

# **Bench Working Party Report**

## **July 16<sup>th</sup> to September 16<sup>th</sup> 2020**

### **Introduction**

Despite the Covid lockdown we have been out and about trying to keep within the distancing guidelines. Some people are still too nervous to come to our sessions, currently one disadvantage is that we can't 'socialise' in our full group. Eg coffee breaks, our normally held summer breakfast cookout etc.

### **Parish Council**

- Removed allotment rubbish (plastic, metal etc) and took non-metal to skip in Memorial Hall car park, metal given to a "traveller" for recycling. Enormous amount. Took whole team (plus the Vicar) all morning and filled the skip with non-metal and additionally about half of a skip of metal.
- Lifted drain in Church Lane and cleared gully of earth (three mornings)
- Spent three mornings separating burnable stuff from non-burnable on the allotment bonfire site. Sorting out the plastic and the sods from the grasses.
- Spent all day one Saturday burning virtually all the stuff on the bonfire site. Just the sawn timber left and a small amount of new vegetation that has been left (against the rules) during lockdown
- Serviced our own three wheelbarrows and repaired light cluster on trailer
- Fixed direction signs at bottom of Claggy Road and Hall Lane so they pointed in the right direction
- Fixed new goal nets on small goals in Recreation Ground
- Mended balustrade on front of Football Pavilion (three mornings)
- Agreed with Caroline Curry precisely where her bench would be placed and made concrete pads to support it. Then installed it.
- Replaced plank on climbing frame at Wren Close playground
- Cleared a drain and gully at the bottom of Hall Lane
- Numerous benches cleaned and stained
- A number of Right of Way waymarks installed across fields

### **Memorial Hall**

- Replaced all the outside light fittings around the Memorial Hall and fitted new batteries to the emergency lights in the Parish Room and archive room (three mornings)
- Cleared weeds from the car park and surrounding areas

- Painted the fence around the refuse bin enclosure (two mornings)
- Painted social distancing marks outside the Hall for queuing
- Replaced the broken ceiling above the entrance to the foyer and painted it (three mornings)

## **Community**

- Full morning work raking matted grass from field at Cottage Farm to encourage more wildflowers to grow. (Apparently this field already has the widest variety of plant species for miles around)
- Designed and manufactured a display stand for the Anna Bossatta community art project and installed it at the Corner Stores. Do go and look.

## **Churchyard**

- Spent three mornings so far trimming the yews on the roadway leading from the main gate to the South door. Also taking some of the branches off the Prunus trees there.
- Due to not being able to have bonfires during Covid lockdown we took one trailer load of branches to Harpenden dump, and another three trailer loads to Ben Coles farm at Ansell's End where he has kindly given permission for the BWP to dump burnable stuff.
- Re-erected a fallen gravestone
- Cleared all the gutters at Church House
- Examined historic Probyn benches outside south wall of church and decided to try and save them. But not much life left.
- Gate at NE cleaned and painted
- Dacre Rooms
- Weeds cleared from sides and back of building

Bob Finch

16 09 20

# Allotment Working Party Meeting 15<sup>th</sup> September 2020 at 4pm

**Attendees:** Cllr Lewis Hawke, Bob Finch (Leader KBWP), Carina Helmn (Parish Clerk)  
Allotment holders: Andy Morton, Gary Ewington, John and Kath Page, Sue Davies, Christine Lawrence, Lorraine Grey

## Notes:

### 1. Invoices for 2020/21

Invoices were sent out on 1<sup>st</sup> September with payment due by 1<sup>st</sup> October. At the time of the meeting 18 invoices were outstanding.

### 2. Assessment of standard of cultivation of allotment plots

The allotment tenancy states:

- 8 a) *keep the Allotment Garden clean and in a good state of fertility and cultivation;*
- 8 dd) *cultivate at least 75% of the allotment plot;*
- 8 ee) *any uncultivated area of a plot to be kept strimmed or cut to ground level*

Due to the subjective nature of deciding if a plot is being cultivated to the standard required by the allotment tenancy, it was decided that each plot should be given a grade from 1 to 5 as follows:

Grade 1	Commendation
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Requires improvement
Grade 5	Unacceptable
New tenant	Under development

Grade 5 means that the plot needs a great deal of work to bring it up to scratch. This could/would include strimming paths, clearing rubbish, cultivation, removal of extraneous items and tidying up the total plot. Plots categorised as 5 would have 3 months to undertake this work or, under the tenancy agreement conditions, the tenancy will be withdrawn.

The full list is attached. Allotment holders will be sent this assessment with the offer of talking to Cllr Lewis Hawke who is able to identify the reasons for the grading to each tenant. Those with grade 4 will be asked to make improvements, particularly plot 9b that needs strimming and plot cleared up.

- 8 i) *not fence the Allotment Garden without first obtaining the Council's written consent;*

### 3. Willow

- 8 aa) *not grow willow or bamboo on any part of the allotment plot;*

After discussion, and in accordance with the tenancy agreement, it was agreed that all willow at the allotment site will be removed, either by the tenant or under authority of the parish council, as all willow takes up considerable volume of water that is detrimental to the surrounding plants. Three sets of willow were identified on plot numbers 11a, 12a and 18b. The allotment holders will be contacted, and the best method of removal agreed for each plot.

### 4. Corner Plot 13a

The area around the site of the old walnut tree is overgrown and will be cleared by KPC contractor. It was noted that the walnut tree is sprouting new growth.

### 5. Paths

- 8 p) *shall keep all paths between plots at least 0.6 metres wide and clear of any obstruction;*

8 q) *shall be responsible for keeping the path adjacent to the east of the allotment plot neatly cut and trimmed;*

Some allotment holders are still not maintaining their paths, and this contributed to an assessment of scale 3. They will be reminded of their responsibilities in an email to be sent out by Lewis Hawke later this month.

#### **6. Vegetation from allotment plots being thrown into the southern hedge**

This practice has become more prevalent this year and includes the dumping of non-vegetation items such as plastic tubing. It was commented that the vegetation has built up, attracts vermin and is an eyesore. Other methods such as composting on plots would be preferable to dumping in the hedgerow. Allotment tenants not to dump waste in the hedges.

#### **7. Bonfire site**

The management of the site was discussed and noted that, in accordance with guidance from the National Allotment Society and NHDC, the bonfire had not been lit during the Covid 19 lockdown.

Bob Finch and members of KBWP have significantly cleared the site in recent weeks and the plot appearance is greatly improved. Unfortunately, over the past few months new items have appeared on the bonfire site despite notices stating that the bonfire site was closed. There continues to be a problem of sods of soil being left on vegetation and the dumping of non-burnable items such as netting, plastics.

It was agreed that allotment plot number 22b would continue to be used for a bonfire: half by KBWP (Mr Bob Finch) and half by individual allotment tenants for their own fires (Cllr Lewis Hawke). A draft document on bonfire guidelines is attached for review and will be issued to all allotment tenants once confirmed.

For increased safety, a filled water butt filled will be situated at the plot.

#### **8. Fencing**

An email was sent on 20<sup>th</sup> August to all allotment tenants including the following:

A couple of allotment tenants have raised the issue of introducing more fencing at the allotment site to prevent animals from eating or destroying their crops. However, concern regarding the visual aspect of fencing within our semi-rural location was discussed at our last parish council meeting with councillors asking for more information. For the council to quantify the problem, please could you let me know what crops of yours have been affected by any damage this year and a guess on how the damage has been caused. We would also like to hear your comments on installing

1. chain link wire fencing on the south side of the site along the hedgerow by the field to supplement that already in place near to Hall Lane, and/or
2. a 6' high fence on the grass area between Pams Lane and Plot Number 1 with two sets of vehicle gates which are required: one set at the top for cars to use the access track and the second set of gates at the bottom near the school for access by the grass cutting contractor.

Two responses were received with one explaining about produce being trampled upon and eaten by animals and the second giving a strong objection to the installation of any fencing at the site.

The working group discussed the south and east boundaries about access by animals and non-allotment holders. We would appreciate hearing views from all allotment holders on whether to consider a new fence and gates on the site at the top of Pams Lane as a precaution against animals and for security.

#### **9. Padlocks**

Cllr Lewis Hawke asked the Parish Clerk to purchase padlocks with keys for both the pedestrian gate at Hall Lane and vehicle gate at Pam's Lane. Allotment tenants would be charged a refundable deposit of £15 for each key. This is to try and stop the site being used as a dumping ground by non-plot holders.

#### **10. Watering of plots**

8 y) *use water hoses to fill water storage containers which should remain covered when not in use and water hoses to be handheld when in use;*

8 z) *not use sprinklers on any part of the allotment plot;*

Allotment holders are reminded of the tenancy agreement relating to the watering of plots.

#### **11. Sweetcorn**

Allotment holders are advised that badgers are particularly partial to sweetcorn and can destroy a crop.

#### **12. Bad language**

8 b) *not cause a nuisance or annoyance to the owners or occupiers of land adjoining the Allotment Garden*

Comments have been received that the allotment site is for families and next to the primary school and therefore all those at the allotments should refrain from using bad language. Incidents of bad language being heard have been reported which can cause offence to adults and be inappropriate for children. Allotment tenants will be reminded of 8b) in the allotment tenancy agreement and if the behaviour continues they will be asked to leave.

#### **13. Communication with allotment tenants**

Cllr Lewis Hawke to draft an update to allotment tenants.

## **Guidelines for holding a bonfire on allotment plot 22b**

1. Wherever possible, items from the allotments or community works should be recycled or composted and only as a final resort to be burnt on a bonfire.

### **Legislation**

2. Bonfires must not cause a 'statutory nuisance' as defined in the Environmental Protection Act 1990. For example causing a nuisance would be if the smoke was to enter people's houses or if it were blowing across people's garden and prevent their normal use of their garden.
3. Under section 161A of the Highways Act 1980, you cannot allow smoke from a fire to drift across a nearby road. You will face a fine if it poses a danger to traffic or leads to injury.
4. Only burnable items to be placed on the bonfire site. All non-burnable items, such as all plastics, to be taken home.
5. Bonfires are not to be held when the neighbouring fields have crops that are close to being harvested or if there is a danger of fire.
6. Build a bonfire well clear of sheds, fences and hedges.
7. Never use flammable liquids to start a bonfire, and never burn dangerous items such as aerosol cans, paint tins, foam furniture, or batteries.
8. Don't leave bonfires unattended. An adult should supervise it until it is fully extinguished, with no hot embers, before you leave it. If it has to be left, damp it down with plenty of water.
9. Always keep a bucket/water butt of water or a hosepipe nearby in case of emergencies.
10. Check the weather – wind direction should be NW to NE and avoid lighting bonfires in high winds.
11. Avoid having a bonfire when the air is still or damp hangs in the air which will only make the smoke linger and take longer to disperse
12. Keep children away from a bonfire.
13. Only add fuel (cuttings, branches, etc.) a bit at a time.
14. There should be two people present when a bonfire is lit.

<b>Plot No</b>	<b>Sep-20 Grade</b>	<b>Scale Classification</b>
1a		1 Scale 1 Commendation
1b		1
2a		2 Scale 2 Good
2b		2
3a	New tenant	New tenant Under development
3b		1
4a		2
4b		1
5a		3 Scale 3 Satisfactory
5b		4 Scale 4 Requires improvement
6a		1
6b		1
7a		4
7b(1)		2
7b(2)		2
8a		2
8b		2
9a		1
9b	4 to 5	Scale 5 Unacceptable
10a		2
10b		2
11a		1
11b		1
12a	3 to 4	
12b	New tenant	
13a		3
13b		3
14a		3
14b		2
15a		4
15b		3
16a		1
16b		3
17a		1
17b		2
18a		1
18b		3
19a		1
19b		4
20a		1
20b		1
21a		1
21b		2
22a	New tenant	
22b	Bonfire	

