

Allotment Terms & Conditions Working Group – Notes

Date: 20th November 2025

Time: 18:00 – 19:15

Chair: Cllr Mick Lucas

Present:

- **Cllr J Ballman**
- **Cllr J Yeowell**
- **Cllr Mick Lucas** (Chair)
- **Andrew Briggs** – Head of Operations
- **Neil Jackson** – Allotments Officer
- **Tenant Representatives:**
 - Phill (Rodbourne Farm)
 - Gary (Redcliffe St)
 - Liz (Akers Way)

1. Welcome & Introductions

- Cllr Lucas opened the meeting; explained this session focuses specifically on reviewing the Terms & Conditions (T&Cs) to ensure they are up to date, enforceable, and reflective of council needs.
- Andrew Briggs welcomed new participants; explained the working group's purpose and how the current T&Cs broadly align with national allotment legislation.
- It was noted that the last major T&C update was around 2 / 2.5 years ago.

2. Review of Existing T&Cs – Initial Comments

2.1 Conflicting Clauses (Pruning & Vegetation)

- Cllr Lucas highlighted inconsistency:
 - One clause prohibits cutting vegetation not belonging to the tenant.
 - Another clause requires the tenant to maintain all vegetation adjoining the plot.
- Agreement that wording needs clarification:
Tenants may prune vegetation *within* their plot but should not cut hedges or trees *outside* their plot boundary.

2.2 Dogs on Site

- Current T&Cs allow dogs only “under control”.
- Suggestion to amend wording to:
“Dogs must be kept on a short, fixed lead at all times.”
- Expandable leads are causing issues.

2.3 Keeping Bees

- Several tenants have asked about permission for beekeeping.
- Council can allow bees under controlled circumstances.
- AB advised tenants should contact the Council directly; they liaise with experienced beekeepers to assess suitability.

3. Structures (Greenhouses, Glass, Safety)

3.1 Greenhouses

- Current rule states greenhouses are not permitted.
- Tenants suggested rewording to:
“**Greenhouses using *glass* are not permitted due to fragility and safety risks.**”
- Polycarbonate or safety glazed structures may be acceptable.

3.2 Existing Glass Structures

- Existing glass greenhouses may remain while safe.
- If damaged or abandoned, tenants will be asked to remove them.

4. Waste, Disposal & Fly tipping

4.1 Bringing Waste On site

- T&Cs prohibit bringing waste onto allotments.
- Clarification needed:
 - Tenants may bring green vegetable matter from their plot to compost.
 - But no household waste, grass cuttings from home, or supermarket waste.

4.2 Asbestos & Hazardous Waste

- Tenants reminded they must NOT remove asbestos themselves; it is illegal without a licence.

4.3 Fly tipping Enforcement

- AB noted major improvements over the last year due to regular inspections, skip provision, and closer communication.
- Discussion that Council may assist individual tenants struggling to remove large items but cannot advertise this widely.

4.4 Rubbish Left on Plots When Tenants Leave

- Council uses a termination form requiring tenants to remove all belongings within 21 days.
- Charges may apply if plots are left in poor condition.

5. Equality, Reasonable Adjustments & Accessibility

- Need to explicitly include Equality Act responsibilities within the T&Cs.
- Council already makes practical adjustments (e.g., accessible plots near gates, flatter ground).
- Each request is reviewed on a case by case basis.

6. Paths, Boundaries & Encroachment

- Some tenants have expanded their plots over time, narrowing or eliminating paths.
- T&Cs need more explicit rules on:
Maintaining path widths and preventing encroachment onto communal areas.

7. Invasive Species & Composting Rules

- Current clause prohibits bamboo, willow, and fast growing conifers.
- Cllr Lucas highlighted contradictions where Council has planted micro forests (Churchward Ave).
- Additional species to add: Japanese knotweed, mare's tail (horsetail), bindweed.
- Composting guidance must specify that invasive weeds should not be composted.

8. Bonfires & Burning Rules

Significant discussion:

Concerns Raised:

- Smoke nuisance to neighbouring residents.
- Inconsiderate timing (e.g., during the day when washing is outside).
- Safety issues when left unattended.

Tenant feedback:

- Some weeds (e.g., mare's tail) cannot be composted.
- Burning can be useful if well controlled.

Ideas discussed:

- Allow limited bonfires only:
 - Seasonal restrictions (spring & autumn)
 - Time of day limits (e.g., after 6pm)
 - Only dry material, no treated timber
 - Never left unattended

- Potential future tenant survey to gauge wider opinion.
- Need to embed bonfire rules directly into the T&Cs.

9. Chemical & Fuel Storage

- Agreement that storing petrol, diesel or paraffin in sheds poses risks.
- However, many tenants use petrol rotavators.
- More clear guidance needed on fuel / chem storage.

10. Wildlife Protection & Netting

- Hedge cutting should be prohibited March & August due to nesting season.
- Netting should be tightly secured to avoid trapping wildlife.
- Mesh size guidance needed.

11. Ponds & Water Features

- Safety concerns noted.
- Advice to only allow small, shallow, covered water features unless otherwise approved.

12. Antisocial Behaviour (ASB), Harassment & Social Media

Points Raised:

- ASB definitions can be subjective; need clearer wording.
- Tenants should report harassment or threatening behaviour to Council and/or Police.
- Need clause addressing online harassment, such as social media abuse within allotment groups.

Agreement:

- Stronger ASB clause required in revised T&Cs.
- Behaviour expectations, consequences, and possible immediate termination must be clearly set out.

13. Trespass & Security

- Tenants advised not to confront trespassers.
- Gate security has improved; fewer issues reported.
- T&Cs should give a clear process for reporting trespass.

14. Abandonment & Temporary Absence

- Tenants sometimes cannot tend their plots due to emergencies or illness.
- Need clause defining:
 - What counts as abandonment
 - How to notify Council of a temporary absence
 - How long absence may be authorised

15. Tools & Machinery

- Debate on banning petrol machinery.
- Many older tenants rely on petrol rotavators.
- No decision: item requires balancing safety & practicality.

16. Parking, Access & Site Improvements

- Issues with vehicle obstruction at some sites.
- Tenants suggested more parking areas where feasible.
- Possibility of adding parking improvements to future site upgrade plans.

17. Toilets

- Cllr Lucas & Cllr Ballman raised the need for composting toilets at some sites.
- Council to explore grant funding opportunities.

18. CCTV & Wildlife Cameras

- T&Cs should prohibit private CCTV facing other plots (privacy risk).
- Wildlife cameras may be acceptable; Council to review legality and issue guidance.

19. Weather Damage & Liability

- Council not responsible for storm or weather damage to structures but will clarify wording.

20. Cultivation Monitoring & Enforcement

Concerns:

- Some tenants receive repeated warnings without improvement.
- Need clear timelines for enforcement.

Discussion:

- Council uses photographic inspection software.
- Inspections occur regularly.
- Some flexibility is required, but repeated noncultivation must not continue indefinitely.

Suggestion:

- Consider adding rule that new tenants must show progress within 3 months, or tenancy may be reviewed.

21. Next Steps

AB summarised the process:

1. All discussion points will be written into draft updated clauses.
2. Draft T&Cs will be circulated to members of the group for review.
3. A second working group meeting may be arranged early in the New Year.
4. Final recommendations will go to the Leisure & Recreation Committee for approval.
5. Tenants will then be informed of changes.

Councillors and officers thanked tenants for attending and contributing positively.

Meeting closed 19:15