

2009 ALLOTMENT NEWSLETTER

Best Kept Allotment Awards

The allotments are viewed and judged in late July of each year in order to fully utilise the growing season and provide the best opportunity for produce. Presentation of the Winners' trophies and certificates for the runners-up for each allotment site are presented during September of each year. Our congratulations once again to the winners, Mr David Sexton (H14) **Hitchen Lane Site** & Mr John Mumford (W31B) **Whitstone Rd Site**, also to the runners up and those commended.



Management of Allotments

For day-to-day issues relating to your allotment you can either contact your Site Representative, or the Town Clerk. We intend to continue to robustly manage the allotments, firstly by the site representative keeping an eye on matters on a day-to-day basis, and the Council's Properties Portfolio Holder, currently Cllr Richard (Bob) Champion, along with the Clerk, undertaking site inspections on a monthly basis.



The concept is to ensure that allotment plots remain cultivated at all times and do not get overgrown, as has happened in the past. Following these inspections any plots not deemed to be at an acceptable standard will receive reminder letters and, if all else fails, then their tenancy will be terminated and the plot re-let from our extended waiting list. It is however pleasing that the majority of our plots remain in satisfactory condition, producing excellent vegetables, fruit and flowers and we thank you for your continued support.

General Maintenance

Mr Maurice Whitcombe currently undertakes the existing contract, whom we must thank for his efforts in the last year, resulting in improvements to the general maintenance and we hope that this can continue. The mains supplies to the water troughs are isolated in November and reinstated the following March of each year. We do however seek your support to Mr Whitcombe by requesting the following;



- ✓ **Please ensure no debris or stones are placed on the grass paths between the allotments. These materials cause damage to mowers machinery and represent a health & safety risk.**
- ✓ **Please ensure that you do not allow plants or materials to obstruct the grass paths between the allotments.**
- ✓ **Please ensure that you do not cut into the grass paths when digging / cultivating your allotment, the paths are already very narrow and if they are reduced so narrow that a hand mower cannot be used, then they will not be cut.**
- ✓ **Please ensure that you regularly trim the edge of the grass path adjoining your allotment. Our maintenance contract only requires the flat / top surface of the grass to be cut.**

Waiting List

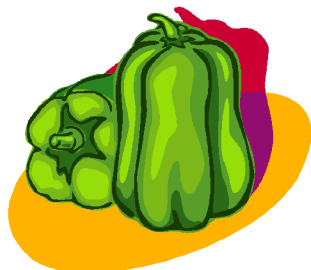
We currently have 22 prospective tenants on our waiting list, some of which have been waiting patiently for almost 12 months. Anyone wishing to apply for an allotment can be added to this list via our website or contact with this office; vacant allotments are then offered on a first-come first-served basis.

Tenants Representatives

Whitstone Road site	Hitchen Lane Site
We currently seek a volunteer tenant of this site to act as Tenants Representative.	Miss Steph McMenamin 01749-346610 stephandal@metronet.co.uk

Renumbering of Allotment Plots

We now have 98 allotment plots in total over our four sites of Hitchen Lane, Whitstone Road and two areas on the Allyn Saxon Estate.



The allotments have now been entered in a new system registry that requires re-numbering, therefore with immediate effect your old number (Example W34B) is now changed to three digit number (Example 098). Please do not be alarmed if you appear to have several plot numbers allocated as this is to allow for future splitting of the plot if ever needed. Your new number will be advised in your rent renewal letter.

Change of renewal date to rent charges but still fixed until 2010

Following a rent review the decision has been made to amend the renewal date to 1 October in each calendar year to alleviate the problems of chasing overdue rents, tenancy terminations and re-letting allotments at the start of the spring growing season. Should we encounter any of these situations in the future then we have the winter period with us and a good lead in period for any new tenants to get their plot prepared in good time for the growing season.

We will therefore charge the pro-rata amount of your annual rent now to cover the 8 month period from the 1 February 2009 until the 30 September 2009. Your annual rent will then be due and be charged as of the 1 October 2009. We also provide you with the alternate option to pay the 20 months rent now so that your next rent would not then be due until 1 October 2010.

The current annual rent charges are; **£7 per annum for a small plot** (below 500 sq ft), **£12.50 per annum for a medium plot** (above 500 sq ft but under 1100 sq ft), and **£25 per annum for a large plot** (above 1100 sq ft). These rent charges are to remain fixed as existing until further review in October 2010.

We are pleased to once again confirm that our levels of rent charges remain one of the lowest within the Mendip District. However we do request your ongoing support in providing adequate maintenance throughout the year to your plot. The cost applicable to re-cultivation of a derelict plot to enable re-letting is quite considerable and may well have implications as to charges at future rent reviews.

Changes to Tenancy Policy Conditions and Agreements

Sheds – Written Agreement is still required, however the maximum shed size on any one plot is limited to maximum dimensions of 6ft x 4ft.

Trees - No Trees, Shrubs or Plants which are non-vegetable, non-fruit or non-nut bearing are to be planted or grown upon the allotment plot. All vegetable, fruit or nut bearing Trees, Shrubs or Plants are to be fully maintained and managed within the boundary of the allotment plot and are not to exceed a total height of 2 metres and total width of 2 metres. **Current Tenancies** are requested to undertake the following retrospective actions to comply with new policy;

- Remove any non-vegetable / non-fruit / non nut trees, plants and shrubs from their individual allotments and to offer replanting within Collett Park within the next 12 month period.
- Undertake management and maintenance to any vegetable, fruit or nut bearing Trees, Shrubs or Plants to ensure they are fully within the boundary of the allotment plot and do not exceed a total height of 2 metres and total width of 2 metres.

Future Improvements

General – Following the renumbering of allotments we hope within this year to erect marker posts with number plates to each allotment, some of which have no markers at all. Layout plans are however available if needed on request and these are issued to all new tenants.



Whitstone Road – Please note that the **new code** for this gate as from the 1 February 2009 will be **9999**. Would tenants using the car park on this site please ensure that the gate is firmly locked at all times.

Allyn Saxon – We have worked with adjoining neighbours and property owners to obtain wanted maintenance to some of the boundaries. It is hoped during the early part of the year that the stone wall to the drill hall boundary will be rebuilt and at the same time we intend to clear debris and bring an additional and redundant allotment plot back into production.

Allotments Association

A previous suggestion was put but has not been taken up, is that the tenants could form an Allotments Association. There are considerable advantages such as the possible provision of grant aid and reduction in cost of seeds etc. We would, of course, continue to provide support, general administration and maintenance of the plots. We would welcome and support any future initiatives in this respect.

Existing Conditions of Tenancy

May we take this opportunity of highlighting below several clauses within your existing Tenancy Agreements. Whilst the majority of allotment holders look after their plots, and abide by the conditions set within the Tenancy Agreement, we have had several incidents throughout the previous year whereby tenants have let their plots get overgrown and **unfortunately once again we have had to terminate several tenancies throughout the year period.**

3) (iv) The Council is entitled to compensation from the tenant for any deterioration in the land arising from the tenant's failure to keep it clean and in a good state of fertility.

4) The tenant shall reside within the Town of Shepton Mallet during the continuance of the tenancy.

5) (a) The Allotment Garden shall be kept in a clean, decent and good condition and properly cultivated;

(b) The tenant shall cause no nuisance or annoyance to any tenant of any other part of the Allotments provided by the Town Council, or the occupiers of adjoining properties;

(c) The setting and lighting of bonfires is strictly forbidden at all times. This Council encourages and agrees for areas of each plot to be set aside for the purpose of composting down all waste from the allotment plots. Any materials, which are unsuitable for compost are to be removed by the tenant from the site at their own cost.

(g) The tenant shall maintain in decent order all fences and ditches bordering the Allotment Garden and shall keep trim and keep in decent order all hedges and paths forming any boundary of the Allotment Garden;

7) If the tenant shall have been in **breach of any of the foregoing provisions of this Agreement for a period of one month or longer** the Council may re-enter upon the Allotment Garden and the tenancy shall thereupon come to an end but without prejudice to any right of the Council to claim damages for any such breach or to recover any rent already due before the time of such re-entry but remaining unpaid.

Shepton Town Website

Our website, www.sheptonmallet.org, enables members of the public to have the latest information on matters relating to the town and enable them to view the majority of administration and information documents relating to the Town Council. If you have any information/images which you feel could be of interest, please contact us by email, the website, telephone or land mail.



Happy Gardening!
Shepton Mallet Town Council