

PUBLIC

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE ALLOTMENTS COMMITTEE,
HELD ON WEDNESDAY 18th APRIL 2018, IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER,
KING'S HOUSE, THETFORD, STARTING AT 10.00 A.M.**

Present:

The Mayor, Councillor D Crawford

Councillors: Councillors:

B Canham
Mrs J Hollis

C Harvey (Vice Chair)
J Newton (Chair)

Officers in attendance:

S Lewis
K Robinson
C Higgins

Deputy Town Clerk
Allotment Officer
Allotment Works Team

The meeting was preceded by a 15-minute Open Forum, starting at 10.00 a.m. when members of the public and representatives of the press were invited to address the Committee.

An Allotment holder from the Munford Road Allotments read from a letter addressed to the Allotments Committee outlining issues that he had with letters that had been sent to Allotments holders and other issues. The Deputy Town Clerk stated that there was an item on the agenda dealing with the Allotments Policy and the role of the Allotment Clubs and hoped these issues can be overcome.

An Allotment holder from the London Road Allotments asked if a grit bin could be provided close to the entrance of the allotments. The Allotments Officer will look into this matter.

The Chairman of the Thetford Garden and Allotment club mentioned the annual allotment competition to be held on Wednesday 11th July. He hoped the Council would continue funding the expenses for this day.

An Allotment holder felt that there was not a level playing field on the early inspections carried out in the winter months. The Deputy Town Clerk reported that with over 200 allotments to cover they need to be done over a 6 month period and that allowances would be made for the time of year when inspecting.

961/17 **DECLARATIONS OF ANY DISCLOSABLE PECUNIARY INTERESTS**
None.

962/17 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**
Apologies were received from Councillor S J Armes.

963/17 **MINUTES**
RESOLVED: The minutes of the Committee's meeting, held on 31st January 2018, received by Full Council on the 27th February 2018, be confirmed as a true record and signed/initialled by the Chairman.

964/17 **ACTION POINTS**
The Chairman updated the committee on the last meeting action points:

- The trees will now be loped later this year after the nesting season.

- The fence and gate on the Magdalen Site will be constructed by an outside contractor.

965/17 HEALTH & SAFETY

Councillor C Harvey, the Allotment H&S Officer, reported issues with barbed and razor wire on the site. The Allotment holder had been written to regarding removal of this wire.

966/17 BUDGET

The Committee reviewed the budget for financial year 2017/18 and noted that they were within the budget. The Chairman stated that in order to plan for the future £10,000 should be transferred into the Allotment Reserves from the surplus the Council is expecting from the year end to be used for Health and Safety repairs at the Allotments. In addition there is a need for full time maintenance staff and a full time administrator to look after the 300 allotments going forward. This should be taken into consideration when planning next year's budget. There followed a discussion and Councillor C Harvey proposed and Councillor B Canham seconded:

RECOMMENDATION: That £10,000 is transferred from the expected year end surplus to the Allotments Reserves to be used for needed Health & Safety repairs.

967/17 ALLOTMENT INSPECTIONS

The Chairman requested that this item is taken below the line due to the confidential nature of the business to be discussed. This was agreed by the Committee.

968/17 ALLOTMENTS POLICY

The Chairman requested that the meeting was closed. This was agreed and the Chairman closed the meeting.

The Deputy Town Clerk reported that the Allotments Policy was a work in progress and should be seen as a starting point and to involve the Allotment Clubs. It was stated from the floor that there are properly constituted clubs at the various sites that have been in existence for many years. After a discussion it was agreed that the Deputy Town Clerk and the Allotment Officer would establish details of each of the constituted clubs and arrange for a series of informal meetings with the Officers of the Clubs so that the clubs and the Council can feed into the Allotments Committee meetings with all parties working together to build a solid working relationship.

The Chairman reopened the meeting.

969/17 RAT PROBLEM

The Allotment Team Worker reported that he has been baiting the rat traps but as there is plenty of food available to the rats where the chickens are kept that they are not being caught. He stated that the only rat proof chicken feeders that will exclude rats are called Treadle Chicken feeders which are widely available at a cost of around £30. The Deputy Town Clerk stated that the Council should employ a professional to inform the Council of a way forward to manage and eradicate this problem.

970/17 ALLOTMENT FEES

The Chairman to reviewed the current fees and reported that whilst they will remain unchanged for 2018/19 they will need to be reviewed in the future to

take account of increased costs if more staff were required to administer the allotments. This would be subject to a public consultation of who would cover the potential extra costs – allotment holders or the parishioners through an increase in precept.

971/17

ALLOTMENTS PRIORITIES

- To develop a robust maintenance plan for all sites including risk assessments and safe working practices – The plan was working well with weekly inspections taking place and regular H&S visits.
- To maintain 90% tenancy of allotments – There are still about 20 plots that are gradually being made ready to be able to be handed over to new allotment holders.
- New priority – To investigate all current Allotment Clubs to obtain the name, the Constitution, if they are members of the National Allotment Society and the name of the elected Secretary/Representative. To arrange informal meetings with the representatives of the clubs and work together to build a strong working relationship.

972/17

TENDER FOR MAINTAINANCE OF ALLOTMENT SITES

The Chairman reviewed the tender for the vegetation management of the Town Council allotments. The tender was agreed and the closing date will be 12 noon on Friday 11th May 2018.

973/17

CORRESPONDENCE

The Chairman requested that this item is taken below the line due to the confidential nature of the business to be discussed. This was agreed by the Committee.

974/17

ITEMS OF URGENT BUSINESS

None.

975/17

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

None.

976/17

EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

To consider resolving that, pursuant to the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960, the press and public be excluded for any remaining items of business on the grounds that publicity would be prejudicial to the public interest by reason of the confidential nature of the business to be discussed.

967/17

ALLOTMENT INSPECTIONS

973/17

CORRESPONDENCE

977/17

LAND FOR ALLOTMENTS

ACTION POINT	BY WHOM	BY WHEN
Trees on Mundford Road Site to be lopped	Works Foreman	Later in 2018

Fence and gate to be erected on the Magdalen Site.	Allotment Officer.	ASAP
To seek advice from a professional regarding the rat problem.	Allotment Officer.	Urgent - ASAP
To arrange informal meetings with the representatives of the Allotment clubs	The Deputy Town Clerk and Allotment Officer	ASAP

Chairman.