

Allotment & Environment Committee

7 June 2023

5pm Town Council Offices, Kingsway, Bishop Auckland

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

Also Present: Sarah Harris, Town Clerk & Vicki Booth Deputy Clerk, three reps from Pollards Allotment site, one from Woodhouse & 5 from Tindale and Cllr Mike Harker.

AEC10/23 - Apologies for absence – were received from Cllr Kimm Lawson

Resolved: that the members accepted the apologies for absence.

AEC11/23 - Declarations of interest – Cllr Siddle's wife has a plot on the Edge Hill Allotment site.

AEC12/23 - Minutes of the previous meeting held on 6th April 2023 were presented

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

AEC13/23 - Allotment Mapping Update – David Banks, from Northern Counties Allotment Association gave an update of the mapping process and at what stage the development was at. Each plot will be able to be numbered and have marker pins installed to clearly identify the plots.

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

AEC14/23 – Report of the Town Clerk

AEC14.1/23 Association Agreements - the clerk presented a report on Association agreements (see file copy)

There to help safeguard association, tenants and the town council. Ensure PLI & ELI are in place etc. The old 2007 association agreements are out of date and needed reviewing. Propose for implementation is that each association sent a generic agreement then a draft will be issued to each for all members to review and then a meeting will be held with that association to agree on any possible changes and agreement and then it will be binding. The proposal is that these will be in place by September 2023. Association currently receive 5% fee for activities undertaken on our behalf and this needs to be reviewed and put into the agreement.

Resolved: that members agreed that the draft can be issued and association meetings can be held within the next few weeks.

AEC14.2/23 Inspections Summer 2023 – These have now started and enforcement action will be taken where required. Members have been asked if they are able to support. Following inspections if any significant action is required that will be reported to the next committee.

Resolved: that members noted the update and would confirm if they are able to support inspections.

AEC14.3/23 Newsletter Summer 2023 – has been issued electronically to those who have email addresses, and limited copied put on site. It include the update regarding the implementation of a water charge for 2023-24.

Resolved: that members noted the newsletter and the contents within it.

AEC14.4/23 – waiting list – waiting list numbers are down to less than 15, however the majority of persons want to have poultry. Edge Hill Site often proves to be the hardest to secure tenants for.

Resolved: to note the waiting list.

AEC15/23 – Public Participation –

Water charges –

Q - why was it not mentioned that it wasn't communicated that a water charge was to be discussed to be implemented.

Q - We went away after the last meeting that there was going to be an opportunity for tenants to feed back so it was disappointing that it was then on the news letter that it was a done deal. Pollards is heavy users & Edge Hill isn't so I think there are better ways that the decision could have been made that each site was looked at individually.

Chair – I believe a consultation should be always done and this is a lesson learnt. Any way we try and do it there are pros and cons whichever way we do it. We are trying to offset some thing and balance things. Need to ensure BATC stick to their agreement with boundary works etc but have the funds to do it.

Q - Between June & July travellers fill their tanks and use water and then water is abused but not by tenants. Water is on all winter in Woodhouse but how many leaks do you have during the winter 6 months.

Town Clerk – The process has been difficult and we are trying to make the allotment services work effectively and why the members came to that decision. Woodhouse Close Site is being issued with a lock for the gates to prevent others accessing the site to take water. Consideration may be given to turning off the water on all sites over the winter.

Chair: If the charge is good this year and the bills are reduced then it will be reviewed.

Q: Is it possible to put a sign up with bills for the last quarter to emphasis the cost and this may visually help people be conscious of what they use and will reflect in the next years bill.

Q – Tindale site – Don't agree with it, they have waited over 5 years to get the drainage, full right hand site of site floods.

Q - Water pressure on Tindale and Pollards is an issue – (old black 20m exterior pipe coming off the meter, South Church 32mm pipe, funding may be possible)

Q - What about rewards and encouragement to use water butts.

Q - Feedback loop - Meetings to have outstanding items and do not remove from list until action has been complete.

Chair: Maintenance plans are being developed, and action logs from each meeting also being developed to improve feedback. Posters can be put up to show water usage. Water pressure is noted as an issue.

Signed chair
July 2023

AEC16/23 *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

Cllr Siddle stepped out of the room due to the declaration of interested for the next two items

Cllr Zair took the roles as chair in his absence.

AEC17/23 Termination of Tenancy – Progress update plot Sat 3rd June was deadline under the Tortes of Goods Act for items to be collected. On Fri 2nd BATC received correspondence from a solicitor. Therefore legal advice is being sought.

Resolved: that members agreed that the legal advice be sought and followed.

AEC18/23. Lease Agreement Edge Hill & Works needed lease dates back to WVDC and creation of BATC, it is reviewed every 3 years the rent is reviewed in line with the Retail Price Index. As part of the lease hedges etc maintained and clear the walkways. Therefore seeking approval for the works of £750 plus VAT to clear the right-hand hedges.

Resolved: That members agreed for the works to be carried out. To the sum of £750 plus VAT to clear the right-hand hedges.

Cllr Siddle re-joined the meeting.

AEC17/23 Agreement for South Church Allotments - South Church Self-Managed Association – Pay BATC £600 per year in rent. The agreement needs to be updated and reviewed.

Resolved: That members agreed to the invoice £600 this forthcoming year23/24 be issued and advise the association that the agreement will be reviewed for next year, and to see appropriate legal advice on the agreement.