

WARBOYS PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the **Allotments Committee** held on 26th October 2015 at the Parish Centre, Warboys.

PRESENT

Councillor J A Parker, Chairman

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

Mrs F Dykstra (Allotments Association).

APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors P S Potts, J C Price and Mrs A R Wyatt.

07/15 MINUTES

Upon being moved by Councillor Mrs Harlock and seconded by Councillor Huggins, the Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 29th June 2015 were signed as a correct record by the Chairman.

08/15 MEMBERS INTERESTS

Mrs Dykstra declared a disclosable pecuniary interest as a tenant of an allotment from the Parish Council, as a result of which it was

RESOLVED

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

09/15 MATTERS ARISING

The Committee considered the following matters arising from the Minutes of its meeting held on 29th June 2015:-

(a) Track on Eastern Boundary

Further to Minute No. 05/15(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 were replaced after removal by members of the public on a regular basis.

(Councillor Willis arrived at the meeting at this point in the proceedings.)

10/15 CONDITION OF ALLOTMENTS

The Clerk informed Members that one plot was currently vacant but there were no names on the waiting list. 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.

11/15 ALLOTMENTS

A report was submitted by the Clerk (a copy of which had been circulated to all Members) with regard to the history of the allotment site in Fenton Road and the legislative background to allotments.

Members were informed that the land at Hallgate had been purchased by the Council in 1914 in the sum of £480 and had previously been much larger in extent. As the land had been purchased for the purpose of allotments, the Clerk pointed out that it was classed as statutory allotments in accordance with the legislation.

In 1985, part of the land had been sold to Cambridgeshire County Council in the sum of £4,610 net of fees for the construction of the new line of the A141 by-passing the village. A triangular piece of the original allotment land separated from the main site by the new by-pass had then been sold as building plots in 1987 for £60,062 net of fees. Members were informed that the allotments legislation stated that the proceeds of the sale of land acquired for allotments must be applied in discharging any debt or liabilities relating to the land or in acquiring, adapting and improving other land for allotments and that any remaining surplus could be applied for any purpose for which capital money could be expended by the Council. The Clerk pointed out that as there were no debts outstanding from the original acquisition and there was more than sufficient land remaining to meet future demand, the Council could allocate the money from the sale with accumulated interest to any capital scheme. Mention also was made to the lack of demand for allotments over the past 2 or 3 years and the fact that vacant plots had been available to let for much of 2015.

The Committee was reminded that an allotments association had been formed by two tenants in 2008 and the Council had agreed to a request that two representatives of the Association be co-opted to the Allotments Committee. One of the founders of the Association had subsequently relinquished his tenancy and the other tenant had decided that she did not wish to be a member of the Committee earlier in the year. As a result, it was unclear whether the Association was continuing and the Council had decided not to fill the second co-opted place when appointing the Committee at the Annual Meeting in May.

The Clerk reported that notification had been received in August that a new Association had been formed and that 44 people had joined, 29 of whom were tenants with the remainder being the spouses or partners of tenants. A committee had also been formed by the Association, only 3 of whose 8 members were tenants. Under the circumstances, Members discussed the standing of non-tenants of the Allotments Association and its committee in any negotiations with the Council. The Clerk reported that a number of tenants had asked for their spouses and partners to be added to tenancy agreements when paying their rent for 2015/16. Members' attention was drawn to the additional administrative work that this would necessitate and the potential for future conflict if

spouses and partners separated but both wanted to retain the tenancy or in transferring an agreement to a single person's name. Mrs Dykstra reported that some tenants were unclear whose name the agreement was in and that joint tenancies would enable either party to be a member of the Association. However the Clerk pointed out that tenants had been sent a signed copy of the tenancy agreement for their respective plots, a receipt for the deposit in their name and a letter confirming the tenancy. To avoid additional administrative work, the Committee decided that tenancies should be retained in a single name but that there was no objection to dealing with the spouses and partners of tenants if they joined the Association.

With regard to liaison with the Council, Mrs Dykstra suggested that it would be preferable if the Allotments Committee met more frequently than the present arrangement of twice yearly in May/June and October. However Members were of the opinion that half yearly meetings should be sufficient if informal meetings were held between representatives of the Committee and the Association approximately three weeks prior to the Committee meeting as this would enable issues to be discussed and subsequently investigated before submission to the Committee for consideration. In the event of any issues arising in the intervening period, the Association could raise these separately with the Council.

With the formation of a new Association, the Committee also had no objection to the resumption of the practice of having two representatives of the Association co-opted on to the Committee itself.

Members were informed that the Chairman of the Association had raised a number of improvements that they would like the Council to consider, including repairs, maintenance and provision of roads, fences and structures. In the absence of any further details, the Committee suggested that a meeting be held with representatives of the Association before the meeting of the Finance and General Purposes Committee in November when the budget for 2016/17 would be considered.

Following further discussion, it was

RESOLVED

- (a) that the tenancy of allotments be retained in a single name to avoid unnecessary additional administration;
- (b) that no objection be raised by the Committee to negotiations with representatives of the Association who are the spouses or partners of tenants;
- (c) that in future, meetings of the Allotments Committee be held half yearly in April and October;
- (d) that a meeting be held approximately three weeks before each Allotments Committee meeting between three representatives of the Committee and the Association to discuss issues relating to the allotments and to permit such matters to be investigated and reported to the Committee for consideration;

- (e) that a meeting be held between representatives of the Committee and the Association prior to the meeting of the Finance and General Purposes Committee in November;
- (f) that the Council be recommended to co-opt two representatives from the Association to the Allotments Committee.

12/15 BUDGET 2016/17

The Committee considered a summary of income and expenditure for Hallgate Allotments for 2014/15 and a forecast for both the current year and 2016/17.

Members were informed that the anticipated balance to be carried forward at the end of the current year was £938 and that, if rents remained unaltered, the balance at the end of 2016/17 was estimated to be £708.

As a result of the decision to meet representatives of the Association prior to the meeting of the Finance and General Purposes Committee in November, it was

RESOLVED

that consideration of the allotments budget and the level of rents for 2016/17 be referred to the Finance and General Purposes Committee for determination.

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

Chairman.