

Notes AGM 2019

Monday 4th November 2019 6.00 pm – 7.00 pm

6.00 pm – 6.10 FEES

The new system of invoicing tenants through the booking system seems to have worked well and there were no complaints from tenants about this. Generally, there seemed to be fewer tenants paying on the night with most having paid either in person or via BACS. Some tenants said that they hadn't received an invoice, so Megan will check that we have their correct email and contact details. It was also suggested that in future, the notice for the AGM could be sent out with the invoices as well as posting on allotment sites and sending by WhatsApp or email.

Welcome and introduction

General Issues on all plots

- Security: - update and feedback about police event

Issues of security were highlighted by the fact that the Gilson Allotment site had been broken into. Locks had been broken and some tools moved around as well as hammers stolen. Everyone was advised to ring 101 if this happens as the Town Council cannot do this on tenants' behalf. This promoted discussion on the item below (WhatsApp Group) which was instrumental in quickly getting information to tenants, once Allan had discovered the damage. It was thought that this was potentially caused by children on half-term and that the equipment may have been left ready for stealing later. This has previously happened on Blythe – a couple of years ago.

There was general discussion about gates to sites being left open or unlocked so Allan said he would send out reminders on WhatsApp as well as putting new signs up on the gates to all sites. It was reported that the lock on Gilson site sticks so Allan will look at it to see if it needs replacing or WD40. On Stonebridge, it was reported that the gate is always unlocked.

Feedback about the Police Event was that it was useful and worthwhile holding.

- WhatsApp Group

The WhatsApp groups have been very successful as a means of relaying information to tenants and for allotment holders sharing information between themselves. This meant that there was more of a community feel between them. Megan advised that mobile numbers are visible to all group members. Allan took names of all people who wanted to join the groups.

- Untended plots

Megan highlighted that there was currently a problem with untended plots, and this had been reported on all sites. Tenants were asked to discretely report untended plots to either Allan or Megan to keep an eye on them. Megan said that she would make it a priority this year to clamp down on untended plots and it was suggested that new tenants should have a probation period of say 3 months. This met with general agreement as it is often the case that new tenants don't realise the amount of work involved in keeping an allotment. Also, for a new tenant they don't know what is already planted in the ground and might benefit from the support of other, more experienced, allotment holders. Megan also emphasised that this has to be balanced between being sympathetic to tenants who have genuine reason for not being able to tend their plot for a period of time.

A suggestion was made that new tenants could be offered help to clear and start up their plots. Both Megan and Allan advised that the Town Council simply doesn't have the manpower to do that but that

other allotment holders might want to offer help. Allan said that he would normally help with strimming plots right back to start and with sheeting.

Also, under discussion was the possibility of having a committee for each site but this was met with general disagreement. The idea of a spokesperson had been trialled before, but tenants felt that they could individually approach the Town Council with their own issues.

The problem with untended plots was that it can make the allotments look unkempt; this and the fact that seeds can spread to other tended plots.

There was general discussion around sheeting plots and an alternative suggestion was that perhaps we should plant wildflowers on them or rye grass and mustard seed. This would stop the more difficult weeds like mare's tail and couch grass from taking hold. There was also a possible suggestion to put beehives there also. Megan suggested that the wildflower seeds themselves may be a problem, but the consensus seemed to be that this was a good idea.

Vacant plots also were under discussion and a suggestion was raised from Gilson, that it would be good to have communal areas on the sites. It was clarified that these weren't to be communal plots but seating areas where tenants could sit and talk together. The subject of toilets on the sites was also mentioned and Megan said that she would revisit this as she had seen an article about low maintenance toilets on other sites.

The 'Community Orchard Plot' also came into question as this is a particularly large area of vacant land which could be better used. Megan will look into how this may be used as a Community Plot or communal area. The general state of allotments at that end of the Stonebridge site is deteriorating further, due to tenants wanting to move away from the untended ground.

There was also a conversation then about the possibility of lockups on the sites for greater security.

Megan will look into the suggestions above to include the Community Plot, Community Areas, Toilets and Lock-ups, and discuss with the Town Council.

- Dumping and waste

There were still issues of dumping on the sites with Stonebridge being the worst affected by fly-tipping. With the vacant 'Community Orchard Plot' looking like waste land, this adds to the situation. Allan said he had some rubbish there ready for burning. There is also an issue of rats on Stonebridge and Allan said that he had some traps that he would bring down.

Update from Head Groundsman on work to be carried out over the winter.

The focus for this winter will be on clearing vacant plots and paths plus actioning the points raised in this meeting. This will be reinforced with Megan focussing on the admin side of ensuring that plots stay tended, particularly with new tenants.

The Competition winners were announced

BEST ALLOTMENTS	Blythe 5A	Stonebridge 5/5A	Gilson 5A
MOST IMPROVED	Blythe 5B	Stonebridge 21B	Gilson 7B

Any other business

Gilson allotment reported that they needed taps near 10A. It was reported that the double taps that Allan had fitted had been removed as they didn't suit the hose fittings for some tenants. Allan will also check the other sites.

7.00 – CLOSE