

WARBOYS PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the **Allotments Committee** held on 18th March 2019 at the Parish Centre, Warboys.

PRESENT

Councillor J A Parker, Chairman

Councillors R J Dykstra, Mrs C Evans, Ms L A Gifford, P S Potts, Mrs J A Tavener and Dr S C Withams

Mr P Bellamy and Mrs F Dykstra (Allotments Association).

APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillors S J Green, Mrs M H Harlock and Mrs S J Wilcox.

08/18 MINUTES

Upon being moved by Councillor Dr Withams and seconded by Councillor Ms Gifford, the Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 29th October 2018 were signed as a correct record by the Chairman.

09/18 MEMBERS INTERESTS

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

RESOLVED

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

10/18 MATTERS ARISING

The Committee noted that there were no matters arising from the Minutes of its meeting held on 29th October 2018 that had not been dealt with at recent liaison meeting with representatives of the Allotments Association and referred to in the following minute.

11/18 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, Councillor Mrs Cole and the Clerk at a meeting with the Association's representatives on 12th March 2019.

The Committee was informed that Red Tile Wind Farm Trust Fund Ltd had approved a further grant of 100% towards the cost of a load of soil improver to be tipped at the allotments for use by tenants. Delivery would be made shortly before the forthcoming Easter period to enable tenants to move the improver to their plots over the bank holiday weekend.

The Clerk reported that there were currently 7 full and 2 half plots vacant. Following the service of notices to quit on several tenants for non-payment of rent over the winter, the number of vacant plots had increased but an excellent article in the last edition of the Warboys Diary by Mr Bellamy had attracted interest and five plots had been let since the article had appeared. Mr Bellamy advised that he had also written a shorter article for inclusion in the next edition in the hope that additional interest could be generated before the summer.

It was noted that plots tended to be overgrown when they were vacated which made them less attractive for prospective tenants. The Clerk reported that the increasing tendency for tenants to install raised beds, paving slab paths, wire perimeter fencing to deter rabbits etc. meant that it was more difficult to clear the plots by mechanical means once they become vacant and had not been well-maintained. The Clerk reported that the Handymen would start clearing overgrown plots and use the tarpaulin purchased to try to prevent weed growth on one of the plots until it could be re-let.

The Committee agreed to a suggestion by the Association's representatives that they be notified of the vacant plots so that other tenants could avail themselves of any materials left by outgoing tenants which might help the Handymen in cleaning the plots. It was also agreed that additional tarpaulin be ordered to spread on a vacant plot to assist in preventing weed growth.

As the Association's representatives had reported evidence of rats again, the Handymen had laid bait boxes with treated grain on two of the plots with the agreement of the tenants and a cage had been set on another plot in an effort to try to eradicate the problem.

The Association's representatives reported that the problem of fumes in the shipping container appeared to have been resolved as a tenant had repaired a leak rotovator.

The Association's representatives also reported that the roadway appeared in reasonable condition as the winter had been reasonably dry until recent weeks. Although road planings were not as readily available as previously, the Clerk indicated that he would continue to try to source them free of charge.

Subsequent to the liaison meeting, the Clerk reported that the Handymen had confirmed that all hedge clippings that were suitable were shredded. However some clippings such as brambles and conifers were difficult to feed through the shredder as they were too soft or blocked the machine.

It was confirmed that all of the waste materials, equipment etc. stored in the old railway carriage had been removed by the Handymen.

As a former Association representative who had offered to make a new notice board was suffering from ill health and his wife had given up the tenancy of her plot, it was agreed that the person who had made the village sign and honours boards be asked if he could assist in making a new notice board.

The Committee welcomed a suggestion from the liaison meeting for a plot to be made available for community use or by an organisation such as the scouts to encourage young people to take an interest in growing crops. In order to enable the Association to explore the possibility further, the Committee undertook to make a plot available in principle without charge.

Mention was made of a recent spate of break-ins at the allotments when the locks on individual sheds and the shipping container had been forced. It was reported that similar instances had occurred on an allotment site in Ramsey which suggested that the people involved were targeting allotment sheds. As replacement locks had been forced on two occasions on the shipping container, discussion arose as to whether it was worthwhile continuing to replace damaged locks. The Clerk reported that the Handymen had been unable to source close-fitting locks with combinations locally and that a padlock with a key would involve additional work in distributing keys, obtaining deposits, providing replacements, etc. Nevertheless it was felt that the shipping container should be secure to deter the theft of tools and machinery.

RESOLVED

- (a) that the Clerk be requested to purchase additional tarpaulin to cover a vacant allotment plot to help restrict weed growth before the plot was re-let;
- (b) that the Clerk be authorised to arrange for a replacement notice board to be provided at the allotments;
- (c) that in principle plot 27 be made available without charge for use as a community plot or by a village organisation and the Association be requested to report back to the Council following further investigation of the feasibility of the idea; and
- (d) that the Clerk be requested to investigate the replacement of the padlock on the shipping container with a suitable type of lock.

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

Chairman.