



## NORTHCHURCH PARISH COUNCIL

Clerk to the Council: Usha Kilich

Northchurch Parish Council

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### **NORTHCHURCH PARISH COUNCIL – ALLOTMENT WORKING PARTY MINUTES**

Monday 14<sup>th</sup> July 2024 at 7 pm at Sunnyside Rural Trust New Road  
Northchurch HP4 1NJ

Councillors                      Cllr Michela Capozzi  
   Cllr Mark Somervail  
   Cllr Chris Syers

NAA Members                      Eileen Shovelton  
   Julie Keyes

Parish Clerk                      Usha Kilich  
Sunnyside Rural Trust              George Stapleton

AC/01/25 Apologies for absence  
Resolved, proposed by Cllr Capozzi seconded by Cllr Somervail to accept apologies of absence from Cllr Dix and Cllr Pocock. Unanimously agreed.  
Apologies of absence received from NAA representatives Mr P Coleman, Ms L Gallagher and SRT representative Mr M Felix.

AC/02/25 Declaration of Interest  
There were no declarations of interest to record.

#### **Acknowledgement of the Passing of John Houston**

The Chair reported with sadness the passing of John Houston a valued member of the Northchurch Allotment Committee. Members expressed their condolences to John's family and acknowledged his contributions to the allotment community.

AC/03/25 To approve the Minutes from Allotment Working Party 18<sup>th</sup> September 2024  
Resolved, proposed by Cllr Capozzi that the minutes of 18<sup>th</sup> September 2024 will be approved at the next Full Council meeting on 8<sup>th</sup> September 2025, allowing Allotment Representatives to come back with any comments. The minutes of the allotment meeting were circulated; however, the representatives did not have sufficient time to review them. Comments must be submitted by 1 September 2025. Motion carried unanimously.

AC/04/25 Report from Upper Site Representative Paul Coleman  
We are now in peak growing season and more or less all plots are under regular cultivation. We are unsure if Plot 86 is being tended. Plot 56 is vacant and is occasionally strimmed by Ken Woodward.

Water usage continues to be monitored by myself. In the recent heatwave daily usage rose to about 5 cu m per day and has plateaued at that level for the last three weeks.

Ken Woodward continues to do great work keeping the grass cut and tidy.

**JK:** inquired whether the grant approved in 2024 for the community shed was still valid. Councillor Capozzi confirmed that it is, and the Clerk would confirm the approved value of the grant. This information will be provided to the allotment representative.

AC/05/25 Report from Lower Site Representative Eileen Shovelton

Thank you, Northchurch Parish Council.

Firstly, thank you to Northchurch Parish Council for emails this year to all plot holders, which outlined the inspection timeline from March 2025 through to Autumn. It clarified visits, welcomed explanatory chats with plot holders (if they wished), and helped plot holders to prioritise time. It helped me, and I hope that it aided the Inspection Councillor's decisions as to whether 'next steps' were needed, (letters) as you progressed through both sites.

Active Committee member – a very sad loss

It is with sadness that I inform you of the passing of John Houston. A very passionate horticulturalist, with a love of community, committed to helping other plot holders, (in a similar way to Paul West), fixing repairs and then also attending both NAA committee and Parish Council meetings to help broaden understandings. To John, the allotments were 'a privilege' to have and to nurture.

Thank you, site manager

As always, we greatly appreciate the work done by Paul West on the Lower Site. He cares for new plot holders, encourages cultivation, maintains grounds, trees and hedges. He is happy to help maintain gates and more recently the plumbing, when a small leak was discovered near to his plots. Water was turned off immediately and along with a couple of plot holders, (PW, FS, Matt), it was rectified. We were without water for around 5 days; however, the dipping tanks held water and was much appreciated by the wilting veg, as it was exceptionally hot weather.

A good number of half-plots vacant

Approximately 6 half plots seem likely to be vacant, (downsizing, retiring, priority choice, e.g. new family). There is now a flurry of re-location plans for sheds and green houses.

- *Is there a waiting list wanting plots ?*
- *Is it possible to email existing plot holders of vacant half-plots, so they can decide if they wish to upgrade from having one half plot into having two half plots, for instance?*

Three payments required in September/October

This year, apart from rental of plot and NAA fees, there will be a requirement to pay separately for water. Last year's two separate payments were a struggle for the NAA initially, in trying to maintain an up-to date register. In light of more payment changes,

- *is it possible, in order to reduce (hopefully) people's confusion about payments, to communicate from now there will be 'three payments in October'? (sending two payments to yourselves and one to the NAA),*
- *Will it be possible to clarify the 'rate' to be used to calculate the water rental?*

A plot holder explained that domestic payments for water include a fee for the wasting of the water, whereas on the allotments it is going straight into the ground, not requiring

any other processing, so likely to have a different 'rate' – i.e. piped into allotments but not piped away.

**ES:** inquired whether the price per unit for water could be determined. Cllr Capozzi explained that the Parish Council is currently in the process of calculating the average water charges, based on data from the past 18 months. The unit price charged by Castle Water will be the same rate passed on to allotment holders.

**ES:** asked whether there is an opportunity to advertise vacant allotment plots. Cllr Capozzi responded that there is no need for advertising at this time, as a waiting list is currently in place.

**ES:** questioned whether all allotment holders would be required to pay the water charges. Cllr Capozzi confirmed that all allotment holders will indeed be responsible for these charges. The invoice will reflect allotment rent and water charges separately. Cllr Capozzi emphasised that the NAA membership will **NOT** be collected by NPC. The Clerk will send out email to remind allotment holders of this.

AC/06/25 Clerk to report on the waiting list  
The Clerk reported that there are three people on the waiting list.

AC/07/25 Chairs Report

- a. Phase 2 of replacing the deer fencing to take place on the upper site (from plot 79 onwards)  
Cllr Capozzi informed members that all allotment holders from plot 79 onwards have been emailed and instructed to clear the area at the rear of their plots in preparation for the commencement of Phase 2 of the fencing work.
- b. Update on two inspections carried out 23 May 2025 and 30<sup>th</sup> June 2025  
Cllr Capozzi informed members that following two recent site inspections, it was observed that those who received emails requesting them to cultivate their allotments have either complied and tended to their plots or have vacated them. The NAA representatives confirmed that the inspection notices have been effective. The next inspection is scheduled for September; however, this may take place earlier if Cllr Somervail is able to conduct one before then. If this is the case, the message will be relayed to the allotment holders.
- c. Plot numbering to take place  
Cllr Capozzi informed members that an increased number of allotment plots are now clearly numbered, and that full numbering will be completed in due course.
- d. Rent review  
Cllr Capozzi informed members that the rent review will be discussed at the full council meeting in September 2025.
- e. Water leak identified on top and bottom site. Lower site leak resolved, thanks to Fred Scurr. Fred Scurr is due to visit the top site to have a look at the two taps that may need attention.
- f. Mirror installation possibly by NAA  
Cllr Capozzi will raise this matter with County Cllr C. Smith-Wright, as Cllr Douris had been exploring the provision of a mirror prior to his retirement. It was suggested that, if a mirror is not a viable solution, alternative traffic calming measures should be considered for implementation.

- AC/08/25      Upper Site Sunnyside Rural Trust Report  
Councillor Capozzi informed members that she would investigate the possibility of installing a “No Parking” sign at the entrance gate to the allotments. If it is necessary to cut back the hedge to facilitate installation, SRT may be instructed to carry out the required work.
- AC/09/25      Future projects at the allotments:  
The Community Shed Grant will be submitted by the NAA.
- The meeting concluded at: 19.43