

## RECREATION, LEISURE & OPEN SPACES COMMITTEE 3<sup>RD</sup> February 2010

### Allotments at Long Lane – Condition Survey

1. Members will recall that following discussion at the meeting on 2<sup>nd</sup> December, the District Council had been asked to provide a quotation for pest control services for the allotments at Long Lane. At the meeting on 13<sup>th</sup> January the Committee noted that the District Council's quotation had been received and further quotations were awaited from Rentokil and Ringwood Pest Control. All of the quotations are the subject of a separate report in the Private Session section of the meeting.
2. Following the December meeting all allotment holders at Long Lane were notified about the Committee's decision and a copy of the letter is attached as Appendix 1. Members' attention is particularly drawn to paragraphs 4, 5 & 6 on page 1 and paragraph 1 on page 2 of the letter.
3. There has been no direct response whatsoever from allotment holders to the contents of the letter. Further inspections have taken place since that letter was distributed and copies of photographs taken on Thursday, 21<sup>st</sup> January and subsequently will be shown through a Powerpoint presentation at the meeting. Despite the request made in the letter to allotment holders, virtually no attempt appears to have been made to remove those items which the pest control professionals have advised the Council are contributing to the infestation of rats. The photographs to be displayed at the meeting will show clearly the full extent of the carpeting, under which the rats breed, that allotments holders have laid. At least one allotment holder has started to spread woodchips on the carpet which admittedly improves the appearance of the area but does nothing to restrict rat runs under the carpeting itself. In addition some allotment holders appear to be using their plots as general dumping areas. The photographs will show examples of logs, shower door, tyres, a paddling pool, broken glass and other items that appear to have been brought onto the site. All of these help to provide the ideal environment in which rats breed.
4. The Council's existing allotment Regulations require allotment holders to keep the allotment garden in a clean and good condition. It is not believed that all allotment holders are complying with this requirement.
5. Officers are therefore reviewing the existing Regulations, taking account of those used by other authorities, with a view to providing more explicit rules to ensure that the allotments are maintained in the manner intended and kept in a good, clean and tidy condition.
6. It is RECOMMENDED:-
  - (i) That a further report be brought to the Committee on updating the Council's allotment Regulations having regard to the Regulations in place at other authorities;
  - (ii) That as a general principle the cost of implementing rodent control measures at all of the Council's allotment sites should be on the basis of the Town

Council supplying and fixing bait boxes on concrete slabs and that the annual revenue costs thereafter relating to the visits by Pest Control Officers and removal of dead rats be recharged at full cost amongst all allotment holders; and

- (iii) That arrangements be made for a meeting with allotment holders to explain the proposed action and that the Contractor appointed to undertake Pest Control be requested to attend that meeting.

Terry Simpson  
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My Ref:

Your Ref:

8 December 2009

Dear Allotment Holder

### **Upper Kingston Allotments**

Some allotment holders will be aware that it appears that there is an increase in rat infestation at the UK allotments. It is reported that the number of rats is higher than at any time previously.

In the past the allotment holders seem to have dealt with this on an individual basis. However this does not appear to have solved the problem and the Town Council has been asked to assist.

I am writing to advise you that we have now met the Pest Control Officer on site. He has promised to let me have a full proposal, with costings, of providing pest control services at the allotments. Once this is received the Council will be looking to deal with any health problems that arise and I will keep you informed of progress.

Whilst it is clear that there are rats on the site which need to be dealt with, other issues that have an effect on rat numbers were observed by the Pest Control Officer. Until these are dealt with by allotment holders any other action taken will be a waste of money.

In accordance with your tenancy conditions you are required to keep the allotment garden "clean ..... and in good condition". It was noted that in many cases old carpet and other material has been left on the ground. When these were moved there were obvious signs of rat runs. In addition in many cases the allotment holders had left wood, wooden pallets, old bins, pieces of metal and frames around the allotments. These are all places which provide cover and shelter for rats.

In a number of cases compost and also manure brought onto the site showed signs of infestation by rats, which is clearly in contravention of the allotment rules. These areas must be managed properly to discourage rats.

I should be grateful if all allotment holders would now look at their sites and take all necessary action to remove those items that encourage vermin as quickly as possible.

In view of the level of problems discussed, the Pest Control Officer has agreed to attend a meeting with allotment holders to discuss measures to discourage vermin. Arrangements will be made for the meeting to be held in the New Year.

We were made aware yesterday that a number of allotments have suffered break ins to their sheds and damage has been caused to other property including one of the polytunnels. I

know that some have reported the damage to the Police and that the Police have suggested that the Town Council should co-ordinate an overall response. This would only serve to reduce the number of contacts with the Police and therefore reduce the apparent number of incidences of theft and criminal damage occurring within the town. It will also increase the amount of time that the Town Council has to allocate to the administration of the allotments. Please make sure therefore, that you do report any criminal activity to the law enforcement agency which is Hampshire Constabulary. By all means email a copy of any report to the office so that we can keep our own record.

Yours faithfully

Terry Simpson  
Town Clerk