

THORNBOROUGH PARISH COUNCIL (TPC)

Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting on Monday 2 September 2019

Present: Cllrs Steve Tribe (Chair); Ray Goodger; Estelle Graham; Mary Taylor.

In Attendance: Alison Robinson (Clerk) and 13 members of the public.

1 Apologies

- 1.1 Received from: Cllr Emily Cooke¹; Cllr Carol Laurence; Cllr Charlotte Moore; AVDC Cllr Billy Stanier; BCC Cllr Warren Whyte.

2 Public Participation Session

- 2.1 No matters were raised.

3 Declaration of Interest in Items on the Agenda

- 3.1 None.

4 Thornborough Allotments

BCC/TPC licence, the allotment tenancy agreement and the new licence

- 4.1 The Chair welcomed the allotment plot holders and explained he would make a presentation to explain the current situation before closing the meeting to facilitate their participation. He stressed the purpose of the meeting was to find a constructive way forward, it was not to apportion blame to past councillors and clerks.
- 4.2 The Chair outlined the background and history of the Thornborough allotments:
- 1979 TPC rents site North of Thornhill from AVDC on a 4-year tenancy agreement followed by annual renewal. Either party could terminate the agreement by giving 12 to 24 months' notice. The plot holders' agreement reflected the tenancy agreement given by AVDC to TPC.
 - 2000 or before TPC rents the current Coates Farm site from BCC on an annual licence; the terms of which were not reflected in the TPC agreement with the plot holders.
- 4.3 The Chair explained there were two types of allotments:
- Statutory allotments where land was acquired for the purpose of allotments and protected by the Allotments Acts.
 - Temporary allotments on land acquired for another purpose but let out until needed and not protected by the Allotments Acts. Temporary allotments tended to have short termination notice periods and generally no provision for compensation for crop loss.
- 4.4 The Chair said the TPC plot holder contracts should have been changed to reflect the changed terms when BCC became the new allotment landlord. As a result, the longer standing plot holders had contracts which do not reflect the BCC terms. Now the issue had been identified it could not be ignored because:
- (a) BCC could decide to terminate the licence if it wanted to take the land in hand for any purpose leaving TPC in an untenable position, and
 - (b) As a public authority, TPC has a duty (now it is aware of the situation) to correct the matter.

He asked the plot holders to reconsider accepting the new licence, closed the meeting and invited their input and input from other members of the public who were present.

¹ Received after meeting started because of a family emergency and therefore not reported.

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4.5 The discussion included the following points:

- (a) The changes between the current contract and the new licence were more extensive than the termination period, it bound all the plot holders together. It was explained in response that the term Garden referred to the individual plots rather than the allotments as a whole. The new licence largely reflected the wording of the old plot holder tenancy agreements.
- (b) The BCC notice period should be challenged. BCC should also be asked to sell the land to TPC, and a compulsory purchase order should be considered if it refused. The impact of Buckinghamshire Council, the new unitary authority which would come into effect on 1 April 2020, was also raised. The Chair said BCC had been approached and was not interested in selling the land.
- (c) The plot holders were reassured that they were not being asked to maintain the perimeter hedges. TPC's contribution towards the maintenance of the hedge between the allotments and the Willows was discussed. The overgrown BCC hedge along the road was discussed. A plot holder suggested her contractor could be asked to cut the overgrown hedge and said the charge would be relatively low.
- (d) It was suggested BCC should be challenged and asked to redesignate the allotments as statutory allotments. It was explained TPC, not BCC, was responsible for the provision of allotments. There was a consensus that it was not worth pursuing because BCC would not agree to lose the right to terminate the licence with one month's notice. It would be better to investigate the possible purchase of land elsewhere for permanent allotments.

4.6 TPC **resolved** to appoint a small group, comprising Cllrs Graham and Tribe, and three nominated plot holders to examine the new licence against the current plot holder agreement. The Clerk was asked to seek permission for the BCC hedge to be cut.

Action: The appointed group to examine the new licence and agree any amendments to make the new Licence more acceptable to the plot holders subject to those amendments being allowable within the terms of the Licence TPC has with BCC. Clerk to seek permission for the BCC hedge to be cut.

Additional water supply

4.7 The Chair explained the offer received from a new plot holder to install an additional water supply without charge, before closing the meeting and inviting comments.

4.8 The discussion included the following points:

- (a) The proposed new water supply system would have, a surface mounted pipe, multiple standpipes and be drained in winter.
- (b) TPC and some plot holders had concerns about the potential for water costs increasing. It was pointed out that the current provision wasted water because the hosepipe was prone to damage and the tap adapter frequently became unattached. Unlike the current hosepipe, controlled irrigation (and watering cans) could specifically target plants. Rain harvesting was suggested. The environmental advantages of locally grown produce replacing air freighted vegetables was raised.

4.9 Cllr Goodger proposed the offer of the installation of an additional water supply should be accepted; the Chair seconded the proposal. Based on three votes in favour and an abstention, TPC **resolved** accept the offer.

Action: TPC and the plot holders need to agree how to handle any increased water costs, before the additional water supply is installed. The Clerk will continue to monitor the allotment water usage.

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Suggestions for improving and enhancing the allotments

- 4.10 The Chair invited suggestions for improving and enhancing the allotments. The following suggestions were put forward by plot holders:
- (a) Rain harvesting – to be explored further once the issues relating to the new licence had been resolved.
 - (b) An offer of well-rotted manure – TPC confirmed it supported the plot holders making appropriate arrangements amongst themselves.

Appointment of an allotment co-ordinator / liaison person.

- 4.11 The benefits of having a co-ordinator / liaison person were discussed and TPC resolved to endorse the appointment of the nominated plot holder.

Action: Clerk to send the plot holder records to the Allotment Co-ordinator and provide the documents required for consideration of the new licence (minute 4.6 refers).

5 Minutes of the Previous Meeting

- 5.1 The minutes of the meeting on 19 August 2019 were **approved** and signed by the Chair as an accurate record.

6 Planning

- 6.1 The following planning application was discussed:

[Tree is on highway land adjacent to above property The crown is to be reduced by 30% to improve light into the 3rd party property and prevent encroachment onto the 3rd party house. The crown is to be raised all round to 5m from ground level. Major dead wood will be removed. Ivy to be re moved at the base of the main stem up to 1.5m from ground level - Old Bridge House Lower End Thornborough Buckinghamshire MK18 2DB.](#)

- 6.2 TPC **resolved** to support the application and ask for the surrounding bank to be tidied up.
Action: Clerk to take forward as agreed.

7 NALC Annual Conference, 28-29 October 2019, Milton Keynes

- 7.1 TPC discussed representation at the conference and **resolved** to pay for the Clerk to attend.
Action: Clerk to book and attend conference.

8 Any Other Business

- 8.1 The clearance of the rubble pile to the side of allotment plot 9 was raised and would be discussed at the next meeting.

9 Date of Next Meeting

- 9.1 Monday 16 September 2019 at 7pm in the village hall.

Meeting closed at: 8.25 pm

Chair's signature:

Date: