

Hurworth Parish Council

Minutes of the Allotment Committee meeting held at Hurworth Grange, Hurworth –on-Tees, on Wednesday 19th March 2014 starting at 7.15pm.

Those present: Graham Wylie, George Lawman, Tony Sayers, Harry Doran, Margaret Williams,

Also attending: Bryan Cooper and Peter Allan (Parish Clerk)

1. Margaret Williams opened the meeting welcoming the committee, and thanking them for their attendance.
2. **Election of Chairman for the meeting.** In accordance with the procedure, the Chair for the meeting was elected; Tony Sayers took the Chair.
3. **Apologies for Absence** Ian Holme (Business)

4. Allotment Occupancy and waiting List

The Clerk reported at that the Grange, Ron Henderson had given up his plot, after many years, as the work involved has getting too much for him. The plot has been allocated to the person at the top of the Grange Waiting List. There are now 4 names on this List.

At Strait Lane, several plots have been released, and there was a Waiting List of nine at the year end. However, as plots were allocated, several people on the Waiting list changed their minds and decided to defer taking a plot. The result is that every new applicant as at 1st January 2014 has been given a plot, also all those who had requested an additional plot.

Two new applications have been received since 1st January, and there is one plot presently available – plot 13a. The plot has been offered to the top of the Waiting List, but if this is not taken up within the next week the other applicant will be offered it.

All allotments rents for 2014 have been paid.

The Clerk will send the list of Allotment Holders to the Allotment Committee Representatives; **please note this is ‘Confidential’ information, as within the Data Protection Act, and must not be circulated.** It is deemed to be required by the Committee members to assist them in monitoring the upkeep of the plots.

5. Dates for the water to be switched on the skip.

The committee reported that the water has been turned on at both sites. The Clerk confirmed that the Parish Council will pay the costs of water for 2014.

After discussion, the committee decided it was not necessary for a skip to be placed at Strait Lane. It was agreed that the majority of the ‘refuse’ should be converted into compost and used as fertiliser. George Lawman emphasised that there was far too much wastage, and this should be deterred.

A skip will be required in October, at the end of the season.

6. Paths and Communal Access

Graham Wylie reported that the pathway at the Lych Gate end has been improved with the spreading of bark, as agreed at the last meeting.

The inside paths require attention, and after discussion it was agreed that the Clerk will arrange for two loads of bark will be delivered to Strait Lane (preferably on a Friday or Saturday). The committee members agreed to make arrangements for the bark to be distributed to improve the quality of the internal paths.

The external paths need attention. These are the responsibility of DBC, and the Clerk will contact StreetScene to arrange for them to tidy the area and to repair the pathways as needed. **Action Clerk.**

The grass cutting at Strait Lane allotments was discussed, and Brian Cooper volunteered to cut the grass regularly. He will arrange with John Middlemas to get access to the HPC mower and strimmer. HPC will pay the cost of the petrol.

The HPC shed has been damaged during the bad weather; Bryan Cooper offered to repair the shed and peg it down solidly. HPC will pay any costs incurred.

7. Allotment Upkeep

Graham Wylie and Tony Sayers both reported that the plots were currently in good order, and that work had started on many of the allotments. There were no 'complaints' to the assessed.

8. Allotment Requirements

- a. It was agreed that notices should be placed on the Allotment Notice Boards notifying all allotment holders of forthcoming meetings, and also display the Minutes of the meetings. **Action Clerk.**
The notice boards will require modifications to provide a covered, dry space to display these notices. **Margaret Williams** will investigate and arrangements will be made.
- b. Tony Sayers requested that a new litter bin is needed at the Grange allotments. Ground based, heavy unit is required, as the previous unit was destroyed by youths using the skateboard area. **Action Clerk**

9. Plans for the Future

Margaret Williams explained that the Parish Council had taken a decision not to proceed with the proposed development of an additional number of plots on the Priory School field which is situated above the Manorfield estate. The reasons quoted were the cost which would be incurred and the future upkeep and responsibility. Also it had been noted that several residents whose houses look out onto this field had expressed concern about security and the landscape appearance. George Lawman commented that this was an unfortunate decision because the community in general would welcome the extension to the facility, and that grants would probably be available to fund the development.

EPICH has also shown an interest in developing a wild flower meadow alongside the allotment development, but this appears to have also been shelved at present. Mr Lawman would like to further review this at some time in the future, perhaps when an independent Association has been formed.

10. Allotment Association update

George Lawman updated the meeting with the progress made towards forming a Hurworth Allotment Association. Several Hurworth plot holders have become members of the National Association, and new plot holders will be approached, to outline the benefits. The National Association is going through a period of change, and new executives have been elected. The Association now falls under the Government heading of 'Leisure and Activities', and this could cause a change in the funding structure. There is a fear at some Associations that rents could increase dramatically, perhaps from £15 to £300 per annum.

The committee decided that there is no benefit in the HPC being members of the National Association, and Margaret Williams agreed that the council annual subscription of £55 can be cancelled. **Action Clerk.**

A constitution for the Hurworth Association has now been drafted, and George feels that within a three year period it should be possible to form the Association. The project is progressing, and new interested members are moving the percentage to the required sixty percent mandate.

11. Any Other Business

- a. Fires are allowed on allotments, but these should only be started one hour before sunset.
- b. The cost of the new notice boards could be met on a 50 -50 basis between the HPC and the allotment holders.

- c. Graham reported that there is too much bad language on the allotment site, and requested that a notice is put up by the council requesting that this is quelled. **Action Margaret Williams.**
- d. A notice needs to be placed on the gate stating that 'vehicles entering the site are at their own risk. **Action Margaret Williams.** Bryan Cooper has provided a turning area on one of his plots, to allow access and manoeuvrability.
- e. A new dog litter bin is required at Strait Lane, Lych Gate end, as the old one has been removed. **Action Clerk**

The date of the next meeting will be Wednesday, 2nd July at 7:15pm at the same venue.

Tony Sayers thanked the committee for their attendance and participation. He closed the meeting at 8:35pm