



**NORTHCHURCH PARISH COUNCIL**

Clerk to the Council: Usha Kilich

PO Box 2603

Kings Langley

WD4 4EJ

Tel.07543493002

email: [clerk@northchurchparishcouncil.gov.uk](mailto:clerk@northchurchparishcouncil.gov.uk)

[www.northchurchparishcouncil.gov.uk](http://www.northchurchparishcouncil.gov.uk)

**Minutes of the Allotment Committee Meeting Thursday 15 September 2022  
commencing at 6 PM, at Sunnyside Rural Trust New Road Northchurch HP4 1NJ**

**Members Present**

Cllr Godfrey Chairman, Cllr Neil Pocock, and Cllr Susan Rees.

Lower Site Representative Eileen Shovelton

Upper Site Representative Paul Coleman

Sunnyside Rural Trust Rep Matt Felix

Proper Officer Usha Kilich

**MINUTES of the Allotment meeting of the Northchurch Parish Council held on  
Thursday 9<sup>th</sup> September 2021 at 6 pm Sunnyside Rural Trust Northchurch HP4 1NJ**

**AC/01/22 Apologies for absence**

Absence of apologies received from Daniele Fornelli.

**AC/02/22 Declaration of Interest**

There was no Declaration of Interest to report.

**AC/03/22 To approve the Minutes from 9<sup>th</sup> September 2021**

**RESOLVED**, proposed by Cllr Godfrey, seconded by Cllr Pocock.  
Unanimously agreed.

## **AC/04/22 Report from Upper Site Representative Paul Coleman**

### **Deer ingress**

The rear double fence on the NE side (away from the railway) is in very poor condition. In the last few weeks, there have been major incursions by deer who have seriously damaged a lot of crops. Gordon Godfrey inspected it with Ken Woodward and me and agreed that repairs are needed. In my view there needs to be a major clearance of vegetation and overhanging shrubs and climbers on the line of the fences, new rot-proof fence posts need to be installed and the existing wire fencing re-installed to the correct height. New wire fencing will not be needed.

When the work has been done, plot holders on the rear fence [66 to 87] will need to be reminded at frequent intervals to keep the fence in good condition.

### **Maintenance work**

Ken Woodward continues to do excellent work keeping the public areas of the allotments in good condition.

### **Plots under cultivation**

There is a small minority of plot holders who do very little on their plots. They visit when asked but then stay away for extended periods. Unfortunately, we do not know anything about the waiting list so it is impossible to judge how much pressure to put on these people. 10 years ago, the waiting list was managed by the NAA and worked well.

### **The main gate**

The main gate is very narrow for trucks visiting Sunnyside and the wooden posts have been damaged. Gordon Godfrey and Ken Woodward joined me to inspect it and proposals are awaited from NPC.

### **The minor gate**

The minor gate (100 metres NE of the main gate) is to be locked to improve security.

### **Communication with plot holders**

Communication with plot holders has been made considerably more difficult since NPC decided not to pass information to NAA about new plot holders. It is unclear why undertakings made by NAA to NPC in 2017 have become unsatisfactory. The NAA is seeking the assistance of the National Allotments Society to resolve this matter. Further NPC/NAA dialogue is needed. The Clerk explained that NPC is following the GDPR Policy, this was communicated to NAA via the Chair of NPC in email exchanges. Mr Coleman requested a copy of the GDPR, this will be emailed to NAA.

### **Overnight stays**

There have been some instances of overnight camping which caused distress amongst some plot holders. When this was reported to NPC, their reaction was to consider asking the police to check the site, and to change the lock combination. NAA thinks these are inappropriate responses. The person

concerned is likely to stop doing it if appropriate counselling is given to him by trained professionals.

Mr Coleman suggested that NPC refer the concerned person to Social Services. The Clerk informed members this was not the responsibility of the Council to intervene, this was supported by Council members. Matt Felix volunteered to speak to the concerned person to see if this would have any effect. The Clerk asked why the code to the gate had not been changed as per Mr. Colman's email to say this was going to be carried out.

Councillor Godfrey: Proposed an annual combination lock number change on the upper New Road Site, to boost security, the number being communicated to all tenants upon receipt of the annual rent demand.

One of the items discussed was the NAA subscription fee. We would ask to increase this to £5.

The other items are listed below:

1) With regard to limiting access to people who at times decide to camp/spend the night at the NAA site, we acknowledge this should be generally discouraged. However, the NAA Committee is not comfortable changing the combination of the lock as a result. The specific case that has recently been brought to your attention likely involves a vulnerable person, so we do feel it could be more appropriate to submit the case to the appropriate people within the NPC or Dacorum. I am more than happy to do that if you can share the right contacts. Moreover, changing the combination would be problematic as the new combination should be communicated to all allotters and to Sunnyside Nursery as well.

2) We have difficulties reaching out to all allotters as we do not have access to their contacts (email, phone numbers). We understand it is not possible to share these with us due to data protection regulations, however, maybe you can ask whoever hasn't done so if they would be interested in sharing their contacts with the NAA. For instance, we are preparing a "welcome letter" for all allotters which could be sent by you to all on the NAA's behalf, with the request for sharing data.

3) During the summer (August 2022), John HOUSTON BOB FARRAR and PAUL WEST began emergency work on the Lower Site gate (canal-side).

John has provided some materials (cost in email, Aug) but more is required to complete securely.

Bob Farrar has estimated a total of about £500 to complete and secure.

John's email also requested 'support' for lifting/maneuvering of materials into place.

Acknowledgment of any reimbursement and support for construction from NPC would be appreciated.

4) The deer infestation during the summer showed that very likely there is a need to secure the Sites. We would welcome a joint survey of the Sites in order to define the problem and discuss solutions.

## AC/05/22 Report from Lower Site Representative Eileen Shovelton

This year at the AGM of the NAA, the 'Chair' resigned, and a new 'Chair', Daniele, was elected to the Northchurch Allotment Association. His letter of Introduction (to the Northchurch Parish Council) will have included some of the points listed here.

- 1) Most plots on the Lower Site continue to be maintained to a very good standard and when plot holders have been unable to visit, **Paul West** has been able to support them.  
The NAA thanks him very much for his vigilance and willingness to help new plot holders and the Primary School group, whilst trimming the pathways with his own (donated) equipment, so the site is always very presentable and attractive.
- 2) The perimeter on the northwest of the site is now safer from branches falling directly onto plots (and neighbouring gardens) since Northchurch Parish Council engaged with 'Tree Monkey' to remove trees in spring. This is appreciated by Northchurch Allotment Association, for plot holder safety and more natural light available for cultivation now on allotments.
- 3) The Lower Site wooden **gate by the canal** has not been 'sound' following 'wear and tear' for several years. The gate post that it hangs off has been struck numerous times as manure is delivered and a section near the ground on the free end has rotted away. The ground there is also a slight rake, thus, the gate must be lifted as it is pulled in to be closed, then secured with a lock. It is awkward to manipulate whilst walking backward uphill, and less strong plot holders struggle with it.

Some remedial work has been attempted by John Houston Bob Farrar and Paul West only to find that there needed to be a 'full repair' with new posts, gate, latch, catch and hinges, etc (after the manure delivery, Oct 2022)

- Costings for materials have been made by John and Bob in consultation with Mannings of Chesham – (about £500 materials...)
- Due to the size and weight of posts & gates, the transportation and siting/positioning would be beyond what could be managed by them.
- They would be happy to help with installation (if they are available at the time).

*~NAA would appreciate knowing if NPC would be willing to fund materials, transportation, and positioning.*

*~Would it also be time to replace the small gate on New Road which is beginning to need repairs?*

- 4) Northchurch Allotment Association was asked by Northchurch Parish Council not to communicate by letter to plot holders due to **Data legislation**. The Clerk explained this is the role of the Clerk of the Council.

In July, new plot holder information would not be sent to the NAA chair anymore, resulting in

- Lack of initial 'welcome' and ongoing guidance about the Association and the site.
- Isolation from a possible group 'support' for plot maintenance, when/if needed.
- Isolation from a network of knowledgeable & experienced plot holders
- No regular news share via the Association's Newsletter (email/post/by hand)
- No communication is possible if something awry/damaged on their plot
- No inquiry of concern if known to be in poor health

A 'WhatsApp group would be a communication tool, but the age demographic of plot holders now is not inclined to use this.

*~I would be grateful to know what Northchurch Parish Council can do for us, to alleviate these communication difficulties.*

*~When I can see that the Regulations are blatantly not being kept by a new plot holder, even after being asked by an 'experienced' plot holder, what would NPC expect me to do when it's 'urgent'?*

The Clerk welcomed the idea of sending information to allotment holders to get in touch with NAA should they wish to be added to the What's App group.

Other News.....

- 5) The Potato competition was won by Frances Rumble, plot 22 (weight 18.5 lbs)

As always a great 'show' under John Houston's talented organisation.

- 6) Children's competition April winner - 6yr old Antanas Gaitiunas (plot 80)

- 7) Northchurch displays in public areas – Thank you to Jean & Bob Farrar (plot14) who continue to provide aesthetic floral displays in public areas, consistently attractive, in the Northchurch community. They have written a short piece for the National Allotment Society's magazine, which we shall be delighted to read when published.

- 8) Sunnyside Rural Trust – in consultation with Matt, events have been promoted in the NAA Newsletters

- 9) St. Mary's School plot has been cultivated successfully this year; a photo appeared in the NAA Newsletter, in July. We all hope to continue the fruitful link with the head teacher and children.

**AC/06/22 Report from Councillor Godfrey** Cllr Godfrey reported on the following;

The Lower Site has two issues, both referring to very old gates and posts:

Bob Farrer has kindly obtained a costing from Manning's of Chesham for replacement.

(1) The canal gate needs replacement as does its supporting gate post.

1 Off 8/10 inch pressure treated post. (size to be confirmed, as is if this is VAT inc). @ £140.00.

1 off 10 ft 5 bar Sommerfield gate.(Need to confirm if this is a VAT Inc). @£290.00.

4 off bags of postcrete.(Estimated @ £20.00).

Possible, new top and bottom hinges for above. (Dependant on wear, only visible on removal, Estimated @ £40.00).

(2) The New Road pedestrian gate.

Garway Gate 1.22m wide x 1.01m High Treated Green. (£161.15 + VAT).

Possible, new top and bottom hinges for above. (Dependant on wear, only visible on removal, Estimated @ £30.00).

A mini digger would be needed to lift the post into position. I don't have a cost for this at present.

**AC/07/22 Number of Vacant Plots on both Sites**

The Clerk reported that there are no vacant plots, however, there are seven members on the waiting list.

**AC/08/22 Review of Rent Charges**

Cllr Godfrey proposed £1 for half plot and full plot £2. To keep the out of parish charges the same. It was also requested that the NAA would charge £5 which will be collected by Northchurch Parish Council, the charges to be implemented as of October 2022, seconded by Cllr Pocock. Unanimously agreed.

**Allotment Charges: October 2022**

	Type of Plot	Basic Rent	Out-of-Parish	NAA Sub	Total
In Parish	Half Plot	£20.00	0	5	£25.00
	Full Plot*	£32.00	0	5	£37.00
	1 ½ Plot*	£41.00	0	5	£46.00
	2 Plots	£49.00	0	5	£54.00
Out- of - Parish	Half Plot	£20.00	£3.00	5	£28.00
	Full Plot*	£32.00	£6.00	5	£43.00
	1 ½ Plot	£41.00	£9.00	5	£55.00
	2 Plots	£49.00	£12.00	5	£66.00

**AC/09/22 Upper Site Sunnyside Report Matt Felix**

Matt Felix reported that Sunnyside Rural Trust is increasingly busy, if there are any issues, he asked allotment representatives to bring them to his attention. The comment was well received by the representatives.

**The meeting concluded at 18.39**