

**MINUTES OF THE COMMUNITY SERVICES COMMITTEE MEETING
ON MONDAY 13th SEPTEMBER 2026 AT 7.30PM IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER, TOWN HALL,
MARKET PLACE, NEWBURY, RG14 5AA.**

PRESENT

Councillors: Phil Barnett (Sub), Nigel Foot, Ian Jee, David Marsh, Vaughan Miller (Chair), Sarah Slack, Meg Thomas and Martha Vickers.

IN ATTENDANCE

Toby Miles-Mallowan – Chief Executive Officer

01. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies received from Cllr Vera Barnett

02. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND DISPENSATIONS

Councillors Phil Barnett, Nigel Foot, David Marsh and Martha Vickers are also Members of West Berkshire Council, which is declared as a general interest and a dispensation is in place to allow them to partake in discussions relating to West Berkshire Council business.

03. APPROVAL OF PREVIOUS MEETING MINUTES

PROPOSED: Cllr Ian Jee

SECONDED: Cllr Nigel Foot

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting of the Community Services Committee held on Monday 30th March 2026 are approved and signed by the Chairperson.

04. QUESTIONS AND PETITIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

5 Questions were received and responses were provided (appendix 1).

05. MEMBERS' QUESTIONS AND PETITIONS

None Received.

06. TERMS OF REFERENCE

Proposed: Cllr Nigel Foot

Seconded: Cllr Sarah Slack

Resolved to approve the terms of reference for the Allotment Working Group.

07. HUTTON CLOSE PROGRESS REPORT

PROPOSED: Cllr Vaughan Miller

SECONDED: Cllr Ian Jee

Resolved to approve to release £1000 EMR to renovate the Goal Posts in Hutton Close

Proposed: Cllr Nigel Foot

Seconded: Cllr Martha Thomas

Resolved to approve to release £13,000 from the Hutton Close EMR to be spent on the

installation of footpath as recommended in the progress report.

08. LADYBIRDS PRESCHOOL LAND AGREEMENT

PROPOSED: Cllr Vaughan Miller

SECONDED: Cllr Roger Hunneman

Resolved to authorise the CEO to enter into negotiations with Ladybirds Preschool to lease the land as outlined in the report.

07. SIAM POLICY

Proposed: Cllr Vaughan Miller

Seconded: Cllr Ian Jee

Resolved to recommend to Policy and Resources Committee the adoption of the SIAM policy.

Risk assessment report was **received** and **reviewed**.

Proposed: Cllr Martha Vickers

Seconded: Cllr Nigel Foot

08. CHARTER MARKET

Proposed: Cllr Vaughan Miller

Seconded: Cllr Martha Vickers

For: 5

Against: 2

Abstained: 2

Resolved to vary the placement of market stalls across the designated market area.

09. FORWARD WORKS PROGRAMME

The forward work programme was **reviewed** and **updated**.

10. EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

Proposed: Cllr Vaughan Miller

Seconded: Cllr Meg Thomas

Resolved to exclude the press and public under section 1, paragraph 2 of the Public Bodies (admission to Meetings) Act 1960.

There being no further business the Chair closed the meeting at 21.48 hrs.

If you would like a paper copy or large print copy of this document, please request this from the Reception Desk at Newbury Town Hall.

APPENDIX 1: QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF PUBLIC

Member of the Public number 1 asks:

Question 1

Can you explain how and why the Allotment Working Group was formed, as we were not consulted? The vast majority of tenants are more than happy with the existing arrangements and the contribution the existing stewards make?

The Allotment Working Group was established by resolution of the Community Services Committee as part of the Council's ongoing commitment to working more closely with allotment tenants across all Council-managed allotment sites.

The purpose of the Working Group is to provide an informal forum where councillors and tenant representatives can discuss allotment matters, identify opportunities for improvement and develop recommendations for consideration by the Community Services Committee.

The Working Group **does not replace the existing allotment stewards**, whose contribution to the successful day-to-day running of the allotment sites is recognised and greatly appreciated by the Council. The intention is to complement the existing stewardship arrangements by creating an additional opportunity for collaboration between tenants and the Council.

Working Groups are commonly used throughout local government to develop policy and explore issues before formal decisions are taken. They are advisory bodies only and have no delegated decision-making powers. Any proposals they develop must be considered by the Community Services Committee at a public meeting before they can be implemented.

The Council recognises that many tenants are satisfied with the current arrangements. The purpose of the Working Group is not to change successful practices unnecessarily, but to identify opportunities to improve the service where appropriate and to ensure that tenants have a direct voice in shaping the future of the Council's allotments.

Question 2

Can you guarantee that the unelected Working Group will keep all tenants informed of any proposals that they wish to carry out, so that the majority of tenants would agree with the proposals?

The Allotment Working Group is an advisory body established by the Community Services Committee and includes both elected councillors and tenant representatives. It does not have the authority to make decisions on behalf of the Council.

Its role is solely to develop recommendations for consideration by the Community Services Committee. Any recommendations will be published as part of the Committee agenda and considered at a meeting that is open to the public in accordance with the Local Government Act 1972.

Members of the public, including allotment tenants, are entitled to attend Committee meetings and may submit questions or make representations in accordance with the Council's Public Participation Scheme. The Community Services Committee will consider any recommendations alongside any representations received before determining whether they should be adopted.

The Council is therefore committed to ensuring that any significant proposals affecting allotment tenants are considered transparently through its established democratic decision-making process.

Question 3

Will you insist that communications between the Working Group and tenants should be through the existing email platforms already being used? We will not accept Facebook communication as many tenants are not on Facebook?

The methods used by the Working Group to communicate with tenants are ultimately a matter for the Working Group to consider, taking into account the need to communicate effectively with tenants across all six Council-managed allotment sites.

The Council recognises that not all tenants use social media and would therefore expect communications to utilise appropriate and accessible methods rather than relying on any single platform.

In the interests of openness and transparency, Newbury Town Council publishes the minutes of its Working Groups wherever practicable. These are made available on the Council's website, allowing all members of the public to review the discussions and recommendations arising from those meetings.

The Council will continue to encourage communication methods that maximise engagement with the widest possible number of allotment tenants.

Question 4

Can you confirm that any level of self-management is not being proposed for Wash Common Allotments?

The Wash Common Allotments for the Working Poor is a separate registered charitable trust and should not be confused with Newbury Town Council's own allotment service.

Newbury Town Council is the **sole corporate Trustee** of the charity. In that capacity, the Council is responsible for ensuring that the charity is managed in accordance with its governing document, the **Charities Act 2011** and the guidance issued by the Charity Commission. Trustees are under a legal duty to act solely in the best interests of the charity and its beneficiaries.

Separately, Newbury Town Council is commissioned by the charity to undertake the day-to-day management of the allotment site on the charity's behalf. This includes administering tenancies, collecting rents and applying the charity's income towards the maintenance, operation and improvement of the allotment site in accordance with the charity's objectives and approved budgets. The Council therefore acts both as Trustee and as the charity's managing agent, with each role carrying distinct responsibilities.

No proposal relating to self-management of the Wash Common Allotments is currently before either the Trustees or the Community Services Committee.

Whilst there is no legislation preventing allotments from being managed wholly or partly by allotment associations or other community organisations, any such arrangement would require careful consideration by the Trustee. The Trustee would need to be satisfied that any proposal was consistent with the charity's governing document, complied with charity law, protected the charity's assets and represented the best interests of both the charity and its beneficiaries.

Should any future proposal affecting the governance or management arrangements of the charity be developed, it would be considered through the appropriate governance processes before any decision was taken.

Member of the public number 2 asks:

A previous CEO said that all except Part 2 council meetings are open for the public to attend so will the allotment working group be open to any public, inclusive of tenants and stewards, who might like to sit in to listen? If so, please can you notify the stewards of the allotment working group dates so they can put a notice on the notice board about it, bearing in mind some tenants do not have computers nor do any form of social media?

Council welcomes opportunities to clarify how its meetings are conducted.

There is an important distinction between **formal Council meetings** and **working groups**.

Formal meetings of the Council, its Committees and Sub-Committees are governed by the Local Government Act 1972 and the Council's Standing Orders. These meetings are the bodies that make decisions on behalf of the Council. Unless confidential or exempt business (Part II) is being considered, members of the public have a legal right to attend these meetings.

Working groups are different. They are **informal advisory bodies** established by the Council or a Committee to examine issues in more detail, develop proposals and make recommendations. They do not exercise any delegated powers and cannot make decisions on behalf of the Council. Any recommendations made by a working group must be referred to the relevant Committee or to Full Council for consideration and formal decision at a public meeting.

Because working groups are informal advisory meetings rather than meetings of the Council, Committee or Sub-Committee, there is **no statutory right of public attendance**. Attendance is therefore determined by the terms of reference agreed by the Council or Committee and by the Chair of the working group where appropriate.

The Allotment Working Group has been established to provide an opportunity for councillors and tenant representatives to discuss allotment matters and formulate recommendations for the Community Services Committee. Any recommendations arising from the Working Group will be reported to the Community Services Committee, where they will be considered at a public meeting in accordance with the Council's normal procedures.

As the Allotment Working Group is not a formal meeting of the Council or one of its Committees, it is not open to public attendance, and there is therefore no requirement to publicise its meeting dates in the same way as Committee meetings.