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Town Clerk – Laura Chrysostomou

Notes of the meeting of the Allotment Working Group meeting held in The New Millenium Chamber, The Manor House, Church Street, Littlehampton BN17 5EW on Thursday 14 August 2025 at 6.30pm.

Working Group:

Councillor O'Neill (Chair)
Councillor Tilbrook*

Co-opted Members:

Mrs Burke
Mr Simmons
Mrs Mendes
Mrs Oliver
Ms King

In attendance:

Juliet Harris – Assistant Town Clerk
Felix Gillett – Community Resource Officer (CRO)

2025 to 2026

9. Evacuation Procedures

The evacuation procedures were noted.

10. Use of Social Media, and Mobile Phones

The procedures were noted.

11. Apologies

There were apologies from Councillor Wiltshire, Mr Farquhar and Mr Lovegrove.

12. Declarations Of Interest

The standing declarations were noted, and Councillor Tilbrook declared a prejudicial and pecuniary interest in the Allotment Fees 2027 item of discussion as his daughter was an allotment holder. He confirmed that he would leave the meeting for this discussion.

13. Notes of the Last Meeting

The notes of the meeting held on Thursday 29 May 2025, were confirmed as a true record and signed by the chair.

*Councillor Tilbrook left the meeting at 6.33pm.

14. Allotment Fees

- 14.1. The allotment rental fee for 2026 would come into effect from 1 January 2026 at £10.36 per rod. The Working Group was therefore asked to consider the level of fees for 2027 with a view to make a recommendation to the Community Resources Committee. The CRO reminded the working group that the strategic aims of the allotment strategy regarding price increases, were to reduce the gap between income and expenditure, and to keep the plots affordable for Littlehampton residents.
- 14.2. In response, the Littlehampton Allotment and Leisure Gardens Association (LALGA), on behalf of site representatives, had developed proposals which they considered would help to address rising management costs. This proposal document is attached to the notes of this meeting as appendix 1. In making these proposals they had considered the points discussed at an earlier conversation with the Deputy Town Clerk and Responsible Financial Officer (DTC&RFO) and Community Resources Officer (CRO). This had been constructive, and they felt paved the way for a consideration of a wider range of measures to both encourage better cultivation practices and reduce the burden of managing the sites on the Town Council's resources.
- 14.3. Their approach emphasised that fee increases alone would not suffice and recommended a 5% rent increase in 2027, alongside new charges and practices. The group proceeded to discuss proposals in more detail and in doing so noted that any recommendations with financial implications would require a year's notice and, if approved, would be implemented in January 2027 at the earliest.

1. Increase the level of plot fee by 5% to £10.88 per rod for 2027.

Due to the rate of inflation being 3.6% at the time of writing the proposal, it was suggested that a 5% increase would forward the Allotment Strategy's aims while being in alignment with other local councils' rent rises.

2. Plot deposits increase from £50 to £100 for 5 rods or less, and from £50 to £250 for 10 rod plots.

This suggestion was made to bridge the gap between the deposit and cost for the Amenity Team to reinstate plots to lettable conditions.

3. The introduction of a £25 fee for joining the waiting list.

It was noted that in the process of introducing new tenants, some on the waiting list are no longer able to take on a plot or do not engage within the first three months. The rationale is that the £25 fee will encourage those new applicants who genuinely

want an allotment to remain on the list, this aligns with practices of other local Parish Councils.

4. The introduction of a £25/month fine for failure to action plot maintenance to plot holders.

By imposing a monthly fine within the 'notice to improve' process, the aim of this is to speed up the repossession of unkempt plots. Whilst members acknowledged there were justifiable reasons for why some tenants struggled at times to keep their plot cultivated, they felt overall this would encourage tenants to take responsibility and adhere to the tenancy agreement.

5. The Introduction of new practices relating to Plot allocation:

The aim of this would be to reduce the number of plots the Amenity Team have to reinstate alongside assigning plots in poor condition to exemplary plot holders that wish to increase their holding.

- A three-month rent-free period for tenants who take on derelict plots requiring clearance.
- Reallocating repossessed plots to existing allotment tenants where they are adjacent to their current plot.

- 14.4. Co-opted members thanked the CRO for his support in facilitating meetings, assisting in researching these topics and for making positive suggestions. The Chair commended LALGA for their constructive and balanced proposals, noting their alignment with the Allotment Strategy's goals of affordability and sustainability. The Group was invited to endorse the 2027 rental increase and associated measures for submission to the Community Resources Committee for approval.

It was therefore Resolved that:

The Community Resources Committee be recommended to increase the level of plot fee by 5% to £10.88 per rod for 2027 and consider the further recommendations as set out in point 14.3. above.

*Councillor Tilbrook rejoined the meeting at 7.12pm.

15. Allotment Strategy 2022 – 2032

- 15.1. The group noted the updated Allotment Strategy, previously circulated, which now included the infrastructure priorities which were discussed at the previous meeting and approved by the Community Resources Committee on 5 June 2025. It was acknowledged that work on the Trinidad South and Southeast Fence was anticipated to be completed in Autumn 2025 and that a best value quote for the Worthing Road central track was being investigated.

16. Report of Allotment Sites

16.1. Update from Community Resource Officer (CRO)

The CRO updated the group on site maintenance, infrastructure work timelines and occupation percentages across the sites. These are set out in the table below and include previously reported figures for comparison.

Site / Occupation % & Vacant Plots	June 2025 (%)	June 2025 Vacant Plots	August 2025 (%)	August 2025 Vacant Plots
Fort Road	100	0	100	0
Howard Road	100	0	100	0
Kingley Gate	100	0	100	0
Mill Lane	97.3	2	97.3	2
Trinidad	92	6	93	5
Worthing Road	83	18	86	16
Total:	92%	26	95%	23

16.1.1. Plot Turnover

- Plots returned: 14 (9 termination, 5 repossessions)
- Tenants relocated: 1 (moved to larger plot)

16.1.2. Waiting List Activity

- Applicants removed from the list: 25
- Accepted tenancies: 19
- Declined, are no longer a resident or did not respond: 6
- New applicants added: 38
- Total on waiting list: 87
- Those waiting for full sites (HR, KG, FR): 33
- The average wait time remains low at 4 months
- Kingley Gate wait time of 1 year
- Howard Road wait time dropped from 3 years to 2 years

The CRO thanked site reps for their audits, which had been shared with the admin team to note and investigate. He also confirmed that the pest control reports would be shared with the site representatives alongside his own periodic updates.

16.2. Site Representatives Reports

16.2.1. Fort Road

Fly tipping was reported outside of the site. It was highlighted that some plots needed attention regarding pest control. Due to the unusually hot weather, it was suggested that urban rat populations were increasing across the country. This issue has been affecting some allotment sites and was being addressed by the pest control contractor.

16.2.2. Howard Road

It was noted that actions discussed outside of the meeting regarding waste removal had been completed. There was nothing further to report.

16.2.3. Kingley Gate

There was nothing to report.

16.2.4. Mill Lane

Outside of the meeting, officers received a brief update from the Mill Lane site representative who was not present at the meeting. It highlighted some overgrown hedges which are being address and that the site was not experiencing a rat problem. He stated there was nothing further which was urgent to report.

16.2.5. Trinidad

There was nothing to report. As a tenant of Trinidad, Mrs Burke thanked the CRO for organising the replacement of the South and Southeast fence.

16.2.6. Worthing Road

The site representative echoed the attention needed regarding pest control on the site. It was also noted that a large tree along the western boarder needed attention as it was beginning to encroach on the allotment's roadway. This was noted and would be investigated by officers.

17. Date of Next Meeting

Thursday 15 January 2026.

The meeting was closed at 7.39pm.

**Littlehampton Allotment and Leisure Gardens Association (LALGA)
Representation and Proposals to the Allotments Working Group meeting 14
August 2025.**

We currently note the significant percentage of the budget allocated to 'Recharge' to the A team. It is hard to really know if this is a fair percentage, as we are unable to scrutinize in detail, relying on many unfixed and average costs. We understand the Town Council (TC) will be undertaking a strategic review, and as part of this, LALGA has agreed to be involved as stakeholders, which will hopefully address some of the concerns and queries we have around the delivery of the current service.

Based on the TC's own calculations, raising the rent will not generate sufficient finances to support the ever-growing on-costs of the A team and we are aware that the council needs to reduce its current pull on the General fund pot.

We therefore have considered other means of bringing in finances other than the rent, with the dual purpose of a) keeping the rent at a reasonable rate for ALL; and b) supporting the TC in being more cost-effective in the running of the allotments.

The current **rate of inflation is 3.6%** at the time of writing, we propose a **5% increase in rent for 2026/7**. This is in alignment with other councils' rent rises.

With additional recommendations:

1. The TC raises the plot deposit from £50 to £100 for 5 rods or fewer, and to £250 for 10 rods, effective immediately

Rationale: It costs £500 (for all plot sizes) for clearance by the A team. Most deposits are not refunded due to the poor condition of the plots. However, the ongoing mismatch between the deposit and the actual clearance cost is causing delays in land reinstatement and increasing A team expenses. We see this as a short- to medium-term measure to regain control over the current issues with plot neglect.

2. A £25 fee for joining the waiting list

Rationale: The conversion rate from waiting list to tenancy agreement is roughly 3:1. This process requires time and money to pursue potential tenants, who often fail to take a plot or do not engage within the first three months, leading to additional efforts. We believe the £25 fee will encourage only those who genuinely want an allotment to remain on the list, aligning with practices of other Councils.

2. NEW £25/month fine for failure to action plot maintenance and use

Rationale: We currently have too many plots that are in disrepair. It is too easy to stretch out the process of repossession/leaving a plot, which prevents the A team from reinstating, the waiting list goes down, and the longer it is left, the worse the clear-up costs are. By imposing a monthly fine, we believe this will speed up this process, and whilst we know there are good reasons for plots being left, tenants do need to take responsibility and adhere to the contract. We need to prevent plots from getting into disrepair.

3. Where a plot has been repossessed and an existing member has offered to take it on and has a good track record of maintaining their current plot, this should be given consideration

Rationale: There are a few tenants on each site that would like to increase their plots and have plots next door which are derelict or are in the process of being repossessed. If allocated to them, this would reduce the number of plots that the A team has to reinstate, at a cost of approx. £500/plot. We therefore recommend that the TC look into developing a set of transparent criteria and implement for membership renewal 2025.

5. Where current tenants, or new tenants, take on a plot that meets the criteria of needing to be cleared and derelict, then a free 3-month no rent period should be offered.

We understand that there is much to consider in terms of the recommendations and the 5% increase, but this will allow the Working Group to continue to develop the allotment finances post-strategic review the TC has committed.