

Allotments Survey

Final survey results and recommendations

This report sets out the results of a final survey among allotment holders in Menheniot taken in February 2019 to examine potential changes in the current tenancy agreement.

This report has been prepared by John Hesketh Parish Clerk
March 2019

Background

In January 2019, councillors asked the Clerk to undertake a short opinion survey among allotment holders to gauge their opinion of the way in which the parish council managed multiple tenancies. The aim of the survey was to clarify the terms and conditions in the current tenancy agreement, and to give plotheolders the opportunity to comment on any other aspects of their experience as tenants.

The survey gave respondents a short scenario, and asked them to answer questions about it:

We have 26 plots to let out. 24 are taken and 2 are vacant. One of the vacant plots has not been looked after properly and is covered in weeds. The other plot is clean, tidy and ready to be let out. The council has 3 people on its waiting list.

Eight questions were asked in the survey.

Headlines

At the close of the second survey on 28 February 2019, the council had received replies from 11 tenants out of 22. This was equivalent to 50% of the plot holders.

Vacant plots should be advertised on site.

A waiting list should be maintained that shows when applicants first made their enquiry. This way, everyone can see that plots are allocated fairly on a first come, first served basis.

The maximum number of plots that anyone can hold should be limited to 2, unless there is no-one on the waiting list.

Plots should be inspected regularly to ensure they are properly maintained.

Next steps

The parish council will discuss this report at its next meeting on 18 April 2019 and decide if they accept the findings and what action to take next.

Option 1

Waiting lists

Publish and maintain regular updates

Option 2

Vacant plots

Advertised to everyone, with people on the waiting list having first refusal.

Current plot holders wishing to move to an alternative plot must make their request through the clerk's office.

Option 3

Maintenance

Plots inspected monthly and warning notices given if not maintained to standard.

Option 4

Notice

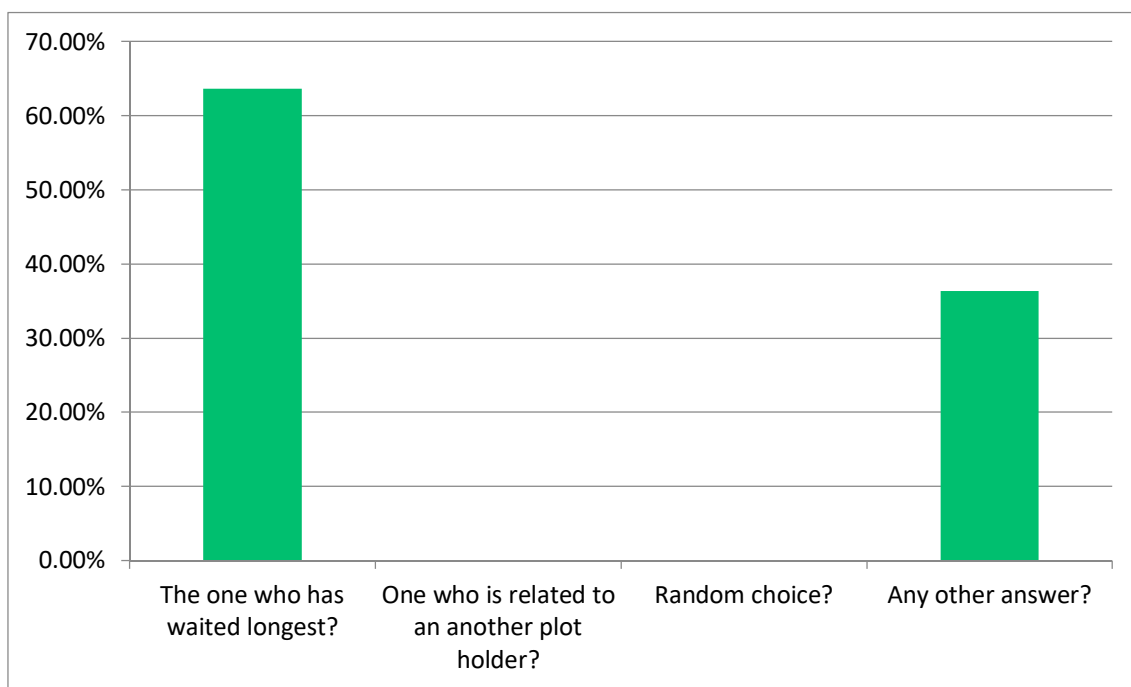
Three month rule for termination of tenancy agreement (for quitting the allotments or for surrendering a surplus plot).

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Who do we give the vacant plot to?

The most popular choice for all respondents (60%) was for the person who has waited the longest. For this to happen, the council will need to ensure that potential plotholders know how to make application, and how many other people are waiting.

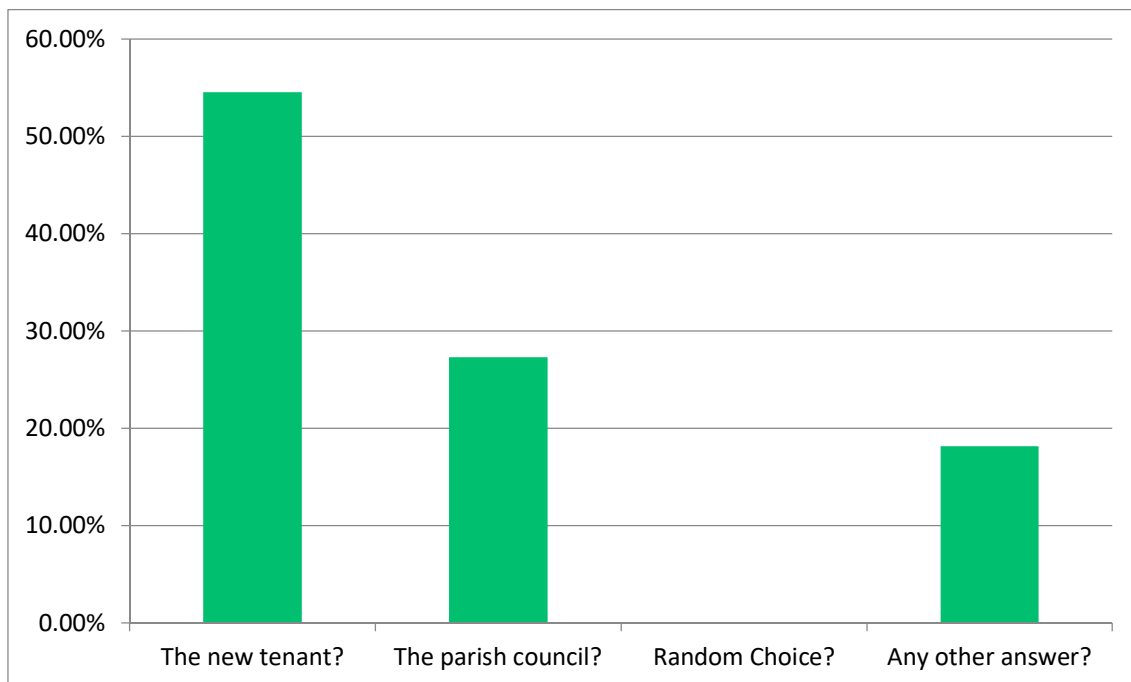


Comments

- Develop a system that is fair, such as advertised and held to a minimum 2 year before exchanging plots
- I believe there should be a well-founded system which would help to resolve some issues which allows any vacant plots to be advertised and displayed to anyone wishing to get a nicer looking plot, or a bigger plot. Some people prevent the ability to get a nicer plot because.
- To the person who has not got one regardless of time on the waiting list

Who decides who has which plot?

Where there are choices in the selection of which plot, over half people replying felt that the incoming tenant should choose. One quarter felt the parish council should allocate – but the comments with this question suggest that this would only happen once there is a clear and public set of rules that everyone can see and understand.



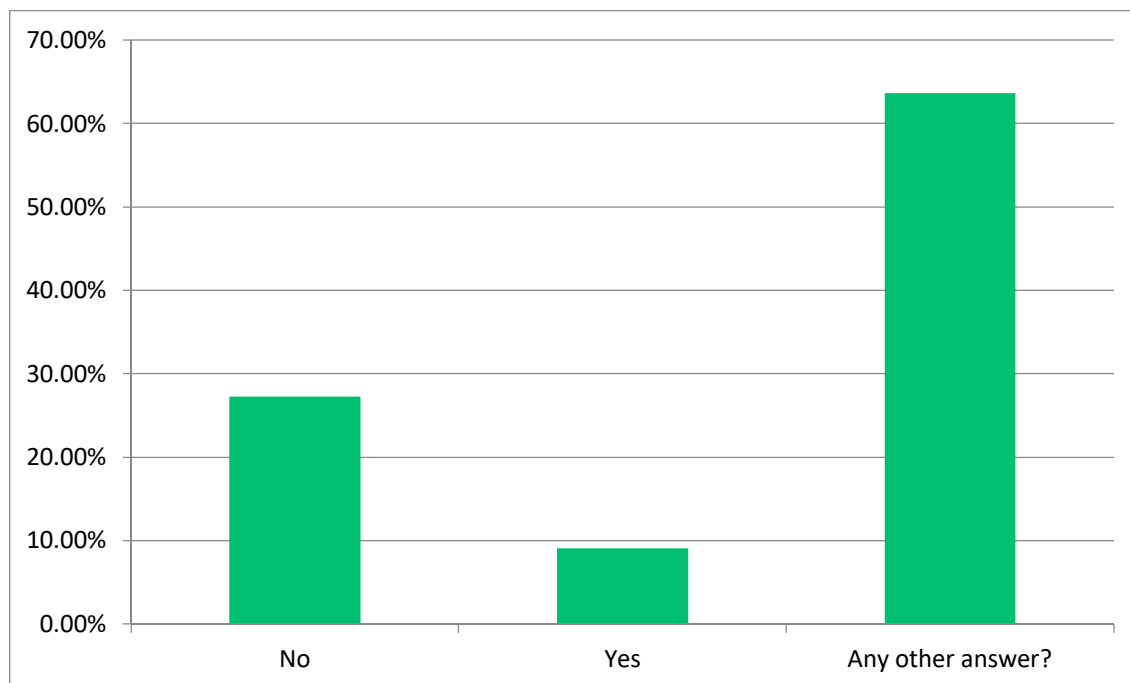
Comments

I would expect the parish council to manage the allocation of plots, again any vacant plots available should be advertised and allocated at the end of the year, this will free up the vacant plot ready for someone else to take.

Once all movement has been made any vacant plots should be offered to anyone the waiting list to be contacted by the parish council.

Some tenants already have more than one plot. When we have people on our waiting list, should we ask one of the existing tenants to give up one of their extra plots?

Three times as many people answering the question directly felt that tenants with more than one plot should not be asked to surrender a plot. However, the comments we received suggest this should be a solution – provided that rules are followed, and the proposal is a 3 month notice period.

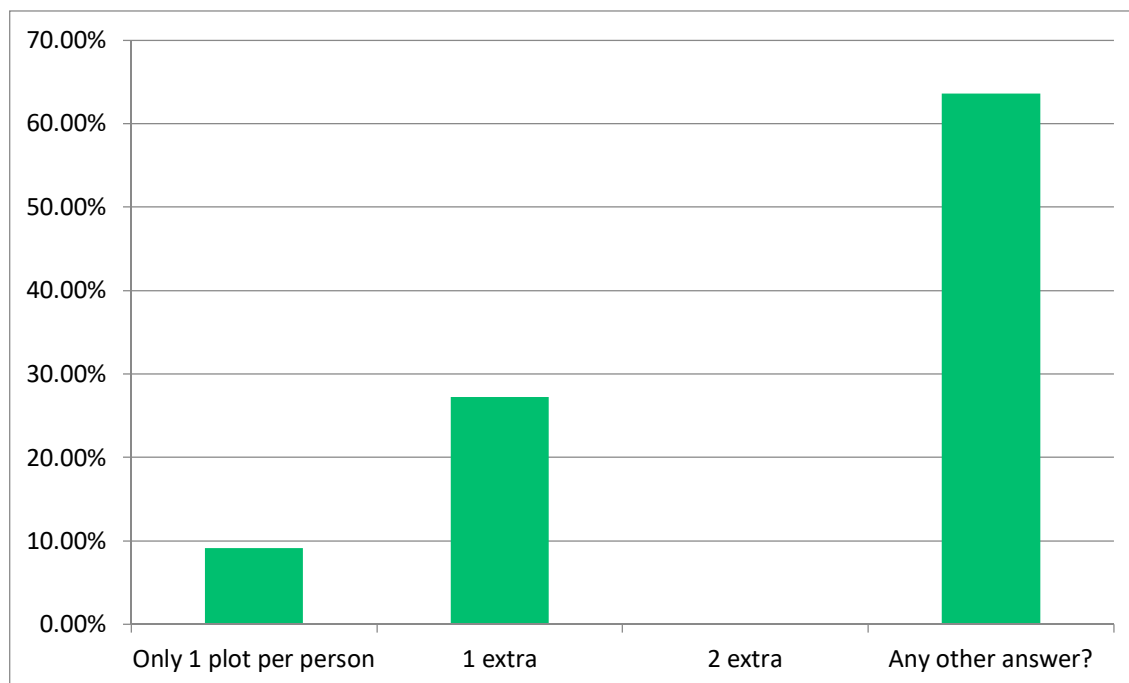


Comments

- If the tenant has held the additional plot for perhaps 3 years they should be allowed to continue, having three plots are a little greedy
- 3 months' notice at end of growing season
- This is again an issue with nice plots are not being fairly allocated.
- Yes providing the council gives the 3 months' notice ie: by the 30th September
- Yes, but they should be asked for voluntary relinquishing and given a minimum notice to complete growing cycle
- Yes provided that statutory notice is given

Should there be a limit to the number of plots any one person can have?

Those answering directly (by 3:1) are clear that the limit should be a maximum of 2 in total. Comments suggest that any spare plots should be offered to people on the waiting list before allocating to an existing plotholder.



Comments

One plot per person except those who have held 2 plots until membership ceases

Once all allocations have been made it would be time to allocate any vacant plots

If nobody is on the waiting list then it could be let to one of the existing tenants on the understanding that they might have to give it up if someone wants a plot at the beginning of the New Year.

Subject to anyone on the waiting list

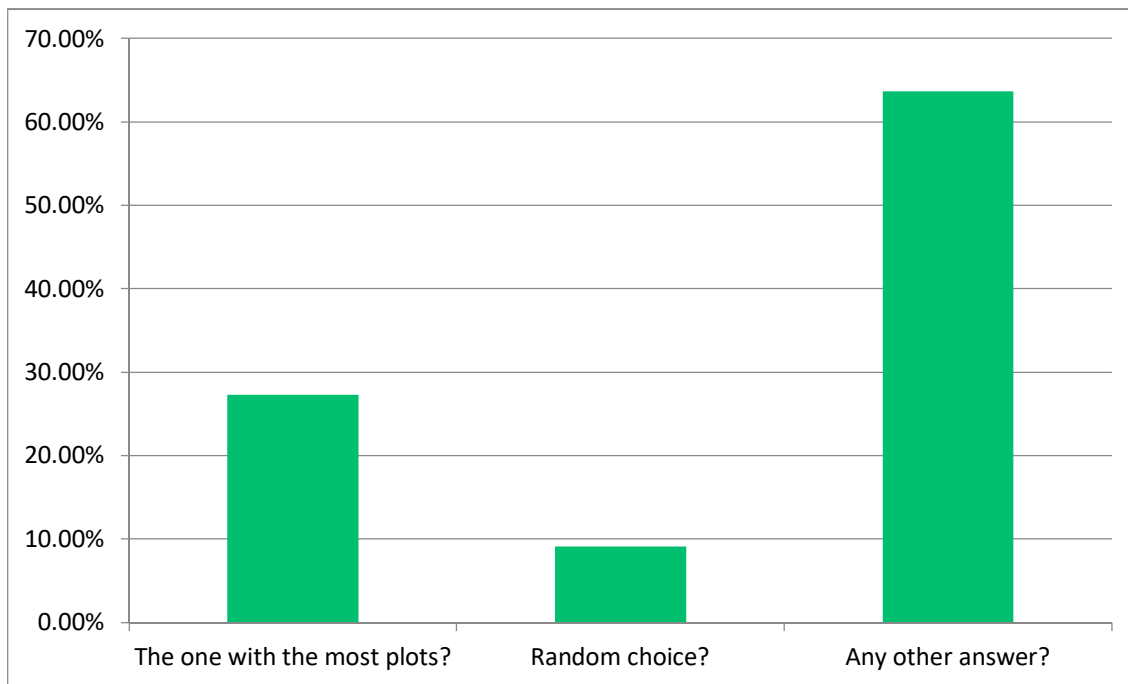
Once all allocations have been made it would be time to allocate any vacant plots

Can have extra plot if not occupied but all current plotholders should be asked if wanted.

No If it keeps the plots in good order when no waiting list

How should we choose who should give up a plot?

So if we have someone on the waiting list, and there are tenants with more than 2 plots, then they should be asked to surrender them in the first instance.



Comments

Use the process for any one with

The whole theme of my response is about fairness not about who has been the longest allotment holder or favourites.

Any plot that is not being properly used or looked after

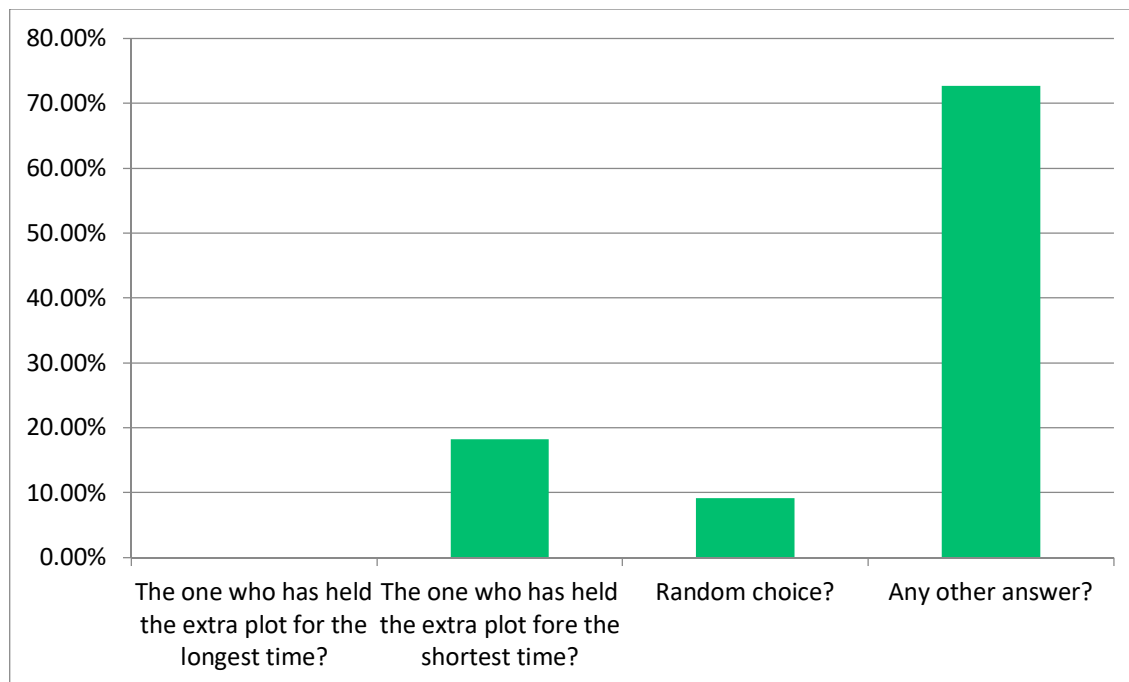
Anyone with more than two plots in the future should be made aware that the additional renewal will be confirmed in January the three months' notice not being applicable

Ask for a volunteer otherwise the one with the most but enough notice needs to be given.

Depends on waiting list numbers

If the three plot holders all have the same number of extra plots, how do we choose which one to give up a plot?

Strong feelings in the comments section about choosing the plot from a tenant who is not managing their space properly.



Comments

Use process of running those persons with 2 plots for three years until they give up their allotment
If required get each person to share a plot if there is a waiting list if no waiting list allocate vacant plots

The one who is not making full use of them

Subject to the condition of the plot

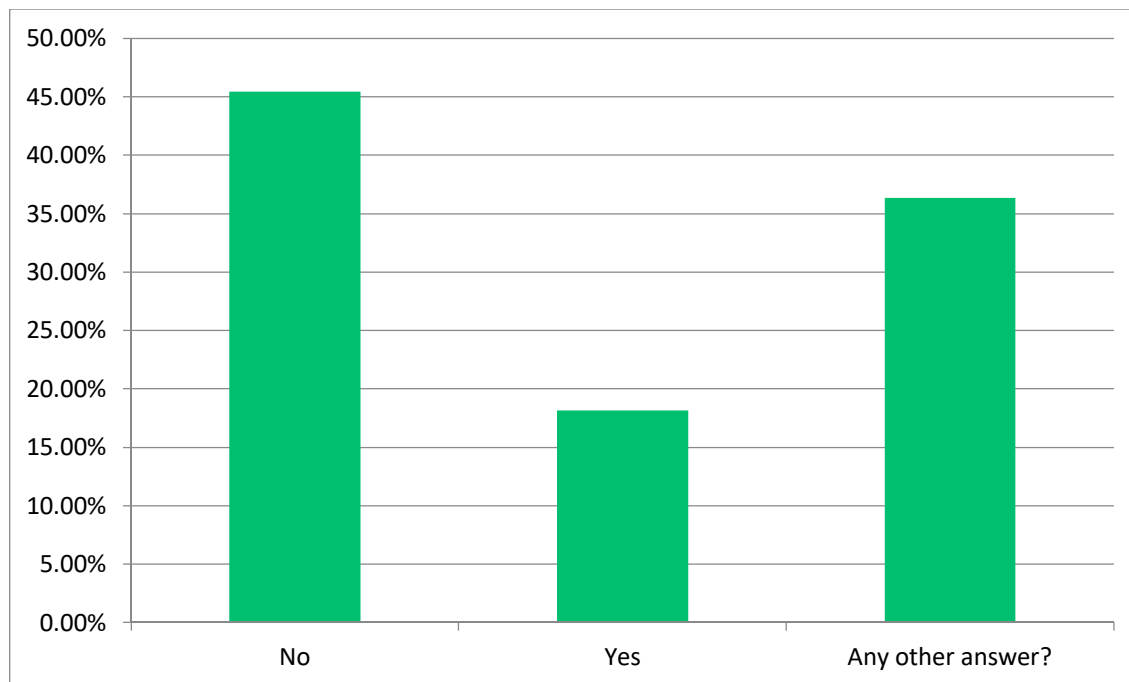
If one of the plots is unkempt they should be asked to give it up

Normally it would be 'last in, first out', but I think asking for a volunteer would be a good starting point. I think it must be taken into consideration that many plot holders will already have made a financial outlay for the year.

Irrelevant if no waiting list

Should the parish council stay away from decisions like this and let the plot holders decide for themselves?

Very clear that the majority of respondents want the parish council to remain in control of the allotments and the enforcement of its rules.



Comments

This brings in exactly what I experienced,
I believe the parish councillor should inspect plots monthly
How? If we have a group I know nothing about it.

Your comments from the survey are listed here.

Comment	Response
If someone has more than one plot and they are not kept clean and tidy then they obviously cannot cope and should give up one.	The council is proposing to make regular checks and introduce a system of warnings if plot are not maintained to the standard set out in the tenancy agreement.
(If a plot holder is required to give up their plot) an early warning to hand back a plot is important.	There is a three month rule in the tenancy agreement about giving notice. The council will enforce this.

Technical

Survey open from 1 February 2019 until 28 February 2019.

16 responses were received. There were 11 responses made so this means that 50% of tenants have engaged in the consultation. Although the survey was made anonymously, where respondents were known to rent more than one plot and had given their name, all their answers were included to reflect all the plots rented.

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