

WARBOYS PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the **Allotments Committee** held on 27th October 2014 at the Parish Centre, Warboys.

PRESENT

Councillor J A Parker, Chairman

Councillors Mrs M P Bucknell, P Clarke, Mrs J M Cole, Ms L A Gifford, Mrs M H Harlock, T R Huggins, P S Potts, J C Price, G C M Willis and Mrs A R Wyatt.

Mrs W Catlow and Mrs F Dykstra (Allotments Association).

APOLOGIES

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Mrs J E Tavener.

09/14 MINUTES

Upon being moved by Councillor Clarke and seconded by Councillor Huggins, the Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 2nd June 2014 were signed as a correct record by the Chairman.

10/14 MEMBERS INTERESTS

Mrs Catlow and Mrs Dykstra declared disclosable pecuniary interests as the tenants of allotments from the Parish Council, as a result of which it was

RESOLVED

that dispensations to speak but not vote be granted to Mrs Catlow and Mrs Dykstra on matters appearing on the agenda.

11/14 MATTERS ARISING

The Committee considered the following matters arising from the Minutes of its meeting held on 2nd July 2014:-

(a) Track on Eastern Boundary

Further to Minute No. 05/14(a), the Clerk reported that the signs erected by the Handymen indicating that the track on the eastern boundary of the allotments was not a public right of way remained in situ but that the track continued to be used by members of the public.

(b) Ditch on Southern Boundary

Arising from Minute No. 05/14(b), the Clerk informed the Committee that no progress had been made towards persuading the County Council to construct a culvert under the access roadway to the allotments and that he had yet to contact County Councillor Tew to ask for his assistance in pursuing the matter.

(c) Hallgate Allotments

Further to Minute No. 06/14 and in response to a Member's question concerning the standing water observed on plot no. 48 when the Committee had undertaken a site inspection at the previous meeting, the Clerk reported that this appeared to have been caused by the tenant building up the soil in the centre of the plot which had caused run off to gather next to the roadway. The issue had not arisen at any of the adjacent plots so did not appear to be a general drainage problem.

Although the supply of horse manure for use by tenants had been resumed, Mrs Dykstra suggested that the manure now had too little straw content which made it hard to work into the soil. Councillor Potts explained that straw was now used less frequently by horse owners as opposed other products and the Clerk indicated that he would try to source an alternative supplier who would deliver manure without charge.

With regard to the decision to offer a tenancy to Hinchingsbrooke Hospital Woodlands Centre for the benefit of local cancer patients (Minute No. 07/14 refers), the Clerk reported that he had tried unsuccessfully to contact the Macmillan Information Manager on a number of occasions. As a result, the plot available had been let to a person on the waiting list.

With regard to the possibility of obtaining road planings to improve the surfacing of the central roadway at the allotments (Minute No. 08/14 refers), the Clerk advised that the County Council were prepared to make small quantities available for collection at the West Highways Depot in Huntingdon. However the Parish Council's van and trailer were too small to make it worthwhile to travel to Huntingdon for quantity of planings that could be obtained and the Clerk advised that he was trying to locate a suitable vehicle for the purpose.

12/14 HALLGATE ALLOTMENTS

The Clerk informed Members that all of the plots had been let but that there were no names on the waiting list currently. As a result, an article would be placed in the next edition of the Warboys Diary to invite Warboys residents to apply for a tenancy.

Councillor Clarke asked if the joints on the water taps could be checked periodically to make sure that no leaks were taking place that would result in excessive water consumption and unnecessary costs to be incurred.

Mrs Dykstra complained about the type of materials burned by the Handymen on the plot retained for Parish Council use. She mentioned that ash from the burning of papers had blown onto adjoining plots, that fires had been left unattended and that drinks containers had been burnt which would contaminate the sub-soil. The Clerk explained that the Parish Council did not have any other land that could be used to dispose of confidential

paperwork or hedge cuttings and that he had already spoken to the Handymen to ask them to ensure that no materials other than paper, card, hedge clippings and weed were burned. Members were advised that a major tidying of the Parish Council office in the summer had resulted in a large number of records having to be disposed of, otherwise the volume of paper to be burnt only amounted to the equivalent of a waste paper basket full every three or four months. Arising from a suggestion that the confidential paperwork be shredded, the Clerk suggested that the volume was insufficient to make this worthwhile. Arising from a suggestion by Councillor Willis that a cage be obtained to burn the waste and contain the fire and ash and that the Handymen build some timber retaining walls for the hedge clippings to be left to dry before they were burnt, the Clerk indicated that he would make the necessary arrangements.

13/14 ADDITIONAL FACILITIES

Further to Minute No. 06/14, the Clerk reported on his enquiries into the request by Mrs Dykstra for new storage and toilet facilities to be provided at the allotments.

The Clerk suggested that the cost of a brick built facility with toilet and hand washing facilities and lockers for tenants would be in excess of £100,000 and therefore would be prohibitively expensive. Steel storage containers to replace the former railway carriage that had been used for storage for many years were available in various sizes at a cost of approximately £3,000 plus VAT depending on their condition.

Information had been circulated to Members on a type of waterless toilet unit which was available at a cost £8,200 plus VAT. The unit required direct sunlight and an exposed position to enable the sun and wind to decompose the waste which would require the unit to be located centrally at the allotments. Various issues were raised by Members, including the reference in the information circulated to the possibility of structural damage caused by an installation in heavy clay soils and the problem of future emptying. Members also queried the level of demand among allotment holders for a toilet and whether the installation of a unit at the allotments would lead to requests for similar facilities to be installed at the playgrounds.

With regard to cost, the Clerk reported that the suppliers had suggested that grants were available. Assuming that 50% of the cost could be met from grant, the Committee was informed that if the balance were to be recovered from rental income over say 10 years, this would necessitate an increase in the rent of £8 per annum or just over 50% of the current level.

An alternative suggestion was raised by Councillors Price and Willis with regard to a less elaborate form of toilet facility akin to that used in camping scenarios.

Following further discussion, it was

RESOLVED

that the tenants be consulted for their views on the possible installation of better storage arrangements and a new toilet facility of varying types, together with a probable increase in rent to meet the cost.

14/14 BUDGET 2015/16

The Committee considered a summary of income and expenditure for Hallgate Allotments for 2013/14 and a forecast for both the current year and 2015/16.

Members were informed that the anticipated balance to be carried forward at the end of the current year was £818 and that, if rents remained unaltered, the balance at the end of 2015/16 was estimated to be £593.

RESOLVED

that no change be made to allotment rents for 2015/16.

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

Chairman.