



ANDOVER TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of Allotments Committee

Time and date

5.30pm on Friday 16 August 2019

Place

The Upper Guildhall, High Street, Andover

Cllr A Watts (Chairman) (P)

Cllr M James (Vice Chairman) (A)

Cllr L Banville (A)

Cllr D Treadwell (P)

Cllr G Davis (P)

Cllr R Rowles (P)

Officers Present:

Wendy Coulter (Town Clerk)

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

Borough/County Councillors Present:

Cllr Z Brooks

Allotment Wardens Present: 1

Members of the Public: 3

Members of the Press: 0

AC 32/19 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received and accepted from Cllr M James.

AC 33/19 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

AC 34/19 MINUTES

It was proposed by Cllr R Rowles and seconded by Cllr G Davis that the Minutes of the Allotment Committee Meeting held on 14th June 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 14th June 2019 be signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

AC 35/19 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Member of Public 1:

Has Test Valley Borough Council (TVBC) signed off the transfer of the Ox Drove Allotment Site to the Town Council and has any work started yet?

Member of Public 2:

“Question:

Previously it was the practice to hold an allotments surgery before the formal meeting of the council. This was subsequently amended to include public participation i.e. non allotment holders were also permitted to speak. The agenda for this meeting implies the surgery aspect has been removed and the previous question and answer session including dialogue between allotment holders and councillors will not take place. Could the chair clarify whether allotment holders surgery is taking place and if not why not?

Allotment Surgery Questions:

Could the committee clarify how often the pest control contractor visits each site and what pest control checks are regularly carried out? Furthermore can the committee advise what checks are carried out to ensure when a pest incident is reported an adequate response and remedial action has been implemented.

There was a recent incident with a water leak at Barlows Lane the Council is aware that the water mains here and at other sites are very old and will need replacing. Could the committee confirm they have sufficient funds for a programme of repairs and upgrades to water supplies and what the time scale for this programme is.

Statement to committee regarding agenda (public participation):

I want to take the opportunity to praise the excellent job done by Town Council staff in organising and running the Town Council stall at the recent Gardening Fair. The stall was busy throughout the day and all those who attended were impressed with the professionalism and approachability of the council officers. The day was a credit to the council and its officers and presented the council in a positive light unlike so many recent negative stories we have all seen.

Running the allotments is the only statutory duty the Town Council has and the effectiveness of the allotment service directly affects over 500, probably closer to 1000, local residents. I would hope this council committee will formally recognise the fine example shown by the council's officers on this and many other occasions.

Unfortunately the same cannot be said for members of the council as only two bothered to put in an appearance to support their officers and volunteers promoting the council's main public service. I would like to acknowledge the token effort made but must point out that it

was marred by one of the councillors smoking on the stall. This was unacceptable in that it was in an enclosed space, also occupied by volunteers, small children and containing food offered to the public. The action was made worse by the fact you were wearing a badge proclaiming yourself a town councillor. I hope you will bear this in mind for the future.

As for the other councillors I suggest you make an effort to get involved in and support the activities of your officers. They are the ones who make this council work. They are the ones who will hopefully still be here after the transient egos occupying the council seats and hurling abuse at each other on social media are long gone and forgotten. They deserve your support.

On the same subject I am concerned to see the council has lost a key member of staff in that the receptionist has not been replaced. This post was an important part of the council's public face, answering calls and dealing with the residents, including many allotment holders. The replacement service whilst good does not live up to the previous high standards. Previously problems highlighted by calls and visits were dealt with promptly and efficiently whereas now the office is closed and customers are expected to speak to an anonymous answering service with no knowledge the council's business. Many allotment holders I have spoken to are not happy about this.

Your role is to provide a service to the public and the many hundreds of allotment holders who are your customers and council tax payers. If you can find funds for bacon rolls, teas, pet vanity projects and self promotion you can find funds for the staff needed to provide the council's core services. You were not elected to spend four years playing politics at the public expense. You have a duty to ensure this council continues to provide the high standards previously set. I urge you to appoint a replacement receptionist and do so before your allotment holders turn up on your doorstep to pay their annual rents."

Chairman's Responses:

Member of Public 1:

The transfer has not been signed off as yet. No work will commence until then.

Member of Public 2:

There is a budget set aside for the water leaks on the allotments. There are earmarked reserves and we have yet to decide on what and when it will be spent.

Allotment Officer 1 Response:

Member of Public 2:

New measures have been put in place regarding pest control with sheets on every site, which are completed by the pest controller confirming attendances and what checks have been carried out on each visit. We, as Allotment Officers, have been attending the visits around the sites with the pest controller and have checked the work that has been carried out.

I confirm that as issues have been reported, the pest controller has attended to them on the same day or the next day.

Allotment Warden:

Pleased to see Officers have been chasing up the allotment holders of uncultivated plots and would like to say thank you.

The Minutes regarding Ox Drove, from the last allotment Committee meeting were slightly misleading. The National Allotment Association did not agree to the plans. We are there to provide guidance only.

A number of tenants at The Drove have asked when will they receive their £50 deposits back?

Allotment Officer 2 Response:

The invoicing period is coming in September, which is a priority. The refunds of deposits will be actioned afterwards. We are moving away from using cheques to using the BAC system. This will ensure the refunds are received quickly and efficiently. We are in the process of contacting the allotment holders for their bank details and it should be completed by the end of the year.

AC 36/19 PICKET PIECE ALLOTMENTS (OX DROVE)

Members noted the updated report on the progress of the new allotment site at Picket Piece (Ox Drove).

AC 37/19 PEST CONTROL

Members noted the updated Pest Control report.

The Allotment Officers further commented that it is reported to Test Valley Borough Council, where it has been established rats are living in the neighbouring residential areas outside the allotments. The costs are then borne by the residents. The improved progress made with cultivating of plots and removal of the rubbish has positively helped to reduce the number of rat sightings.

AC 38/19 REMOVAL OF TREES – THE DROVE

Members considered the report and the three quotes obtained for the removal of 1 Maple tree and 1 Silver Birch tree at The Drove Allotment site.

It was proposed by Cllr R Rowles and seconded by Cllr A Watts that Quote 2 for the felling of 1 x Maple and 1 x Silver Birch at total cost £450.00 plus VAT be approved and the work be authorised to go ahead.

A vote was taken which was unanimous.

RESOLVED: That quote 2 for the felling of 1 x Maple and 1 x Silver Birch at total cost £450.00 plus VAT be approved and the work be authorised to go ahead.

AC 39/19 FENCING AND HEDGING

It was proposed by Cllr G Davis and seconded by Cllr R Rowles that authority be delegated to the Allotment Officers to start a review of the fencing and hedging across all Allotment Sites.

A vote was taken which was unanimous.

RESOLVED: That authority be delegated to the Allotment Officers to start a review of the fencing and hedging across all Allotment Sites.

AC 40/19 SITE VISITS FOR MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE

The Allotment Officers confirmed that site visits are being organised for when the Invoicing period is over. It was suggested that all members of the Committee be invited to attend.

AC 41/19 ALLOTMENT OFFICERS REPORT

Members noted the Allotment Officers' report.

AC 42/19 COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME

Members noted the Committee Wok Programme.
There were no additional items or amendments made.

C 043/19 DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING

Members noted that the next Council meeting would take place on **Friday 11 October 2019**, in the Upper Guildhall, High Street, Andover, starting at **5.30pm**.

C 044/19 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 items 14 and 15, due to the confidential nature of the Appeal and Complaint.

A vote was taken which was unanimous.

RESOLVED: That the Press and Public be excluded from the meeting at items 14 and 15, due to the confidential nature of the Appeal and Complaint.

The Chairman closed the meeting at 6.38pm.

Chairman

Date