



ANDOVER TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of Allotments Committee **Surgery**

Time and date

6.30pm on Wednesday 8 March 2023

Place

Upper Guildhall, Andover

Cllr K Hughes (Chairman) (A)
Cllr L Gregori (A)

Cllr N Long (Vice Chairman) (P)
Cllr R Hughes (P)

Cllr D Coole (P)
Cllr E Reynolds (P)

Officers Present:

Gail Foster (Town Clerk)
Jo Whiteman (Allotment Officer)

Allotment Wardens present representing:

Old Winton Road
Saxon Heights
The Drove
Barlows Lane
Vigo Road
Admirals Way

Members of the Public: 1

Allotment Holders Surgery

In the absence of the Chairman, Councillor K Hughes, the Vice Chairman, Councillor N Long, opened the surgery at 6.30pm and welcomed all attendees. The Vice Chairman welcomed the new Saxon Heights allotment warden and gave thanks for taking on the role.

The notes below are a precis of statements/questions. They are not recorded word for word.

Old Winton Road Warden:

Has the Town Council had any response back from Environmental Health, Test Valley, with regards to the pest control?

The Town Clerk's Response:

No. I have written to the Environmental Health. No response yet. I will be raising the issue with the Chief Executive next week to see what pressure could be put onto them.

Vigo Road Warden:

The plot to be turned into 2 plots, has this been measured up yet?

The Town Clerk's Response:

This can be done next week. Once measured, we will have the costs per plot.

Vice Chairman:

I would like to offer my apologies to the Drove Warden for not responding to your questioning of prices and rent increases in Andover, after the last meeting. A google search showed the average plot in the UK size is 200sqm, which is £86.00 per year plus charges and water. Plymouth Council charge an admin fee of £20.00, £10.00 for a key and £40.00, if you want the plot cleared and strimmed. They charge £79.13 for a small 179sqm plot and a larger plot for £158.26. Salisbury Council charge £46.00 for a 5 rod plot and a large plot is £92.00. There is also a £12.00 key charge and water charges. St Helen's Council charge a £100.00 tenancy agreement fee. They have also increased their allotments by 85.7%. New tenants now would have to pay the tenancy arrangement fee, plus water, plus key, so anyone taking on a plot there would have to pay £260.00. Winchester Council charge £66.00 per plot plus £25.00 for a Share in Society, which you have to join, as well as a key charge. Unfortunately, at the Park Road site, there is a 48 month waiting list. Aldershot Council charge £45.00 for a 5 rod plot, an annual membership fee of £7.50, new membership admin fee of £20.00, a key charge of £25.00. So it is £97.50 for new tenants.

Personally, I think what Andover Town Council charge is quite reasonable in comparison.

The Drove Warden:

I would disagree as you are looking locally. Rural areas are much less. Look within Hampshire and Berkshire in a 20 mile radius.

Member of public 1:

Would you be prepared to publish your findings along with links to your sources, in order to validate them?

Vice chairman's Response:

A simple Google search will show the information I have given.

Saxon Heights Warden:

If someone was to do a local search of the 20 closest Councils to Andover and a FOI request on everything they charge for allotments, get our statistics and see if Andover falls on that table, that would be the fairest way to see how fair Andover charges are.

Councillor D Coole:

If I may add, every Council has different requirements and every allotment site has different requirements. There is no way of toning down the factual evidence, as to why they charge what they charge. It is irrelevant. Andover charges this amount because we deem it necessary based on our expenses. There's no value in comparing allotment sites.

Vice Chairman:

There's been a lot of negative press saying we shouldn't subsidise allotments. We are trying to break even and that's why we have had to put the rents up. We are reasonable compared to the rest of the country.

The Drove Warden:

I think the Town Council internally needs to look at its actual costs. What they are, if they are accurate and whether they are essential.

Town Clerk:

Speaking as the Responsible Finance Officer (RFO) all the costs entered into our profit and loss, have been incurred and paid up to date with everything. All the numbers are correct. Whether costs should have incurred or not, maybe a different question, but this is being looked at too. We are looking to cut costs, to finding local contractors that are more reliable, can complete the jobs earlier, which would reduce increases on costs due to waiting times. We are also looking at value for money.

The Drove Warden:

There's no dispute on the accuracy of the accounts. It's purely whether the costs were justified. I acknowledge it was before your time.

Member of Public 1:

Do you include staff costs in the rates?

Councillor R Hughes:

No, we do not. At the moment breaking even is on costs incurred. It doesn't include the biggest cost of all which is the cost of the staff. If we included the cost of staff, which we could do to properly break even, the rents would be considerably higher.

The Vice Chairman closed the surgery at 6.41 pm.



ANDOVER TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of Allotments Committee

Time and date

6.42pm on Wednesday 8 March 2023

Place

Upper Guildhall, Andover

CLlr K Hughes (Chairman) (A)
CLlr L Gregori (A)

CLlr N Long (Vice Chairman) (P)
CLlr R Hughes (P)

CLlr D Coole (P)
CLlr E Reynolds (P)

Officers Present:

Gail Foster (Town Clerk)
Jo Whiteman (Allotment Officer)

Allotment Wardens present representing:

Old Winton Road
Saxon Heights
The Drove
Barlows Lane
Vigo Road
Admirals Way

Members of the Public: 1**AC 153/03/23 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies were received from Councillor K Hughes and Councillor L Gregori.

AC 154/03/23 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor E Reynolds declared an Interest as he is a member of the Drove Association and plot holder.

AC 155/03/23 MINUTES

It was proposed by Councillor R Hughes and seconded by Councillor E Reynolds and

RESOLVED: FOR – 3, AGAINST – 0, ABSTENTIONS - 1

that the Minutes of the Allotment Committee Meeting, held on Thursday 2 February 2023, be signed by the Chairman as a correct record. **Action: Committee Officer**

AC 156/03/23 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

The notes below are a precis of statements/questions. They are not recorded word for word.

The Drove Warden: A comment regarding the terms of reference for Allotment Wardens. Can I ask Councillors to bear in mind the definition of Allotment Warden? A warden is a tenant who represents tenants and assists the Council in the management on a particular allotment site. The terms are written along the lines of an employee. Wardens are volunteers. Also, the definitions of an allotment site and a plot need clarification.

My second comment relates to The Drove No Man's Land clearance and the skips being outside, will be filled overnight. We normally have skips arrive in the morning and taken away in the afternoon.

The Chairman's response: We will take these points on board when we get to the item in the agenda.

Member of Public 1: Do the Allotment Wardens appointments comply with the Andover Town Council Appointments Policy and Standing Orders?

Town Clerk's response: We have asked for volunteers and when people step up, they are appointed.

Member of Public 1: They need to be qualified as per Standing Orders.

Town clerk's response: The Standing Orders refer to the appointment of Members or Councillors, not members of the public.

AC 157/03/23 NEW ALLOTMENTS

Members noted that the Saxon Heights Allotment Site had been handed over to Andover Town Council. 7 plots had already been taken up and the remaining 3 have been offered out. Rental payments have started to come in. A Warden for the site has been identified, a press release has been drafted and will be sent to the Andover Advertiser, placed on the Town Council's website and social media accounts once approval has been received from the developer.

Officers have attended the Picket Twenty Allotment site and checked on the progress. Officers are waiting to attend a meeting with the developer to discuss snagging points.

AC 158/03/23 TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR WARDENS

Members received and considered the Terms of reference for Wardens.

It was questioned that if the Wardens are just volunteers, why are they being paid as well as given an allotment? It was clarified to act as an incentive to bring volunteers forward and to cover incidental expenses.

It was suggested that point 6a. of the terms be amended to say 'plots on the whole site.'

An easier to read handbook for the wardens could be created which would combine the Warden Terms of Reference, Privacy Statement and the expectations of the Warden position.

It was proposed by Councillor D Coole and seconded by Councillor R Hughes and

RESOLVED: Unanimously, that:

1. The Warden Terms of Reference be accepted and adopted. **Action: Deputy Clerk**
2. A Warden's handbook be created, combining the Warden Terms of Reference, Privacy Statement and the expectations of the Warden position. **Action: Town Clerk**

AC 159/03/23 PLOT INSPECTIONS AND SERVICE MANAGER

Members received and noted the Plot Inspections and Service Manager report.

A question regarding the use and sharing of Tablets for wardens was raised. It was felt that it would be appropriate to suspend Standing Orders to allow a discussion with the wardens on this point.

It was proposed by Councillor N Long and seconded by Councillor R Hughes and

RESOLVED: Unanimously, that that Standing Orders be suspended.

The wardens were invited to speak and the following points were raised:

Happy to use a Tablet once trained.

Sharing Tablets would not be ideal, due to delays on updating the allotment site information regularly.

Potential delays with the handover of Tablets between sites, due to availability of wardens.

Ineffective use of Officer time involved.

Too restrictive on volunteer's time.

An app would be more beneficial and efficient if it can go onto mobile phones.

It was proposed by Councillor R Hughes and seconded by Councillor N Long and

RESOLVED: Unanimously, that Standing Orders be reinstated.

It was proposed by Councillor D Coole and seconded by Councillor R Hughes and

RESOLVED: Unanimously, that the following recommendations be approved:

1. Allotment Officers, the Town Clerk and Allotment Wardens attend NAS society training as soon as can be arranged, so that inspections can be done by qualified persons. **Action: Town Clerk**
2. The Wardens are trained with the Tablet as soon as possible. **Action: Town Clerk**
3. To purchase more Tablets to allow Wardens/Officers to effectively inspect without constantly passing one Tablet around. **Action: Town Clerk**
4. Investigate whether the app form can be put onto mobile phones, whether it can run on Wi-Fi and report back to the next Full Council meeting. **Action: Town Clerk**
5. A rota be put in place so that Wardens inspect at different times of the month. (To prevent 500 site inspections being completed in the same week). **Action: Town Clerk**

Members discussed the displaying of plot numbers on the Allotment sites. It was felt to be unfair to expect the cost of replacing a plot number to be paid by the plot holder. The question was asked whether the cost was known for a complete new set of plot numbers to be provided. It was commented that only missing plot numbers would need to be replaced.

It was proposed by Councillor D Coole and seconded by Councillor R Hughes and **RESOLVED:** Unanimously, that a quote for costings to provide replacement sets of plot numbers from Ugly Duckling be requested and presented at Full Council for consideration and approval. **Action: Town Clerk**

AC 160/03/23 FLY TIPPING

Members received a verbal update report on Fly Tipping.

Following the fly tipping incident on The Drove, the individual that was responsible had been identified as a young lady, a minor. Her place of residence was known and her school had been contacted. It was recommended that the Andover Town Council (ATC) did not approach the family directly. Officers are currently waiting for the school Headmaster to respond, as it's a sensitive issue. Test Valley Borough Council (TVBC) have said they would be more than happy to provide a briefing to ATC Members/Officers on what to do about fly tipping. TVBC do not recommend ATC handle fly tipping incidents itself, as it is not equipped to do it. TVBC would handle these incidents for ATC with no charge. A briefing with TVBC would be arranged for Members and Officers.

Action: Town Clerk

AC 161/03/23 ALLOTMENT OFFICERS REPORT

Members received and noted the Allotment Officers Report.

AC 162/03/23 THE DROVE - NO MAN'S LAND CLEARANCE

Members received and considered a report on The Drove - No Man's Land Clearance.

It was proposed by Councillor R Hughes and seconded by Councillor N Long and **RESOLVED:** FOR - 3, AGAINST - 0, ABSTENTIONS - 1 that:

1. Quotes for skips be sought. **Action: Allotment Officer**
2. Look for a team of volunteers/Community Payback. **Action: Town clerk**
3. Obtain quotes for labour if no volunteers are available. **Action: Town Clerk.**
4. Take additional actions necessary to facilitate the clear up. **Action: Town Clerk**
5. To agree that no additional fencing is required if this solution is adopted.
6. A report would be brought back to the next Allotment Committee meeting. **Action: Town Clerk**

AC 163/03/23 TENANTS REQUEST

Members received and considered a report on Tenants Requests.

1. Fruit Cage positioning - Old Winton Road

It was proposed by Councillor D Coole and seconded by Councillor N Long and

RESOLVED: FOR - 2, AGAINST - 0, ABSTENTIONS - 2 that permission is not granted and the tenant be asked to move the fruit cage, in accordance with the Allotment Rules and Regulations. **Action: Town Clerk**

2. Bantams - OX Drove

It was proposed by Councillor D Coole and seconded by Councillor N Long and

RESOLVED: Unanimously, that:

- a) Clarification be sought that the tenant's request to retain the Bantams, complied with the Andover Town Council's Chicken Policy. **Action: Town Clerk**

b) Officers to write to the tenant if it did not comply and request that the Bantams are removed from the plot. **Action: Allotment Officer**

3. Gate – Ox Drove

It was proposed by Councillor D Coole and seconded by Councillor N Long and

RESOLVED: FOR – 2, AGAINST – 2, ABSTENTIONS – 0 that permission is not granted for a gate to be fixed at the tenant’s plot entrance. **Action: Town Clerk.**

4. Tomato containers on fence posts – Ox Drove

It was proposed by Councillor E Reynolds and seconded by Councillor D Coole and

RESOLVED: FOR – 3, AGAINST – 0, ABSTENTIONS – 1 that:

Permission is not granted to retain the affixed tomato containers. Councillors noted that the tenant may retain the tomato containers subject to installing their own posts and that the Town Council will pay for the removal of the tomato containers, if the tenant does not wish to install their own posts. **Action: Allotment Officer**

5. Wind Turbine – Ox Drove

It was proposed by Councillor D Coole and seconded by Councillor E Reynolds and

RESOLVED: Unanimously, that permission be granted on the proviso that the anchoring lines are removed from the Town Council’s boundary fence. **Action: Allotment Officer**

AC 164/03/23 COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME

The following items were requested to be added to the Committee Work Programme:

1. Old Winton Road footpath and clearance of fencing to be reviewed. **Action: Allotment Officer and OWR Warden.**
2. Admirals Way fencing – length required: **Action: Allotment Officer and AW Warden.**
3. Vigo Road Conifer Tree Works – update: **Action: Allotment Officer and VR Warden.**

The Vice Chairman gave his thanks to the Officers for their hard work on the allotment works.

AC 165/03/23 DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING

Members noted the date of the next meeting: **Thursday 6 April 2023**, to be held in **The Lights, Andover, starting at 6.30pm.**

AC 166/03/23 EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

It was proposed by Councillor E Reynolds and seconded by Councillor R Hughes and

RESOLVED: Unanimously, that the Members of the Press and Public be excluded from the Meeting at Agenda Item 15 due to the confidential nature of items 15 and 16 and to comply with GDPR.

CONFIDENTIAL

AC 167/03/23 COUNCIL SOLICITORS

The Drove Allotment Site

It was proposed by Councillor R Hughes and seconded by Councillor D Coole and

RESOLVED: FOR - 3, AGAINST – 0, ABSTENTION – 1 that the requested permission was not granted. **Action: Allotment Officer and Town Clerk.**

AC 168/03/23 REVIEW OF LEGAL POSITION

Vigo Road Allotment Site

It was proposed by Councillor R Hughes and seconded by Councillor D Coole and

RESOLVED: Unanimously, that:

1. Legal costs be obtained from the Town Council's solicitors. **Action: Town Clerk**
2. The suggested legal document be completed. **Action: Town Clerk**
3. A letter to the resident be drafted. **Action: Town Clerk**
4. Present a report to Full Council. **Action: Town Clerk**

The Chairman closed the meeting at **8.29pm**.

Chairman

Date

DRAFT