



BLYTH TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of the Meeting of the Allotments Committee held at Arms Everytyn House on Tuesday 4 October 2016 at 6.30 pm

Present: K Ellis (Chair), J R Potts (Vice-Chair), C Bruce, B Elliott, R Parker, O Potts

Officers:

J Hughes	Acting Town Clerk
D Clough	Allotments Officer
M Hawthorne	Committee Clerk

Members of the Public – 4

1.	APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE L Rickerby
2.	DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS & THE GRANT OF ANY DISPENSATIONS None.
3.	MINUTES FROM THE ALLOTMENTS COMMITTEE HELD ON THURSDAY 2 JUNE 2016 Committee agreed to ADOPT the minutes.
3.1	MATTERS ARISING None.

4 ALLOTMENTS BUDGET – 2017/2018

The Acting Town Clerk referred to his report which was circulated to all Councillors. He commented that there is an allotment rent increase and the aim is to leave the allotment budget at £25,000.

Councillor Parker raised the issue of boundary walls that are in need of repair/replacement and suggested that a report is prepared which outlines the work required and approximate costs, for each site. This would allow the Council to carry out planned work within the budget. The Acting Town Clerk said that there was a programme of works presented to Committee last year and a decision was taken not to proceed with the works.

Committee agreed to ask the Allotments Officer to write a report outlining the work required on each site. This should be completed before the budget is agreed. As the next Allotments Committee is not scheduled until 17 February 2017 it may be necessary to call a special meeting to consider the report.

Councillor Parker noted that some of the internal fences are not uniform and proposed asking the allotment holders to rectify them. He also queried whether grants could be apply for to carry out this work. This will be explored further and included in the Allotments Officer's report.

Councillor Elliott proposed that the Allotments Officer approaches each allotment holder and asking for their repair list which could then be submitted to Committee with a view to prioritising the work. A survey of this nature has previously been carried out. He commented that concerns have been raised about the state of the roads for almost two years and no progress has been made. The Chair reminded Committee that there are 600 allotment holders in Blyth and over £500,000 has been spend on allotments to date.

Councillor Elliott asked if the water taps are being checked regularly to ensure there are no leaks etc. The Allotments Officer advised that he checks the water meters on a monthly basis.

	<p>Councillor J R Potts commented that the two priorities are the road ways and external fences and a previous quote for the road repairs was in the region of £100,000 (this is approximately one tenth of the total budget for BTC). The cost of repairing the lanes on Bolam site would be £90,000 and although the work could be carried out in sections, this would increase the cost.</p> <p>The Acting Town Clerk said all of the information will be collated and contained in the Allotments Officer's report and a special meeting convened to address the issues raised.</p> <p>Repair were carried out on the 10th Avenue site 18 months ago. The Chair asked for photographs and some information around costs for alternatives which the Allotments Officer is in the process of doing.</p> <p>Councillor J R Potts asked if the number of plots could be shown for each site. The Allotments Officer will add this information.</p> <p>The budget for 2017/2018 to be agreed subject to the additional information relating to the issues raised above.</p>
5	<p>ALLOTMENTS OFFICER REPORT</p> <p>The Allotments Officer referred to his report which was circulated to Councillors. The report reflects works carried out to date and includes costs. Discussion took place on the following:</p> <p>Wensleydale</p> <p>The Allotments Officer said work is progressing well and may be finished ahead of schedule. There will be three individual stopcocks so each lane can be isolated. The meter will go into the main system with another stopcock. Following an inspection by a Water Board Inspector, it was necessary to change the specification of the taps and this incurred an additional cost of £2,000.</p>

BSHAA

The Allotments Officer asked Committee to consider whether livestock can be allowed on the new sites. It would be beneficial and help in letting the plots with the proviso that any sheds holding poultry should not be higher than the dividing fences.

Committee agreed allow poultry on the new allotment subject to certain conditions.

Bebside

Work commenced on 26 September 2016 and was completed on 30 September 2016. A final inspection has been carried out and no problems were encountered during this work. The Allotments Officer commented that a procurement exercise was carried out – the contract was advertised on the website and social media. 9 contractors responded via email, 8 visited the site and three quotes were submitted. Following this process Straughans were identified as the company offering best value for money.

Committee discussed the proposal to pay £271 out of the site maintenance budget to remove the cherry tree. Discussion took place as to whether the Council should meet the cost of the tree removal or if it was the responsibility of the allotment holder. Councillor Elliott proposed that a tree survey should be carried out as it may be possible to remove the roots at a lesser cost. No-one seconded this motion therefore the Chair asked Committee to vote on the removal of the tree.

The outcome was 3 for, 1 against and two abstention.

Committee agreed to meet the cost of £271 from site maintenance budget to remove the cherry tree.

BSHHA

BSHHA installed to barriers to prevent fly tipping. The total cost included paying a welder to fit the barriers. Councillor J R Potts proposed that the Committee agree to meet the cost. This motion was carried.

Agreed £300 from the emergency budget.

Beatrice

Three sections of palisade fencing need to be replaced. The Allotments Office confirmed the final cost would be £665, £60 for waste disposal (£725+vat).

Agreed to £725 out of the emergency budget.

Wensleydale

Councillor Elliott asked for clarification regarding the process which was used to identify a contractor to install the water system at Wensleydale and why the additional £2,000 was not included in the expenditure detailed in the Allotments Officer's report. The Allotments Officer explained that following an inspection by the Water Board Officer a recommendation was made, 3 days before the start date for the work that the specification had to be changed which incurred extra costs. These costs would have increased whichever contractor was carrying out the work. The Chair and Vice-Chair were both contacted with regard to this matter and agreed to the additional costs.

Councillor Elliott indicated he would speak to Mr Cavanagh, Northumbria Water, with regard to this. The Chair commented that Councillor Elliott will have to speak to Mr Cavanagh as a member of the public and not as a representative of the Council. Councillor Elliott said that in his opinion there was a flaw in the

	procurement process and he wants to make sure public money is not being wasted.
6	ITEMS FOR INFORMATION AND URGENT BUSINESS None.
7	DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING Tuesday, 25 October 2016, 6.30 pm in the Council Chamber, Arms Everytne House.

MEMBERS OF THE ALLOTMENTS COMMITTEE

Councillors:

K Ellis (Chair)

J R Potts (Vice-Chair)

B Elliott

R Parker

O Potts

L Rickerby

D Rutter

A Turnbull

PART II

CONFIDENTIAL

The Chair advised Councillor Elliott that he will not allow such behaviour in the Committee again as he was trying to make political gain. Councillor Elliott queried via the Acting Town Clerk whether this comment was in order as the meeting had concluded. The Acting Town Clerk advised the Committee had move to part II.

ALLOTMENTS TENANCY – PLOT 53

The Allotments Officer displayed photographs and referred to his report outlining the steps that have been taken to date.

Following discussion Committee agreed to serve a termination notice on Mr McEwan unless he can demonstrate a vast improvement by 7 November 2016 which is the end date of the 28 day notice for the tenancy termination notice to come into effect. Committee also agreed that the Council will have to arrange for the necessary improvements to be carried out (cost to be confirmed). A procurement exercise will be completed to identify a suitable contractor to carry out the work.