

# **PARKS AND COUNTRYSIDE SERVICES**

## **ALLOTMENT ADVISORY GROUP Minutes of Meeting**

**Wednesday 26<sup>th</sup> February 6-8pm  
The Circle 33 Rockingham Lane**

### **Present:**

**Councillor Brian Holmshaw (Chair)  
James Musgrave Allotment Manager  
Caroline Jennings, Allotment Officer (Minutes)  
Rowan Longhurst, Countryside Service Manager  
Phil Webster, Sheffield Allotment Federation and Parson Cross Society  
Michael Booth, Allotment Federation/Mossway allotments  
Peter Keen, Hangingwater Allotment Association  
David Marshall, Roscoe Plantation Allotment Society  
Anne Adams, Roscoe Plantation Society  
Councillor Barbara Masters, SCC  
Jude Lambe, Walkley Bank Allotment Society  
Fred Oldham, Norton St Pauls Allotment Society  
Ann Marshall, Woodseats Allotment Society  
Colin Williams, Ecclesall Allotment Association  
Garry Watts, Norton Lees Allotment Society  
Ian Wilson, Roe Woods Allotment Society  
Gareth Powis, Archer Lane  
Bill Atherton, Archer Lane  
Rob Hawkins, Hangingwater Allotments/Federation**

<b>ITEM</b>	<b>DETAIL</b>	<b>ACTION</b>
<b>1.</b>	<b>Introduction</b>  Councillor Brian Holmshaw introduced the meeting.	
<b>2.</b>	<b>Apologies for Absence</b>  Councillor Woodcraft Councillor Curtis Crossland	
<b>3.</b>	<b>Minutes of Last meeting 24<sup>th</sup> September 2024 and Matters Arising and Actions arising</b>  Minutes recorded as a true record.  James talked through the previous meetings Actions.	

ITEM	DETAIL	ACTION
	<p>P1 Lee Vallett asked if there could be a section on the website which was purely information for societies, James agreed this could be accommodated as part of the implementation of the wider policy documents and review of the allotment web page.</p> <p>P1 James is broadening the group's membership to include other constituted groups. No concerns raised to James.</p> <p>James agreed to share the terms of reference with the group. If approaches are made to attend, we can support. Will send out with the May AAG invite, will also be included in the review of allotment web page.</p> <p>Water contract details, one interested, any others please contact James.</p> <p>Competition criteria will go out along with the invitation.</p> <p>P8 biodiversity, will invite a team member from ecology to the AAG other suggestions for speakers welcomed. TBC May AAG</p>	<p>JM</p> <p>ALL</p>
4.	<p><b>Allotment Rules and Policy Consultation</b></p> <p>James explained the background to the allotment rules and policy document.</p> <p>The document is intended to be fully available on the allotment webpage as a self-help tool that will add clarity to current rules and policy. Much of the policy is already in place and any amendments are updated that comply with allotment law or others such as environmental protection local government law and equalities. After the consultation tonight, no new rule will be added. Jargon, grammar, formatting and referencing may be changed. The approval will be included in the committee report to be put before CPL Committee on the 31<sup>st</sup> March 2025. Approval will allow the allotment service to give notice to tenants by letter, of the change of council rules around the 31<sup>st</sup> May 2025. The letter will provide a link to the allotment webpage and the information in the document. The new rules and policy will be effective on the 31<sup>st</sup> July 2025. New tenancy agreements will then be issued, these will reflect the new rules. Due to the twelve-month legal notice period, it is expected that the new tenancy agreement will commence on the 1<sup>st</sup> April 2027. This process will be by electric Docusign.</p> <p>The terms of nuisance have been developed to help identify breach of tenancies; this has not been available before.</p>	

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	<p>The council legal team and equalities team have been consulted on the document including the National Allotment Society legal team to discuss serious breaches (those without remedy). It is thought unwise to remove the appeal from the notice to quit into the improvement notice so the proposal is to keep the current format. It is however acceptable to give a 14-day notice on an appeal and our notices will reflect this.</p> <p>James said he would also like the group to consider what constitutes a serious breach of tenancy, can they be remedied with an improvement notice. The term non-cultivation will be changed to improvement notice.</p> <p>We also ask you to consider our proposal to raise the key deposit as the existing cost does not reflect inflation and could help with the return of more keys.</p> <p>Time now for questions as the consultation on the document is to take place this evening only.</p> <p>Ann Marshall said that expecting 25% cultivation in the first few months was fine but to ask for 75% in 9 months could be seen as unreasonable depending on the state of the plot. James replied to this saying that we will consider everyone on an individual basis. Ann reiterated that it was unfair if you take on a bad plot as this could cause anxiety.</p> <p>Colin Williams disagreed and said that there was a need for a hard and fast rule, but with room for flexibility, considering on a one-to-one basis.</p> <p>James said it would be good to point out difficult plots in the 'before you apply' for example making sure plots are viewed before they are accepted.</p> <p>Michael Booth agreed to put in something before taking on a plot. He is worried that 50% of allotments tenants will be breaking the rules when the new rules go live as people won't know that the rules exist. James explained that a letter will go out to all tenants and a link will be in the letter, tenants can also request a hard copy.</p> <p>Jude Lambe highlighted that some areas on an allotment are impossible to cultivate, and not everyone will be able to fulfil what's asked of them in the document.</p> <p>Anne Adams agrees there should be strict rules but there is a need to exercise discretion. She suggests in point 6.1 around exceptional extenuating circumstances that we put in discretionary terms such as (a really bad plot).</p>	

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	<p>Garry Watts mentioned that vacant plots not being worked time and time again because they are not getting the right tenants. James explained that we are bound legally on how we offer plots. He went on to say that carpets on plots should be banned, James agreed that they were classed as hazardous waste and there was a blanket ban on anything that wasn't biodegradable.</p> <p>Peter Keen was concerned about the administrative burden of this process and that some refining was required.</p> <p>James went on to explain that current structures in place will stay as it would be too much to ask for them all to be removed, but he would like allotments to become more sustainable and water harvesting was as a good ask considering climate change. Having fires in drums was something else he would like to approve as he would like the service to respond to changes on air pollution.</p> <p>David Marshall said that there must be burning on site. James comment that things do have to change though.</p> <p>Councillor Masters said she lives close to allotments and know that green waste and plastic is burnt together. She thinks that we should say 'if you have any concerns, we <b>strongly advise</b>, in bold, you talk to the allotment office'.</p> <p>Michel Booth said that fires need investigating as they get accused when it isn't a fire on the allotments; he went on to say fires are worse in winter because everything is wet. Michael Booth asked about keeping ducks as everyone asks about them, and chicken feeders should only be approved feeders. James reiterated that the feeders must be of the approved type to deter vermin.</p> <p>Rob Hawkins mentioned that he was still to be convinced that the handbook needed to be changed. James replied saying that it wasn't really changing it but bolting it down, the document will now represent diversity and equality.</p> <p>Jude Lambe said she sent out the draft to members, one member commented that there was no mention of biodiversity, making the point that some non-cultivation may be deliberate for soil health and to discourage the use of pesticides. Having a blanket ban on trampolines and small playhouses doesn't encourage young people to site, they were allowed in the handbook. James responded about the amount of rubbish that the team removes and these are significant contributors.</p> <p>James went on to say that we needed a document for guidance on how to deal with those who breach their tenancies, and this document will help significantly with this.</p>	

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	<p>Jude Lambe would like to see a right to appeal on the enforcement procedure.</p> <p>Councillor Holmshaw said there may be something on biodiversity next meeting.</p> <p>Anne Adams mentioned point 8.7 and the height restriction isn't as high as a normal door height and would like this to be a bit higher if possible.</p> <p>On Solar panels it needs to say they can be used for cameras.</p> <p>8.2 and 8.6 she hoped fruit trees comes under the 75% cultivation. James explained that fruit trees are not part of the 75% because some plots just become filled with fruit trees and nothing else.</p> <p>James moved on to talk about hedges and their height with the need to be able to see into plots because of possible anti-social activity and the need to have good site lines.</p> <p>David Marshall commented that tenants are compromised time and time again on security.</p> <p>Michael Booth said that flags should be allowed along with drones. James said that it was council policy that drones should not be used on any council land.</p> <p>Further amendments were mentioned by James he mentioned the ability to legally serve notice with a close connection to family members. Small structures for Bracken Moor and Beauchief as this reflects the sizes of plots, and a proposal for an increase in key deposits from current £3 to £5.</p> <p>James asked how people felt about MulTiLock proposed increase to £30 deposit with £25 refund on return of the key at the end of the tenancy. Michael Booth was concerned about a possible equalities issue with some people being unable to afford this.</p> <p>Rob Hawkins highlighted point 10.6, he said that some years ago one tenant found they were in the wrong price category and got it changed, it was mentioned that it was likely the whole run of allotments were wrong and asked the administrator at the time to change them but this was refused, he said that Sheffield Council are fraudulent, and it's likely that all these plots are still in the wrong category, he worries that half the estate are in the wrong category. There needs to be honesty in a document.</p> <p>James replied that we have better mapping now and assumed they are all the correct sizes. James will investigate this further.</p>	<p>JM</p>

ITEM	DETAIL	ACTION
5.	<p><b>Royal Horticultural Society visit 13<sup>th</sup>-15<sup>th</sup> June 2025</b></p> <p>James explained the RHS visited and went through a short presentation on what the RHS are planning on their visit to Sheffield.</p> <p>Individual societies were asked to submit a proposal if they would like to take part by contacting <a href="mailto:helenburden@rhs.org.uk">helenburden@rhs.org.uk</a> or 07968 337179</p> <p><b>AOB</b></p> <p>i. Time and date of next meeting, May, day to be confirmed.</p> <p>James asked what people's overall thoughts were about the rulebook and its consultation this evening, he believes it's a step forward, it doesn't fit all but it will be available online so will be transparent and fits well for helping with challenging tenants.</p> <p>Michael Booth agreed it was a step forward, Anne Adams agreed it increased transparency. James commented that it would help manage the estate, and having online self-help would hopefully free up officer time so more time could be spent on site. Everyone agreed that the new rules and policy was generally a positive step forward.</p>	
6.		