

LISS PARISH COUNCIL

Allotment Tenants Meeting: Minutes

Monday 7 November 2016, 7.30pm, Liss Village Hall

Present: Councillor David Dodds (Chairman), Councillor Sue Halstead, Councillor Howard Linsley, Administrative Officer Frances Cook and 11 Allotment Tenants (4 from Lower Green, 2 from Kelseys, 3 from Fernhills, 1 from Riverside Walk and 1 from Mitchells).

1 Allotment Charging Increase

- 1.1 The Chair advised that following the change of charging regime last year the regime was remaining in place but that there would be an increase. The Chair informed the meeting that the current charge is 16p per square metre and that the charge from 1 January 2017 would be 16.5p per square metre.

2 Renewals for 2017

- 2.1 The Chair advised that new agreements were available for those present if they wished to renew this evening. Otherwise they would be posted in the near future.
- 2.2 The rent for 2017 was due by 6 January 2017 at the latest. However, due to office closures during the festive period, rent returns were requested by Thursday 16 December 2016.
- 2.3 An allotment holder asked what the money raised through the rent was used for and the Chair informed the meeting that it covered the costs of locks, padlocks, water supplies, other maintenance such as hedge trimming round the allotments and maintenance to hedges and so on. Councillor Linsley added that it was also used to defray the set up costs of the allotments. The Administrative Officer reminded the meeting that the Liss allotment rates were very favourable compared with neighbouring councils which were being charged at over 80p per square metre and also charged deposits.
- 2.4 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.
- 2.5 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.
- 2.6 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.

3 Vacant and Unworked Plots

- 3.1 The Chair informed the meeting of the current vacant plots but accepted that some of those were close to unworkable.
- 3.2 An allotment holder interjected that the unworked and vacant plots were so badly kept that no-one would want to take them on and so the problem is only going to get worse. He also informed the meeting that as the near by plots become more affected by the overgrown plots those plot holders would also give up.
- 3.3 Another allotment holder at Fernhills said that trees were growing up and were also making some plots unworkable and that something should be done to control the weeds.
- 3.4 An allotment holder at Lower Green stated that he had just visited all the allotments before deciding to take a vacant plot at Lower Green and that most of the vacant plots he had looked at required so much work to make them usable that he would not have taken them. The plot he has taken is not quite as bad but it will take some time to knock it into shape.
- 3.5 Following further general discussion the allotment holders expressed the shared 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 raised the issue of clearing plots but in connection with the use of weedkillers. She informed the meeting that a plot near hers had changed hands several times and each time the new holder sprayed it with weedkiller which drifted onto her plot and damaged her plants. She also stated that the ground of the nearby plot had had so much weedkiller sprayed on it she thought it was probably so contaminated that it wouldn't be any good for growing. She also read

an article stating that there was a link between some weedkillers and weedkiller ingredients and cancer. She asked that LPC take an organic stance notwithstanding the substances had not been banned by DEFRA. Councillor Dodds expressed sympathy for the allotment holders concerns but stated that it would be difficult for LPC to take either an organic stance or ban certain weedkillers, particularly if DEFRA considered them safe to use. Councillor Dodds also drew attention to the relevant clauses in the Agreement but accepted the allotment holder's comment that by the time the other person had used the spray it was too late and the damage by drift had been done. Following quite a lot of general discussion it was agreed that the renewal letters would remind plot holders of the need for care when using weedkillers and also to inform any new allotment holders similarly. Councillor Dodds also indicated that the terms of the Agreement would be considered again to see if they can be amended to include a provision that LPC can terminate the Agreement for failing to comply with its terms.

4.2 An allotment holder at Fernhills said that the gate on the right hand side of the road had dropped to the point that it was very difficult to get it open. He asked that it be reposted so that it can be used. Councillor Dodds said that this would be looked into.

4.3 An allotment holder at Mitchells said that due to the use of the land the access through the gate from Hill Brow Road is now treacherous. The land behind the gate in the allotments is very rutted and uneven. Following discussion it was agreed that the simplest solution was for this access to be blocked up. Councillor Dodds confirmed that he would arrange for the access gate from Hill Brow Road to be blocked off so that the only access was the gate on the corner of Hill Brow and Andlers Ash Road.

4.4 An allotment holder at Fernhills raised LPC's tree policy and asked that it be reviewed as more and more plots (particularly at Fernhills) are becoming unworkable as a result either of overhanging trees or, as in at least one plot at Fernhills, trees growing within the plot. Councillor Dodds expressed sympathy with this and accepted that if action were not taken all the allotments would eventually become unusable as a result of trees. Councillor Dodds agreed to raise this point at the next Grounds Committee meeting.

5 Any Other Business

5.1 Mr Babcock espoused the benefits of joining the local Horticultural Society and encouraged plot holders to become members

5.2 Councillor Dodds reminded those attending that the public consultation on the replacement of the West Liss Pavilion takes place on 26th November 2016 and encouraged as many as possible to attend and give their views.

5.3 Councillor Dodds also reminded those attending that the Liss Faye/Christmas Fayre takes place on 7th December 2016.

6 Close

6.1 The Chairman closed the meeting at 8.30pm.

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Chairman