

Minutes  
Allotments Committee  
Democratic Services

Date 11/01/2024  
Time 10:00 - 11:21  
Location King's House; Council Chamber  
Present Chris Harvey (Chair), Terry Jermy, Terry Land (Vice Chair),  
John Hembling, and Peter Vale.  
Officers Alan Yorke (Acting Town Clerk and Finance Officer)  
Carl Higgins (Allotments Officer)  
Karen Robinson (Committee Clerk)

### **OPEN FORUM**

There were several members of the public in attendance who asked questions relating to:

- 1) A tenant asked about the policy regarding keeping bees on all of the allotment sites, and if bee keepers have to be tenants. The Acting Town Clerk replied that he would look into this matter.
- 2) A tenant asked about areas of land in Thetford for allotment use. E.g. Brunel Way. The Chairman replied that he would look into this matter with the Allotment Officer.

### **MINUTES**

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#### **567/23 DECLARATIONS OF ANY DISCLOSABLE PECUNIARY INTERESTS**

None.

#### **568/23 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies: Councillor Ronald Wood.

Absent: Councillor Mike Brindle.

#### **569/23 MINUTES**

**RESOLVED: The minutes of the Allotments Committee meeting held on 12th October 2023, which were received by Council on 24th October 2023 are a true record and signed/initialled by the Committee Chairman.**

#### **570/23 ALLOTMENT OFFICER'S UPDATE**

The Committee discussed a report from the Committee's Officers (including plot allocations and waiting lists), which was circulated prior to the meeting:

- Allotment tenants were notified of the intended site combination code changes and this change took place on the 8<sup>th</sup> of January 2024. The Police Beat Manager has also been notified of the changes.
- The local Police were notified of a series of break-ins on the Mundford Road Allotment Site and the London Road Allotment Site. The Committee discussed the utilisation of ex-offenders and community payback service for various tasks on the allotment sites.
- Current rules state that soil cannot be brought onto the allotment site for raised beds and will need to be screened and there may also be a challenge in getting it on site.

Councillor Terry Land proposed, and Councillor Terry Jermy seconded that a change to the rules be approved to enable a person with mobility challenges to erect raised beds, subject to the plot being returned to its original state upon relinquishment or termination.

### **Allocated & Vacant Plots**

- Since the last allotment committee meeting 22 applicants have been contacted and this has resulted in 13 applicants going forward with the offer.
- The allotment waiting list now stands at 41 applicants and five of these applicants have specified a preference on a site that does not have any vacant plots.
- The number of vacant plots stand at 22 and are located at the following sites:
  - Mundford Road – 14
  - Bury Road – 6
  - London Road – 1
  - Icknield Way – 1

Some of these are full plots and have the potential to be turned into half plots.

The Allotment Officer is liaising with the Town Team Manager on how best to focus on the clearing of the plots either using the Town Works Team or looking at Contractors. Clearance tasks such as stump clearing can only be done externally.

### **Uncultivated plots**

The number of plots that are allocated but not cultivated and therefore giving the perception of being vacant are as follows:

- Mundford Road – **18** plots.
- Bury Road – **7** plots.
- London Road – **5** plots.

There are several reasons why these allotment plots are in an uncultivated state.

- The plot has only recently been allocated.
- The tenant is unwell or suffering a bereavement.
- The tenant is a fine weather gardener.
- Unexpected work and family commitments.
- The tenant has given up and has yet to inform the Council.

Uncultivated plot inspections will start at the beginning of April.

### **Action Points:**

1. Committee Officer to inform the Fire Service and Ambulance Services of the codes for the allotment sites.
2. Councillor Chris Harvey to be issued a key for the Icknield Way allotment site.
3. Committee Officer to generate a document detailing track changes of individual plots in readiness for the April committee meeting.

The report was noted.

### **571/23 PRELIMINARY FINANCIAL REPORT**

The Committee discussed the preliminary Allotments Financial Report for the nine months ended 31 December 2023, which was circulated prior to the meeting:

- Expenditure is significantly lower than budget, forfeited deposits have increased, clearing of asbestos is expensive, and there are only six people have not paid.
- More plots will be allocated once they have been halved.
- The early pay option has been withdrawn from the Council's renewal process.

The Financial Report was noted.

### **572/23 ALLOTMENT SITE REPRESENTATIVE REPORTS**

The Committee noted that there were no reports from Allotment Site Representatives circulated prior to the meeting, but a discussion followed regarding the legality of erecting CCTV signage on the allotment sites.

### **573/23 UPDATE ON DEVELOPMENT OF RAMSEY CLOSE AS AN ALLOTMENT SITE**

The Committee discussed an update on the process to develop Ramsey Close as an allotment site:

- Replies to be sent to the residents that contacted the Council with concerns.
- Breckland Council has been approached to change the covenant from playparks to an allotment site. There is a detailed legal and consultative process to follow, and Breckland Council is gathering those costs.
- The site clearance has commenced, water supply to the site to be instigated before fencing can be erected.
- There will be no parking allowed outside of the site and no livestock permitted on the site.

The update was noted.

### **574/23 MATTERS TO DISCUSS AT AN INFORMAL MEETING WITH ALLOTMENT HOLDERS**

The Committee agreed that the following matters will be discussed at an informal meeting with Allotment Holders:

1. The possible banning of bonfires on Allotments.
2. Improving security at the allotment sites.
3. Bee hives on different allotment sites.
4. Control of dogs on the allotment sites.

**RESOLVED: That these matters be discussed together with any other matters that should be considered at an informal meeting with allotment holders.**

### **575/23 ACTION PLANS**

The Committee discussed an update on the Action Plans set out in the approved Programme of Action, which was circulated prior to the meeting:

- The administrative and accounting function is operating well, but there is a lack of capacity reflected in the Council's programme of work regarding the implementation of projects.

The update was noted.

### **576/23 HEALTH & SAFETY**

The Committee noted that there were no health & safety matters that have arisen since the last meeting.

### **577/23 CORRESPONDENCE**

The correspondence received has focused on the Ramsey Close feasibility study and the security issues on Mundford Road and London Road.

**Action Point:** Committee Officer to formally respond to the residents at Ramsey Close who had submitted comments.

The report was noted.

### **578/23 COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT**

The Committee noted that there was no consultation or media release required.

### **579/23 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.**

**Decision required: Whether or not to exclude the press and public.**

### **580/23 TO CONSIDER INDIVIDUAL TENANT ISSUES (IF ANY)**

The Committee discussed tenant issues on the London Road allotment site and approved a meeting with the individuals concerned.

The feedback was noted.

Chairman