

# Allotment Sub-Committee Briefing Document – 24 November 2021

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## **Summary**

The Allotments Sub-Committee has been created to:

1. Liaise with the allotment holders and inform the council on their activities
2. Establish the allotment holders needs from the council
3. Consider the provision of allotments if there is demand for them from local residents and it is reasonable to do so.
4. Report on condition of current KTC assets such allotment boundaries and gates plus any problems that may have arisen on site
5. Advise the Finance Committee on findings with a view to appropriate ground rent, maintenance, allotment provision and contingencies.

## Introduction

An allotment garden, often called simply an allotment is a plot of land made available for individual, non-commercial gardening or growing food plants. Such plots are formed by subdividing a piece of land into a few or up to several hundred parcels that are assigned to individuals or families. Such parcels are cultivated individually.

The individual gardeners are usually organised in an allotment association, which leases or is granted the land from an owner who may be a public, private or ecclesiastical entity, and who usually stipulates that it be only used for gardening (i.e. growing vegetables, fruits and flowers), but not for permanent residential purposes (this is usually also required by zoning laws). The gardeners have to pay a small membership fee to the association, and have to abide by the corresponding constitution and by-laws. However, the membership entitles them to certain democratic rights. Allotments are private and the public does not have a right to roam through a site.

KTC has powers and duty to provide allotment gardens if demand is unsatisfied and if reasonable to do so – Statutory Provision: Small Holding & Allotments Act 1908, s.23.

KTC is responsible for the following allotments:

- Scott Road
- Margaret Road
- Windmill Avenue
- Northfield Avenue
- Whiteford Drive
- Green Patch Kettering (Community Allotments)

The following has been gathered from speakers to the Town Council, reports & enquiries of the finance committee, allotment visits and through some casework.

There is currently a waiting list for all allotments with the exception of Whiteford Drive.

*Extracts from the Allotments Rental Report presented to the Finance Committee 15 July 2021:*

*“As part of the Community Governance Order 2020 the allotment sites transferred over to Kettering Town Council. The allotments are self-managed by the resident allotment associations in each case, and, historically, each association has paid their landlord the figures set out below, on an annual basis*

*Allotment Site Income per annum*

<i>Margaret Road</i>	<i>£500</i>
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<i>Northfield Avenue</i>	<i>£143</i>
<i>Scott Road</i>	<i>£370</i>
<i>The Green Patch</i>	<i>£1</i>
<i>Whiteford Drive</i>	<i>£100</i>
<i>Windmill Avenue</i>	<i>£ 77</i>
<i>Total</i>	<i>£1,191</i>

*The Green Patch is unique in that the former Borough Council agreed a 100 year lease for their site and it is probably not worth collecting the £1. The Green Patch carry out their own grounds maintenance.*

*In terms of costs, the clerk has established that the grounds maintenance costs for the allotments, currently carried out for the Town Council by NNC's grounds team amounts to £3,000. This is a smaller figure than originally included in the Town Council's budget, but has been recently confirmed with the grounds team. There is no detailed specification for the grounds maintenance work carried out, and that might be a piece of work for the Town Council to construct, in dialogue with the Allotment Associations."*

The Kettering Allotments Society (KAS) is the association responsible for the allotments at

- Scott Road
- Margaret Road
- Windmill Avenue
- Northfield Avenue

Whiteford Drive allotments have their own association.

The Green Patch is a flagship community garden project run by Groundwork. Over the last 10 years they have created and developed a shared green space that is used by a range of local people, schools, local authority and community groups. It hosts volunteer days, educational sessions and family events.

## Findings

### **KAS**

Following Information received by email from Russel Attwood on Wed 21/07/2021 09:31.

“As far as we are aware the old KBC had no grounds maintenance service arrangements for any of our allotments. Many years ago, we did arrange occasional jobs, such as boundary hedge cutting for a fee. In recent years KBC have told us they are too busy to do this, so we have paid farmers to do boundary hedge cutting for us. We have had no invoices from KBC apart from our rent. There may have been an occasional bit of mowing of the track along Northfield Avenue, but we were never invoiced and we think this was some kind of informal arrangement. A small repair was carried out on the main gate at Scott Road after storm damage in 2019, but that was not on allotment land, as it was on the land that is now a construction site for new houses, so a KBC gate that we used to access the track to our allotments.

The ground maintenance we have done ourselves is mowing the tracks, strimming the verges, rubbish removal, paying for skips, small-scale hedge trimming by ourselves plus paying the farmers to flail the large boundary hedges. We have also improved the tracks with gravel (eg in 2020 we spent over £400 on MOT gravel for Scott Road) and allotment members volunteered to fill pot holes in the track.

Our understanding of our relationship with the old KBC was that our rents were fairly modest and we did not expect anything much from them in terms of ground maintenance. If we knew that there was grounds maintenance available we may have asked for more. Our priorities have always been to improve security with better fences and this would be a capital expense beyond our budget.

We have also had a very large expense recently that we would like financial assistance from KTC to allay. We discovered asbestos at Margaret Road allotments. It had clearly been there for many years and would have brought there at a time when asbestos was still legal. It was crumbling and discovered by a new allotment member who was clearing a previously overgrown plot. The removal was done by an authorised asbestos removal company and cost approximately £4000 (John Burn, our treasurer can confirm and provide copies of the invoice and certificates). This has completely depleted our bank balance, but had to be done due to the urgent Health and Safety issues. The committee has asked me to approach KTC to ask if there are any grants that it can provide towards this unexpected expense?

The other big request we had of KBC for several years, with no response, was to clear the KBC (now KTC) owned land adjacent to Scott Road that had previously been rented to Mr Davies and is basically an enormous fly-tip left by him when he vacated. This site is now hazardous as I mentioned when I spoke to the new KTC at Bowling Green Road in May. We have been informed that NNC will clear this land and make safe, but have not heard any more. We would urgently ask that a timescale be published and formal commitment to make this site safe. The asbestos and tractor tyres, broken glass are all still there and summer holidays means that there is nothing to stop curious youngsters trespassing and harming themselves and contaminating the environment further by disturbing the waste. Once it is clear, we would love to rent it from KTC for additional allotments.”

### *General*

Plot holders are required to:

- Live or work in the Kettering area, with some members living in Corby, Wellingborough and Geddington.
- New members are given a six month probation and required to observe the KAS Constitution, modified from National Allotment Associations standard.
- If plots are not maintained then holders will be given warnings before notice is served on them to leave.
- Each allotment holders is limited to a maximum of three plots.

The KAS has maintained the perimeter fences of it's sites in recent years. Preference is to allow hedges to grow through the fencing to form a natural enclosure. Where fencing is required to be replaced, the preference is, where appropriate, for 'heras' fencing panels to be used and allow foliage to grow through them to eventually form a hedge border.

Certain materials are not allowed on site due to previous issues with waste being left on site when people leave their plots. This includes glass, plastic, bricks, paving slabs, tyres, carpet and glazing units. When required, KAS will arrange for skips to remove waste from site with a rubbish amnesty.

Mains water is provided to all sites but hose pipes are band and rain water butts are encouraged in order to reduce mains water consumption. Ground conditions are different between sites with Scott Road and Windmill Avenue being relatively dry sites with their higher aspect than Northfield Avenue and Margaret Road which are located in the river valleys and consequently moister soils, the later prone to partial flooding.

Compost is expensive to buy and KAS would be interested in obtaining it direct from the waste management centres, to augment the mulch they get for free, delivered from tree surgeons.

## Scott Road

- The allotments have approximately 130 plots and 12 people on the waiting list.



- A new gate will be installed as part of the Scott Road housing development by Jeakins Weir. The gate will be a steel swing gate (see attached specification) which will be lockable and the Allotment holders will have keys to the lock in the same way that they did prior to the development taking place. There will also be pedestrian access to the allotments alongside the gate.
- Access track to the allotments has been realigned through the new housing estate currently being built on behalf of NNC Housing. The section through the new housing now forms the new road and will be tarmacked. The section between the housing and allotment is made up of stone and earth. The Housing department is currently looking at methods of preventing mud being tracked or running on to the new road to which may cause a nuisance to residents and block drains.



- NNC are to arrange for the removal of waste from a portion of the land that was previously rented to a tenant by Kettering Borough Council. This environmental issue is currently on hold due to the area being overgrown and will be surveyed in



detail when the vegetation has died back towards the end of the year. It can then be established the level of contamination. Asbestos corrugated sheets are used to form the boundary for some short sections along the footpath and will require replacement. It is anticipated that when all the rubbish has been removed the land can be turned into more allotment plots.



- Frenches Field, adjacent the allotments, is being acquired by Kettering Town Football Club for their new stadium. Currently, there is no vehicular access to the field and the route in is still to be determined. KAS have expressed concerns regarding this development.





- At the Town Meeting on 21 September 2021, Russel Attwood spoke about a potential arrangement with the probation service to work on the site. To enable this, a toilet on the site would be needed. KAS are considering options for onsite toilet facilities.
- Ground Rents have been paid to NNC following their reminder letter to KAS, instead of KTC. Cllr Lloyd Bundy is currently investigating this matter at NNC.
- Half plots have been introduced to assist with reducing the waiting lists and give some new plot holders a less demanding size to begin. Microplots are also being considered.

## *Margaret Road*

- The allotments are the largest site with approximately 200 plots and 15 people on the waiting list.



- Security of the site is good. The perimeter is guarded by high fences or hedgerow. Gates are the security type with one on Margret Road being the responsibility of the allotments.





- The gate at the north eastern corner of the site is the responsibility of the Buccleuch Estate.



- Plots nearest the river Ise have been prone to flooding.
- Ground Rents have been paid to NNC following their reminder letter to KAS, instead of KTC. Cllr Lloyd Bundy is currently investigating this matter at NNC.
- Onsite car parking has recently been improved.
- The site is no longer able to access welfare facilities on the adjoining Green Patch which was a community allotment before receiving lottery funding.
- The site slopes down to the river Ise and the bottom two rows of plots, either side of the lowest of the four ridings, are prone to flooding from rising ground water each winter, 50mm deep. This may be as a result of damaged below ground culverts running down the hill towards the river Ise. The plots at the bottom of the site have also experienced floods in the winter of 2020/21, up to 700mm in depth.





## Windmill Avenue

- This site is the smallest of the four KAS sites with just 23 plots and five people on the waiting list.

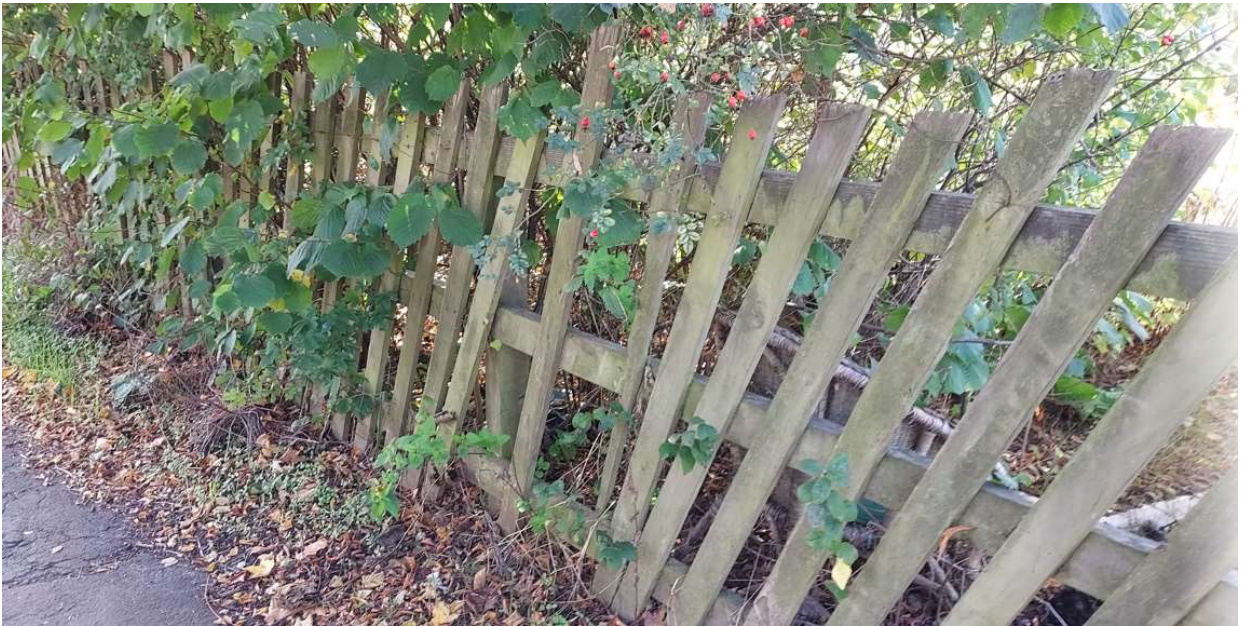


- Ground Rents have been paid to NNC following their reminder letter to KAS, instead of KTC. Cllr Lloyd Bundy is currently investigating this matter at NNC.
- While the site has a four foot high fence along the Windmill Avenue perimeter, security is regarded as good, a likely outcome of the site being overlooked by the houses on the opposite side of Windmill Avenue. The site is also bounded by the rugby club playing fields and domestic houses. The site has not had any issues with theft.



- KAS currently maintain the perimeter fences of the site. Preference is to allow hedges to grow through the fencing to form a natural barrier. While much of the fence is in reasonable condition, some sections are in need of repair.







## Northfield Avenue

- This is the most oversubscribed allotments, with approximately 50 plots and 40 people on the waiting list.
- Ground Rents have been paid to NNC following their reminder letter to KAS, instead of KTC. Cllr Lloyd Bundy is currently investigating this matter at NNC.
- Security is an issue at this site with a few thefts having occurred recently. There are two vehicle and one personnel gates on entrances to the site from Northfield Avenue. Only one vehicular gate at the north end of the site is a security type. The other two and some sections of fencing could be replaced to improve security.



- Network Rail have laid a high voltage (HV) cable across a plot, between Northfield Avenue and the railway line, effectively making this area unsuitable as a cultivated area due to future access required by the district network operator and because of safety concerns with respect to the buried HV cable.



- The riding connecting the plots is part of the current route for the new Western Power Distribution (WPD) 33kV high voltage cable to Hanwood Park which will cause considerable disruption to the allotments. KAS are trying to get a new gate from WPD as dispensation for this, as they did from Network Rail for similar work.





- Melton Street Community Hall and St. Andrews School have both been given new plots on the site that have recently been cleared of undergrowth.



- At the southern end of the site an old GPO and now Virgin Media compound is the site for standby generators and electronics containers. The entrance to this compound is inside the allotments' vehicle gate and it is felt it would be better to reposition the gate to avoid a shared access.





- KAS currently maintain the perimeter fences of the site. Preference is to allow hedges to grow through the fencing to form a natural barrier. While much of the fence and hedges along the boundary with Northfield Avenue is in reasonable condition, some sections are dilapidated and will need remedial work to maintain the perimeter.



### ***Whiteford Drive***

- In the last four years they have had no help or assistance from the councils.
- They have always maintained their own grounds themselves and ask for volunteers to help sort out communal areas. It is the same people that volunteer within the allotment that do the communal areas and level plots that have been left to overgrow.
- On average they spend between £20-£30 on fuel and have just recently had to start looking at some new equipment as theirs is getting a bit passed it now. The last time they bought a new mower was about 7/8 years ago; with the amount of work they do they will definitely be needing a new one soon.
- Japanese knotweed recently encroached from a neighboring house but has now removed through householder's insurance.
- Visit to see the site has been arranged for 10:30am Saturday 11 December.

### ***Green Patch***

- Visit to see the site has been arranged for 10:30am Saturday 11 December.

## **Conclusions**

According to the allotment societies, ground maintenance has not been undertaken by any of the local councils in about the last four years. Any necessary ground maintenance has been undertaken by the allotment holders themselves.

The allotments are not just a vegetable patch for local residents. They provide a community asset that offers a community of like-minded people who share experiences, materials and the fruits of their labour. The open space and exercise involved in cultivating plots provides health and wellbeing benefits for those involved. This has been of particular benefit during the Covid pandemic lockdowns when allotments provided the only outside space some could use and enjoy, particularly where they had no gardens of their own.

## **Recommendations**

Some suggested recommendations for consideration:

*Extracts from the Allotments Rental Report presented to the Finance Committee 15 July 2021:*

*“It is recommended that*

- a) KTC continue to invoice the allotments on an annual basis for the amounts detailed in the table above.*
- b) Continue to employ NNC’s grounds maintenance team to carry out grass cutting and associated work for the remainder of this financial year”*

*From Cllr Craig Skinner*

*“The need (or not) to have any maintenance from NNC. Could we not scrap the rent charges on agreement that the allotment holders/associations will maintain the grounds as part of their contract with us?”*



## Links

KTC Website Allotments <https://www.ketteringtowncouncil.gov.uk/allotments.html>

Kettering Allotment Society <http://www.ketteringallotments.co.uk/>

KAS Facebook Page <https://www.facebook.com/groups/1039037056512442>

Green Patch Website <https://www.groundwork.org.uk/projects/the-green-patch/>

NNC Kettering Area Allotments <https://www.kettering.gov.uk/directory/26/allotments>

Wikipedia Allotments Page [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Allotment\\_\(gardening\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Allotment_(gardening))

## Contacts

### *KTC Allotment Sub-Committee*

Chair – Cllr James Tows (07942 326591) Email: [jamestowns@ketteringtowncouncil.gov.uk](mailto:jamestowns@ketteringtowncouncil.gov.uk)

Cllr Carolyn Carter (07594 858082) Email: [carolyncarter@ketteringtowncouncil.gov.uk](mailto:carolyncarter@ketteringtowncouncil.gov.uk)

Cllr Keli Watts (07583 693262) Email: [keliwatts@ketteringtowncouncil.gov.uk](mailto:keliwatts@ketteringtowncouncil.gov.uk)

### *Kettering Allotment Society*

Chair – Clive Thorley email:

Secretary & *Scott Road* – Russel Attwood (07954 091 883) email:

[russell.attwood1@ntlworld.com](mailto:russell.attwood1@ntlworld.com)

Wed 21/07/2021 09:31

Treasurer - John Burn (07745 363236) email: [allotment.moneyman@gmail.com](mailto:allotment.moneyman@gmail.com)>

*Margaret Road* stewards team below:-

Peter New (07857 854377) email: [peter.new2@btinternet.com](mailto:peter.new2@btinternet.com)

Rachel Moulton (07429 138 114) email: [rachelmoulton@btinternet.com](mailto:rachelmoulton@btinternet.com)

John Roberts (07525 474 302) email: [john.roberts999@googlemail.com](mailto:john.roberts999@googlemail.com)

*Windmill Avenue*: Mr White (01536 518 097)

*Northfield Avenue*: Harry (07518 265 286) [hpope52@gmail.com](mailto:hpope52@gmail.com)

### *Whiteford Drive Allotments*

Chair - Claire Humphrey (07564 852077) email: [cleg78@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:cleg78@hotmail.co.uk)

Treasurer - Andy Blackshaw

### *Groundwork UK*

(0121 236 8565) email: [info@groundwork.org.uk](mailto:info@groundwork.org.uk)

Local contact - Emily Oakley/Kate Williams

## Appendix A - Allotments Rental Report

<b>KETTERING TOWN COUNCIL</b>		
<b>Meeting</b>	FINANCE & GOVERNANCE MEETING	Page 1
<b>Report Originator</b>	Emma Driver	<i>Agenda item No FC21/013</i>
<b>Title</b>	Allotments – Rental	

### **Purpose of Report**

To agree the rental income generated by the allotment sites

### **Information**

As part of the Community Governance Order 2020 the allotment sites transferred over to Kettering Town Council. The allotments are self-managed by the resident allotment associations in each case, and, historically, each association has paid their landlord the figures set out below, on an annual basis

<b>Allotment Site</b>	<b>Income per annum</b>
Margaret Road	£500
Northfield Avenue	£143
Scott Road	£370
The Green Patch	£1
Whiteford Drive	£100
Windmill Avenue	£ 77
Total	£1,191

The Green Patch is unique in that the former Borough Council agreed a 100 year lease for their site and it is probably not worth collecting the £1. The Green Patch carry out their own grounds maintenance

In terms of costs, the clerk has established that the grounds maintenance costs for the allotments, currently carried out for the Town Council by NNC's grounds team amounts to £3,000. This is a smaller figure than originally included in the Town Council's budget, but has been recently confirmed with the grounds team. There is no detailed specification for the grounds maintenance work carried out, and that might be a piece of work for the Town Council to construct, in dialogue with the Allotment Associations.

### **Recommendations**

It is recommended that

- a) KTC continue to invoice the allotments on an annual basis for the amounts detailed in the table above.
- b) Continue to employ NNC's grounds maintenance team to carry out grass cutting and associated work for the remainder of this financial year.