

BLYTH TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of Assets Working Group Meeting held at the Isabella Community Centre on Tuesday 20 April 2010 at 7.00pm.

PRESENT:

Councillors: P Lovatt (Chair)
J Condon
K Ellis

Town Clerk: S Noddings

IN ATTENDANCE:

22 members of the public, representing the allotments within Blyth Town, were present at this meeting.

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies had been received from Councillors Susan Davey, Alisdair Gibbs-Barton and Penny Reid.

2. DISCLOSURE OF INTEREST

There were no disclosures of interest.

3. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 16 MARCH 2010

The minutes were agreed and approved.

4. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 30 MARCH 2010

The minutes were agreed and approved.

5. UPDATE REGARDING ACTIONS ARISING RE ALLOTMENTS

The following actions were discussed and updates provided where appropriate: -

No:	Action:	Responsibility:
1.	Risk Assessment to be conducted regarding the locking of gates at all allotment sites.	Policy - P Reid <i>No update</i>

2.	Review Newcastle City Council's scheme/policy on allotment gates and share good practice.	Policy - P Reid Costing - K Ellis <i>No Update</i>
3.	Facilitate a Training Course for representatives of all allotments for the handling of Rat Poison.	Training - A Gibbs-Barton <i>David Clough to provide S Noddings with contact details for Kill Germ so she can progress.</i>
4.	Establish the extent of the Waiting List for Blyth Town Council Allotments and individual allotments and share information with all concerned.	S Noddings <i>Allotment waiting list anomalies identified through programme of visits and Associations asked to share information regarding their waiting lists.</i>
5.	Review funding opportunities for Blyth Town Council Allotments and individual allotments and identify opportunities for support.	Ongoing Activity <i>S Noddings developing list of funding opportunities.</i>
6.	Invite Police involvement at future meetings of the Assets Working Group with particular reference to the Allotments.	S Noddings <i>Future involvement agreed - meeting scheduled for 27 April 2010.</i>
7.	Priority - Establish Blyth Town Council Policy on pensionable age and eligibility for discounted rent.	Policy - P Reid <i>No Update</i>
8.	Review all policies and procedures that have been introduced e.g. Partnership in Allotments, Grandfather Rights, etc to establish a framework for all allotments to work with.	Policy - P Reid <i>No Update</i>

9.	Establish whether all Blyth Town Council Allotments have Statutory Status. (<i>Statutory Status applies to land bought or leased for the express purpose of providing allotments. Non Statutory Status applies to land bought or leased with a long term alternative purpose.</i>)	S Noddings to confirm with NCC Legal Team but it is believed Blyth Allotments are all Statutory Status. <i>Still awaiting confirmation.</i>
10.	Agree rents for 2010-2011.	Proposal to Council on 13.05.10 - P Lovatt
11.	Establish whether the number of allotments is appropriate for the population in Blyth Town Council catchment area.	No minimum requirement although there are examples of good practice. Average of 1 allotment for every 73 households in England and Wales. <i>Suggested that some guidelines in the Allotment Act - to be reviewed.</i>

5.1 ADDITIONAL ACTIONS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

- It was recommended that Blyth Town Council subscribe to membership of the National Society of Allotments and Leisure Gardeners at a cost of £60.00. **Agreed Action: AG-B**
Application completed and submitted.
- Delegated Authority for the Assets Working Group was discussed and the need for a cash limit to be defined for expenditure. **Agreed that the Chair recommend this to Council on the 13th May 2010. Action: PL**

- The Town Clerk to contact Northumbrian Water regarding meter readings, leaks, stand pipes and to explore the possibility of locked access. **Action: SN** *Some progress made but still issues regarding the lack of clear accounting with Northumberland County Council and the notification of transfer to Blyth Town Council.*
 - The Town Clerk is to arrange a schedule of visits to all allotments sites for the mornings of Saturday 10th, Sunday 11th, Saturday 17th and Sunday 18th April 2010. visits to be circulated to all Councillors. **Action: SN** *completed and discussed under item 6.*
- Schedule of Visits
- The Town Clerk is to check which sites require skips/trailers, identify secure locations, and establish frequency. K Ellis to establish the cost of hiring skips and trailers and identify potential contractor. **Action: SN and KE** *Tenders in progress.*

6. UPDATE REGARDING COUNCILLORS' VISITS TO ALLOTMENTS SATURDAY 10, SUNDAY 11 AND SATURDAY 17 APRIL 2010

The Chair advised the meeting that following the visits he had drawn up a detailed spreadsheet of all the required actions and prioritised them as short, medium and long term activities subject to approval by the full Council. Details were explained and an undertaking was made to circulate the spreadsheet once these issues had been discussed and priorities agreed by the Council.

7. ANY OTHER BUSINESS:

- 7.1 S Noddings advised the meeting that she had received a quotation from Northumberland County Council regarding pest control on the allotments. The quote included three options with costs ranging from £5,000 per annum to in excess of £7,200 per annum. It was agreed that it would be more cost effective to continue with the proposed training of key people at each allotment and to obtain the rat poison through Association Shop. Volunteers for training were forthcoming for each of the allotment sites in Blyth Town.
- 7.2 Other issues raised included Partnerships, Rent, Tree Chippings from Northumberland County Council and a letter regarding fires: -
- Partnerships would be dealt with within the Policy Document.

- Rent - The Chair to make his recommendations to the full Council on the 13 May 2010 and the outcome to be communicated.
- S Noddings stated that she had followed up the issue of tree chippings with Northumberland County Council with no success. Those present were invited to provide name of contact and it would be followed up.
- Fires are traditionally allowed during the period October to March provided they are small and do not cause pollution or inconvenience to neighbours. Policy document to clarify Blyth Town Council's ruling on this issue.

7.3 A member of the public enquired if the Clerk had written to the allotment holder identified at the visit to Bebside Allotments. S Noddings confirmed that she had written and that as soon as there had been a response she would discuss the issue with the Chair. Normal practice laid out in the national guidelines is that you allow 30 days for a response to the first letter, 30 days for a response to the second letter followed by a notice to quit by recorded delivery. Policy to be clarified and incorporated into Blyth Town Council's policy document.

5. DATE OF NEXT MEETING OF THE ASSETS WORKING GROUP AND THE ALLOTMENT HOLDERS REPRESENTATIVES

The next meeting will take place on Tuesday 15 June 2010 at 7.00pm. Venue confirmed as the Isabella Community Centre.

Signed by the Chair: _____

Date: _____