

ALLOTMENT INTEREST GROUP SPOKESPERSON QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS 19th JUNE 2019

Statement	Answer	Action
Will allotment holders receive a sub standard shed to the requested ones as there has been no communication on this.	The shed was ordered to the exact specification of the recommendation of the Allotment Interest Group. An email was sent to Sue Woodcock on 29th May to confirm.	Shed is being installed on 4th July.
Not happy with the tone of the inspection letters	The current letters were decided upon by the Planning, Highways & Environment Committee on 04/07/2018	
Term 'Cultivation' the PC is unaware of this meaning	The term 'cultivation' is defined in the Allotment Rules 9.5 as crops growing, preparation for crop growing or being rested as part of crop rotation. Keep the plots free of weeds and grasses before any seed heads form, and any area which has long standing weeds or grasses will be deemed as an area of non-cultivation	
	Plots that received letters failed to meet the criteria in point 5.3 of the Tenancy Agreement which states The tenant shall have at least 25% of the Allotment cultivation of crops after 3 months and at least 75% of the Allotment under cultivation of crops after 12 months and thereafter.	Officers have put forward recommendations to the council to clarify the terms of the allotment tenancy agreement due to the inconsistency of the wording with the allotment rules. This was not considered at the meeting on 12th June due to the meeting becoming inquorate. This will be considered at the next meeting.
The percentage of hard standing has been highlighted yet according to our contract the shed footprint is not included in that calculation.	The shed is not included in the footprint. 75% cultivated, 20% hardstanding which leaves 5% for a shed/greenhouse/storage container.	
Common sense regarding the percentage would have been more useful rather than sending a young man (who clearly had problems with estimating a mathematical percentage or understanding anything to do with growing) to do the job	The council's staff are trained and experienced to carry out a visual inspection on the allotment plots to estimate the percentages. It is the council's policy to estimate. Officers at KHPC have 20 years combined allotment management experience.	It is for the council to decide if estimation or an exact measurement is required. This can be considered at the next meeting, it was not possible to consider at the Amenities Committee due to the meeting being inquorate.
Cold frames form an integral part of cultivation on allotment plots, these were not included in the inspection even though it was blindingly obvious they are bursting with plants and seed tray.	Cold frames require written permission from the Amenities Committee. The Council has only granted written permission for two plots on the site. It is not always possible to see what is in a cold frame and an estimation is made at the time of inspection.	Plottolders that do not have written permission for the cold frames will need to make a formal request. The Council are asked to consider if cold frames shall be automatically included as 'cultivation' if it is not clear whether crops are present. This was due to be considered at the meeting on June 12th but could not be decided upon due to the meeting becoming inquorate. This will be considered at the next meeting.
Verbal agreements are in place for all raised beds. This was granted in 2015.	The Tenancy Agreement point 8.1 states that the Tenant shall not without the written consent of the Council erect any building or structure such as sheds, greenhouses, large fruit cages, raised beds etc on the allotment plot.	The council is bringing this issue to the attention of allotment holders that do not have written consent of the council in order to ensure that this is regularised.
Communication with plot holders - as they did not know about the allotments being under a different committee.	A committee structure change took place in May however this has no impact on the allotment policies or procedures of the council. The council reserves the right to change its internal protocols at any time and allotment holders are reminded to check the agendas and minutes on the council website to keep up to date with council business.	The allotment website page will be updated with the agreement terms, rules and any other information that allotment holders may find useful about the council to ensure that allotments holders can find information more easily.

<p>Allotments are a 'poor relation' to the Sports Park. Lack of regular path cutting. 'Gardener' didn't know about path mowing.</p>	<p>The Council have been considering the policies and procedures of the allotment holders mowing the paths at the PHE Committee. In May 2018 due to the required work for Sports Park pitch renovations the Committee decided to allocate path mowing to a facility assistant therefore the Senior Groundsman ('Gardener') was no longer responsible for the mowing. In July 2018 the PHE Committee resolved for the allotment paths to be cut by the Sports Park staff once a month. A variety of facility staff have carried out cuts and strimming depending on weather and shift patterns.</p>	
<p>Information relating to the use of the allotment car park is that this is being used as the overspill to the Sports Park, when there is an event at the Sports Park the car park is closed to allotment holders.</p>	<p>The allotment car park is the 'overspill' car park for the Sports Park. Allotment holders are allocated 14 spaces within the Sports Park lease but when there is an event at the Sports Park spaces are coned off for the reserved use of allotment holders, this was agreed in May 2018 by the PHE Committee.</p>	<p>Signs are being quoted for to place within the car park to inform users that they are reserved for allotment holders. This will be considered by the Amenities Committee at the next meeting. The signs will make it clear to Sports Park users that some spaces are reserved for allotment holders.</p>
<p>A plot holder is concerned about the growing trees surrounding the allotment perimeter. The plot holder was told that they were 'Liberty's trees'.</p>	<p>The trees around the perimeter are the responsibility of KHPC within the Sports Park lease.</p>	<p>Quotes are being obtained to cut back these trees however due to the Hedgerows Regulations 1997 this will not be carried out until the nesting season is over. This will be considered at the next Amenities Committee. The shrubbery and other areas that are able to be tidied are being dealt with.</p>
<p>The rocky road between the allotment car park and allotment site does not conform to disability access.</p>	<p>In the past there has been an item on the PHE agenda regarding a footpath from the allotment car park to the allotment site. In July 2018 the PHE Committee decided not to progress with this.</p>	<p>Another recommendation for the allotment footpath is being put forward by officers for the Amenities Committee to consider at the next meeting</p>
<p>If the PC had discussed issues with the interest group before acting in this aggressive manner then this unfortunate state would not have occurred.</p>	<p>The Clerk and Deputy Clerk attended the Allotment Interest Group meeting on 25th April at the Spitfire pub at 8pm to explain what was taking place following the decisions of the committee.</p>	
<p>Some allotment holders are thinking that there is an alternative reason for the parish council behaviour - more football pitches or tennis courts.</p>	<p>The land is leased from Rouse Kent Residential to KHPC to be used as allotments until 2139. The parish council have never discussed using the allotment land for any other purpose. The parish council have a statutory duty to provide allotments.</p>	
<p>The most important issue here is finding a way forward to rewrite a more workable tenancy agreement.</p>	<p>Officers agree and had put forward recommendations for the re-wording of the tenancy agreement however these decisions could not be made due to the Amenities Committee being inquorate.</p>	<p>These recommendations are being considered at the next meeting.</p>
<p>Posting large notices on gates merely added fuel to the fire of relationships with the parish council and allotment holders -why is the allotment noticeboard not being used.</p>	<p>Polite notices were produced in A3 and were put on the vehicle entrance and pedestrian entrance to ensure that all users of the allotments had the best opportunity to observe them. These notices were removed by allotment holders twice.</p>	
<p>May I suggest that all letters from the recent inspection be cancelled and a fresh inspection take place at the end of June.</p>	<p>The council is bound to follow the existing approved tenancy agreement until the committee agrees otherwise. There was an opportunity for the committee to do this on 12th June however due to the meeting being inquorate the decision was not able to be taken.</p>	
<p>More than one plot holder should attend inspections so they are able to highlight poor plot management quickly. The parish council would not need to know very much about growing but could rely on the knowledge of plot holders.</p>	<p>Plot holders were invited to attend the latest inspection and one plot holder responded to this invitation. Sue Woodcock offered to attend if there were no volunteers. The plot holder attended three quarters of the inspection for several hours and gave his opinion on allotment holders. He advised that he could not stay until the end due to other commitments. The council can only enforce the regulations as detailed in the allotment tenancy agreement, this cannot be a subjective process.</p>	