



BLYTH TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of the Meeting of the Allotments Committee held in the Council Chamber at Arms Everytne House on Tuesday 3rd June 2014 at 6.30pm.

Present:

Councillors: J R Potts (Vice-Chair), C Bruce, B W Elliott, O Potts and L Rickerby.

Members of the Public: 10

Also present:

Stephen Rickitt – Town Clerk (Democratic Services)

Sean Robinson – Assets Officer

Liam Forsyth – Committee Clerk

033/14/01: APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors K Ellis and A Turnbull.

034/14/02: DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS AND GRANT OF DISPENSATIONS

None.

035/14/03: MINUTES OF THE ALLOTMENTS COMMITTEE HELD ON THE 6TH MARCH 2014

The Minutes of the Allotments Committee held on the 6th March 2014 were **AGREED** by the Committee and signed by the Chair.

036/14/04: REPORT OF THE ASSETS OFFICER

(Please find report attached)

Prior to the consideration of the report, Councillor J R Potts commented that as with previous meetings he would be inviting participation at the end of each individual section of the report.

Councillor J R Potts initially sought clarification regarding rent increases. The Assets Officer confirmed that the £5 increase is to occur in the next financial year.

Regarding Bolam Avenue, Councillor C Bruce enquired as to the empty/unused gardens on the site. The Assets Officer commented that the letters have gone out to the Allotment Holders who have not cultivated their gardens to the required amount. David Clough from the Blyth Small Holdings Allotment Association commented that 11 letters had been sent.

Councillor J R Potts enquired as to whether there was an update regarding the planned project work with the Cyrenians. The Assets Officer commented that he had attempted to chase up this item but had received no response.

The Assets Officer then drew attention to the additional report (see attached). This instigated discussion regarding future fencing across the Allotment sites.

Following discussion it was **AGREED** that palisade fencing is to be adopted as the policy for repair of fencing on the allotment sites.

Discussion was then held regarding the removal of Asbestos, to which there has been reports of on the Allotment Sites.

The Town Clerk (Democratic Services) initiated discussion regarding the potential site at Beatrice Avenue.

The Town Clerk (Democratic Services) sought delegated authority for modest arrangements to be made. This was **AGREED** by the Committee.

Subject to ratification

Councillor J R Potts enquired as to the expected number of gardens on the new site. The Assets Officer hoped that there would be around 50 new gardens with potential for raised beds and parking spaces.

Discussion was then held regarding the exploratory drilling at the Newsham Side Club site. Jack Gilles from the site commented that he had been approached by fellow allotment holders who had commented that they were happy to see that something was being done to attempt to address the programme.

Councillor B W Elliott commented on his desire for in future to get 3 quotes for such work.

Issues surrounding residents in proximity of the 10th Avenue site was also discussed. The Town Clerk (Democratic Services) commented that we can investigate as to who owns the land. **Action: SER**

Issues regarding concrete bases left at the site were also brought to the attention of the Assets Officer. It was commented that Northumberland County Council are to be contacted. **Action: SR**

Discussion was then held regarding the need to address surface issues at the Tenth Avenue site. It was commented that issue was to be addressed last year however did not occur.

The Allotment Committee **AGREED** that planings are to be purchased as a short term fix for urgent attention with investigations to continue to address the problem long term.

An allotment holder wished to remind the Committee that the accessibility issues need to be addressed prior to any further projects such as the raised beds outlined within the report.

Regarding the Wensleydale Gardens, discussion was held regarding the placement of paving rather than a gravel surface on the agreed site. The Town Clerk (Democratic Services) sought that the Committee note this arrangement. **This was NOTED** by the Committee.

Councillor O Potts and the Officers commented on the positive response they had received from residents.

Discussion was also held regarding sourcing the water meter at the Wensleydale site. The Assets Officer commented that his investigations were ongoing.

Councillor B W Elliott commented on the need to manage the water supply and urged haste to rectify this situation.

The Committee **AGREED** that this is to be a priority for the Assets Officer.

The Assets Officer also provided an outline of the National Association of Allotment Officers conference held at Blyth Town Council. It was commented that a lot was learnt and that the other Officers were impressed with new gardens at the Bolam Avenue site.

The Town Clerk (Democratic Services) wished to note the role of the Officers in organising and facilitating the event. The Councillors thanked the Officers for their work.

Discussion was then held as to the procedure used by the Assets Officer to remove Asbestos from the site. The current process and working arrangement with Northumberland County Council was outlined by the Town Clerk (Democratic Services).

Councillor O Potts then provided an outline of the future recruitment of an Assistant Assets Officer, it was commented that this was help to assist the current Assets Officer in the management of the Allotments.

G Newell wished to request the associated policy, accounts and procedure documents for the Allotments. The Town Clerk (Democratic Services) commented that these are to be provided. **Action: SER/SR.**

037/14/05: WORK COMMITTED FROM FINANCIAL YEAR 2013/14

For this item discussion was then held regarding the poor quality of work associated with the boxing in of the taps within the Allotment sites. It was **AGREED** that this is to be investigated by the Assets Officer.

The Assets Officer commented on the completion of the paving within the Wensleydale site. It was noted that the list of expenditure for the allotments is available within the accounts.

038/14/06: FUTURE WORK PROGRAMME FOR 2014/2015

The Town Clerk (Democratic Services) commented that this item had been covered in previous items.

031/14/07: ANY OTHER BUSINESS AND ITEMS FOR URGENT ATTENTION

The Town Clerk (Democratic Services) wished to remind Councillors that they should not visit Allotment Sites unannounced.

Subject to ratification

032/14/08: DATE OF THE NEXT SCHEDULED MEETING

It was **AGREED** that the next scheduled Meeting of the Allotments Committee is to take place on the 7th October 2014 at 6.30pm in the Council Chamber.

Meeting Closed: 8.15pm

Date:

Signed:

Members of the Committee:

Councillor K Ellis (Chair)
Councillor J R Potts (Vice-Chair)
Councillor C Bruce
Councillor B W Elliott
Councillor O Potts
Councillor L Rickerby
Councillor D Rutter
Councillor G Thompson
Councillor A Turnbull

BLYTH TOWN COUNCIL
Allotments Committee
03 June 2014

Report of the Assets Officer

Allotment Waiting List:

Please find below an updated waiting list for allotments as of 31 May 14.

TOTAL ON WAITING LIST	
Wensleydale	37
Bebside	6
Bolam Avenue	12
Delaval Avenue	0
Laverock	1
Newsham	6
South Farm	0
10th Avenue	4
20th Avenue	1
Beatrice Avenue	8
No Pref	13
TOTAL	88

The invoices for the Allotment rents were sent out at the end of March for this year's rent. Most of the invoices have been paid, we are awaiting payment on 12 gardens with reminder letter's been dispatched w/c 02 Jun 14.

Bolam Avenue

The damage to the internal road adjacent to the pedestrian gate (Ford Drive) has been partially repaired. We are still awaiting more road plainings from NCC to rectify this problem. As from the last report that there needs to be a major survey of all internal roads as they are falling into disrepair I brought this problem up with the National Allotment Society at the recent Northern Regional Allotment Officer's Forum and I am investigating possible funding streams that we could potentially use for this project and on other Allotment sites in Blyth.

There has been a report of damage to the gate at the Sport's Centre entrance. A temporary fix has been completed and the Blyth Small Holdings & Allotment Association is monitoring the situation. There has also been damage to the external wall near the skate park and is awaiting a repair.

Asbestos was found on two gardens. This has now been removed at a cost of £795.00 + VAT.

There has been a lot of rubbish deposited along the wall adjacent to Ford Drive which now needs to be removed. I have instructed the Committee to place notices up to stop Allotment Holders from dumping more rubbish.

Subject to ratification

Beatrice Avenue

With the land transfer now complete we are now in the process of costing the project of installing new allotment gardens. Presently there are horses still being kept on the land. I have spoken to the stables adjacent to the field which own the horses and they state that they have grazing rights. I have requested that they need to provide written proof of this. I am liaising with the Town Clerk (Democratic Services) in order to resolve this issue.

There has been a complaint neighbours adjacent to the site about noise from cockerels. The noise monitoring team have identified the plot and I have informed the allotment holder and the cockerels will be removed.

There has been a request from one allotment holder asking for assistance to repair his internal fences and clear the plot of excess rubbish. I have referred him to the Newsham & New Delaval Allotment Association for guidance.

Side Club

The borehole was completed on 01 Apr 14 with the following results. A hole was dug to a depth of 12 metres. Apart from a 200mm thick sand band at 10.5 metres only clay was encountered in the borehole which would be unsuitable for efficient water drainage.

10th Avenue

Concerns have been raised by Allotment Holders with regards to the external fencing around the site. On a site visit the fences that need addressing are residential fencing and I have contacted Homes for Northumberland to see if any of the properties belong to them. If they are private it is down to the owners to carry out repairs.

From the last Allotment Committee meeting the quote received for the resurfacing of the entrance and car park was found to be excessive. As above I am liaising with the National Allotment Society to investigate funding for the upkeep of the internal roads. This will also include the raised beds for the disabled and possibly to installation of toilets.

Water Supply for Laverock Place & Delaval Gardens

The water supply to both Laverock Place and Delaval Gardens is now complete with no issues raised.

South Farm

There has been a report of fly tipping into the South Farm allotments from a property in 20th Avenue. This has been reported to Homes for Northumberland and the matter in been dealt with via their Neighbourhood Liaison Officer. I had a request for a skip to be delivered to the South Farm site. When the wagon turned up to deliver it they refused to drive onto the grassed area adjacent to the gardens as they have changed their company policy in regards to

Subject to ratification

delivering skips on grassed areas. I am in the process of investigating alternate solutions to this problem.

20th Avenue

There have been several reports of fly tipping at the site. The area is quite open and it is used as a short cut so there is no possibility of restricting access. Presently once we get a report of fly tipping I contact the NCC NEAT Team and they remove the items but this is an ongoing issue.

Bebside

There has been a complaint from a member of the public that some cars are been parked on private land. I have been to the site and spoken to the allotment holders requesting that they can drive to their gardens if they are loading/unloading a then return their cars to the car park at the rear of the garage. This is been adhered to and the complainant has phoned and thanked the allotment holders for their cooperation.

There has also been a complaint from an Allotment Holder about the state of the car park and the surface needs to be improved. The damage is occurring from the petrol tankers using the car park as a turning point when delivering fuel to the garage. I am investigating who actually owns the car park to see if any improvements can be made.

Wensleydale

At the budget Under Spend meeting (18 Mar 14) it was agreed to carry out the paving of the void space between the new external fence and residential properties of Solingen Estate. This work has now been completed and signed off. Also from that meeting it was agreed to commence the building of new gardens and the work has commenced with the building of 7 new gardens. This work is ongoing and a projected end date of 30 May 14 has been given for completion. I am also now looking at four plots that have not been cultivated to the standards set out in the tenancy agreements. I am now in the process of issuing termination notices to the tenants. At least 2 of the gardens have the potential to be reduced in size and with 3 plots on one and 2 on the other plot. With these additional gardens that are becoming available there should be a good reduction in the length of the waiting list for the Wensleydale site.

There has been a request from Tony Raffell that the side gate needs to be locked as there have been reports of minor thefts from the gardens. I have a lock available to install which the keys to the main gate also fits. There is a requirement to have more keys cut for the additional tenants.

The water supply is still to be re-sited into the Wensleydale site (Persimmon to meet costs). I am still investigating where best to fit the supply.

Subject to ratification

Joint Project with Bede Academy

The project is still ongoing but has been put on hold as Bede Academy are now in the process of end of year exams. Update to follow.

Joint Project with Cyrenians

I have emailed the point of contact from the Cyrenians and have had no reply - no change from last report.

AOB

I received an email dated 30 Apr 14 from a resident from Hortondale Grove stating that the waste land/field which runs from the top of Axwell Drive to Hallside, adjacent to the Isabella Railway line is overrun with vermin and fly tipping. Also the brambles are growing out of control encroaching on his property. He believes that the land once cleared up has potential to be cultivated into an allotment site. I have initially looked at the land from Google maps to see if this is viable but my initial thoughts is the land has not got good enough access at present. With the new gardens been built at Beatrice Avenue and another potential site at 9th Avenue these two sites are taking preference before we consider any other potential sites. I will keep the request on file for future reference.

Sean Robinson

Assets Officer

03 Jun 2014.

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BLYTH TOWN COUNCIL
Allotments Committee
03 June 2014

Additional Report of the Assets Officer

Please find below amendments and additional information to the Asset Officer's Report for the Allotments Committee meeting to be held on 03 Jun 14.

Bolam Avenue Allotments:

Please find below the quote for the damage to the Sports Centre entrance to the allotment site.

Entrance: Renew with concrete: £345+vat
Steel Palisade: £300+vat

Damaged corner section: Renew with concrete: £990+vat
Steel Palisade: £860+vat

Sean Robinson
Assets Officer
03 Jun 2014