

BROCKENHURST PARISH COUNCIL

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Allotment Management Policy

Introduction

The Parish Council provides allotments at Black Knoll for the residents of Brockenhurst Parish. The land is leased from Forestry England and the Parish Council must maintain and manage the land in accordance with the lease agreement with Forestry England. This is reflected in the lease agreement with plot holders.

Management of Allotments

The management of the Black Knoll allotments is discussed at Amenities and Infrastructure committee meetings and any recommendations are made to full council for approval. The day-to-day management of the allotments are the responsibility of the Parish Clerk, who will deal with all enquiries and maintain the waiting list.

The Parish Council are responsible for the maintenance of the perimeter fencing including the main gate. The perimeter trees are regularly inspected, as per the Parish Council tree policy, and any recommended work will be carried out. The internal track and turning space will also be maintained, subject to budget and approval from Forestry England. The Parish Council is also responsible for maintaining the track from the main road to the allotment site.

Eligibility and Waiting List

The allotments are provided for residents of Brockenhurst parish who are over the age of 18, subject to availability.

Eligible requests are added to the waiting list in the order they are received. When a plot becomes available the next person on the waiting list is contacted and invited to view any available plot/plots, once a plot has been chosen, all paperwork must be completed within fourteen days. The clerk retains a copy of all agreements and signed documents. The Finance Officer will issue the invoice, which will be pro-rata if started later than 1st April.

Cultivation, growing season and Use

The Tenant shall use the plot as an allotment garden only as defined by the Allotments Act 1922 (that is to say wholly or mainly for the production of vegetable, fruit and flower crops for consumption or enjoyment by the Tenant and his family) and for no other purpose and keep it free of hazards, e.g. broken glass or scrap metal etc., and reasonably free from weeds and noxious plants and in a good state of cultivation and fertility and in good condition.

As defined in the allotment agreement a good state of cultivation means that 75% of the plot, excluding compost areas, is in cultivation.

A new Tenant shall have at least 25% of the allotment plot under cultivation of crops within three months and at least 75% of the allotment plot under cultivation of crops within twelve months and thereafter.

The growing season, as defined by the Allotment Society is from the 6th April – 29th September each year.

Changing Plots

Any request for an existing plot holder to change their plot must be put in writing to the clerk for consideration when the next plot becomes available.

Co-working

If you become unwell or have a short term change in circumstances and are unable to tend your plot in the normal way you may wish to be assisted on your plot by someone else. Your co-worker will simply be able to assist you for a short period of time but will have no rights to the plot if you leave. The Parish Clerk must be advised.

Sub-letting of Plots

The plot holder shall not enter into an agreement, verbal or written, to sublet or reassign an allotment plot or any part of it to any party under any circumstances.

Passing on a plot

Brockenhurst Parish Council may allow the passing on a plot to his/her widow/widower or son/daughter in the event of a tenant's death. The Parish Council will consider any written request which must demonstrate a family link and interest in the plot.

Leaving a Plot

When a plot holder leaves a plot, it should be in good condition and free of any buildings or other structures. New plot holders can request that buildings and other structures be left behind. In these cases, the new plot holder takes on full liability for their condition, safety, and eventual removal.

Please remove any of your property at the end of your tenancy and any plants you wish to keep. Anything left on your plot after the end date will become the property of the Council.

Site Inspections and administration

Inspections are carried out at least three times a year usually between the months of April and July by the Parish Clerk and one Councillor who is usually the Allotments Representative, a member of the Allotment Association is invited to attend. No advance notice to plot holders is required.

Inspections review each plot and consider:-

The general condition of the plot including the safety, tidiness and the amount of weeds.

The cultivation of the plot, dependant on which month the inspection is taking place. If the plot holder is contravening the tenancy in some other way (under the conditions of the agreement)

Following an inspection, the following procedure is in place for the clerk to contact any plot holder whose plot falls short of any of the above requirements.

First letter

This is to advise that the plot falls short of the expected standard and that the plot will be reviewed at the next inspection in one month's time.

If the reason for writing is due to health and safety, then either immediate action is required or the plot will be reviewed at an agreed timescale.

Second letter

This letter will be issued if after the second inspection a plot still falls short of the required standards set out in the tenancy agreement. The letter advises the plot holder that at the next inspection if the plot has not improved a one-month notice will be issued.

Third letter

This letter is issued if after the third inspection the plot still falls short of the required standards set out in the tenancy agreement.

The plot holder is given one month to vacate the plot and remove any personal items, return the key and the agreement will be terminated in accordance with the allotment agreement. There will be no refund in rent.

How to appeal a decision

If a plot holder wishes to appeal the decision to terminate their agreement, this should be sent by email or letter to the Parish Clerk. This will then be reviewed by the councillor who carries out the inspections, the Parish Clerk and if necessary, the Parish Council chairman.

Buildings, Fencing and Structures

Any buildings, fencing or other structures that are considered to be unsafe will be required to be removed by the plot holder.

Any damage caused by unsafe structures is the responsibility of the tenant and not the Parish Council.

Existing buildings, fencing and other structures must be of an appropriate design, fit for purpose and in a good state of repair.

Plot holders are advised to submit designs and location plans of any proposed buildings, fencing or other structures for approval to avoid the risk of having to subsequently remove or relocate them.

Fences should not prevent an unhindered inspection of the whole plot. Barbed wire is not permitted.

It is forbidden to stay overnight or live on an allotment plot.

Hedges and Trees

Maintenance of hedges within the allotment are the responsibility of tenants. Shared hedges should be maintained jointly by the tenants on either side. It is an offence to disturb nesting birds so please check your hedges before cutting.

Perimeter trees are managed by the Parish Council and Forestry England and should not be cut back without permission from the Parish Council.

Tenants must not secure anything to the trees, for example, swings.

Please note that you cannot create any additional access points to your plot or remove existing hedging without written permission.

Permission must be gained from the Parish Council before planting new hedging or trees.

The Tenant shall not plant any trees other than dwarf fruiting trees and or fruiting bushes without the prior consent of the Council.

Invasive Species

Please inform the Parish clerk immediately if you have any invasive species on your plot as you may need specialist advice to remove them.

Fires

The Tenant shall keep these to a minimum. Only dry organic material which has been produced on-site should be burnt and bonfires should not be left unattended. The Tenant should be considerate of other plot holders and pay particular attention to wind direction. The Tenant shall comply with Forestry England guidance and no bonfires or BBQs are allowed during periods of high risk.

Where possible use alternative methods of disposal such as a household waste recycling centre.

It is strictly forbidden to bring waste onto an allotment site for burning.

Compostable material must not be burned. Recyclable material must not be burned.

Animals and Livestock

Animals and livestock are not permitted.

Beehives

Beehives may be permitted subject to approval from the Parish Council and Forestry England and no objections from neighbouring plots.

Pest Control

Pest control on allotment sites is the responsibility of plot holders.

Waste Management

Plot holders are wholly responsible for correct handling and proper disposal of waste from their allotment plot. It is strictly forbidden to bring waste or other harmful material onto an allotment site including asbestos.

Fly tipping, dumping of waste or adding to dumped waste on any part of an allotment site is strictly forbidden and will result in immediate termination.

The use of old carpets as a weed suppressant is not permitted.

When you take on a plot you may find rubbish and other debris, which you should remove and dispose of carefully. Many materials can easily be transported off-site for recycling or safe disposal at a waste recycling facilities. Materials such as wood or bricks can be reused on the plot, saving the need to send materials to landfill.

The Parish Council aim to provide one skip per year to help allotment holders dispose of permitted debris.

The Tenant shall not remove anything from a vacant plot, including sheds, plants, crops, without the prior consent of the Council.

Vehicles

Motor vehicles are allowed onto an allotments site but can only be driven along the track.

In very wet weather it is recommended not to drive on the soft ground as this causes damage to the track.

Fees

The allotment fees are reviewed each March by the Personal and Resources committee with any increase amendment from April of the following year.

Allotment invoices are issued by the Finance Officer in good time for payments due from the 1st April each year.

Dogs

Dogs must be kept on a short lead at all times and must never be left unattended.

Dogs must not cause a nuisance, by barking or freely wandering around the site or left unattended.

Dog fouling must be cleared up by the dog owner and disposed of responsibly off site.

Children

The health and safety of children on an allotment plot must be considered carefully as allotments can pose particular risks to children.

Remember you must never leave children unsupervised on an allotment site.

Children must not be allowed to roam around the site or onto other plots.

Visitors

The allotments are not accessible for the general public to freely walk around.

The only people permitted to tend an allotment plot are the tenant and their immediate household.

You may allow a friend onto your plot to assist you, but you are solely responsible for their behaviour and welfare whilst on site, they must be accompanied by the tenant at all times. Allotments must not be used as a venue for entertaining.

Storage of Materials

Allotments must not be used for storing materials. Having excessive quantities of materials on plots reduces the area available for cultivation and can pose a hazard to yourself and others. Please only bring materials onto your plot if you intend to use them immediately and, if necessary, store them safely and tidily.

We will write to tenants who are storing excessive amounts of materials on their plot.

Any weedkillers and fertilisers should be safely stored.

Tools must be safely stored when not in use.

Insurance

Allotment sites are used at your own risk and you are responsible for the health and safety of all visitors to your plot, whether they are invited or not.

All allotment holders **MUST** have public liability insurance to cover for their plot and for anyone working on their behalf. Membership to the National Allotments Society can be purchased via Brockenhurst Allotment Association and will include public liability insurance. Confirmation of membership to the Brockenhurst Allotment Association or proof of alternative public liability insurance must be provided to the Parish Clerk

Risk Assessment

An annual risk assessment is carried out by the Parish Clerk.

Problems

Any problems that arise on your plot or the allotment site during your tenancy should be reported to the Parish Clerk.

Keeping your details up to date

It is the responsibility of the plot holder to inform Brockenhurst Parish Council of any change of address and update any other information relevant to their tenancy, such as illness or incapacity. Any communications will be sent to the latest address and/or email provided and will be deemed by the Parish Council to have been delivered to the plot holder.

Adopted: 5th September 2023 and effective from 1st March 2024
To be reviewed annually or sooner if required

Next Review: September 2024