

## Allotment & Environment Committee

6<sup>th</sup> September 2023

6pm Town Council Offices, Kingsway, Bishop Auckland

**Present:** Cllr Michael Siddle (Chair), and Cllr Sam Zair, Cllr Andrew Legge

**Also Present:** Sarah Harris, Town Clerk & Vicki Booth Deputy Clerk , three reps from Pollards Allotment site and Cllr Mike Harker.

**AEC18/23 - Apologies for absence** – were received from Cllr Kimm Lawson

**Resolved:** that the members accepted the apologies for absence.

**AEC19/23 - Declarations of interest** – no declarations made

**AEC20/23 – Appointment of Deputy Chair –**

**Resolved:** that Cllr Legge be appointed deputy chair, this was Proposed by Cllr Siddle and Seconded by Cllr Zair.

**AEC21/23 - Minutes of the previous meeting held on 6<sup>th</sup> June 2023 were presented**

**Resolved** – that members agreed that these were a true record.

**AEC22/23 - Allotment Mapping Update** – plot marker and numbers would be sourced and installed.

**Resolved:** that members noted the report and look forward to receiving the next stage of the process.

**AEC23/23 – Report of the Town Clerk**

**AEC23.1/23 – Water** – Clarification about the charge for water was discussed.

**Resolved:** that members agreed charge is per plot, as per the recommendation from Policy and Resources Committee. This is to be confirmed at the next full council.

That the council responsibility for the water ends with the official taps on each site.

**AEC23.2/23 -Tenancies 2023-24** - an update was provided to confirm that the new mapping and water charges would be included. They also discussed the option of for including the 'Association' fee as part of the invoice to also be payed over to the association to keep paperwork streamlined.

**Resolved:** that members noted the update and satisfied association can issue out packs on TC. behalf, as well as the town council collecting the association fee from tenants.

**AEC23.3/23 -Draft Association Agreements** – the contribution from allotment rent income on association sites was discussed. It included options of remaining at 5% or increasing to 10, 15 or beyond.

**Resolved:** that members noted the draft association agreements and look forward to their resolution.

That the members agreed with the recommendation from the Policy and Resources committee to increase the payment to 10%.

That it was agreed that the after infrastructure should be the responsibility of the council up to the main taps on sites, not to off shoots.

That they agreed to a comprised position of how to make the association meetings quorate for decision making, of a third of members should be present for annual meetings, whereby an executive is then appointed. However, questions remain and further debate is needed regarding if the association don't have enough to hold a quorate AGM to make that decision and what could be an alternative mechanism.

It was agreed that the council would maintain communal roadways to a certain minimum level, which further discussion is needed as minimum standards be established and if vehicles are allowed and weather conducive, as vehicles should only be accessing sites to collect or retrieve items. Not just to attend plots.

**AEC23.4/23 – Maintenance Plans** – essential maintenance is being dealt with but the budget is very tight, it is recommended to seek approval to use the ear marked reserves to help with minimum repairs for sites. These reserves sit in circa of £14,000. Agreed that these will need to be used in the next round of essential works to progress.

**Resolved:** that members seek approval of this from full council.

Asbestos removal agreed at cost of £580 plus VAT

Gravel for cart way improvements for potholes approved for Woodhouse and Tindale, error in first delivery as dolomite too large and requirement is to now purchase pea gravel for smaller areas agreed.

Tree works to be completed and Edge Hill and Pollards agreed.

Waste removal agreed at various sites.

Repair 6-foot gap in the fence and purchase 2 locks for the wasteland area of Woodhouse allotments agreed.

That members requested clerk to seek costs of a maintenance person on a contract basis and compare to the costs of staff members carrying out the work and bring to the next meeting for discussion.

**AEC23.5/23 – Inspections Summer 2023** – whilst the system is not perfect, it is an improvement on previous years. further improvements are needed including having member involvement.

**Resolved:** that members noted the inspections are now compete, and that systems have improved but need further improvement.

Members agreed that the invoice be sent to plot 17&19 at Tindale to recoup the costs of the clearing of the site since the NTQ elapsed.

**AEC23.6/23 – Rules** – Need to make some small amendments on the next round of tenancy agreements e.g IBC tanks. With regards to cultivation discount look at wording and the site that doesn't have cultivation need to have a different type of tenancy agreement. Allocation of plots also needs to be clarified and a maximum number of plots per person or per household or by size.

**Resolved:** that members noted the rules require amendments and a report be taken as part of the policy review to full council ahead of tenancies being issued.

**AEC23.7/23 – Environment** – Cllr Siddle gave an overview of the River Wear Trust event in August.

**Resolved:** that members noted the work of the event, and that lessons needed to be learnt in the future.

## **AEC24/23 – Public Participation –**

A question was asked if there were other association sites which had formal association agreements in place.

**Resolved:** it was confirmed that the South Church Site had a historic agreement, however this is due for review. It was also a different type of management arrangement to what the other two sites had in place.

Pollard Allotment Association commented that they though improvements were needed in the inspection process, as some people had received the wrong information.

Resolved: as per AEC23.5/23 inspections process is being looked at further, part of which will involve, only one site per week, with multiple time slots. Reinspection's are diarised and followed up.

**AEC25/23** *Exclusion of Press and Public In accordance with the provisions of Section 1 of the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960, as amended by Section 100 of the Local Government Act 1972, the Council do now exclude the press and public for the remaining item on the agenda by reason of the confidential nature of the business to be transacted since publicity would be prejudicial to the public interest.*

**Resolved:** that Members exclude the press and public.

Public members left

**AEC28/23** – Strategy long term vision of the allotment sites was discussed.

**Resolved:** That members agreed to seek costings of a contractor/ handy person be explored and brought back as part of budget setting to see if it would be feasible.

That members agreed to seek further legal advice on process for enforcement and improvement of some sites.

That members agreed to develop project plan to bring back to use the former stable site, to reduce the waiting list.

That members agreed to develop detailed maintenance plan and establish quotes for tree maintenance.