

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE ALLOTMENTS COMMITTEE HELD IN KINGS HOUSE,
THETFORD ON THURSDAY 25th AUGUST 2022, STARTING AT 10.15 AM.

Councillors:
D Crawford (Chair), C Harvey, B Tullett (Vice Chair)

Officers:
T Cunnell (Town Clerk), A Yorke (Deputy Town Clerk), C Higgins (Allotment Officer)

MINUTES

268/22	<u>DECLARATIONS OF ANY DISCLOSABLE PECUNIARY INTERESTS</u> None.
269/22	<u>APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE</u> None.
270/22	<u>MINUTES</u> RESOLVED: The minutes of the Allotments Committee meeting held on 16th June 2022, which were received by Full Council on 28th June 2022, are a true record and be signed/initialled by the Chairman.
271/22	<u>ALLOTMENT COMMITTEE ADMIN 2022/23</u> The draft Terms of Reference had been workshopped on 23 August 2022 and the amended Terms of Reference was tabled. After agreeing to one further change highlighted in the document, Councillor B Tullett proposed, and Councillor C Harvey seconded: RECOMMENDED: The Terms of Reference attached as Annexure A be recommended to Full Council.
272/22	<u>ENVIRONMENT STRATEGY CONTRIBUTION</u> The following items were identified for inclusion in the Committee's Environmental Strategy, namely: - <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review of allotment sizes. Ideally need to consider but take into account the demand for plots. Also need to also consider standardisation of plot sizes. Policy of only allocating half plots endorsed. • Water usage. Whilst the need to reduce water consumption is recognised, this would be a controversial change. Need to liaise with Site Representatives. • Fertilizer/composting. Need to liaise with Site Representatives. • Limit livestock. Also considered a controversial change. Need to liaise with Site Representatives. • Wildlife borders. To be considered for planting outside the existing site perimeter fencing. <p>There was also a discussion on whether hosepipes would be subject to a national or regional water usage ban. The Strategy would be discussed with Site Representatives.</p>
273/22	<u>COMMITTEE PRIORITIES</u> The priorities were discussed, noting that staff capacity was a restrictive challenge. The following operational strategies were identified: - <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To improve governance of Allotment Site Representatives. The need for clarification of roles and expectations deemed necessary. • To develop costed maintenance plans for each allotment site. This would assist the budget process.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage allotment associations to seek third-party funding. This was supported and identified as a priority for the next Site Representative Meeting. • Finalising guidance on allotment holders on managing their allotments. <p>The following possible projects were discussed: -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve security on the allotment sites. Locking of allotment sites was discussed. This is to be addressed at the next Site Representative meeting. • Implementation of selected environmental strategies. This is dependent on those strategies being finalised (see item 272/22 above). • Undertake a feasibility study on the possible impact on allotment redevelopment of Thetford train station to develop a response to Breckland's plans. It was noted that there was no additional information on the redevelopment of Thetford train station. • Identify land to develop further allotment sites. <p>These are to be considered in the budget preparation process.</p> <p>Action point: Committee Officer to send to all Committee members the draft guidance on managing allotments for their review.</p>
274/22	<p><u>FINANCIAL REPORT UPDATE</u></p> <p>The Financial Report (attached as Annexure B) for the period ended 31 July 2022 was discussed and noted.</p>
275/22	<p><u>ALLOTMENT OFFICER'S REPORT</u></p> <p>The Allotment Officer reported on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plot inspections and the decision not to renew tenancy agreements where plots are uncultivated or not used. • Provided an update on the allocation of plots and waiting lists. • The number of vacant plots. • The focus on targeted inspections such as uncultivated plots, animal welfare and hoarding of materials. <p>The report was noted.</p>
276/22	<p><u>SPECIFIC REQUESTS FROM ICKNIELD WAY</u></p> <p>The Committee agreed that Plot IC04B can be used as a communal area in response to a request from the Icknield Way Site Representative.</p> <p>The Committee refused the request that the gate/door to the allotment site be unlocked. This rule will not therefore be relaxed.</p>
277/22	<p><u>ACTION PLANS</u></p> <p>The Committee were updated on: -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The change to the rules on beekeeping to be considered. • The workshop on the Roles of Sites Representatives.
278/22	<p><u>CORRESPONDENCE</u></p> <p>None.</p>
279/22	<p><u>COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT</u></p> <p>The planned meeting with Site Representatives.</p>

Chairman

ANNEXURE A

THETFORD TOWN COUNCIL

TERMS OF REFERENCE - ALLOTMENT COMMITTEE

Role of Allotment Committee

- To confirm the quorum for the Committee to be 3 councillors;
- To consider and make decisions on any matters affecting the allotments and to implement the Allotment Policy;
- To liaise with allotment clubs, to notify them of Committee meetings and to encourage participation and co-operation;
- To annually approve any increase in tenancy fees;
- To work with the allotment tenants in order to provide a well- managed and effective service to allotment users;
- To carry out regular Inspections of the allotments;
- To recommend to the Town Council appropriate budget provisions for the current and coming financial years for items within the committee's remit;
- To review monthly accounts report and variances for the allotments;
- To recommend transfers to and from reserves from the allotment budget;
- To review and recommend amendments to the Allotment Tenancy Agreement, Terms and Conditions, the Allotment Policy and Terms of Reference;
- To carry out the annual Risk Assessment and bring to the attention of the Town Clerk and the Committee any identified health and safety risks;
- To review and approve maintenance plans;
- To maximise revenue from allotments to minimise the subsidised cost of providing allotments;
- To adopt appropriate strategies each year for inclusion in the Council corporate plan;
- To ensure the allotments comply with legal restrictions and health and safety issues;
- To respond to complaints, in line with the complaints policy.

Role of the Chairperson

- To hold regular meetings;
- To assist the Deputy Town Clerk (DTC) in setting agendas;
- To chair the Committee and ensure that council policies and procedures are correctly followed;
- To ensure that the Committee acts within the **areas** of delegated business, and that It refers decisions to Full Council when appropriate;
- To work closely with the DTC to ensure management of allotments is effective;

Role of the Deputy Town Clerk and Committee Secretary

To prepare agendas and minutes and ensure that these are circulated according to standing orders;

To work closely with the Chairperson ensuring that all necessary support is provided for the Committee;

To work with the Chairperson of the Committee, responding to correspondence and complaints.

ANNEXURE B

THETFORD TOWN COUNCIL						
ALLOTMENTS						
FOR THE PERIOD ENDED 31 JULY 2022						
INCOME					EXPLANATION OF JULY 22 VARIANCE	
Allotments		2022-23	2022-23	2022-23	2022-23	
N/C	NAME	JULY 22 ACTUAL YTD	JULY 22 BUDGET YTD	JULY 22 VARIANCE	BUDGET	
		£	£	£	£	
4600	Allotment Fees - No VAT	125		125	8,448	Most fees will be billed in October.
4601	Allotment Fees - Vatable	130	200	- 70		
4605	Forfeited Deposits	-	-	-	300	
TOTAL		255	200	55	8,748	
EXPENDITURE					EXPLANATION OF JULY 22 VARIANCE	
Allotments		2022-23	2022-23	2022-23	2022-23	
N/C	NAME	JULY 22 ACTUAL YTD	JULY 22 BUDGET YTD	JULY 22 VARIANCE	BUDGET	
		£	£	£	£	
5600	Allotments - No VAT	170	1,623	- 1,453	8,448)See breakdown of expenses below for detailed explanations.
5601	Allotments - Vatable	937	-	937)
5602	VAT Unallocated expenses	-	-	-		
TOTAL		1,107	1,623	- 516	8,448	
NET	Allotments	- 852	- 1,423	571	300	
<i>BREAKDOWN OF EXPENDITURE</i>						
	<i>Judging fees</i>	100		100	100	
	<i>Boundary posts</i>		48	- 48	140	
	<i>Annual pest control</i>			-	1,800	
	<i>Isolation of water pipe taps</i>		100	- 100	237	
	<i>Taps and keys</i>	562		562		
	<i>Tap repairs</i>		75	- 75	225	
	<i>Legal fees</i>			-	250	
	<i>Publications & comms</i>		250	- 250	1,000	
	<i>Special plot clearing</i>	330	500	- 170	1,625	
	<i>Contribution to Maintenance</i>			-	1,000	
	<i>New security locks</i>	115	250	- 135	750	
	<i>Repairs to fencing</i>		350	- 350	1,115	
	<i>Signage</i>		50	- 50	206	
	Total	1,107	1,623	- 516	8,448	

ANNEXURE C

Allotment Officer's Report

- Plot Inspections and Tenancy Renewals**

General plot inspections have been carried out during the past growing season which has resulted in some tenants receiving Formal Notices giving them a deadline to bring their allotment plots back up to the required standard. If it is found that a tenant has neglected their plot all season and particularly if they have shown a consistent history of neglect, then a Notice to Quit has been issued and they will not receive a chance to renew their Tenancy Agreement which expires on the 10th of October.

A copy of the Notice to Quit letter:

Dear Tenant

After recent inspections of your allotment plot it was still found to be in a state of neglect and this contravenes the Town Council's signed Allotment Tenancy Agreement and the Thetford Town Council Allotment Rules (Section 7. Cultivation and use of Allotment Gardens: Rules 7.3, 7.4, 7.5).

We have therefore decided not to renew your Tenancy Agreement when it expires on 10 October 2022.

It would be appreciated if the allotment plot could be vacated in a condition that is suitable to be allocated to the next tenant, devoid of rubbish and overgrown vegetation. Furthermore, all unsuitable structures will need to be dismantled and removed from your site. This will need to be carried out before the 10th of October 2022 so please ensure that you remove all your personal belongings. Any items left on your allotment plot will be permanently removed by the Council.

Should you wish to vacate your allotment plot earlier, please let me know.

If you require any further information, please email me on carlhiggins@thetfordtowncouncil.gov.uk. I will respond within 2 working days.

Yours faithfully

Carl Higgins

Allotment Officer

Thetford Town Council.

In total, nineteen tenants have received a Notice to quit letter and so far, five tenants have appealed to be given the chance to keep their plots, giving reasons that they have been working away or have been unwell. In these cases, careful consideration is given, and the tenant is usually granted a time scale to bring their plot up to standard before the renewal date (10/10/2022). Tenants that have shown a history of neglect would not be granted any further time scale.



Update on Allocation of Plots and Waiting List

- There are 52 applicants on the waiting list.
- Six applicants have been contacted since the last committee meeting and this has resulted in 3 applicants taking up the offer of an allotment plot.

Vacant Plots

- Mundford Road has two full vacant plots that require intensive clearance work and a half plot that is presently being worked on to bring it up to letting standard.
- London Road has 1 full vacant plot that requires further clearance work.
- Icknield Way has a half vacant plot that requires some work to bring it up to standard.