

# **WARBOYS PARISH COUNCIL**

Minutes of a meeting of the **Allotments Committee** held on 31st October 2016 at the Parish Centre, Warboys.

## **PRESENT**

Councillors Ms H A Backhouse, Mrs M P Bucknell, Mrs J M Cole, R J Dykstra, Ms L A Gifford, Mrs M H Harlock, J A Parker, Mrs J A Tavener, G C M Willis, Dr S C Withams and Mrs A R Wyatt.

Mrs F Dykstra and Mr A Taylor (Allotments Association).

## **01/16 ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN**

Upon being moved by Councillor Ms Backhouse and seconded by Councillor Mrs Bucknell, it was

### **RESOLVED**

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

**Councillor Parker in the Chair.**

## **02/16 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.

## **03/16 MINUTES**

Upon being moved by Councillor Willis and seconded by Councillor Dr Withams, the Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 15th March 2016 were signed as a correct record by the Chairman.

## **04/16 MEMBERS INTERESTS**

Councillor Ms Backhouse and Mrs F Dykstra declared a disclosable pecuniary interest as tenants of an allotment from the Parish Council. Councillor R J Dykstra and Mr A Taylor declared similar interests as their spouses were tenants of an allotment. Dispensations to speak but not vote on matters affecting the allotments had already been granted to Councillors Ms Backhouse and Dykstra.

## **RESOLVED**

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

## **05/16 MATTERS ARISING**

The Committee considered the following matter arising from the Minutes of its meeting held on 15th March 2016:-

### **(a) Security**

Further to Minute No. 16/15, and in response to a question by Councillor Mrs Bucknell, the Association's representatives advised that a sign had been pinned to the notice board on site asking tenants to inform them of any incidents of thefts from the allotments. However none had been reported.

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

## **06/16 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 and Councillors Miss Gifford and Dr Withams at a meeting with the Association's representatives on 11th October 2016.

Members were informed that a shipping container had been delivered on site for use by the tenants for storage purposes and that the roadway had been surfaced. A skip of soil improver had been delivered on site which had been funded by grant from Red Tile Wind Farm Trust and a further 50 bags or thereabouts delivered to the site which had been left over after the free distribution of bags to village residents earlier in October.

With regard to the issues raised at the meeting with the Association's representatives, it had been accepted by the Council's representatives that tenants were legally entitled to keep chickens on site and a suggested set of conditions was appended to the report now submitted. However Councillor Ms Backhouse who had applied initially to keep chickens now advised the Committee that she had decided to withdraw her request as she was aware that this was unpopular with some of the other tenants and would create additional administrative work for the Council.

The Committee was advised that the Association's representatives had reiterated their request for permission to erect sheds, greenhouses and polytunnels at the allotments which were currently prohibited by the tenancy agreement. Members offered no objection to the proposal, subject to additional rules being introduced to regulate the age and size of structures and type of materials. It was felt that the conditions should also require an additional deposit, that structures should be removed by tenants at the end of their tenancy and that tenants should accept all responsibility for the risk of thefts or vandalism.

Councillor Mrs Cole drew attention to the fact that one tenant had already erected a small structure containing asbestos on the plot, arising from which the Clerk undertook to write to the tenant asking him to remove it.

The Committee was advised by Mrs Dykstra that the tenant who wished to keep bees on site had not vacated his plot but that the Association accepted that as this was of interest to only one person and might be a cause of concern for others, this need not be pursued. She informed the Committee that the tenant who had requested the provision of bootscrapers on site subsequently had relinquished his tenancy and that the Association also accepted that this would not be progressed.

Following concerns raised by the Association's representatives which were reiterated by Councillor Mrs Bucknell with regard to the plot used by the Council to dispose of hedge cuttings, the Chairman indicated that he would visit the site with the Clerk to consider what action, if necessary, was required.

The Association's representatives had again raised the condition of the field let by the Council adjoining the individual allotment plots and Councillor Mrs Bucknell reported that this now contained numerous thistles that were seeding. The Clerk advised that he had written to the tenant on two occasions following previous complaints from the Association and would contact him again.

Arising from a further request by the Association for the installation of an eco-toilet at the site, the Committee's attention was drawn to the installation of toilets at the allotment sites in Huntingdon. It was suggested that grants were available which could help to offset the cost of installation.

## **RESOLVED**

- (a) that tenants be permitted to erect sheds, greenhouses and polytunnels on their plots, subject to compliance with conditions to be determined by the Council;
- (b) that the Chairman and Councillors Ms Gifford and Dr Withams be requested to submit suggested conditions for sheds, greenhouses and polytunnels at the allotments for consideration and adoption by the Council; and
- (c) that the Clerk be requested to investigate and report back on the feasibility of installing an eco-toilet at the allotments.

## **07/16 BUDGET 2017/18**

The Committee considered a summary of income and expenditure for Hallgate Allotments for 2015/16 and a forecast for both the current year and 2017/18.

The Clerk reported that there were currently 6 full and 1 half plots that were vacant at the allotments and no objection was raised to the Allotments Association trying to attract new tenants.

Members were informed that the anticipated balance to be carried forward at the end of the current year was £568 and that, if rents remained unaltered, the balance at the end of 2017/18 was estimated to be £342, assuming all of the plots were let. It was also pointed out that the rents of individual plots were being subsidised by the income from wayleaves and the rent from the field adjoining the allotments. In addition the administration charge of £250 to the allotment account did not reflect the amount of time now spent on allotments by the Clerk since the Association had become more active and were raising issues with the Council.

However Members felt that if rents were increased, this would be less likely to attract new tenants and it was therefore

**RESOLVED**

that rents be retained at the same level in 2017/18 at £15 for a full plot and £10 for a half plot.

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

**Chairman.**