

MINUTES OF A SPECIAL MEETING OF THE COMMUNITY SERVICES COMMITTEE HELD ON WEDNESDAY, 15 OCTOBER 2008 AT 7.30PM IN THE CASTLE, HERTFORD

PRESENT: Councillor N Wilson, in the Chair.

Councillors J F Cook, Miss K P Darby, Mrs H P Durbin, J C Hedley,
Mrs B S Haddock, Mrs B M Wrangles

IN ATTENDANCE: Ms N L Villa, Town Clerk
Miss M Challis, Assistant to the Town Clerk
Mr S Davies, Responsible Finance Officer

**Mr and Mrs Wilkerson - North Road Plotolders Group
Ms Vic Hobson - Mudlarks**

151. **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE** were received from Councillors Mrs H P Durbin (prior engagement), D R Poole (Royal British Legion commitment), and Mrs S M Newton (prior engagement).

152. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Councillor Miss K P Darby declared a personal interest in agenda item 6 as she has visited the Mudlarks' allotments in her role as Mayor.

Councillors J F Cook and Mrs B M Wrangles declared a personal interest in agenda item 6 as they are allotment holders at North Road and Cromwell Road allotment sites respectively.

Councillor N Wilson declared a personal interest in agenda item 6 and 7 as a member of the Allotments working group.

153. **THE MINUTES**

It was **RESOLVED** that:

The second draft of the minutes of the meeting held on 1 September 2008 were approved as a correct record and the Chairman authorised to sign the same.

154. **MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES NOT DEALT WITH ELSEWHERE ON THE AGENDA**

It was **RESOLVED** that:

The Action Sheet be received and noted.

Matters arising

(a) The Town Clerk is awaiting prices for the 5mph signage to be placed on the Cromwell Road site.

- (b) The Town Clerk confirmed that holders of uncultivated plots are being asked to quit before their renewal date.
- (c) The Town Clerk is to find out if there are any restrictions for “lawn allotments”
- (d) It was agreed that future invoices should have clear notification of the due payment date but that the invoices went out early in order to allow plot holders to surrender their plots and new tenants found in time for a full invoicing year.
- (e) Garden Barber is to be replaced as the contractor for Holy Trinity/St. Leonard’s garden as they are failing to keep the garden to an appropriate standard whilst sourcing local labour.
- (f) Any outstanding issues with the quality of work at the War Memorial are not related to the work initially commissioned by Hertford Town Council and the work has now been approved by Cllr Poole
- (g) The condition of the grills covering lighting units around the memorial needs to be addressed. This will be considered in the next financial year.

155. QUESTIONS AND/OR STATEMENTS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

Having given appropriate notice in accordance with Standing Order 1.8 of the Councils Constitution, the following members of the public addressed the Committee:

Ms Vic Hobson from Mudlarks:

The Committee was updated about Mudlark’s work. They now employ two members of staff, and it is expected that they will have 30 trainees by the end of their 1st year, 60 by the end of next year.

Mudlarks had originally requested 6 extra allotment plots, however due to the high demand for allotments for residents, Mrs Hobson supports the compromise of just 4 extra plots for the project.

Mr Brian Wilkerson from North Road Plotholders group:

These proposals offer part of the solution to the problem of an ever increasing demand for allotments. It is important that whilst deciding on these issues they are not dealt with in isolation or ignorance of the wider picture.

The statistics on which they are based need explanation. For example the twenty people on the North Road waiting list is included in the demand, but no one has checked if these people are already counted on other lists. I still have people telling me they are on lists for more than one town council site. I have let 5 plots this weekend; how many of them were to people on the Town list?

Allotments should be considered in terms of 5 pole plots.

The map of Crawleys Field is confusing; an aerial photograph shows a complete undivided field.

Throughout the town there is an average density of plots per acre on all sites. Where does the Crawleys Field estimate come from because based on the rest of the town 26.23 x 5 pole plots is achieved per acre? On this basis 80 x 5 pole plots could be accommodated on Crawleys field at a rental of £1080.

The decision is then to re-let at a realistic rent, sell and seek land elsewhere in the town or reinstate as allotments. That is if anyone wants them. How many on the waiting list live within walking distance of West Street? This is the main reason stated for people not wanting different sites in the past.

The greatest demand is from Bengoe residents, 50% of our waiting list also have Bengoe addresses. The reality is that it would need half of the existing Bengoe site tenants to give up to clear the demand for that site. The same is true of The Folly.

Re-opening Crawleys Field is a good option but the Council should consider selling it and seeking allotment land in the Bengoe area. This would reduce pressure on Bengoe, The Folly and North Road.

When did the Council last have contact with the tenant? I read Mr Burdett-Coutts died some time ago and unless I am mistaken as to the member of the family, surely the tenancy should have ended with the death of the tenant.

The other land available is at Cromwell road, and the Mudlarks have been allocated some allotments for their admirable scheme. As tenants of the Council they should be treated the same as others when seeking extra land.

When dealing with applications from current plotters for additional plots, I as custodian of 20% of the allotments in Hertford have to consider; priority for Hertford residents on the waiting list and whether the applicant has cultivated their existing plot to a satisfactory standard.

Before approving the additional Mudlarks land this Committee should be satisfied that the current land is being cultivated and used for allotment purposes and those on the waiting list justly treated.

What the Mudlarks are seeking is an area almost the size of your Folly site to provide facilities for 15 trainees (according to their website) who may be or may not be Hertford residents.

At a meeting of this committee earlier this year a Councillor suggested that the Council contacted me to see how we managed to deal effectively with the waiting list but nothing happened. There are many

issues involved in dealing with the waiting list problem and I ask that the North Road Plotolders Group representatives be fully involved in taking this issue forward. Three minutes here cannot do more than provide some assistance in your decision making on these specific proposals.

156. CROMWELL ROAD ALLOTMENTS

The Committee received a report regarding the allocation of land on the Ware end of the Cromwell Rd site.

Cllr B Wrangles suggested that the entire area be rotivated and excess soil moved around the site as required, making allocated plots easier cultivation.

After a short discussion concerning the allocation of land it was **RESOLVED** that:

The Committee approve the allocation of allotments 127 – 130 (inclusive) to the Mudlarks project.

Plots 131 – 136 will be divided into 5 pole plots due to meet current excessive demand as soon as possible

157. CRAWLEYS FIELD

The Committee received a report on the area of land known as Crawley's Field and considered a recommendation that the site re opened and used for allotment purposes.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

The Council should serve notice on the current tenant at Crawleys Field, in order to reinstate allotment plots.