

Allotments Committee

16 July 2009, 20.00h

Present Councillors:	S Walford	Chairman
	I Begg	
	G Clark	
	T Reason	substitute
	T Barton	
	M Cheale	
	G Copland	
	M Green	
	E Habib	
	J Hagan	
	M Hobbs	
	M Jenkins	
	F Shortt	
	M Wade	
	M wing	
		Parish Clerk
	Julia Warren	
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	Press	

424-09 APOLOGIES

Apologies were received and accepted from Councillor J Turner (personal reasons), Councillor Reason substituted, and Mr D Watson.

425-09 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor G Clark declared a personal interest in the leylandii and hawthorn trees on plot 73 Hitchens field

426-09 QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC

Mr Hagan and Ms Jenkins spoke of their personal dislike for the aesthetic appeal of polytunnels. It was confirmed that such structures may need planning permission from St Albans District Council as planning authority, however Mr Barton, supported by evidence from the NSALG disputed this assertion. A response was awaited from the planning enforcement department.

Mr Barton, accepting that a number of residents, primarily those in Necton Road, had expressed concerns regarding the visual impact of the poly tunnel, offered mitigating measures. He said that the new polythene, currently screened with green shade inducing netting, would 'green up' in a matter of months. It could also be screened with, for example, bamboo. He suggested that the recently pruned hedge adjacent to the footpath also screened the allotments from wind and perhaps could be permitted to grow taller in future years.

427-09 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 21 May 2009 were approved.

Resolved: **To approve the Minutes of the meeting held on 21 May as a true and fair record, and for these to be signed by the Chairman.**

428-09 BAXENDALE REPORT

This had been received from Mr Copland and had been circulated. A number of plot numbers were either absent or very damaged and replacement recommended.

It was noted that the new tenants of plot 36 had won the 'best newcomer' allotment prize at Village Day less than 2 weeks after taking up tenancy on 1 July 2009 and following the removal of 2 dozen sacks of rubbish from the site.

The Herts Highways footpaths officer had met with the Committee Chairman on site and agreed to reduce the hedge height in the autumn.

The allotment regulations pinned to the notice board had been defaced and needed replacement.

Resolved: **1 To note the report**
2 That the missing damaged plot numbers be replaced
3 That a fresh set of allotment regulations be placed on the notice board

429-09 GLEBE REPORT

Mr Watson's report had been previously circulated. Mr Wing reported that the horse had now left the Glebe South horse field and a new tenant awaited. Approximately 65 people had attended and enjoyed the BBQ on 11 July. Communication was facilitated as all but 2 ploholders communicated with their representative by email. It was noted that the new tenancy agreement asked for contact information including email addresses and whether the tenant was happy for WPC to share their details with the allotment representative.

Just two plots were identified that needed attention, numbers 6 and 20. It was agreed that the tenants be informally approached to identify whether they had specific problems.

It was noted that an incinerator had recently appeared just beyond the new allotments, used by a household with gate access to the field, possibly on Sheepcote Lane. It was agreed that the householder be advised that this was not appropriate use of the field and that the incinerator should be removed

- Resolved:**
- 1 To note the report**
 - 2 Allotment representative to informally ascertain any reasons for difficulties in maintaining plots 6 and 20**
 - 3 Clerk to contact householder seen utilising the incinerator to advise that this was inappropriate and that the incinerator be removed**

430-09 HITCHENS REPORT

A written report was circulated and discussed. At the previous meeting on 21 May (Minute 288-09) the problem of creeping allotments due to poor delineation and historic management had been discussed. . It was agreed that prior to any by informal agreement between plot holders, facilitated by Mr Wade, plotholder of these plots, mostly adjacent to Necton Road be advised in writing by the Clerk.

Under-cultivation and poor cultivation of specific plots was discussed, as were specific offending trees which contravene regulations and letters agreed.

Plot 43 had been relinquished. It was agreed that this large plot be split into two half plots and re-let.

Mr Hobbs had responded to the letter sent regarding the hawthorn and leylandii trees on plot 73. His preference was that the trees survive and remain the responsibility of WPC. Councillor Clark declared a personal interest in these trees, planted by her husband and did not vote. The future of these trees was debated at length and agreed that, as minuted in March 2008 (minute 5) the trees would be removed by WPC in the autumn. Any damage to the allotment plot would be reinstated.

It was also agreed that the Christmas tree adjacent to plot 7 be removed in the autumn.

Mr and Mrs Astell had replied regarding the request to remove their tree and suggested a site meeting with members of the Allotments Committee. This was agreed.

Mr Wade and Mr Habib would speak to Plot holder 66 regarding the poisonous nature of the laburnum tree (per Minute 288-09). It was noted that plots 64 and 66 were more cultivated and less of a play area

Thanks were extended to Trevor Barton and Fran Shortt who manned the allotment stall at Village Day. A magnificent fruit display plus photos and books etc was mounted and a number of expressions of interest generated. It was agreed that this be considered in future years and that a banner would be beneficial. A quotation was to be sought.

They were also thanked for clearing the half plot adjacent to the turning area. This area had been used for the successful BBQ following the Village Day celebrations.

- Resolved:**
- 1 To note the report**
 - 2 Plot 43 to be split into two and reallocated by the office**
 - 3 Clerk to ask Mr Dawes to remove trees from plots 7 and 73**
 - 4 Chairman to meet with Mr and Mrs Astell**
 - 5 Mr Wade and Mr Habib to discuss the poisonous nature of laburnum seeds and the need to remove the tree with the tenant of plot 66**
 - 6 Clerk to obtain quotation for 'Allotments' banner for future use on Village Day.**

431-09 FOLLY REPORT

Mrs Cheale gave a report on the Folly allotments. Letters were agreed, in particular that the tenants of plots 22, 25, 25b, 26, 26b and 31 be reminded of their responsibility for the adjoining pathways which were somewhat weedy.

A letter had been sent to the tenant of plot 12 asking that the shed be cleared and removed within 4 weeks of 28 May. A non allotment holder's belongings were believed to still be within this shed. It was agreed that he be written to personally and if the shed remained after a month it and its contents be removed by WPC.

It was noted that plot 2 was one of the most improved and beautifully cultivated allotments on Folly. The fence was however inappropriate and should be removed.

It was noted that the tenant of plot 16 wished to retain a full size plot and had acknowledged the demise of the large laurel in the autumn.

Mrs Cheale reported that a number of plot numbers were damaged or absent. Agreed that these be replaced.

- Resolved:**
- 1 To note the report**
 - 2 That the Clerk write to the suspected owner of the belongings in the shed of the former tenant of Plot 12 advising that the plot would be re-let and that the shed and its contents should be removed within 4 weeks.**
 - 3 Clerk to write to Plot 2 advising that the fence detracted from an otherwise beautiful allotment and should be removed**
 - 4 That the missing damaged plot numbers be replaced**
 - 5 The allotment representatives for all fields were thanked for their reports. These were much appreciated but should be restricted to factual information.**

432-09 WORK PROGRESS REPORTS & REQUESTS

A number of requests had been received and were discussed.

Mr Saint had requested permission for a traditional greenhouse size 10' x 12' on Glebe 50. The regulations permit a single greenhouse plus shed each 6' x 8' x 8' high. It was agreed that subject to this, per regulations, being installed on a non-permanent base and no more than 8' high it would be acceptable to the Parish Council. This was also conditional that no other structures be built upon the allotment. He would also be advised that SADC may require planning permission.

Mr Habib had requested permission to erect a polytunnel 25' x 17' x approx 7' high on Hitchens 62. He planned to install this later in the year, December time. This request was discussed in the light of the current objections to the large poly tunnel, of similar dimensions, on the far side of Hitchens field and the awaited response from planning enforcement (Minute 426-09). Councillors considered that it would be currently inappropriate to permit another similar structure. However Mr Habib could apply at a later date. The reasons for refusal were that this was far larger in footprint than the combined shed and greenhouse given in the 2009 allotment regulations and would be positioned directly behind residential property.

It was noted that there were now a number of poultry coops on the allotments, permissible within the rules.

The matter of dripping taps was in hand.

- Resolved:**
- 1 Clerk to write to Mr Saint giving permission for a greenhouse subject to no further structures on his plot, it being on a non permanent base and of height restriction 8'.**
 - 2 Clerk to write to Mr Habib currently refusing permission for a poly tunnel on the grounds of its size and proximity to residential properties. This application could be resubmitted after 6 months and resolution of the discussions surrounding the existing large poly tunnel on Hitchens Field.**

433-09 SECURITY

It was noted that the combination locks on Hitchens Field had been removed and lost. The code for Glebe Field had been changed and the lock system working effectively.

A number of shed breakins had occurred in recent months, primarily of windowless locked sheds. Advice from the police was that valuables should not be stored on the allotments and sheds remain unlocked. Police patrols continued to surveil the allotments

Resolved: To note the report

434-09 ALLOTMENT WEEK 2009

It had been suggested that the allotments were 'open' to the public for a period, perhaps morning/afternoon, during allotment week 2009 (10 – 16 August). Concerns for security were raised, also of whom would be present to answer queries. It was agreed that allotments be promoted in a similar way to that so successfully achieved at Village Day (Minute 430-09) at the Farmers' Market on Sunday 16 August. It was hoped that a joint venture with WEB would be achievable – perhaps a small manned display on their stall. Mr Wing agreed to approach WEB, Cllr Begg to contact Cllr Shardlow, chairman of the Farmers' Market Steering Group.

- Resolved:**
- 1 To note the report**
 - 2 Cllr Begg to contact Chairman of Farmers' Market Steering Group re one-off part stall at 16 August.**
 - 3 Mr Wing to approach WEB for part of their stall on 16 August for an allotments display**

425-09 WAITING LISTS

A detailed report had been circulated. This showed the waiting lists (in terms of plots requested) to stand at

Baxendale 4 plots
Folly Fields 2 plots
Glebe/Hitchens 3 ½ plots

In addition 2 people asked to be added to the waiting list at the Village Day allotment stall

Resolved: To note the report

The Chairman declared the meeting closed at 22.10h.

Dated this day of 2009
Chairman