council.

Officers would be required to investigate costs for the change of use of the land and whether the land was suitable for the production of edible goods for human consumption. I.e. Checking for land contamination.

Investigation into costs would be required for the Council to make an informed decision into fair costs for the purchase of any land.

Officers would also need to investigate the cost of the Town Council setting up a new site, for example contractors installing fencing, potential landscaping, laying out paths and plots and the provision of a water supply and sheds.

Financial Implications

The cost of purchasing an additional allotment site and set up is unknown. The Town Council does not have specific monies set aside for the purchase of allotment sites (as explained in the report). However, there are financial reserves but any costs would have to be agreed by full Council and further research is required to access costs.

Recommendations

To instruct Officers to carry out either Option 1 or 2 or to carry out both options.

Note: The person to contact about this report is Wendy Coulter (Town Clerk & RFO)

Andover Town Council, 68B High Street, Andover, Hampshire. SP10 1NG

Tel: 01264 335592

Email: townclerk@andovertc.co.uk

Website: www.andover-tc.gov.uk

Appendix D: Allotment Officers Report

D

Allotment's Update

The invoicing period is now over and we are pleased to report that the vast majority of tenants have paid on time which allowed us time to process them efficiently. As happens every year, we have seen the number of occupied plots fall slightly after invoicing. This is due to tenants giving up plots or being evicted from their plots for non-payment. This year around 20 tenants were evicted for not paying within the 40-day period we stipulate in the tenancy agreement. We hope the stance we have taken this year by enforcing our Rules and Regulations when it comes to payments, will see next year's payments run even smoother than we have seen this year. We have conducted site visits across all 7 sites since the last Allotment Committee meeting and are very pleased with each site and how our Wardens are working with us to ensure the sites run well.

We are working consistently with our Contractor to ensure the turnaround on vacant plots is quick so we can work through our waiting list quickly. This gives new tenants the opportunity to have an allotment without a long wait, which is ready to be cultivated.

Replacement Fencing

It is proposed that the first fencing to be replaced will be at the Old Winton Road site. The fencing on this site is in very poor repair and is bordered on three sides by a public footpath. Therefore it is imperative that this be the first site to be improved.

We are looking to obtain quotes early in 2020, with research currently being undertaken to source companies to provide suitable fencing. The quotes will be brought to the first Allotment Committee meeting in the New Year. This is an on-going project which the Allotment Officers will continue to manage throughout the coming year with regular updates to the Committee.

Events for the Andover Allotment Calendar for 2020

Andover Town Council Allotment Officers hope to host a number of exciting events as we have during 2019 and would encourage all tenants who wish to engage with us to join in the fun. We had a stall at the Gardening Fair this year which was fantastic. We hope to do this again in 2020's Gardening Fair.

We plan to host another trip to The New Forest and Hampshire County Show. We encourage all of our tenants to get involved and make suggestions of things they would like to see from us in the coming year. We plan to keep the Scarecrow Competition; we are unsure if we will continue the Sunflower & Pumpkin Competitions due to uptake however will advise all tenants of the decision early springtime of 2020.

Pest Control

We are very pleased with the way in which our pest controller Mr M Benton of M.B Pest Control, has been managing the on-going rodent visits we seem to have across all sites.

Working closely with Mr Benton has really benefitted all sites and relations between us, tenants and the contractors. We have logs at all sites which are visible to the tenants which highlight any areas which are currently being treated, areas of concern and also where Mr Benton records his site visits. All sightings are reported to Mr Benton who is on site to investigate within hours of being informed.

Furthermore, ANY tenanted plots which appear to encourage rats are now liable for call out fee's and treatment when rats are reported in the vicinity of the plot. The same will be done for plots which are composting incorrectly, this has been rolled out across all sites and all tenants have been informed. We hope this will put the power back into the hands of the tenants and if tenants are not adhering to our guidelines around composting and maintaining their plots correctly – any infestation as a result of this will be payable by them and not use funds which could be spent elsewhere within the allotments. We will work with all parties to ensure we have the cleanest and rodent 'un-friendly' sites as possible, however we will never be able to eradicate all rodents and as such would ask for on-going support and understanding.

Bonfires at various sites

We received a few complaints about bonfires being held at allotment sites during the hot weather back in the summer. However, now we are in winter the tenants are now able to hold bonfires after 4pm instead of the later time of 7.00pm during the summer months. All tenants must still take into consideration neighbouring houses, wind direction, continue to use incinerators and not leave burning materials unattended. However, during the winter months we do not find the bonfires cause as much of a nuisance to the houses which surround our sites.

Note: The people to contact about this report are Fern Long and Nikki Barber (Allotment Officers), Andover Town Council, 68B High Street, Andover, Hampshire. SP10 1NG

Tel: 01264 335592

Email: allotmentofficer1@andovertc.co.uk and allotmentofficer2@andovertc.co.uk

Website: www.andover-tc.gov.uk

Appendix E: Committee Work Programme

E

Date of Meeting	ITEM	Requested by	Purpose of Item
14 February 2020	Update on Allotment provision North Side of Andover		
14 February 2020	Report on Ox Drove Site		
14 February 2020	Gardening Competition preparation		
April/May 2020	Gardening Competition update		
April/May 2020	Gardening Fair update		
July 2020	Preparation for invoicing		
July 2020	Update on summer events/trips		
July 2020	Consideration of additional works to allotments to be included in the Budget 2021/2022		
September 2020	Allotment Budget 2021/2022		
December 2020	Review of the Allotment Year and consideration of any additional works to be carried out during the winter months.		