

<p><u>HUNTINGDON TOWN COUNCIL</u></p> <p><u>ALLOTMENT HOLDERS FORUM</u></p>

An Allotment Holders Forum was held in the Commemoration Hall, High Street, Huntingdon on Tuesday 4th August 2009.

Present: Councillors S Akthar (Mayor), B C Dutton, C Doyle, H S Mallett (Chairman), J Morgan & C Osborn. Frank Owens, Allotments Regeneration Initiative and approximately 40 allotment plot tenants.

1. **CHAIRMAN'S WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS**

The Chairman, Councillor Helen Mallett, welcomed everyone present to the Annual Meeting of Allotment Holders.

2. **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Mrs Rutter.

3. **MINUTES**

Copies of the Minutes of the Allotment Holders Meeting held on 7th August 2008 had been circulated. It was agreed that these were a correct record for signature by the Chairman.

4. **PRESENTATION OF PRIZES TO THE WINNERS OF THE BEST KEPT ALLOTMENTS COMPETITION 2009**

The Chairman invited the Mayor of Huntingdon, Cllr Saeed Akthar to present garden vouchers and trophies to the winning tenants in this years' competition. Cllr Akthar referred to the Council's provision of 170 plots in the town and the increasing demand in recent years for tenancies, as people were attracted to the health benefits of outdoor gardening as a pursuit and for its fresh produce.

Congratulations were expressed and prizes were awarded as follows:

Best Young Gardener – David Williams – Plot 32a, Sallowbush Road

Best Kept Allotment (1st) – Mr P Dobson – Plot 8, Sallowbush Road

Best Kept Allotment (2nd) – Mr N Hindle – Plot 20a, North Street

Best Kept Allotment (3rd Equal) – Mr L Rugg – Plot 14, Primrose Lane

Best Kept Allotment (3rd Equal) – Mr P Foley – Plot 18, Sallowbush Road

Best Newcomer (open to tenants who took on their plots after 1 September 2008) – Miss T Weeks – Plot 15a, Primrose Lane

5. **PRESENTATION**

Mr Frank Owens of the Allotments Regeneration Initiative addressed the meeting with an informative talk. He spoke about the history of allotment gardening in the UK and the importance of home-grown produce, particularly during the wars and times of recession. He emphasised the importance of open spaces in our towns as a “green lung” ensuring quality in our environment and referred humorously to the reasons why people take up allotment gardening as an activity.

He spoke about the Allotments Regeneration Initiative, for whom he worked as a volunteer Area Mentor and the meeting heard about the organisation’s history, organisation, strategy, functions & activities nationally. He then invited questions.

Mr Michael Smale, a plothead at Hartford Road, asked whether plot availability nationally was increasing in line with demand, to which Mr Owens responded that there was no information available currently to evidence this.

The Chairman thanked Mr Owens for his talk and it was

RESOLVED to thank Mr Owens for his attendance.

6. **SITE REPRESENTATIVES REPORTS**

There were none.

7. **QUESTION TIME**

The Chairman invited questions and comments from allotment holders on any matter relating to the service.

- 7.1 Mr Jolly referred to plans for the construction of a composting facility published in the April issue of “Allotments News” and asked about progress and arrangements for the distribution of compost. He was particularly interested to know where waste, previously given to plotheaders to compost and resulting from the Council’s other parks and open spaces, was now being disposed of.

In connection with this, another plothead asked how the proposed composting facility would cope with materials difficult to degrade, such as raspberry canes, as well as pest- infected produce, such as potatoes with blight.

The meeting heard that the composting facility would be built after the growing season was over and that arrangements for the distribution of compost would be agreed with site representatives and clearly communicated via the Newsletter and the Noticeboards.

- 7.2 Mr Leaden suggested that new tenants should be offered a trial period of six weeks to tend their plots, following which a decision could be taken on whether or not they were able to continue to manage. This would avoid prolongation of the tenancy agreement due to the current management process for uncultivated plots. He referred to 4-5 uncultivated plots at the Hartford Road site where weeds were in excess of five feet.

Another tenant suggested that a resolution at the last meeting to ensure that new ploholders were advised of the commitment necessary to manage a plot had not been followed up.

The meeting heard that these comments would be communicated to management for comment and action if possible.

- 7.3 A ploholder asked about a recent decision to replace a combination lock with a padlock on a gate to the Hartford Road Allotments at the entrance from Tennis Court Avenue, subsequent to which the combination lock had been put back on. The meeting heard that deposits paid for keys had not been refunded.

The meeting heard that these comments would be communicated to management for comment and appropriate action.

- 7.4 A ploholder asked when skips would be provided for the removal of unwanted waste.

The meeting was advised that skips were likely to be provided in late September/October and that arrangements would be communicated via the noticeboards.

8. **CLOSE OF MEETING**

The Chairman thanked the Mayor, Councillors and the plot holders for their attendance, comments and observations.

CHAIRMAN