

Allotment Site Visit – 21 September 2026

Attendance:

Cllr Gordy Keep, Cllr Catherine Fileman-Wright, Cllr Vivienne Hodges, Clerk

Allotment Committee:

Sarah Pinn, Tim Foster and Angie Turner

1. Hedge Project Progress

The Allotment Committee has cleared the area to allow access for hedge works. Cllr Keep has banked up the hedge and will erect a fence and rail post to prevent unauthorised access from the adjoining property. Clerk to install a notice once the fence is in place.

Woodland Trust trees are expected in the first two weeks of November. Trees in Time will coordinate the planting.

Tim Foster reported deer entering the site via the hedge and damaging crops. He asked whether a wire fence could be installed. The Council noted this had been discussed previously; standard wire fencing would be ineffective unless it was full deer-grade fencing. Cllr Keep observed that the exceptionally dry summer has increased deer activity across the area as they search for food.

2. Polytunnel Request (Wellmoor Community Allotment)

The Allotment Committee reported a request from Wellmoor for a polytunnel to support growing, teaching and community activities. The current allotment rules do not permit polytunnels. Any approval would require the Allotment Committee to propose amendments to the allotment rules for consideration and approval by the Parish Council. The Committee was asked to check that Wellmoor is consulting neighbouring properties adjacent to the polytunnel. Although there is no right to a view in planning law, consultation would support good neighbourly relations.

3. Maintenance Planning

No immediate boundary maintenance issues were identified. However, neighbouring trees are overgrown and affecting plot holders. The Allotment Committee has spoken to the landowners, who have given permission for the trees to be cut back, and is planning work to deal with overhanging trees along the boundary.

Entrance gate requires adjustment; Cllr Keep has offered to complete this.

4. Unnotified NHS Contractors

Workmen were seen cutting the hospital hedge, stating they were working for the NHS. The Allotment Committee was aware that the hedge was being cut and expressed appreciation that the work had been completed.

5. Use of Allotments for Food Growing

Current concerns - Some plots appear not to be actively cultivated. The aim is to ensure that plots are used productively or reallocated to people on the waiting list, which currently has eight people.

Existing process (as explained by the Allotment Committee) - The annual May site visit identifies plots that do not appear to be actively cultivated. An informal letter is sent asking plot holders to attend to their plots or consider reducing to half a plot. A follow-up letter is usually sent and ultimately plot holders may be asked to leave. The committee admitted that administration has been lax this year, and enforcement is difficult in a small community.

Proposed improvements - Continue May site visit to identify unattended plots. First notice to include that a Parish Council site visit will take place in July, and improvements must be visible. A follow-up letter to be sent as usual.

The Clerk suggested that the final notice to quit should come from the MPC, giving it greater authority and clarity as a corporate decision. Any such proposal would require PC approval.

The Allotment Committee would like to continue with an annual meeting in September but make it office based to review the rules and procedures.

Starter Plot Proposal

Inspired by the approach used at Chagford allotments, the proposal is to convert half a plot into several starter plots, allowing people on the waiting list to try a smaller area before committing to a full plot.

Path Maintenance

Rules state: *“Those tenants on the upper side are responsible for maintaining the path to the right hand side of their plot when viewed from the track. Those on the lower side are responsible for the path on the left hand side when viewed from the track.”*

The Clerk suggested the Allotment Committee could cut clearly unattended paths and invoice the plot holder, generating modest additional income given the low rent.

Site Walk-Around Observations

Cllr Fileman-Wright noted plastic lying around; the committee encourages plot holders to clear it. The committee noted items are being left in the communal area, often left in case someone finds them useful, but they rarely move and accumulate. Cllr Keep offered to remove the current scrapheap.

6. Correspondence and Administration

The Allotment Committee informed the council that the new secretary is Bee Denning. The Clerk will continue emailing the allotment address, copying in the treasurer and chair. Cllr Fileman-Wright requested that emails be acknowledged so the clerk knows they have been received.

7. Additional Comments from the Allotment Committee

The Allotment Committee would like to thank the Parish Council for a very useful and constructive site meeting on 21 September.

The Committee has not yet been able to meet formally to discuss the proposed amendments to allotment rules and procedures raised during the visit. However, following feedback to the Chair and some informal discussion, the Committee feels it may not be appropriate for the Parish Council to take responsibility for issuing notices to quit, as tenancy agreements for individual plots are made between the Association and plot holders. The Committee is keen to explore an alternative approach that would still allow the Parish Council to support the process while maintaining the Association's role as the contractual body.

The Committee expects to meet in October to re-draft the rules, which will then be submitted to the Parish Council for approval.