# OCKBROOK & BORROWASH PARISH COUNCIL

# The Parish Hall, Church Street, Ockbrook, Derby DE72 3SL

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15th March 2023

To the Chairman and Councillors of the Allotment Committee for Ockbrook and Borrowash Parish Council,

You are summoned to attend an Allotment Committee meeting of the Ockbrook and Borrowash Parish Council to be held in the Parish Hall, Ockbrook, immediately after the Burials Committee meeting, on Wednesday the 22nd March 2023.

Yours sincerely,



Sarah Kitchener

Clerk and RFO, Ockbrook and Borrowash Parish Council

## Agenda.

1. To receive apologies for absence.
2. To confirm the minutes of the previous meeting held on the 6th October 2022.
3. Variation of the order of business.
4. Declaration of members interests
5. Committee items for Discussion/Action/Update.

* Amend the allotment tenancy agreement to give the Clerk delegated responsibility to authorise the placement of new sheds and green houses.
* Discuss the allotment association comments sent via email on the 19th and 22nd February 2023 – see appendix 1.

1. Date of the next Allotment Committee meeting.

### **Appendix 1**

Email from the 19th February

Since both the last Elmcross meeting late in January and the Parish Council meeting earlier this month, I have been holding back contacting you in the hope that issues raised  on both occasions would have been dealt with by now. I refer to the state of the external hedges at both Elm Street and Shacklecross allotment sites, and also the internal one at Shacklecross, which runs alongside the communal path. All have been in need of cutting, public safety being a major factor where stray bramble and hawthorn were impeding movement along the pavement.

Following the full council meeting on February 1st, the face of the Elm Street hedge was indeed cut back promptly. However, the top remains uncut, and I understand that the excuses given by the contractor to one of the tenants included that it had grown too high, he couldn't reach it and that he didn't have the right tools to cut through its thickness. He suggested that he might leave it this year and employ a tractor and flailer to deal with it next year. This is completely unacceptable; aside from the fact that hedges need regular cutting to maintain even growth and thickness, flailing them is a dangerous business and quite unnecessary in this instance. A hand saw, hedge trimmer or long pole attachment to a chain saw would be perfectly adequate. Those allotment holders whose plots border the hedge are expected to cut their side as part of their tenancy agreement often without the benefit of any power tools or being able to reach the top face, a hedge which was imposed upon them without consultation and cuts a great deal of light from their plots even when trimmed down to 8 feet in height.

As far as I am aware, up until last Wednesday the Draycott Road hedge was still uncut. This stretch runs internally the full length of plot 27 and its tenant spent many hours last winter cutting back years of hawthorn growth and saplings within the hedge to allow not only light to his plot but also to reclaim some ground. The amount he took off was remarkable. During late Summer or early Autumn, another Shacklecross tenant rang me to say that he had been to the Parish Office to complain about the external side. Parking his car on Draycott Road, he had been incensed to see a woman with a pushchair having to walk on the road to avoid the stray growth, including brambles, which extended across the pavement, and felt duty bound to help her.

The tenant on plot 1, which borders the Nottingham Road hedge, reported that it had been cut along with the laurels on the corner of Ballards Way, having spoken to the contractor at the time and flagging up yet again the problem of the internal hedge and particularly the section which is fast-growing conifer. He himself has trimmed it back to allow the gates to be properly opened but again the conifer is impeding tractor deliveries of farm manure. And again he has been told that cutting it back any further will kill it, whilst any of us with experience of leylandii are aware that this is patently not the case.

We are now only a few days away from March. Should hedge-cutting not be a priority by now?

Another problem is the main track on the Elm Street site, where the tyre tracks have become compacted while the earth and grass between is causing damage to the underside of some vehicles, extending to a broken exhaust in one instance (I will not take my own small Peugeot on site for fear of damage during the winter months). I note that this year's tenancy agreement states: 'To keep the pathway or carttrack abutting the Allotment Garden cut and reasonably free from weeds and maintained at the statutory width as outline below:' (2 [iv]) and indeed many of us mow and build up with  stones as far as possible but we do not possess the capability to take a layer of turf and soil off in even measure. Nor should we when there are other users of this track beside allotment holders.

Plot 46 on Elm Street (the proposed 'community orchard') is another potential problem, having been neglected for months and left with shredded black plastic membrane embedded in soil and grass, while mare's tail will soon spore and goes unchecked, spreading to other nearby plots. Is there any future plan for this plot, or could it be let to an enthusiastic tenant and reduce the number on the waiting list? Meanwhile, plots 22 and 23 remain part-covered as winter winds have ripped membrane from its moorings with no sign of its tenants. Is it fair for this to continue with so many on the waiting list?

On a more positive note, I would like to thank you for passing Elmcross details on to new tenants and to mention how successful covering plot 29 has been, enabling the new tenant to begin straight away without the soul-destroying slog of having to clear ground first. (Similarly plot 9 which was largely covered by the previous tenant). It is uplifting to see enthusiastic tenants able to immediately make their own mark on a blank canvas.

Dog fouling and strangers on site (one Audi driver recently tearing down the track to immediately turn and tear back up) remain persistent problems which will not improve until security is an issue taken seriously.

Email from the 22nd February

I'm very pleased to report an update to the email I sent you on Monday. The tenants on plot 22, Elm Street, have begun work on their plot and are making great progress, facilitated largely by the covering of plastic sheeting which has supressed and killed much of the weed. They aim to have half of the plot cultivated this year while leaving the other half covered.

A few months ago, after having cleared the brambles from the Kimberley Road boundary in the car parking area, I asked if there was any possibility of us having a small skip to clear the remaining rubble away. You may remember the difficulties one of our gardeners had in trying to take some of the smaller pieces to the Raynesway tip in his car. There was no response to my query. Now that we are entering a new season, I would like to renew this request so that we can clear the problem once and for all and thereby keep any resurgence of bramble along that boundary kept cut down to ground level and eventually obliterated. If a skip is deemed too expensive, then can you suggest a better way of removing the rubble and somewhere to remove it to? it is not detritus left by allotment holders.