



MINUTES OF THE TOWN COUNCIL ALLOTMENT TENANTS MEETING HELD ON 4th DECEMBER 2017 IN THE COOMBE SUITE AT THE CIVIC CENTRE AT 7.00PM

PRESENT; Cllrs P Smith (Mayor), R Claydon (Deputy Mayor), P Barton (Chair of Allotments Committee), T Luker, N Pinnegar, L Farmer and 32 members of the public.

IN ATTENDANCE; Ms Sue Bailey (Town Clerk) and Mrs D Hyam (Administrator).

1. WELCOME. The Chairman Cllr P Barton welcomed members of the public to the meeting.

2. PRESENT SITUATION AT SITES

There are several projects that the Council is considering to improve the allotments. Much has been done to investigate the problem of the low water pressure of .2 litres per sec at New Road Allotments. It was found to be the result of lime scale build up in the pipe from the water main to the site. It was concluded that upgrading of the water supply was needed. Following the submission of quotes it was decided by the Allotment Committee that the best way forward would be to install a new supply from the water main in New Road to a new stand pipe near the main entrance which would be connected to the onsite water system. In answer to concerns it was confirmed that the water pressure would improve to 1.5 litres per sec. The quotes are in the excess of £5,000 and will go before the Town Council for consideration.

Plans have been formulated, to level the upper entrance path, infill with compact path stone, install handrails and new double gates to make bringing manure and deliveries onto the New Road site easier. The proposed plan was submitted to GCC Highways for consideration and no objections were raised, the quote of near £3,000 will now go before the Town Council for consideration.

Quotes for a new gate post at Knapp Road allotments have been sought and will be discussed at the next Town Council meeting for approval.

A request for a handrail and infill to level the middle set of steps at Knapp Road has been received and will be inspected in due course.

Quotes are being sought for the strimming of vacant plots and the overgrown areas near plots 23 and 35 at Knapp Road as the Town Council resources are low due to the current long term sick leave of staff.

There are 3 ½ vacant plots at Knapp Road and 5 ½ plots at New Road. Plot 15 at New Road is being considered for use as a community plot for the Memory Group as it is next to the main gate, but this will be decided following proposed works to the path at the main entrance. There is one name on the waiting list for this plot should it not be suitable for the Memory Group. At present there are no other names on the waiting list.

3. AREAS NEEDING ATTENTION AND OTHER ISSUES.

It was commented that a few years ago some tenants cleared part of the bank next to their plots ready to be covered with a membrane, but the work was not completed. The Town Council had set aside £200 for the Knapp Road Allotment Association to hire a digger to complete the work along with improvements to the top path. Unfortunately, this was not completed due to the Chairman of the association leaving the area. It was noted that the association has £250 available for projects at Knapp Road.

The tenants raised concern that there was not a suitable area for dropping off manure at Knapp Road. The Allotments Committee are looking at getting the area of plot 23B in front of the large gate cleared so this area can be used for such deliveries.

It was raised that a tenant at New Road allotments who had covered a plot but had done very little cultivation was allowed to move to another plot. The tenant had found a full plot too much to manage and decided to take a half plot instead.

Skips had been promised last year to remove rubbish from both sites. This had been delayed due to the Administrator and the Chairman being on long term sick leave. This would be looked at again in conjunction with the clearing of vacant plots.

Many asked about plot inspections and how often they take place. Inspections take place twice a year and the appropriate letters are sent to tenants if there are any concerns. In some cases certain circumstances can account for a slip in a plot's condition. In this instance more time is given for improvement. It was suggested that tenants contact the Council if there are any concerns. However, this can be difficult for the site representatives to report as tenants tend their plots at different times of the day. It was suggested that a monthly up-date on plot vacancies and plots under special circumstances could be posted on the website or noticeboards along with any other useful information so tenants are aware of the current situation. It was noted that the noticeboard at New Road is planned to be installed following the proposed works at the main entrance. There is a noticeboard at Knapp Road and these boards would be a valuable form of communication for tenants.

Concern was raised that plots were being given up for wildlife. The intention of the Council is to trim and cover vacant overgrown plots with a view to taking a holding deposit from new tenants in future and there are no plans to have them set aside for wildlife. However, the boundary edges of both sites are left fallow to encourage wildlife. It was expressed that there is a need to keep certain areas as wildlife havens as it is all part of the enjoyment of having an allotment. It was noted that there has been an abundance of birds, slow worms and other native species seen on the allotments in the past year.

It was suggested that tenants form groups at each site. Associations can take advantage of discounts when buying seeds, manure etc. This could also enable tools to be shared between tenants. Unfortunately, tools have been taken from plots, including a wheel barrow, so these would need to be kept in a lockable shed or tool box. It was agreed that both sites would benefit from having sheds, but they are not allowed on the allotments due to covenants covering the sites. The Council had taken legal advice on the interpretation of the covenants and were advised that any structure over a meter was not permitted. However tenants are allowed to have lockable tool boxes as long as they do not exceed a meter in height. It was pointed out sheds had been on the New Road site many years ago.

There is a large communal compost heap not far from plot 35 at Knapp Road which is being constantly added to. The concern is that it will start to encroach on the plot. In the same area there is a large amount of brambles. It is proposed that the area is trimmed and the roots cleared with a small tractor as spraying weed killer could drift onto neighbouring plots. It was suggested that the area could be more organised and controlled for composting purposes etc. Tenants are allowed to have compost bins on their plots reducing the need to have a communal area and tenants are permitted to have bonfires as long as they do not cause a nuisance to local residents.

It was asked if the Town Council had been approached by the developers of the land adjacent to the New Road allotments, who are currently seeking planning permission for housing and a car park. It was confirmed that the Town Council had not been approached. It was noted that statutory sites would need permission of the Secretary of State to change the use of an allotment site.

It was noted that on some vacant plots produce had not been harvested this year. It was suggested that surplus fruit or vegetables could be picked and given to the food bank in future.

4. PRIORITIES GOING FORWARD.

Water supply at New Road.

Proposed alterations to path and main gate at New Road.

Trimming and covering of vacant plots and other areas at both sites and the area around plots 23 and 35 Knapp Road.

Review the condition of paths at New Road especially the path near 10A where there is a drop from the path onto the plot.

Review the condition of the top path and middle steps at Knapp Road.

Hand rail at middle steps at Knapp Road.

Compost area to be improved and controlled.

Form working groups at each site to help tenants in difficulty and other projects.

Produce newsletter in January 2018 and put information on website, for example the proposed alterations to the main path at New Road, vacant plots and plots under special measures.

5. ALLOTMENT COMMITTEE MEETINGS. The next committee meeting will be held on Wednesday 10th January at 6.00pm in the Committee Room at the Civic Centre. All are invited.

6. ALLOTMENT TENANTS MEETING. A tenants meeting will be planned in the spring. It was suggested that tenants have their own meetings for each site to discuss issues raised and form an active group and were welcome to arrange this between themselves at the close of the meeting.

7. This complete the business of the Allotment Tenants Meeting and the Chairman thanked all for attending.

Signed.....Chair of the Allotments Committee

Date.....