

Hurworth Parish Council

Allotment Committee AGM Minutes **for the Meeting held on 21st November 2013**

Those Present:- Committee members

Ian Holme, Margaret Williams, Graham Wylie, George Lawman (Allotment Assoc. Representative)

Also 21 allotment holders: and Peter Allan - Parish Clerk

1. Chairman's Address

Ian Holme took the Chair and opened the meeting. He welcomed all the attendees, noting it was a very good and heartening turnout.

He intended this meeting to clarify a number of ongoing issues, and to reaffirm the rules of the Allotment Committee, as well as discuss plans for the future.

2. Apologies for Absence:- Norma Kyle, Ian Palmer. Tony Sayers was absent.

3. Minutes of the meeting held on 19th September 2013

The Minutes were approved, proposed by Graham Wylie, and Seconded by George Lawman.

4. Financial Report

The Clerk circulated details of the allotment expenditure for the last twelve months, and talked the audience through the costs.

<u>Allotment Expenses 12 months to 31st October 2013</u>			
John Edwards	Grass cutting for year	38.53	
Eden Landscapes	Treework at Grange	160.00	
North Water	Water Strait Lane	17.16	

HCA	Water at Grange	64.00	
Skipbridge Signs	Strait Lane	60.00	
North Water	Water Strait Lane	24.53	
Holder	Fence materials Grange	200.00	
Nat Allotment Assoc	Subscription	55.00	
North Water	Water Strait Lane	53.16	
M&M Services	Grass Strait Lane	7.61	
AC Metals	Skip hire Strait Lane	160.00	
		<u>839.99</u>	
2014 Notes			
1. Two skips for Strait Lane	Confirmed	320	
2. Toilet for Strait Lane	Requested	1750	
Allotment Rent 2013 is £15 oer plot.			
57 plots at £15		855	
New plots			
Cost of set up			
Cost of legal documents			
Communal shed			
Keys for main gate etc.			

It was noted that Strait Lane would have a skip twice a year, in May and in October.

5. Election of Committee for 2014

The Chair informed the audience that after researching the archives, the committee should comprise 3 representatives of the council, three representatives for Strait Lane Allotments and one representative for Hurworth Grange allotments.

The following people were elected:-

HPC

Ian Holme

Norma Kyle

Margaret William

Strait Lane

George Lawman

Graham Wylie

Henry Dora

Hurworth Grange

Tony Sayer

6. Office of Chairperson

It was agreed that the new committee would select their own chairperson, or elect to rotate the chairmanship.

7. Allotment Register and Waiting List

There are 48 allotments at Strait lane and 9 at Hurworth Grange.

All the allotments are occupied at present, and there is a Waiting List of 9 for Strait Lane and 3 for Hurworth Grange.

There will be 4 allotments vacated at the end of the year, and it is probable that several more will become available in January.

The rules for allocating vacant allotments, are as follows:-

1. Strictly in order of application date.
2. A person who already has an allotment will not be given another, until all applicants without an allotment have been satisfied.

3. Allotments can be shared, but only the registered tenant is recognised. Hence, upon vacation of a plot, the person sharing does not have a right to take over the plot. He/she must wait until it is their turn on the Waiting List.
4. Sharing arrangements are strictly between the parties concerned, but it would be prudent to advise the Clerk of the arrangements, to avoid confusion.

After an open discussion, the meeting agreed that these rules are fair and clear.

8. Rent for 2014.

The Chairman informed the meeting that the rent for 2014, will remain at £15 per plot. This is very low in comparison to most other allotment sites in the country.

9. Rules and Regulations

a. Modification to HPC Allotment Rules and Regulations.

The original rules were transcribed in 1932, and were revised by the council in December 2011.

A change to the rules would first require the allotment holders to vote with a two-thirds majority, and then go before the council for consideration. At this point, the council may decide that residents in the near location should be consulted, before a decision is taken.

Finally a decision will be taken by the full council, in an open monthly meeting.

b. Keeping of hens.

Several allotment holders at strait Lane have intimated their interest in keeping hens on the allotment plot. This is currently contrary to the HPC Rules and Regulations, and would require a modification to the rules, as stated in 1 above.

The council has already received a letter advising them that local residents are against this change, as there is a fear of vermin encroachment, and general deterioration of the environment within the allotment area.

The meeting discussed this subject for some time, with varying views. Electric fences were suggested, but there is no electricity on this site. The Strait Lane site is located within a housing estate, and is not conducive to poultry or animal farming.

The Chairman closed the subject with no clear conclusion or consensus. However, residents will be consulted if the initiative moved forward and this could only be progressed to the PC once the two thirds criteria of allotment holders has been confirmed /satisfied.

c. Sharing of plots.

This was addressed by the Clerk during the Register and Waiting List review.

d. Toilet for Strait Lane

A request has been received by the council from the Allotment Committee. Quotations of £1250 and £1750 have been tendered.

At the November PC Meeting, the council agreed to make a contribution to the cost of a toilet, provided the 'need' was substantiated by the allotment holders. The balance of the cost would have to be met by the individual plot holders, and the maintenance, cleaning and upkeep would be the responsibility of the allotment holders.

George Lawman informed the meeting that disability concerns should also be considered, and that grants are available, provided they are channelled through an Allotment Association, as the parish council would be unable to attract these grants.

10. Allotment Association Update

Mr Lawman was invited to address the meeting, and covered the following points:-

Mr Lawman recapitulated the history of the events to date, embracing the meeting held three years ago to launch the concept, and the referendum that followed. This only attracted a small vote, and many allotment holders did not vote at all.

In the last 12 months more allotment holders have indicated support, and several have joined the National Allotment Association, as has the HPC.

There was a lengthy discussion with some of the benefits being highlighted and some less positive observations. The Chairman reiterated that the council has an 'open mind' on this subject, and would charge a peppercorn rent, if the Association is formed and takes over the full responsibilities for operating and the upkeep of the land.

Terry King called for a straw poll, to try to gauge the level of support for an Association. A vote was taken and the result indicated 13 in favour, 2 against and several abstentions.

Mr Lawman suggested a gradual and phased handover; however the Chairman said that a clean one-off handover would be preferred. The Association will need to be formally established with a Business Plan and a Committee elected to run the operations.

Once again, this could only be progressed to the Parish Council, if the two thirds criteria of allotment holders has been confirmed /satisfied.

11. Future Opportunities

The Clerk shared information about the possibility of HPC providing some new allotments. These would be with the agreement of Priory Hurworth House School on their lands at the top of the Westfield Drive estate. Discussions have shown positive progress and an agreement in principle. HPC are going to get a consultant to provide a report to establish the requirements, provide a layout of the designated area, and provide some cost estimates, for the creation of the facility.

Residents will need to also be consulted, but initial observations have proved positive.

12. Allotment Upkeep

Two allotments require work to bring them up to scratch, and the Clerk will approach the plot holders.

There is some confusion about the boundaries on the allotments at numbers 2, 3 and 4. It was agreed that Graham would look at these and erect some boundary stakes to clearly identify the territory.

Graham outlined the upkeep survey format details, and the procedure for dealing with poorly kept plots.

13. Any Other Business

Terry King brought attention to the need to build up the access path from Lychgate. **The Clerk agreed to take appropriate action to remedy this.**

- a. It is recommended that excess supplies of vegetables should be made available to residents, rather than allowing them to rot.
- b. Val Hughes recommended that notices should be put up on the allotment sites giving dates of future meetings, and that the Minutes should be put onto the Parish web site. This was agreed.

14. The Chairman thanked everybody for attending, and closed the meeting at 8:15pm