



**SHIPSTON ON STOUR TOWN COUNCIL
NOTES OF ALLOTMENT HOLDERS ANNUAL MEETING
Monday 28th April 2025 at 1830hrs
At
The Townsend Hall, Shipston on Stour**

Present:

Shipston Town Council: Councillor Tony Booth, Councillor Hilary Kelly

Emily Booth and Debbie Hardiman (Deputy Clerks)

Allotment Reps: Anne Wagenhauser (New Street)

Stephen Lockwood & Anne-Marie Braithewaite (Shoulderway)

Allotment Holders: Approx 28

Welcome and Introduction:

Councillor Tony Booth welcomed everyone to the Annual Allotment Holders Meeting and introduced himself as Deputy Mayor of Shipston Council and Chair of the General Purposes Working Group Chair. He also introduced Councillor Hilary Kelly as chair of the Environment Working Group and Deputy Clerks Emily Booth and Debbie Hardiman. Cllr Booth informed the Allotment Holders that the Town Clerk has recently resigned. Updated that website changes will be going ahead this year, meaning Agendas, Minutes and other information for the Allotments will be easier to access going forward.

Minutes of Previous Meeting:

Councillor Booth discussed the minutes of the previous meeting.

Discussion of Reps Meeting:

Held at New Clark House on 19th February 2025. Discussion on increasing fees the following year. Will discuss this during the presentation.

Presentation:

- 93 plots across both sites, discussion took place of wooden stakes to be placed at both sites to identify which plot is which.
- Currently 8 on the waiting list – New street has 2 current vacancies, Shoulderway has none.
- Cllr Booth congratulated New Street on their second prize winnings from Moreton Show
- Income and Expenditure discussed for this year, showing a deficit of £1,129.22 – meaning that fees will need to be increased for the next year. An Allotment Holder raised a query – what is the break down for Lawns2Mow, what it is they have charged for. It was explained that they mow every 10 days and general upkeep of hedges, bushes and

tidying. It was also explained that they charge extra for rubbish removal from vacated plots, because we don't charge a deposit. Emily explained that it all adds up, and rubbish removal is extra, because it is not within their contract. It was asked if we could possibly do a little less mowing to decrease the cost, perhaps a no mow may – it was explained that we already take part in no mow may. Cllr Booth also added that in terms of the environment we do ask that harmful chemicals are not used on the plots, we also ask this of Lawns2Mow.

- There will be a 10% increase in fees for all allotment plots for the next financial year. New Street will go from £50 to £55 for a full plot and from £25 to £27.50 for a half plot. Shoulderway will go from £41 to £45.10 for a full plot and from £20.50 to £22.55 for a half plot. If going by this year's expenditure, The Council will still be in deficit, no profit is being made. These fees will be increase from the 1st April 2026
- Plot markers are currently being painted, some have been placed. Emily added that we are placing them, but if holders are unhappy with where they are placed, they are welcome to move them, but they need to be visible.
- Suggestion boxes have been placed on both sites
- Notice boards are updated monthly
- Inspections take place every month
- New allotment agreements have been put into place after the previous year, all signed and returned
- Receipts have been sent out, either by email or by post
- We are in the process of sourcing a card machine to make payments easier next year, cash payments can be taken, but would need to be the exact change as the Council Office does not have a petty cash float
- Produce shelf has been purchased for New Street, from the winnings from Moreton Show
- Inspections were then discussed; these are taking place every month, the dates are published in the noticeboards. If plots are deemed to be neglected warning letters will be sent out. It was discussed that a new warning system has been discussed – where if an allotment holder is given 3 warning letters in a 6 month period, the plot will be reassigned – but was decided this would not be the case and the original process of sending out warning letters as written in the allotment agreements will continue. It was also added that it is a grey area in terms of neglect, but we will be keeping photographic evidence to support and comparing each time an inspection takes place. Allotment Holders were reassured that if there is a specific reason why their plot has been neglected, for example medical or personal reasons this will be taken into account and just to keep the office informed. It was added that if anyone ever has any concerns about plots to let us know. An allotment holder raised a query regarding the allotment agreement, it states that complaints need to be sent to the office with your name and plot number, there was concern that people will complain regardless and people may be issued with warnings when it is not needed. Debbie Hardiman added that warning letters will not be sent out until either herself or Emily have been down to the plot in question and inspected it. If deemed neglected, then a photograph will be taken and a letter will be sent out.

- An Allotment Holder asked if there could be a possibility of a deposit, but only for new holders. It was discussed that whilst this would be a good idea and would reduce the cost of waste removal after a plot is vacated. Emily also raised the point that if this rule change came into play, as stated in the allotment agreement, allotment holders would need a 6 month notice period before rule changes can come into play. It was also added that we wouldn't want to add this in only for new holders, it would need to be for all and new agreements would need to be put into place with new criteria etc. It is something we could possibly look into in the future.
- Another question was asked regarding new plot holders taking on plots that need a lot of work. Emily answered that when a new holder takes on a plot that is in poor condition, she lets the new plot holder know of these details before they take it on. She also added that the office are aware of which plots have been recently taken on, so would be giving them adequate time to get the plot up and running and won't be issuing warning letters during this time. An Allotment Holder asked would it be something that a group of Allotment Holders could work together to get it up and running. Emily agreed that would work.
- Emily added that in previous years an "admin fee" was added into the expenditure, this hasn't been done, as it is not felt necessary.

Open Forum:

- Cllr Booth informed all Allotment Holders that the office has recently been made aware that Shoulderway Lane site was originally only a temporary allotment site, as it will be needed as a Cemetery extension when the current Cemetery is at capacity. The original allotment holders of Shoulderway Lane were made aware of this, but over the years with change of Councillors, Clerks and Staff it isn't information that was passed on. He informed allotment holders that they need to be aware of this clause, but Council are looking into other possibilities. There is another plot of land, that could be used as a Cemetery extension, this will be looked into. There is also another possibility of using older graves, at the moment this is not something we can do, but there is a white paper that has gone into government specifically for parish and town Councils throughout the country to do this, as they have granted this in London. He informed that whilst it is not immediate, it is something we need to be aware of. An Allotment Holder asked what is the timeframe. Debbie Hardiman informed that an average of 18 interments take place per year, and at present in the current sections being used there are 60+ plots available. There is another section along the side that is empty. These plots were originally set out as child spaces, so they are quite small, the area needs to be measured and calculated how many plots could fit into this space to be able to calculate a more accurate timeframe.
- An Allotment Holder asked the question about Dogs being allowed on the plots. At a previous meeting a few years ago it was asked if a trial could take place to allow dogs, also wanted to know the specific reasoning behind dogs not being allowed. She has spoken to other Councils and it would seem we are the only Council to not allow dogs on the Allotments. A discussion took place between Allotment Holders, there was a

mixture of responses, a few for dogs and some against. It was decided that this rule is now in place and will not be changing going forward.

- Allotment Holder mentioned that there is currently a severe rat problem at New Street. Unfortunately, new street is on a river bank and is nature. It needs to be controlled by each allotment plot holder, ideally by using humane traps as opposed to using poison, as this will affect other forms of wildlife.
- An Allotment Holder asked a question about mowing. Shoulderway Lane pathways are not being mowed. It was discussed that pathways between plots should be maintained by the Allotment Holders, the main pathways are mown. The main path from the side gate needs to be mown, Emily will ask to get this done.
- An Allotment Holder asked why incinerator bins are not being allowed. Cllr Booth reminded the holders that this was discussed at the last meeting and will not be discussed again. Allotment Holders believed it was because one person complained – it was reiterated that this was not the case, it was for environmental reasons.

Meeting Closed at 1930hrs