

Lewes
Town
Council

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To: Councillors Bird, Burrows, Catlin, Clarke, Lamb, Makepeace, Maples and Sains

A meeting of the Allotments Working Party in the Yarrow Room, Town Hall, Lewes, on Thursday 30, June, 2022, at 11:00am, which you are summoned to attend.

Laura Chrysostomou
Town Clerk
22 June 2022

Agenda

1 Election of Chair

To elect a Chair for for the municipal year 2022 to 2023

2 Apologies for absence

3 Members' declarations of interests

To note any declarations of personal or prejudicial interest in items to be considered at this meeting.

4 Minutes

To agree minutes of the meeting held on 15th February 2022 (Attached on pages 2-4)

5 Allotment Show

To review the annual allotment show

How to contact us

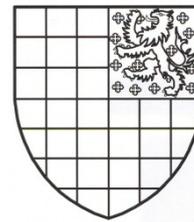
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**LEWES
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COUNCIL**

Minutes of a Meeting of the Allotments Working Party held in the Council Chamber, Town Hall, Lewes on Tuesday 15th February 2022 at 10.00am

Present: Cllrs M Bird (from 10.40), R Burrows (Chair), S Catlin, I Makepeace, Dr W Maples and S Sains

In attendance: Town Clerk, Town Ranger and Customer Services Officer

1. **Apologies:** were received from Cllr Lamb who had an emergency at home.
2. **Member's Declarations of Interest:** Cllr Dr Maples declared an interest in that she is a Council allotment tenant and Cllr Bird in that he potentially may provide assistance on an allotment plot.
3. **Minutes:** The Minutes of the meeting held on 27th January 2022 agreed as an accurate record subject to paragraph 6.4 being amended to read as follows:

The ban had raised confusion, with conflicting advice and concern with some tenants regarding the use of slug pellets.

4. **Chair's announcements:** The Chair welcomed everyone present to the meeting and fed back from his informative tour of the Allotments with the Town Ranger.
5. **Policy Review:**
 - 5.1 Members had before them the revised Tenancy Agreement that had been reviewed at the previous meeting held on 27th January 2022. The Town Clerk informed Members that revisions included items discussed at the last meeting of the Working Party, ideas that had been put forward by allotment tenants at the recent allotment symposium and from reviewing good practice elsewhere. The revisions were highlighted in yellow in the Policy document.
 - 5.2 **Introduction** – Members agreed minor amendments to the wording.
 - 5.3 **Allotment Tenancy – Assignment of allotments 2.1 – 2.13** – Amendments were made in various paragraphs to improve the wording with a sentence included in section 2.7 regarding email in that it was the Council's preferred method of communication. Paragraph 2.9 was removed as this was similar to other paragraphs in the document. In paragraph 2.12 wording specifying a time limit (no more than two years) for named help/assistance to the tenant was included. An extra paragraph (2.13) was included informing tenants that the Council would be prepared to reduce the size of their plot if it became un-manageable to enable the Council to release lane to waiting applicants. There then followed a discussion regarding the implementation of a 'Buddy' system and whether Members felt the issue of co-workers had been covered in the Policy as it stands (2.12) or whether the introduction of a Buddy scheme should be implemented.
 - 5.4 **Allotment Rental** – Currently the rental year runs from 1st April to 31st March each year. The Working Party considered whether renewals could be either in January or October. The CSO and Ranger reported that several tenants had requested that the rental year run from September/October to enable new tenants to prepare their plot for the next growing system. The TC reported strong agreement at the Allotment Symposium that it

should change.

- 5.5 Breaches and Sanctions** – Paragraph 5.2 included a sentence enabling the Council to recover any costs outstanding for the lot or for damages related to it should a breach of tenancy occur and in paragraph 5.3 wording was added to the last sentence relating to the notice period for terminating a plot.
- 5.6 Termination of Tenancy and Notice** – In Paragraph 6.2 the percentages were increased in relation to cultivation of the plot, from 40% to 50%, but still allowed for allotment plots to be developed over time as per national guidance. Paragraph 6.4 remained the same in relation to the tenant's surviving spouse or partner continuing with the tenancy, as opposed to extending that to a wider range of relatives, in a similar approach to inheritance law. Paragraph 6.5 was removed as similar to another section of the Policy.
- 5.7 Nuisance, bonfire and other restrictions** – Paragraph 7.4 wording was added in relation to dogs and that they should be kept restrained on a lead to avoid causing a nuisance on other plots or on the site as has been the case. Wording was removed from paragraph 7.11 regarding occasional helpers. Paragraph 7.13 and 7.15 were removed and a paragraph added in relation to composting and vermin.
- 5.8 Use of pesticides, herbicides, vermicides and fertilizers** – There was a detailed discussion regarding paragraph 8.4 regarding the use of slug pellets on allotment plots. When adopting the Policy in March 2021 the Council had banned the use of pesticides. The meeting discussed alternative solutions in relation to slug pellets, considered feedback received from Tenants and amended the policy accordingly, encouraging non-chemical alternatives for slug control but permitting slug pellets endorsed by the Organic Farmers and Growers Association.
- 5.9 Water-use** – Paragraph 9.4 was amended to use the word prohibited instead of discouraged in relation to sprinklers and sprays.
- 5.10 Bees & bee-keeping** – This section was made more succinct and directing tenants to the Council website for more information.
- 5.11 Ponds** – This whole section was removed with guidance to be placed on the Council website and a new bullet point regarding ponds and bog gardens in the section dealing with structures.
- 5.12 Structures** – Paragraphs 13.3, 13-8, 13-13 were removed and in 13.16 bullet point 3 'red pallets' was included.
- 5.13 Trees and invasive plants** – This section was new following queries from Tenants, with a paragraph included requesting that tenants seek advice from the Council before planting trees on their plot.
- 5.14 Plastics** – Paragraph 15.2, bullet point 2 plain cardboard was added as an alternative for weed-suppressing.

6. Allotment Symposium

- 6.1** The Town Clerk reported that the Symposium had been well received by allotment tenants summarising key discussion points and suggestions.
- 6.2** Tenants were keen for an annual meeting or allotment working groups as well as introducing a volunteer role: Allotment Site Representatives. An annual meeting could be held at the Allotment Show with 'Ask the Expert' stands, linking in with the idea of listing 'skill sharing' possibly through the Allotment Site Representative.
- 6.3** Attendees agreed that development of the website to contain useful information would be good, such as 'skill sharing lists'.
- 6.4** Tenants were encouraged to form their own 'associations' at each site to support communication, and possibly create 'Buying Co-Operatives' to buy items in bulk to obtain discounts. The idea of WhatsApp groups amongst Tenants was suggested to aid communication between them.
- 6.5** The idea of re-purposing derelict plots was suggested, which could house communal composting, compost toilets. The Working Party raised this would reduce the number of plots available for the waiting lists. The suggestions would be considered by the Allotment Working Party next year.
- 6.6** It was asked if the Allotment Show rules could be reviewed as they can be archaic. The

Working Party discussed some ideas and agreed to review it ahead of the 2022 Allotment Show.

6.7 Fees were raised by some Tenants who wished to them increase, but it was also stated that would be difficult for those on a low income.

6.8 The use of slug pellets was discussed and alternatives such as copper rings, 'sacrificial planting' and planting rhubarb were discussed.

6.9 **Allotment Site Representative**

Members considered a draft role description for an Allotment Site Representative. A decision would need to be made as to how many representatives would be needed for each site as sites varied in size. The expert speaker at the Symposium advised the Town Council to introduce a basic role with simple nominations and develop the scheme over time.

7. **Rubbish Clearance:**

Members were asked to consider the current provision of rubbish clearance at the allotment sites. Currently, Landport had their rubbish cleared twice a year, the other sites did not receive this service but had received ad hoc skips for rubbish clearance. It was noted that not all sites can accommodate this kind of clearance.

8. **Allotment Rents 2022 to 2023 and renewal period:**

8.1 Having declared an interest Councillor Maples left the meeting. Currently the cost per rod (25sqm) was £4.50. It was suggested that where sites had water, tenants be issued a separate invoice for water use. However, not all the sites had a water supply. A comparison of charges was reviewed, showing the rent at Lewes Town Council to be lower than other comparators. It was suggested that the increase could be phased with the changes to the allotment year.

8.2 This item had been discussed in item 5.4.

9. It was **resolved** that:

- 1) The revised wording in paragraph 2.12 addressed the matter of assistance on plots and the implementation of a Buddy scheme be reviewed in January 2023 by the Working Party.
- 2) Allotment tenants be encouraged to use non-chemical alternative slug control. Council would only permit pellets endorsed by the Organic Farmers and Growers Association. The exact wording for this paragraph was delegated to the Town Clerk in consultation with the Chair for recommendation to Council.
- 3) Recommend to Council that allotment renewals commence in October in any year subject to consultation with allotment tenants. This item be delegated to the Town Clerk to investigate any implications this would have regarding the financial year.
- 4) The introduction of volunteer roles on allotment sites be recommended to Council.
- 5) That the Landport allotment site receive one more rubbish clearance in July 2022, after that, tenants would be required to remove their own rubbish.
- 6) The Allotment Site Reps could put tenants in touch with other tenants who may be able to help them remove rubbish from their plot if they don't have a car.
- 7) Recommend to Council that rent be increased from £4.50 per rod to £5.50 from 1st April 2022 until October 2023 when the cost per rod would increase to £7.00.

The meeting ended at 13:00

Signed:

Date: