

## **BLYTH TOWN COUNCIL**

**Minutes of Assets Working Group Meeting** held at the Isabella Community Centre on Tuesday 16<sup>th</sup> March 2010 at 7.00pm.

### **PRESENT:**

Councillors: J Condon  
A Gibbs-Barton  
P Lovatt  
P Reid

Town Clerk: S Noddings

### **IN ATTENDANCE:**

Representatives from: Newsham and New Deleval Allotments  
Bolam Avenue Allotments  
Bebside Allotments  
Laverock Place 'Dig for Victory' Allotments  
Tenth Avenue Allotments  
Wensleydale Terrace Allotments

#### **1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence had been received from Councillor Davey.

#### **2. DISCLOSURE OF INTEREST**

There were no disclosures of interest.

#### **3. ELECTION OF CHAIR**

Councillor P Lovatt was nominated and seconded as Chair, this was carried unanimously.

#### **4. DISCUSSION ITEM: ALLOTMENTS**

Councillor P Lovatt, Chair, opened the discussion by providing a brief outline of what Blyth Town Council wanted to achieve from this the first Assets Working Group meeting.

Councillor Gibbs-Barton provided a brief update on how Northumberland County Council had been managing the allotments while the Local Councils in the South East of the County were

established.

The Town Clerk circulated a table summarising the information provided by Northumberland County Council in the lead up to their handing back the management of the allotments on the 1<sup>st</sup> April 2010.

One of the allotment holders enquired who would be the point of contact in future as there had been too many changes in recent times. The Chair confirmed that the Town Clerk would be the point of contact and if people needed her contact details they should speak to her at the end of the meeting.

The Chair then invited the representatives from each allotment to provide a summary of issues that have been ongoing: -

#### **4.1 Newsham and New Deleval Allotments**

- Six weekly skips promised then not provided
- Skips substituted with a trailer
- Drainage issue
- Perimeter Fencing
- Rents - Association discounts rents with their Management Fee
- Roadway at Side Club (roadstone promised/needed)
- Pilfering problems - £600 last week
- Side Club fence cut open - not repaired

#### **4.2 Bolam Avenue Allotments**

- No skips in the last 18 months
- Inequality of costs/rents
- 44 derelict gardens (long waiting list)
- Issues with gates being unlocked - access and fly tipping
- Flooding biggest issue - what constitutes a wet garden?

**Action 1:** *It was agreed that an urgent Risk Assessment would be carried out regarding locking gates. Consultation with tenants, police, fire brigade and ambulance service.*

**Action 2:** *It was agreed that Newcastle City Council's allotments scheme would be reviewed in particular reference to their locking of gates policy.*

#### **4.3 Bebside Allotments**

- Travellers accessing site, using water to clean vans and fly

- tipping
- Taps in access road - enquired about moving taps into plots to address problem
- Open aspect
- No gate or lock

#### **4.4 Deleval Crescent Allotments**

Representative not present but subsequently spoken with both allotment holders who confirmed issues as follows: -

- Rents not as stated in the table provided
- last year rents increased from £15.00 to £32.00 with the promise of water being provided on-site

#### **4.5 Laverock Place 'Dig for Victory' Allotments**

- No water on-site - requested 4 years ago
- 2 gardens dormant - County Council brought in a digger but left gardens lower than adjacent field so they flood now - field drain also smashed by the digger
- No definitive garden boundaries or gates
- Palisade fencing and gate but no lock for gate
- Never had skips provided but could do with two per year (one in February or March)
- Northumberland County Council used to provide poison for the rat issue - Handling Course required in advance of use on site.
- Rent £17.96 not as stated in the table provided

**Action 3:** *Facilitate a Training Course for representatives of all allotments for the handling of Rat Poison. Possibly through representative of the manufacturer.*

#### **4.6 Tenth Avenue Allotments**

- Waiting List - only one plot at Tenth Avenue
- Skips
- Need to draw a line under what has happened in the past and move on
- Deliver what is promised
- Plot size and rents

**Action 4:** *Establish the extent of the Waiting List for Blyth Town Council Allotments and individual allotment sites and share information with all concerned.*

**Action 5:** *Review funding opportunities for Blyth Town Council Allotments and individual allotments and identify opportunities to provide support for bidding.*

The Chair confirmed that there was a real commitment to progress things and that the monthly meetings would assist this. It was also suggested that in time it may be appropriate to look at self management again and that the allotment holders could manage the sites for Blyth Town Council.

**Action 6:** *To invite Police involvement at future meetings of the Assets Working Group with particular reference to the Allotments.*

**Action 7:** *Priority to establish Blyth Town Council Policy on pension able age and eligibility criteria for discounted allotment rent.*

#### **4.7 Wensleydale Terrace Allotments**

- Much the same as discussed by other allotments
- One vacant plot which has just become available - this could be divided into two
- Two other plots have stood for as long as 8 years
- No car parking space
- Rents and allotment sizes
- Partnership Allotments
- Lock on notice board damaged and needs to be repaired

The Chair felt that it was important that the group discuss how all of these issues can be managed effectively.

Councillor Gibbs-Barton asked if the allotment holders/associations would prefer a blanket rule across Blyth Town Council or by site?

The general opinion was that there needs to be a framework that each allotment can build upon.

**Action 8:** *Priority to 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.*

Councillor Reid stated that she felt all the Councillors would wish to visit the allotment sites to experience these issues first hand.

The Chair asked that the representatives of the allotments advise the Town Clerk of when it would be best to arrange for Councillors site

visits to the allotments.

**Action 9:** *To establish whether all of Blyth Town Council Allotments have Statutory Status.*

**Action 10:** *Agree Rents for 2010-11.*

**Action 11:** *Establish whether the number of allotments is appropriate for the population in Blyth Town Council catchment area.*

Prior to the meeting ending all Councillors present undertook to participate fully in delivering the agreed actions.

The Chair requested that all representatives ensured that the Town Clerk had their correct contact details.

## **5. DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

It was agreed unanimously that the next meeting would take place on Tuesday 20<sup>th</sup> April 2010 at 7.00pm. Venue to be confirmed but Isabella Community Centre considered most central.

**Signed by the Chair:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_