

Sutton Bridge Parish Council Allotments' Committee meeting with garden allotments tenants, held 18:15hrs, Tuesday 06 September 2022, in the Diamond Hall of the Curlew Centre

Present: Cllr Simon Booth (from 18:25hrs), Cllr Chris Brewis, Cllr Kim Davies, Cllr Michelle Pitt, Mr Robert Smith (clerk), Mrs Karen Croxford (admin assistant), ten garden allotment tenants.

Minutes

1. The meeting commenced at 18:15hrs and moved to the Diamond Hall due to the Bridge Room being locked.
2. The allotment's committee chair welcomed all present and it was hoped that the meeting would be the start of a period of improved communication between the Parish Council and allotment tenants.
3. Cllr S Booth sent his apologies as he would be running late.

18:20hrs an allotment tenant entered the meeting

4. Wright's Lane allotment roadway.

Due to problems with North Level District IDB's sluice gate doors at Foul Anchor sluice, there was a delay on the previously agreed kind donation of around 3 tonnes of stone plannings from Martin Childs Ltd, to be taken from its temporary crane hard standing at the site. It was hoped that this would now become available in October/November 2022. It is intended that the stone is used to fill in potholes on the Parish Council's roadway at Wright's Lane allotments.

5. Wright's Lane northern allotment boundary

Earlier this year on alleged incident of deliberate damage to a neighbouring farmer's crop had been reported to the Parish Council. There had also been reported instances of the neighbouring field being walked on to access allotment plots, as well as cars being parked on the adjacent track causing an obstruction to farm vehicles.

It was the Parish Council's intention to install three concrete posts to mark the boundary and reinstate a three-foot pathway at the north end of the allotments marked by a further two concrete posts.

18:24hrs Cllr S Booth entered the meeting

It was questioned by two tenants that the movement of sheds and water butts to allow for the pathway would prove difficult. The clerk reported that any problems to individual tenants would be reviewed separately, and the Parish Council would look at how any issues might be resolved.

A meeting would be arranged with individual tenants whose plots were affected once the concrete boundary posts were installed.

A tenant mentioned that a partial concrete post was causing a trip hazard at the top of the allotment plot near a shed. This would be investigated by the Parish Council, and quotes sought for its removal.

6. Parking

There should be no parking that caused any obstruction to farm traffic or trespassed on neighbouring land. It was noted that dog walkers had been seen parking on the track at the start of the public footpath.

7. The phasing out of half plots

It was intended that no new half plots tenancies would be offered. Existing tenants with half plots would not be affected. When half plots tenancies ended, it was intended that these would be amalgamated with the adjacent half plot where possible.

8. Rent increase from September 2023.

The clerk confirmed that there was to be an increase in the allotment rent to £32.50 p.a. effective 29 September 2023. This represented an annual increase equivalent to 2.65% over the last ten years. Notices to tenants would be sent out in the next few weeks.

9. Rules and Regulations

It was noted that the Parish Council expected that tenants abide by all its Garden Allotment rules and regulations. Rules would be regularly reviewed by the Parish Council and amended as required and determined by the Parish Council.

The following rule amendments had recently been applied.

- i. All references to Allotment Working Party to be changed to Allotment Committee.
- ii. "The tenant shall not plant any trees other than small fruiting trees and or fruiting bushes. Fruit trees shall be no higher than 7ft 6in and shall be pruned as required."
- iii. "No more than 20% of a garden allotment plot may be given over to fruit trees/bushes. The tenant must ensure that the area between and surrounding the tree/ bushes are kept free of weeds."
- iv. "Applicants for a tenancy of an allotment plot must be a resident of Sutton Bridge Parish and shall provide proof of residence prior to becoming a tenant."
- v. "Where a vacancy exists, the allocation of a plot may be offered to a non-resident charged at double the normal annual rent."
- vi. "A member of the Committee, or officer of the Council may enter and inspect an allotment plot at any time. Tenants must provide Committee members or Council officers access to sheds/enclosed structures following a request giving reasonable notice."
- vii. "Bonfires shall not be lit when the wind speed is above Beaufort Scale 2 i.e., more than a light breeze above 7 mph".
- viii. Amend rule 9.3 to "A tenant may allow a dog onto their own allotment but must ensure that the dog is always under control and that the dog does not wander onto any other plot. All fouling to be removed by the tenant."

10. Further issues of concern

- i. There had been reports of some tenants selling produce from their allotment plots for public sale and profit. Tenants were reminded of Section 1.1 of the Allotment Rules and Regulations:

"The reason for an allotment plot is growing of fruit, vegetables, flowers, and herbs for the plot holder and his or her family. Allotments may not be used for commercial gain, though the sale small quantities of genuine surplus is allowed".

It was hoped that no further reports about such instances would be received, which otherwise could require the Parish Council to take enforcement action.

- ii. Tenants were reminded that tenancies could not be transferred to any other person. When a tenancy ceased or was no longer wanted, the Parish Council would issue a new tenancy agreement in accordance with fair practice.
- iii. Any concerns or complaints concerning allotments should be submitted in writing to the Parish Council email: admin@suttonbridge-pc.gov.uk.

11. Open forum.

- i. It was asked if the new area of land at the Wright's Lane allotments that had been allocated for new allotment plots could be cultivated, as the weeds were causing problems for neighbouring allotments and properties. Cllr S Booth kindly stated that he would replot the area.
- ii. The matter of non-cultivation of plots was raised. Any instances should be reported to the Parish Council for investigation, following which appropriate action would be taken. This could include issuing a notice to quit.
- iii. The following issues were noted at the Wright's Lane allotments:
 - An overgrown hedge was overhanging the allotment roadway.
 - Rubbish had been thrown onto the allotments from a neighbouring property.
 - Incidents of fly tipping had occurred in the area.
 - Excessive thistles growing on the farmed field adjacent to the allotments.

These matters were to be investigated by the Allotment Committee at its next allotments' inspection.

12. Consideration for holding future meetings.

- i. It was generally agreed that the meeting had been useful and constructive. It was suggested that future meetings with allotment tenants took place on a quarterly basis.
- ii. It was suggested that tenants were informed of the date and time of committee inspections so that tenants could meet members of the committee on site and raise matters of concern with them. This was to be considered by the Allotments' Committee.

The meeting was closed at 19:15hrs.