



MINUTES of a meeting of THE ALLOTMENTS COMMITTEE

On Tuesday 4th March 2020 at 2.00pm in the Council Chamber of Colne Town Hall

In attendance: Cllr. A Mann, Cllr. D Clamp, Cllr. B Wildman and Mr B Kibble (Co-opted Member)

Others in attendance: Mr. E Dennison (Allotments Officer), Mr. D Kay (*Alkincoates*) and Mr. A Robertson

1. Welcome

Cllr. Mann welcomed all to the March Allotments Committee meeting.

2. Apologies

No apologies had been received.

Absent: Cllr. P Howarth

3. Minutes

The Minutes of the 10th September 2019 were approved a correct record of the meeting.

The Minutes were approved as a correct record.

Proposed: Cllr. D Clamp
Approved by Committee.

Seconded: Cllr. B Wildman

4. Declarations of interest

Members were invited to declare any interest relating to items on the agenda in accordance with the provisions of the Code of Conduct and/or indicate if S106 of the Local Government Finance Act applied to them.

There were no additional declarations of interest or implications expressed relating to S106 of the Local Government Finance Act.

5. Exclusion of the Public

The meeting considered if there were any items on the agenda which might require the exclusion of members of the public from the meeting.

The Allotment Officer had prepared a finance report for discussion under item 10 and a resident complaint to be covered under item 12 which included correspondence with a plot holder. The Committee agreed these items be moved to the end of the agenda.

6. Public Forum

The opportunity was given to consider questions, statements or petitions from members of the public.

Open Gate Project.

Mr Robertson from Open Gate explained that in reviewing the project a number of issues had been identified which it was felt deterred the level of participation they would like to see achieved. The absence of suitable indoor space resulted in groups having to shelter in the polytunnel where there was not sufficient space and the space that was available was not always appropriate to the activities that needed to be undertaken. The ages, mix and size of group using the site made it difficult to manage individual needs without creating clearly defined and secure areas and improvements to general facilities. The absence of a public toilet in the area was also an issue when trying to encourage people to the site and keep them on site for longer periods. In addressing these issues the volunteer organisers had put forward a number of proposals for consideration. These proposals included:

An additional secure structure that could be primarily used for teaching/briefing purposes and where personal items might be left when working on site. They had originally been looking at the possibility of a small (4m in length by 2.1m in width) shipping container but due to difficulties with site access they identified that a flat pack style container that could be assembled on site would be more appropriate. This would be furnished with a table and chairs to enable it to be used for teaching/briefings.

One of the volunteers is the owner of Tubbs of Colne who are supporting the venture and hope to utilise produce from the site in the restaurant to highlight the vegetables that are in season on the plot. They would also like to link up with the project to undertake basic cookery demonstrations. To facilitate this they would like to install a firepit on site to occasionally cook food. The fire pit would use charcoal and would only be used on a limited number of occasions.

As a temporary measure, a portaloo has been located on site but this is not practical for longer term use as it has to be removed from site to be emptied. The group have investigated a high quality composting toilet which is a low maintenance unit and may be purchased provided they are able to attract sufficient grant funding.

The group have arranged with Lancashire Adult Learning to use the site as a venue for a six week horticulture course with a view to also host a follow on course over the summer provided the demand is sufficient.

The project currently runs on Thursdays and Fridays and the occasional Saturday morning.

Alkincoates Path.

The Committee were advised that the path to the lower far side of the Alkincoates Allotments was deteriorating due to defects when it was originally laid. The contractors had previously been called back to make repairs shortly after it had been installed but the path was continuing to deteriorate.

7. Plot Inspections

- 7.1. The number of inspections have been limited since the last meeting. Basil Street, Broken Banks, George V (intake), Montague Street and Temple Street. As part of the ongoing project work scheme a number of improvements had been made to communal areas on Basil Street, Broken Banks and Montague Street.

8. Policy Update

8.1. Livestock Consents:

Details of current livestock consents was circulated at the meeting along with details of new applications made since the last meeting.

Four of the new applications were declined as they had not included either the type or number of livestock for which consent was being requested.

8.2. Geese and Ducks

It was noted that Geese and Ducks were ground feeders and that the use of treadle feeders for feeding this type of livestock was unlikely to be realistic. Where consent is sought for Geese and Ducks robust measures would need to be taken to ensure nuisance from rodents or other animals was kept to a minimum.

9. Allotment Allocations

Details of known vacancies arising since the last meeting were discussed at the meeting.

The Public left the meeting at this point as the following items were classed as Private items.

10. Allotment Finances

The Committee were advised that the majority of plot holders had paid the current years fees. Of the two accounts that remained to be resolved, one had not received the invoice as they had changed address, and the other was awaiting an outcome of the Committees decision on the payment of water charges.

The Allotment Officer reported that the majority of the remaining allotment budget had been committed to improvements to the central pathway at Broken banks and fencing work at Temple Street. Estimates had been received for pathwork improvements to Montague Street but this work had been held back in case funds were needed to cover storm damage. As no tree damage had been identified the order for Montague Street would be placed shortly. In addition, a small number of equipment purchases had been heldback until the year end to ensure there were sufficient funds in the budget.

The Committee received a confidential report, outlining a comparison of allotment charges within the North West area and the potential impacts of changes in the current fee structure.

The Committee recommended maintaining fees at their current level.

11. Allotment Awards

The Committee noted the planned dates for the awards. New plot holders had been advised that they would be automatically included in the Best Newcomer category and additional entry forms and notices were due to be sent out at the end of March to all plot holders.

12. Allotment Update

12.1. George V Allotments and Livestock

The Committee continued to be concerned about the central plots on this allotment site. The plots next to the pathway did not appear to be actively cultivated. The dock plants had been cut down to ground level at some point but at the time of the last visit, the plot mainly consisted of exposed soil with pooling surface water, no or little vegetation and/or shelter and with the geese appearing to have been left to their own devices, roaming over the entire

surface of the plot.

The Committee was not satisfied that the plot met the appropriate level of management and cultivation and asked the Allotment Officer to write to the plot holder advising them of their concerns.

12.2. Montague Street

The Committee had previously received a letter regarding the condition of Montague Street Allotments. Since receiving the letter, two visits to the site had been undertaken by Committee members, accompanied by the Allotment Officer and the issues discussed with the current plot holder. In addition some remedial work had been undertaken to the access path to ensure the plots were accessible. Quotes had also been obtained to install a more substantial/serviceable pathway to the allotment site. At the time of the last visit in February 2020, it was estimated that there were 21 ducks sited on plot three.

The Committee requested that the Allotment Officer write to the plot holder asking that they limit the type and number of livestock kept on the site to no more than six ducks. Should they wish to keep other livestock on the site the plot holder should make a formal approach to the Committee for additional consents.

13. Councillors Questions

There were no questions at this time.

14. Date & Time of next meeting

The next Allotments Committee meeting is due to take place in May/June 2020 and would be included in the schedule to be considered by the Council meeting in May.