

WARBOYS PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the **Allotments Committee** held at the Parish Centre, Warboys on 20th March 2023.

PRESENT

Councillor J A Parker, Chairman

Councillors. R J Dykstra, Ms L A Gifford, J Land 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, A Ntuk and Mrs C L Sproats.

08/22 MINUTES

Upon being moved by Councillor Dr Withams and seconded by Councillor Ms Gifford, the Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 7th November 2022 were signed as a correct record by the Chairman.

09/22 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 wife was an allotment tenant but he had previously received a dispensation to speak but not vote on matters affecting the allotments.

RESOLVED

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

10/22 MATTERS ARISING

The Committee noted that there were no matters arising from their meeting held on 7th November 2022.

11/22 ALLOTMENTS

A report was submitted by the Clerk (copies of which had been circulated to all Members), drawing attention to the issues that had been discussed by the Chairman, Vice Chairman and the Clerk at a meeting with the Association's representatives on 8th March 2023.

It was reported that an application for a further grant from Red Tile Wind Farm Trust Fund for the delivery of soil improver for use by the allotment holders had been unsuccessful. As a grant had been approved in most years since 2015, the Trust had decided that sufficient grants had already been awarded.

The Clerk reported that 1 full plot was vacant currently. The tenancy had been offered to the person at the top of the waiting list who had failed to reply, as a result of which this would be offered to the next person on the list.

Following a site visit by the Chairman, Vice Chairman and Clerk in January, letters had been sent to a number of tenants who had yet to pay their rent or whose plot did not appear to have been cultivated for some time. Notices to quit had subsequently been served on several tenants with the plots having been relet to people on the waiting list. A further inspection of the allotments would take place in May to check again whether individual plots were being cultivated.

Members were informed that the Association's representatives had advised that rabbits and rats continued to be evident but that it had been accepted that there was little that could be done to eradicate the nuisance. Rats were thought to be nesting in compost bins which acted as a source of food and heat but complaints had been received in the past when poison had been laid and traps had been sprung by tenants to avoid pests from being caught.

The Clerk reported that a load of 2.5 tons of road planings had been delivered to site earlier in the month and spread by the Handymen. The Association's representatives had expressed their appreciation.

Members were informed that the plot used by the Handymen to dispose of hedge cuttings from around the village had been filled following work by them over the autumn. A delay in burning the cuttings had arisen due to the prevailing wind having been from the east for some time resulting in a risk of smoke blowing towards the A141, followed by several weeks of wet weather.

Following a complaint by one of the Association's representatives about encroachment from brambles in the adjoining field which was let by the Council and cut for hay, the Clerk reported that the tenant was experiencing a problem with his health currently. As a result, it had not been possible to speak to him about the issue but a further approach would be made after two or three months had elapsed.

A complaint also had been received that when hosepipes were laid across the roadway to water plots on the eastern side, other tenants were driving over them and causing splits in the piping. One of the Association's representatives had offered to provide a solution for the tenant who had raised the matter.

In addition, the Association's representatives were of the opinion that the five taps on site were now insufficient for the number of plots that were let, especially in dry summers such as that experienced in 2022. They had suggested that it would be preferable if the pipework were extended to the rear of the allotment site to benefit those tenants furthest away from the existing taps. The Clerk advised that the invoice for water used on site was expected imminently but would be expensive as the meter had not been read since the end of the dry summer. It was anticipated that the cost of extending the supply and installing additional more taps would be high but the Clerk undertook to investigate.

The Association's representatives had asked if new signs showing the numbers of plots could be installed as many of the existing signs either had disappeared or become indecipherable. The Clerk reported that various designs had been tried by the Handymen in the past, none of which had been wholly successful. The possibility of professionally made signs had been investigated previously but the cost would have amounted to several hundred pounds. Members were advised that further options would be considered.

It was reported that the Community Association would be organising a Best Kept Allotment competition again later in the year.

12/22 STORAGE

It was reported that the Association's representatives had asked previously if the former railway carriage which had been used for storage by tenants for many years could be retained and improved. They had offered to undertake the work if the Council paid for the materials which were estimated to cost £1,400. One of the Association's representatives subsequently had found a new sawmill in the area which had offered to supply the wood at a cost of £600 to £700 once the timber currently available had been seasoned for a further 6 to 12 months.

The Chairman advised the Committee that the railway carriage was now in a dilapidated condition and he reminded Members that the shipping container had been purchased by the Council to act as a replacement for the carriage. In addition, permission could be sought for sheds on site which provided further individual storage for tenants.

The Association's representatives maintained that, in their opinion, the carriage had an aesthetic value and that there was now insufficient storage to meet the needs of the current 50 tenants. In the event of the Committee agreeing to the request, the Chairman suggested that it would be difficult to also fund the cost of additional taps on site, bearing in mind the level of rent currently being paid by tenants.

RESOLVED

that a maximum sum of £700 be made available for materials to repair the railway carriage if the members of the Allotments Association were prepared to do the work themselves.

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

Chairman.