

## **Minutes of Allotment Committee Meeting held in The United Reformed Church Rusthall on 18<sup>th</sup> March 2014 at 7:30pm**

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MEMBERS PRESENT: Cllr Benoy (Chairman) Cllr Mrs Codd and Cllr Edwards

OFFICER PRESENT: Mrs S Denne – Clerk

MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC PRESENT: Yes

1. **Apologies for Absence** – Cllr Lawrence
2. **Declarations of Interest** - Cllr Benoy has an allotment plot
3. Minutes of the Allotment Meeting held on the 17<sup>th</sup> December 2013 were agreed.
4. **Speaker:** Phil Bannister, a volunteer for Folly Wildlife Rescue, West Kent Badger Group, Sussex Badger Trust and South Downs Badger Group, gave some background information on badgers before informing the meeting on how to deter badgers from the allotments. A badger can grow up to a metre long and weigh 13kg. They can live in the same area for centuries. They have bad eyesight and hearing but a keen smell, so they follow the same path each night. Their food of choice are earth worms, they can eat up to 200 a night. However, if this food source is in low supply, they will eat beetles, rats, mice as well as fruit and vegetables. Badgers are protected, under the 1992 Badgers Act. There are no chemical deterrents available. The most effective deterrent is a high fence that needs to be sunk into the ground by at least 10 inches. Electric fences are also useful; however both of these are very costly. Short term solutions are water sprays, ultrasonic devices, sudden flash of light, (toy windmills, bottles of water, cd's and streamers) urine and garlic powder.  
He finished his talk by kindly offering his time to visit anyone in an emergency, with regards to badgers and other wild life.
5. **Speaker:** Peter Hutton, a bee keeper for many years and member of the Sevenoaks and Tunbridge Wells branch of bee keeping. He gave a very informative talk about how to become a bee keeper, what equipment was necessary to purchase and the different types of bees someone could keep. He also went on to discuss the various diseases that attacked bees and how to eradicate them. He then informed the meeting on the best way to keep bees on an allotment site. He suggested that anyone who would like to keep bees should be qualified and suitably insured. A fence of at least 6ft to be erected around the bee hives. Two colonies on a small garden site and four to six colonies on a larger garden site. He suggested four colonies on an allotment. Also the type of bee to be housed should preferably be one that does not sting.
6.
  - i. The Allotment Committee agreed to order skips for the last weekend in May. This was to help the tenants clear up after the storms. It was stressed that no wood, vegetation or metal was to be put in the skips. Wood is to be burnt, vegetation put on compost heap or burnt and metal to be put in a designated area for collection.
  - ii. Fencing had been mended and 14 posts replaced along the Primrose boundary of the Southwood Road site. The contractor may be able to offer the Allotment Committee some second hand chain link fencing, at a reasonable price and also some wooden stakes. The fencing would be used to repair the Wickham Gardens boundary. Any surplus could be sold to the tenants.
  - iii. The contractor who was to make and install the noticeboards is now no longer able to do so. Committee is to look into obtaining another contractor. Cllr Benoy has started to remove the TWBC signage from the three sites and these will be replaced with signs giving the Clerk's details.

## **7. Clerk's Report –**

- i. All rents for 2013/2014 have been received, £3140.55
- ii. There are 2 sites available on Southwood Road, 1 on the extension and 6/7 sites on the Wickham Gardens site. However, the Clerk felt that at least 2 sites at Wickham Gardens could not be rented out as in bad positions.
- iii. The Clerk reported that after sending out an email/ letter to all tenants on the Wickham Garden site complaining about a gate being left unlocked all day and dogs being allowed off their leads and being allowed to foul; the problems had ceased to exist.
- iv. Cllr Benoy and the Clerk carried out inspections on the Southwood Road and extension. Wickham Gardens will be done shortly and then all sites re-visited in May.

## **8. Open session for questions from the public –**

- a) Tenants from Southwood Road asked if they could also have a skip. *Clerk to look into costing.*
- b) Tenants requested reassurance that plot holders that do not look after their plots will be informed and any necessary action taken. *The Clerk and Cllr Benoy confirmed that this would be the case.*
- c) The Committee asked the tenants who were present, how they felt about someone, who worked in Rusthall but lived 1.2 of a mile from the Parish boundary, renting a plot. It was agreed, as the person worked in Rusthall, that this would be acceptable. *Clerk to inform applicant.*

The Meeting closed at 2115.