

## **Allotment & Environment Committee**

**4 February 2025**

**Town Council Offices, Kingsway, Bishop Auckland**

**Present:** Cllr Michael Siddle (Chair) Cllr Legge & Cllr Zair

**Also Present:** Vicki Booth Acting Town Clerk, reps from Pollards Allotment Association, and Edgehill Allotment Association.

**AEC009/24 - Apologies for absence** – were received from Cllr Lawson and Cllr Fryatt

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

**AEC010/24 - Declarations of interest** – no declarations made

**AEC011/24 - Minutes of the previous meeting** – presented at full council

**Resolved** – that no minutes required approval

**AEC012/24 –Guest Speaker** – Paul Cockerill gave a presentation on the wildlife that exist over the viaduct and in the River Wear and the dangers faced to the wildlife when the grass is cut and the opportunity that the town has to promote this rich area as a place of natural beauty. That the area could benefit from being formally recognised as environmentally important due to the 18 species of rare wildlife that reside in the area.

**AEC013/24 –Report of the Acting Clerk:**

**AEC013.1/24** – An update was given regarding the number of vacant plots per site and the status of the waiting list.

**Resolved:** that members noted the update and agreed that some advertising for the vacancies should be promoted through social media.

**AEC013.2/24** – An update was given regarding the maintenance plans, scheduled work and slippage.

**Resolved:** that members noted that updated plans will be brought to a future meeting.

**AEC013.3/24** – An update was given regarding the ballot that took place at Pollards allotments over the future of the association.

Signed chair  
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**Resolved:** that members noted the ballot outcome was in favour of an association remaining but the response rate was low.

**AEC013.4/24** – An update was given regarding the requirement for allotment associations to have Employers Liability Insurance as well as Public Liability Insurance as per the association agreements.

**Resolved:** that members agreed that both PLI & ELI were a requirement of the council after seeking advice from BATC's insurance company on the issue. Members also agreed that 3.1 of the association agreements needs to be redefined for clarity purposes.

**AEC013.5/24** – An update was given regarding the first month with an allotment officer and what impact this has had on the office and on the allotment sites.

**Resolved:** that members noted the update.

**AEC013.6/24** – An update was given following the debrief with the South Church Association following the plot fire that took place in Sept 2024.

**Resolved:** that members noted the update and would welcome the feedback from the Fire Brigade around the distance of gas bottles and the storage of unused bottles.

**AEC013.7/24** – Members were briefed about the use of manure on site and the best way forward as some sites have concerns regarding the source and delivery of said manure

**Resolved:** that members agree that a policy was not required around this however agreed that a 'best practice' leaflet should be produced and circulated.

**AEC013.8/24** – members were advised that a coffee and catch up session is currently being arranged for March 2025 and will have a guest speaker. Once details are confirmed tenants and members will be notified.

**Resolved:** that members noted the update.

**ACE014/24** – Following the work to reinstate the allotments on the waste land at Woodhouse new concerns have arisen. The ground is not penetrable and therefore tenants are unable to plant anything at present. Given the level of investment in the area already it is deemed that the ground needs to be resolved in order for the land to be used.

**Resolved:** members were not comfortable with any of the options and requested a contractor be sourced to dig three or four trenches across the site to establish what is below and how far the bricks and rubble go down.

**ACE015/24** The idea of numbering all plots on each site has been something the Council has discussed for a number of years. The newly appointed allotment officer has given us capacity to do this. Quotes have been obtained for robust material plastic numbers which are weatherproof and very visual. Three quotes were presented.

**Resolved:** that members thought aluminium numbers may be better suited than plastic and requested quotes for a similar shape and size but of an alternative material.

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**AEC016/24** – South Church Allotments have requested the use of the land adjacent to the shop to store bags of soil at certain times of the year when they receive a bulk order to ensure the car park is left vacant for vehicles. They have the fence to secure this area. The area in question is already 40% concrete and paving slabs or similar would be used to level the ground without it being permanently fixed.

**Resolved:** that members agreed that South Church Allotments could repurpose this area to store bags of soil.

**AEC017/24** – DCC's Civic Pride Team have plans for their annual anti-litter campaign which will run from 5<sup>th</sup> March 2025 to 5<sup>th</sup> May 2025.

**Resolved:** that members were supportive of the initiative

**AEC018/24 Floral Arrangements and sub-committee** – Discussion took place that the sub committee has not yet taken place as it was agreed in the first year DCC would be used for the planting and watering of the floral arrangements.

**Resolved:** that members agreed there needs to be more of a formal agreement between BATC and DCC regarding BATC taking over the costs of the floral arrangements in town and what DCC as a contractor will be doing throughout the spring/summer season to plant and maintain these.

*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.*

**AE019/24 Recharge Costs** – A discussion took place regarding the recharge of costs to clear untidy vacant plots of the previous tenants. A fixed fee was preferable but variable fee based on the cost to clear was an option.

**Resolved:** that members agreed it should be a two-tier system. That a charge of £200 should be made which will partially cover the cost of the waste management however, should they make the payment within 14 days this would be reduced to £100.