

DRAFT



MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE TOWN COUNCIL'S ALLOTMENTS COMMITTEE HELD ON 26th JULY 2017 IN THE COMMITTEE ROOM AT THE CIVIC CENTRE AT 6.00PM.

PRESENT: Councillors: P Barton (Chairman), P Smith (Town Mayor), T Luker, R Claydon, N Pinnegar, L Farmer.

Co-opted members: A Burns, C Mitchell.

IN ATTENDANCE Mrs D Hyam.

145. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE. I Jones.

146. DECLARATION OF INTEREST. None expressed by members.

147. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD 13th July 2016. Proposed by Cllr T Luker and seconded by Cllr P Smith of the Allotments Committee that the minutes of the meeting held on 13th July 2016 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman. Agreed all in favour.

148. RESULTS OF ALLOTMENT INSPECTIONS. The Chairman explained that allotment inspections had taken place at the end of June and the Council had received a complaint regarding the condition of allotments at Knapp Road in the area of 19-23. Mrs Hyam read out the following results to the committee.

Plots at Knapp Road 13A the tenant was sent Letter to Remedy no response or improvement so sent Letter to Quit. 19B the tenant sent Letter to Remedy and condition of plot lapsed due to illness. Following recent follow-up inspection it has much improved. 21B the tenant was sent Letter to Remedy no response or improvement so sent Letter to Quit. 22A the tenant was sent Letter to Remedy has decided to give up plot. 23B the tenant was sent Letter of Concern as relatively new tenant, is making some improvement but will monitor progress. 32 the tenant was sent Letter to Remedy and lapsed due to family bereavement, will monitor progress.

Plots at New Road 7B the tenant sent Letter to Remedy and lapsed due to illness so will monitor progress. 12 the tenant sent Letter to Remedy has decided to give up half of the plot which has been reallocated to a new tenant. 22A the tenant was sent letter to Remedy no response or improvement so sent Letter to Quit. 24 the tenant was sent Letter to Remedy the lapse was due to illness so will monitor progress. 26 the tenant was sent Letter to Remedy, has made some improvement so will monitor progress. 27A and 27B both are relatively new tenants as no progress has been made this year both sent Letters of Concern response awaited.

Mrs Hyam informed the committee as a result of the letters sent out to quit and present vacant plots there would be the equivalent of 3 full plots available at Knapp Road and 3 full plots available at New Road and there are no names on the waiting list. The Chairman said that the condition of the allotments were very poor and will need strimming and plan to cover the vacant plots with weed proof membrane once strimmed. A Burns added this may encourage new tenants as trying to cultivate an overgrown plot is very daunting and does put a lot of prospective tenants off.

Cllr L Farmer entered the meeting.

P Smith raised the concern of the cost to the Town Council for strimming and covering plots that tenants have not cultivated. He suggested that a new clause be added to the Allotments Agreement so any new tenant returns the plot in the condition it was taken on and to pay a deposit to cover strimming if it is left in an overgrown state when vacated. The Chairman added this would apply to new tenants going forward after the strimming and covering of vacant plots.

Cllr P Smith proposed that a new clause and deposit be considered by the full Council and added to the Allotment Agreement and it was seconded by Cllr T Luker and all agreed.

149. WATER SUPPLY AT NEW ROAD ALLOTMENTS. The Chairman explained that the poor water supply issue was being investigated by Severn Trent and the Council is waiting for a quote to repair or improve the water supply. At present there are three options to solve the problem as follows;

1. Hire our own digger with driver and try to locate a crushed pipe in the 100 yards or so length of this pipe which is about a metre underground. A significant amount of this would be inaccessible and very disruptive. If any pipe damage was found we would still be faced with repair to the metal pipe which is very small in diameter.

2. Do nothing and place water troughs at lots of points around the site stating that tenants must live with low pressure. The site is already very sloping and difficult to navigate and this would compound problems with the site's usability and desirability.

3. Install a new metre connection with Severn Trent. This would be a slightly larger pipe with access point near our entrance. Severn Trent have sent us forms to complete to request a quote but they charge £138 to prepare the quote as it includes a site specific investigation which may involve traffic regulation, assessing other services and utilities nearby, etc. The Town Council would need to authorize a spend for this sum to obtain a quote in order that the Council is informed of its options. Installing a new Severn Trent tap is likely to be expensive involving a few thousand pounds, however once done, there would be a larger pipe, a nearer access point and fewer problems in the future from other parties damaging the main allotment pipe.

The Chairman added that we are waiting for a quote and that Severn Trent insist that it would be the Council's responsibility from the stop cock outside the Chipping Surgery to the allotments. Cllr R Claydon said that he had accessed the Severn Trent website and he felt that it was unclear whose responsibility it was. On its pages it states that responsibility lies with them until it reaches the users property and on another page states the opposite so very ambiguous and inconclusive. He felt that the option of installing water tanks at the top of the allotments should not be dismissed and investigated as the water pressure would not affect the flow of water on the site as it would be gravity fed. The water system would then comply with water regulations and save money. Mrs Hyam confirmed that at present tenants are allowed to use hose pipes but if the dip tanks and stop cocks are install they would not be used. Cllr P Smith said that water flow could be worked out mathematically to see if this was a viable option. A Burns as a tenant of the allotments was asked for his opinion on how much water would be used at any one time. He said this would be difficult to estimate and the proposed holding tank may not keep up with demand if the water pressure is too low to effectively refill it. At present tenants are finding it very hard to keep their plots watered many are staying on the plots for long periods of time to achieve this and due to the clay soil and run off a lot of water is needed to keep crops in good condition. The Chairman raised concern that

the tank or tanks may need a solid foundation, blocks or a retaining wall at the top of the site. After much discussion it was concluded that Cllr P Smith would work out a formula to assess the water flow needed using the holding tank system. Mrs Hyam to supply meter readings for at least ten years if possible to ascertain water usage and no proposal could be made to the Council until a quote had been received and investigations into the tank system had been completed.

150. NOTICEBOARD NEW ROAD. The Chairman thanked A Burns for offering to put up the new noticeboard and confirmed that the Council would like it to be erected to the right hand side of the main gate as you enter the site. Cllr R Claydon offered to help A Burns with this project.

151. NEW ROAD IMPROVEMENTS TO THE PATH AT THE MAIN ENTRANCE. The Chairman informed the committee that discussions had taken place at a recent site meeting to improve the sloped path to the main gate. It was suggested a series of steps could be installed with a handrail but following a survey carried out by Cllr Smith this was going to be very expensive in the region of 10 to 20 thousand pounds to install and the steps would need to be quite high due to the gradient. A local contractor suggested that the path could be altered to a zig-zag formation with a hand rail and shallow steps. This would allow tenants to access the site easily with wheel barrows. The contractor has been asked to produce a sketch and a quote for this alteration so it can be considered by the Council.

152. STRIMMING OF PLOT 42 NEW ROAD. The Caretaker has started to strim plot 42 and the bank at New Road so the bank can be inspected following complaints from the residents at the housing development at the Chipping Surgery. Once the strimming has been completed it is hoped that the plot will be covered with a weed proof membrane. The Chairman added that during a recent meeting it was noted that one tenant living in the new development was accessing the site over the fence and had cut steps into the bank Mrs Hyam will be sending a letter as this was not agreed and is unacceptable.

153. SUGGESTIONS FOR PROPOSAL TO ALLOW DEDICATED CHILDREN'S PLOTS. The Chairman proposed that the Committee consider allowing a plot to be dedicated for children. He envisaged this would enable children to get involved in gardening and enjoy seeing things grow and understand where food comes from. This in turn would encourage healthy eating and the difference in being able to eat home-grown fruit and vegetables. The plots would need to be small say an eighth of a full plot and the ground cleared ready. The parents of a child or children would need to register as the tenant, sign an agreement and be there at all times to supervise. This is already allowed in the present Allotment Agreement but it was felt that a clause referring to children's plots should be added. The cost of a children's plot would be an eighth of the full plot fee. Investigations will continue into procedure and implementation of such a scheme all were in agreement that it would be a good project to pursue.

154. TO RECEIVE REPORT FROM KNAPP ROAD REPRESENTATIVE. C Mitchell had nothing to report. The Chairman asked if the Knapp Road Association were active as they had completed a lot of work on the site over the years. C Mitchell explained that numbers has dwindled over the past 12 months but he would ask members if there was any intention to continue. The Chairman said that it would benefit them from continuing and would like them to consider having a meeting in the autumn with

the Council to discuss the site. C Mitchell added that he felt this would be favourably received by tenants.

155. TO RECEIVE REPORT FROM NEW ROAD REPRESENTATIVE. A Burns had nothing to report.

156. ITEMS FOR FUTURE MEETINGS. Water supply New Road up-date, Progress on plots for Children, Path at main entrance New Road.

157. DATE FOR NEXT MEETING. Wednesday 13th September 2017 in the Committee Room at the Civic Centre

158. This completed the business of the Allotment Committee

Signed.....Chair of the Allotments Committee

Date.....

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