

# LISS PARISH COUNCIL

## Allotment Tenants Meeting: Minutes

Monday 30 October 2017, 7.30pm, Liss Village Hall

Present: Councillor David Dodds (Chairman), Councillor Sue Halstead, Councillor Howard Linsley, Councillor Keith Budden, Councillor Francis MacNamara, Administrative Officer Frances Cook and 4 Allotment Tenants (2 from Lower Green, 1 from Kelseys and 1 from Princes Bridge).

### **1 Allotment Charging Increase**

- 1.1 Following a brief introduction, the Chairman informed the meeting that the regime was remaining in place but that the new charges for next year had not yet been agreed and but that tenants would be advised of the new rent when the allotment renewal letters were issued.
- 1.2 An allotment holder queried the change of regime and the Chairman explained that the old system was unfair and was resulting in anomalies with some allotment holders with smaller plots were paying more than those with larger plots and so the regime moved to a charge per meter square which was fairer.
- 1.3 Another allotment holder informed the meeting that she and her allotment neighbours were concerned that their plots were all charged differently but were the same size. The Administrative Officer checked the file and advised her that their plots were, in fact different sizes according to the measurements that we have. The Chairman advised the allotment holders that if they thought their charges were incorrect they could challenge them and we would remeasure.
- 1.4 An allotment holder asked what costs LPC incur to justify an increase in charges. The Chairman informed the meeting that there were a range of costs from hedge trimming, water rates (a number of the sites are on water metres), maintenance of gates and locks and office staff time in dealing with queries, issues and the renewals.

### **2 Renewals for 2018**

- 2.1 The Chair advised that new agreements would be sent out as soon as the new charges had been agreed by the Parish Council.
- 2.2 The Chair reminded the meeting that the signing of the tenancy agreement would need to be witnessed by an LPC employee and reminded the meeting that the Office opening hours are Monday, Wednesday and Thursday, 10am-2pm. The Chair advised that alternative arrangements could be discussed with the office if necessary.
- 2.3 The Chair reminded that tenants should indicate on the allotment tenancy whether they wished to be included in the Best Kept Allotment competition. If anyone wished to change their mind during the year they should contact the office.
- 2.4 The Chair informed the meeting that the renewals letter would also provide a new code for the combination locks which would be changed in the new year. The Chair requested that tenants bear with us during the changeover, e.g. should the new code not yet be active, please try the previous code until the issue is resolved. An allotment holder asked why the codes change each year and the Administration Officer advised that this was to ensure that previous allotment holders cannot re-enter the allotments and to cut down on thefts. The same allotment holder asked whether there were a lot of thefts and the Administrative Officer informed the meeting that there had been thefts from at least two of the allotment sites reported to the office this year.

### **3 Vacant and Unworked Plots**

- 3.1 The Chair informed the meeting of the current vacant plots. An allotment holder informed the meeting that there were more vacant plots than that. The Chairman reminded the meeting that the issue may be unworked plots rather than vacant plots and that there was little that could be done with those who weren't worked their plots especially if LPC were unaware of them. The Administrative Officer informed the meeting that one person was removed from his plot last year as a result of his failure to maintain his plot. The Administrative Officer asked the allotment holders to inform the office if there are unworked plots so the office can take action to remedy the situation.
- 3.2 The allotment holders expressed the view that something should be done to tidy up the vacant plots to make them more attractive to new holders.

### **4 Open forum - issues/concerns from tenants**

- 4.1 An allotment holder from Lower Green allotments raised the issue of hedge cutting. He reminded the meeting that the outside of the boundary hedges were cut but that the adjoining allotment holder was responsible for the inside of the hedge. He informed the meeting that the hedges are now too high for him to reach and that he has cut up as high as he can reach. He asked that either the hedges be reduced in height or that the Groundsman be asked to cut the inside of the hedges. This

led onto a general discussion about the state of the hedges and the paths. The problem with the paths is getting worse as allotment holders are not keeping them up and where there are vacant plots the paths are also being left. One allotment holder informed the meeting that it is getting very difficult in some places to use the paths and that people were walking across her allotment. The general outcome from the discussion was that three of the four allotment holders attending would be happy to pay more for their allotments if the hedges and paths were maintained by LPC. The Chairman responded that this would be looked into and that perhaps these works could be undertaken by the Lengthsman.

4.2 The allotment holder from Kelseys informed the meeting that there was a problem with people living in houses backing on to the allotments depositing their garden waste on the allotments. It was suggested that a letter be sent to the adjoining occupiers to remind them that they should not be depositing their garden waste on the allotments.

4.3 The Chairman informed the meeting that there was a small amount of wood available at the Groundsman's Hut for use by allotment holders, primarily for making compost bins if any of them wanted it.

4.4 An allotment holder informed the meeting that the water tap between plots 2 and 3 at Lower Green was leaking and probably need a new washer. The Chairman said that the Groundsman would be asked to look at this.

4.5 An allotment holder commented that all the taps are still on and that with winter now upon us, the water should be turned off to stop the taps and pipes from freezing. The Chairman said that this would also be passed on to the Groundsman.

4.6 An allotment holder informed the meeting that a number of the wooden stanchions for the water taps have rotted and need to be replaced. The Chairman said that this would also be passed on to the Groundsman.

4.7 An allotment holder informed the meeting that there was a leaking pipe near Princes Bridge allotments which was resulting in water coming into the allotments. He said that he had contacted the water board to inform them of this, but so far as he could see no action had been taken. The Chairman said that the office would look into reporting this also.

The same allotment holder informed the meeting that he had offered to sort out some of the drainage problems at Princes Bridge but hadn't done so yet for personal reasons. He informed the meeting that he would now do so at no cost to LPC and the Chairman thanked him and asked him to let the office know when the works would be carried out so that the allotment holders could be informed.

4.8 An allotment holder raised the problem of the entrance to Princes Bridge and the mess made of the verge by British Rail parking its vehicles and machinery there. The Chairman informed him that the land was probably owned by HCC and the Administrative Officer said that she would report the state of the verge to HCC.

4.9 An allotment holder informed the meeting that the padlocks at Lower Green need replacing as the numbers are wearing off. One allotment holder informed the meeting that people are just climbing over the gates because the padlocks are becoming difficult to use. The Chairman said that the state of the padlocks would be checked when the padlock code is changed in January and any defective padlocks would be replaced.

## **5 Any Other Business**

5.1 An allotment holder informed the meeting that the grass at Liss Forest Recreation Ground was not mown frequently enough this year and that this had caused problems for users, particularly for the Bank Holiday Fayre. She asked that the grass be cut more often. The Chairman said this would be looked into.

5.2 Councillor Halstead reminded those attending that the public consultation on the Neighbourhood Plan Referendum on 9<sup>th</sup> November 2017 and encouraged as many as possible to attend and give their views.

5.3 Councillor Dodds thanked the attendees and reminded them to sign in if they had not already done so. He also reminded them that they could contact the office during office hours to let us know of any issues or problems with the allotments.

## **6 Close**

6.1 The Chairman closed the meeting.

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Chairman