

WARBOYS PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the **Allotments Committee** held on 29th October 2018 at the Parish Centre, Warboys.

PRESENT

Councillors B L Correll, R J Dykstra, Ms L A Gifford, Mrs M H Harlock, J A Parker, Mrs S J Wilcox and Dr S C Withams.

P Bellamy and Mrs F Dykstra (Allotments Association).

APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillors Mrs J M Cole, S J Green, P S Potts and Mrs J A Tavener.

01/18 ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN

Upon being moved by Councillor Dr Withams and seconded by Councillor Dykstra, it was

RESOLVED

that Councillor J A Parker be elected Chairman of the Committee for the ensuing year.

Councillor Parker in the Chair.

02/18 APPOINTMENT OF VICE CHAIRMAN

Upon being moved by Councillor Parker and seconded by Councillor Dr Withams, it was

RESOLVED

that Councillor Ms L A Gifford be appointed Vice Chairman of the Committee for the ensuing year.

03/18 MINUTES

Upon being moved and seconded, the Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 19th March 2018 were signed as a correct record by the Chairman.

04/18 MEMBERS INTERESTS

Mr Bellamy and Mrs Dykstra declared disclosable pecuniary interests as tenants of allotments from the Parish Council. Councillor R J Dykstra declared a similar interest as his wife was a tenant of an allotment. Dispensations to speak but not vote on matters affecting the allotments had already been granted to Councillor Dykstra.

RESOLVED

that a dispensation to speak but not vote be granted to Mr Bellamy and Mrs Dykstra on matters appearing on the agenda.

05/18 MATTERS ARISING

The Committee noted that there were no matters arising from the Minutes of its meeting held on 19th March 2018 that would not be dealt with under Minute No. 06/18 below.

06/18 ALLOTMENTS

A report was submitted by the Clerk (a copy of which had been circulated to all Members), summarising the actions taken since the previous meeting of the Committee and drawing attention to the issues that had been discussed by the Chairman, Vice Chairman, Councillor Mrs Cole and the Clerk at a meeting with the Association's representatives on 17th October 2018.

The Committee was advised that tenants had been grateful for the delivery of another load of soil improver before Easter and had requested a further delivery at the same time in 2019 which would need to be subject to a successful application to Red Tile Wind Farm Trust for grant.

The Clerk reported that a total of 7 full and 2 half plots were now vacant, although a recent enquiry had been received from a prospective tenant. Members were informed that allotments did not appear to be as popular as previously when additional plots had had to be provided because of the length of the waiting list. Some of the plots had been vacant for some time which had resulted in them becoming overgrown and the Clerk reported that he was liaising with the Handymen as to the best approach to improve their condition so they could be re-let.

Mr Bellamy offered to advertise the availability of plots to rent on social media in the hope that this would attract prospective tenants.

Following evidence of the presence of rats at the allotments, the Clerk reported that he would ask the Handymen to place traps at the allotments again.

As ruts were appearing again in the roadway, the Clerk indicated that he would try to obtain more road planings. Arising from a question, the Clerk explained that the Handymen closed the roadway over the winter to try to protect it from vehicular traffic in wet weather and when there was less activity at the allotments.

However Councillor Correll proposed that a fully engineered road be constructed to enable the tenants to take vehicles to the further car park and access their plots. He suggested that the cost could be met from the earmarked reserve in the allotment account but the Clerk advised that as the money had been generated from the sale of allotment land, it should be used for purchasing or improving alternative land for allotments. Alternatively it could be used for any other capital expenditure by the Council.

The representatives of the Association referred to problems of plots being waterlogged and suggested that the roadway was impeding drainage and causing flooding. It was suggested that drainage pipes be installed under the roadway and the Clerk was requested to obtain quotes for consideration.

The Clerk confirmed that he would remind the Handymen of the need for hedge cuttings to be shredded and placed in the compost bay.

It was reported that the Association had been approached by a member of the public who wished to keep bees at the allotments which currently was prohibited under the tenancy agreement. Councillor Correll indicated that he was in favour of a suitable amendment of the agreement to enable bees to be kept but other Members queried whether some tenants might be concerned if they were allergic to stings and that it would be difficult for the Council to ensure that bees were being cared for in an acceptable condition. While membership of the British Bee Keeping Association entitled members to public liability insurance, the Clerk advised that it appeared that anyone could apply to join the Association which then offered a range of courses and qualifications on bee keeping.

As an application had not been made to the Council, the Chairman suggested that no further action should be taken at the present time.

As the Association's representatives had advised that some of the numbering on individual plots were becoming indistinguishable or in one case was missing, the Clerk indicated that they this would be dealt with by the Handymen over the winter.

RESOLVED

- (a) that the Clerk be requested to investigate the cost of providing improved drainage at the allotments; and
- (b) that an application be submitted to Red Tile Wind Farm Trust Fund Ltd for a further load of soil improver.

07/18 BUDGET 2019/20

The Committee considered a summary of income and expenditure for Hallgate Allotments for 2017/18 and a forecast for both the current year and 2019/20.

Members were informed that the balance brought forward at the start of the year was likely to be exhausted and a deficit arise at the end of the year of £7. The deficit was expected to increase to £71 at the end of 2019/20 if rents were not increased.

Members were informed that rents had not increased since 2013 but in view of the number of vacant plots currently and the lack of interest in renting an allotment, it was

RESOLVED

that rents be retained at the same level in 2019/20 of £15 for a full plot and £10 for a half plot.

There being no further business, the meeting was declared closed.

Chairman.