

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE ALLOTMENTS COMMITTEE, HELD ON THURSDAY 16th JANUARY 2014, IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER, KING'S HOUSE, THETFORD, STARTING AT 10.00 A.M.

Present:

Councillors:

M G Spencer (Chairman)

Mrs S J Armes

D Crawford

In attendance:

M Howard Town Clerk

R Carter Allotment Officer

R Stebbings Works Foreman

Also in attendance:

R Woods Chairman Thetford Garden & Allotment Club,

T Gale, Representative Mundford Road Allotments Association

K Coghlan Representative Bury Road Allotments

Y Rout Representative Icknield Way Allotments

E Browne, A Beard – Members of the Public.

The meeting was preceded by a 15-minute Open Forum, starting at 10 a.m. when members of the public and representatives of the press are invited to address the Committee.

Mrs Y Rout asked if the fence between the Cemetery and Icknield Way allotments could be repaired, she had made a request approximately a year ago but nothing had been done to date. The Works Foreman said that he would see what needed to be done to the fence.

Mrs K Coghlan requested that something be done to secure locks to allotment gates to prevent them from going missing. The Works Foreman informed the meeting that the locks will be secured to the gates in the very near future.

T Gale reported that there had been a number of break-ins and damage caused on the Mundford Road allotments. He supplied details of a material that could be attached to the top of gates to deter people from climbing over them. A Beard informed the meeting that a survey had been done some years earlier to find out how many gates were required to give access to the Mundford Road site. T Gale suggested that perhaps not all the gates were needed and it was the gates that seemed to allow easier access to the site. A Beard agreed to supply the Council with details of the survey. The Town Clerk agreed that there may be the possibility of closing up some of the gates and attaching the spiked material on top of the remaining gates.

T Gale also asked if notices informing people of security cameras could be displayed as one allotment holder already has a camera and he intends to fit one. The Town Clerk agreed that he could display notices as these were factually correct.

Ms E Browne advised the meeting that there was a very big gap under one of the gates, large enough for someone to crawl through.

Minutes

681/13

DECLARATIONS OF ANY DISCLOSABLE PECUNIARY INTERESTS

None.

- 682/13 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE
Apologies were received from the Mayor Councillor S N H Wright and Councillor T J Lamb.
- 683/13 MINUTES
RESOLVED that the minutes of the Committee's meeting held on 18th July 2013, as received by the Council on 30th July 2013 under minute 235/13 (e) be confirmed as a true record and signed/initialled by the Committee Chairman.
- 684/13 REVIEW OF FEES
The increase of fees from October 2014 was discussed in detail in conjunction with financial information supplied. It was agreed that the fees were very low. Bearing in mind that the expenditure for allotments had exceeded the budget of £8,300 with three months of the current financial year still to go it was agreed that a significant increase would be appropriate. So far this year expenses were more than double the income received.
The Town Clerk suggested that fees should be increased by 50% in October 2014 to £36.00 with a further increase in October 2015 to £48.00 for whole plots and £21.00 and £29.00 respectively for half plots.
The subject of concessionary rates for tenants over 60 was also discussed in detail. Whilst it was agreed that should the concession be removed the increase for those people over 60 would be more than 50%, it was a necessary step to try and cover the costs of the allotments.
The implications of raising the rent and also charging two years rent at one time was discussed and it was agreed that if the rent was increased then to charge two years rent at one time would be too much to ask of tenants.
After discussion Councillor Mrs S Armes proposed and Councillor D Crawford seconded that as from October 2014 allotment fees will be increased to £36.00 for a whole plot and £21.00 for a half plot, concessions to be ceased but that fees will be collected for one year only.
A vote was taken: For - 3 votes.
RECOMMENDATION: As from October 2014 allotment fees will be increased to £36.00 for a whole plot and £21.00 for a half plot, concessions to be ceased but that fees will be collected for one year only.
- 685/13 INSPECTION DATES FOR 2014/2015 YEAR
The best times for inspections was discussed and Councillor Mrs S Armes felt that it would be best to leave the first inspection of the year until after Easter as this was traditionally when many people start work on their plots. The two dates for inspections were agreed as Wednesday 30th April 2014 and Wednesday 30th July 2014.
- 686/13 CHANGES TO TERMS AND CONDITIONS OF TENANCY
The subject of the size of sheds allowed on plots was discussed with regard to size and use. Councillor Mrs S Armes proposed and Councillor D Crawford seconded that clause 2.7 the Terms and

Conditions of Tenancy should be amended to state that any building erected on a plot must be no more than 6' x 8' in size, with the exception of clubhouses. The building must not be used for residential use i.e. for sleeping in.

A vote was taken: For - 3 votes.

RECOMMENDATION: That Clause 2.7 of the Terms and Conditions of Tenancy be amended to include a maximum size of building that may be erected of 6' x 8' (with the exception of clubhouses) and that it may not be used for residential use i.e. for sleeping in.

687/13

USE OF £1200 RECEIVED FROM NETWORK RAIL 2011

The Town Clerk informed the meeting that the £1200 received from Network Rail had been used for essential maintenance of the allotments since being received in 2011. Therefore, unless an amount was requested from reserves (Finance Committee) there was no money available. All understood and agreed.

688/13

FINANCIAL REVIEW

A breakdown of expenses against budget figures was tabled and discussed. There has been a high level of maintenance required as well as a significant increase in the cost of water supplied, particularly for the Mundford Road site. There had also been a large amount spent on maintenance of trees. This had all been discussed at Agenda Item 684/13 when determining the new fee structure.

689/13

REPAIR OF TROPHY (RETROSPECTIVE) FOR TGAC ANNUAL SHOW

One of the trophies for the TGAC Annual Show required repair, which had been done and the payment of £5 to cover the repair was agreed retrospectively.

690/13

PAYMENT TO TGAC FOR ENGRAVING OF CUP FOR ANNUAL SHOW

An invoice for £12 for the engraving of a cup for the TGAC Annual Show had been passed to the Council and discussed. Councillor D Crawford proposed and Councillor Mrs S Armes seconded that the Invoice be paid to TGAC.

A vote was taken: For - 3 votes.

RECOMMENDATION: That an invoice for £12 paid by TGAC for engraving the cup be reimbursed to them.

691/13

PLANTING OF WILD FLOWERS

Mrs R Woods informed the meeting that TGAC were happy and willing to plant flowers if the Town Council had a specific area that would benefit from planting. The Town Clerk asked that TGAC should put forward areas that they felt were suitable and that the Council would seek any permissions, if required.

692/13

PRESS RELEASES

It was agreed that a press release be done well in advance of the increase in fees, explaining where money had been spent e.g. fencing and where costs were much increased.

693/13

ITEMS OF URGENT BUSINESS

The Allotment Officer gave details of allocation and waiting times to the meeting as follows:

23 Allocations since 1st April 2014 with an average waiting time of 4 months.

25 people on waiting list as at 15th January 2014, of which 4 are waiting for specific plots.

8 plots to be allocated as soon as possible.

694/13

DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Date of next meeting Wednesday 14 May 2014.

Chairman

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