

Bathford Allotment Rents

At the plottolders meeting in April, it was agreed that we would seek the views of plot holders before the next increase in allotment rents. This questionnaire is the tool for this task and the Wardens and Parish Council Amenities Committee would ask you to consider a few facts and then give your opinion on a reasonable rent for the plot you hold.

Firstly, a few facts;

- 1 Your plot rent has not changed for a number of years. The main variable in cost was the water charge, over which we have no control and, in 2002 we separated this into a separate charge that changes according to the cost of water as billed.
- 2 The method the council uses to fix amenities rents each year uses the annual retail price index to increase the rental charge and 'rounds up' this figure to the nearest pound. Because allotment rents are very low, this meant a significant increase every year – way above inflation! (*Note: If we had carried on using this formula the rent for a full plot for 2008 would have been at least £21 inc. water!!!*).
- 3 In 2004 we agreed the current figure with the Wardens and the rents have not changed since (although the water charge has risen by £1 to cover increased charges from Wessex Water).
- 4 The rents to be collected this year **HAVE NOT CHANGED**. We are looking towards 2008 charges now.

Secondly, a bit of history for newer plot holders:

- 1 There is an old story, which circulates that the Parish Council is 'not allowed to make a profit from the allotments'. This story raises its head whenever allotment costs are reviewed and needs to be explained – so here are the facts and then hopefully, we can forget it.
- 2 The allotment fields were let to the village by the Skrine family under the Enclosure Acts in the 1800's. The Acts say that the landowner must be paid an amount **at least equal** to the amount of wheat they could have grown on the land during that season. No upper limit was laid down in the Act. If anyone is interested in the history, I have an electronic copy of a transcript of the relevant document and will be happy to share it.

The future:

1 What are the Amenities Committee's aims?

We would like to see the rents rise to a reasonable level and remain at that level for a number of years unless something unforeseen arises. The Parish Council does not want to make a profit from the allotments (or any other amenity it controls) but, also, it must not make a loss! At the end of the day, we are responsible for precept monies collected from every member of the Parish and must look after that money.

- 2 Currently, the allotments are working in budget and there will be no rent rise until 2008. However, we must ensure that we stay within our budget. We also believe that the charges for our allotments bear comparison with other parishes in our area. (See B&NES website / allotments). Detailed budget figures for Bathford can be viewed at the Parish Office – please contact the Clerk.
- 3 We would like an input from you, as a plot holder, as to what you believe is a fair rent for the plot you hold.
- 4 We also welcome suggestions from you as to what could be done to improve the allotment area (bearing in mind cost constraints) with a view to long term improvement of the allotments generally.
- 5 The Amenities Committee is to consider ways of using any surplus allotment budget funds each year to improve the facilities available. We welcome your suggestions as to what are areas to target.

On the back of this sheet is a questionnaire with a few tick boxes. Some of the suggestions there come from a meeting between the Wardens and myself and you may have a few ideas of your own. Please take a few minutes to complete the questionnaire and return it to Mike Smith, Martin Wright, the Parish Office or me. We will review the results and come back to you later in the year.

Stan Cherry,
Bathford Parish Council.

Current Allotment Plot Rents:

Single Plot £10 / year Concession £5 / year Half Plot £5 / year Concession £2.50 / year
In addition, all plottolders pay £3-00 per year Water Charge

Rough budget figures for last year:

Garden Business Grasscutting	£146.87
Maintenance	£70.50
Hedgecutting	£58.75
Ground rent	£1.00
Insurance excess	£125.00.
Water charges for year	£158.17
Total	£560.29

Rental Income for the year	£470.00
Water charge income approx	£ 142.00

Total £ 612.00

1 **Rent rise from September 2008:**

Wardens Suggested rise	Yes	No
Increase by £1 p.a. for full plot with concessions (£11, £5.50, £2.75 + water charge)		
Amenities Committee suggested rise		
Increase by £4 p.a. for full plot with concessions (£14, £7, £3.50 + water charge), fixed for three years subject to no sudden large cost increases to the budget. The committee will also consider suggestions to allotment amenities from any excess income.		
Your suggestion for a fair rent		
Please enter your own suggestion for price of a full plot – concessions would be applied.		

2 **Suggestions for improvements to the Allotment area from surplus funds.**

From Wardens / Amenities meeting	Yes	No
Obtain a load of manure for general use once per year		
Obtain a store and specific tools for general use (e.g. lawnmower, rotovator or strimmer)		
Subsidise any excess water charge rises when possible		
Please enter your ideas for improving facilities here:		