



**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE ALLOTMENTS COMMITTEE
on Tuesday 22nd March 2022 at 6.30pm
At Colne Town Hall**

In attendance: Cllr A. Mann (Chairman), Cllr P. Howarth, Cllr K. McNulty and Mr B. Kibble (Co-opted Member) and Cllr M. Chung (via Zoom).

Also in attendance: Mr E. Dennison (Allotments Officer) and Mr C. Unwin (Member of the Public).

1. Welcome

The Chairman welcomed all to the March meeting of the Colne Town Council Allotments Committee.

2. Apologies

To report and record apologies for absence from Members of the Allotments Committee.

No Apologies had been received.

3. Declarations of Interest

To receive any declarations of interest from Members relating to any item on the agenda in accordance with the provisions of the Code of Conduct and/or indicate if S106 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 applies to them.

No declarations were received.

4. Minutes

To approve as a correct record the Minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday 14th September 2021.

The Minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday 14th September 2021 were accepted as a true and accurate record.

Proposed: Cllr. A Mann.

Seconded: Cllr. P Howarth

Approved by the Committee.

Members asked for updates on the following item from the March minutes.

Item 3. The plot holder had complied with the requests to remove the cockerels from their plot and a recent plot inspection had confirmed the plot remained cockerel free.

5. Public Forum

To consider questions, statements, or petitions from members of the public who are welcome to the

meeting and have a total collectively of 15 minutes to make their representations to the Committee. (Information only)

Mr Unwin addressed the meeting providing a brief history of the Knotts Lane and South Valley Allotment site. He advised that the Knotts Lane and South Valley Allotments used to be part of the deeds of Knotts Farm. He has recently forwarded a copy of the original 1950 deed of the sale to John Ogden for the sum of one hundred and eighty five pounds.

In 1962 John Ogdon bequeathed the land to Colne Corporation for the people of Colne. Mr Unwin asked the Committee to consider the possibility of re-naming the allotments at the top of Knotts lane to the John Ogden Allotments in recognition of this bequest. Unfortunately, he did not have a copy of the original bequest or Mr Ogden's last will and testament, only a handwritten note to this effect with his own documents.

The Committee said it was happy to consider a request for renaming the site at a future meeting once the details of the bequest could be confirmed.

6. Allotment Meeting Dates

To consider the meeting schedule for 2022-23. (For information Only)

The Chairman advised that she had received an email which suggested that the date of the meetings were not necessarily at the most appropriate time of year and more meetings might be needed.

The meeting dates had been agreed by Full Council and fell each quarter. The dates for this year had been set for 14th June, 13th September, 13th December 2022 and 28th March 2023. The Committee were advised that they could hold extraordinary meetings if and when the need arose. Additional meetings were likely to require further resources and Councilor's time.

Members of the Committee were keen to ensure that there was a regular program of plot and site inspections. It was suggested that a schedule be drafted with site inspections being undertaken over the period of one month and as required during the growing season. The Committee confirmed its intention to keep to the existing schedule of meetings at this time.

7. Water Supplies - Sutherland Street

To receive a verbal update on issues relating to the water supply on the Sutherland Street Allotments. (For Information Only)

The Allotment Committee was looking at proposals to install an additional settlement tank at the Sutherland Street site and sought to ascertain if funding might be forthcoming from Pendle. The Committee were advised that Pendle do not have a budget for the maintenance required and that the Area Committee are unable to help as they do not have revenue funding.

Pursuing the installation of the second tank within the existing system would result in a requirement for the settlement tank to be cleaned and monitored on a regular basis due to the likely presence of legionella within the surface water.

It was suggested that installing a mains water supply may be less complicated and would be less reliant on testing requirements or maintenance. Investigations were made with United utilities and a plan obtained of the nearest mains services.

The Council would need to agree plans for the installation and obtain the relevant consents from Pendle, Lancashire County Council and United Utilities and obtain quotes from an appropriate contractor to undertake the work. United Utilities would then be able to connect the supply to the new installation.

Currently ownership of Sutherland Street has not been transferred to Colne Town Council and it will need to be clarified if this site is included in the proposed land transfer. Consideration would then be needed to be given if the Committee wished to undertake this work. At present the view of the committee was not to commit to significant works until ownership of the site had been transferred to Colne Town Council.

8. Knotts Lane and South Valley Allotment Site

To consider a verbal report on the progress of the site transfer from Pendle Borough Council and the potential land purchase. (Information only)

Ownership of the allotment site had been transferred from Pendle to Colne Town Council. The land purchase of the access track remains with our solicitors. The last communication indicated there was difficulty in obtaining a land registry compliant plan from the vendors. The Town Clerk will be discussing this with our solicitors to see how matters may be expedited.

9. Allotment Budget

To receive a report on the Allotment Budget and planned spending for 2021/22. (Information Only)

There was likely to be a significant underspend in a number of budget areas. This was partly to the holding back of funds for ongoing projects such as South Valley and Sutherland street.

The areas include an underspend on barriers and fencing of approximately £1,633 after work on High Garth is completed. There was a need for additional fencing at Knotts Lane, but quotes would be needed before the work could be commissioned. Proposals to re fence Alkincoates West are on hold subject to consideration of its future use. Fencing is also required on South Valley to support the establishment of pathways to the top plots and the further division of plots.

There was likely to be an underspend of between £1,000 to £1,500 on the repairs and maintenance budget. There were several jobs to be done on Basil Street site including additional fencing and maintenance of the steps and decking but unfortunately quotes were unlikely to be received until the start of the new financial year.

The amount of tree work required on allotments had been relatively small. There was some work outstanding to tidy up one tree on Alkincoates Allotments but elsewhere there had been no significant work required as a result of the winter storms. Consequently, there would be an underspend on tree work of approximately £3000.

The committee were advised that projects such as the South Valley purchase and the Sutherland St water supply had resulted in spending in some areas being held back or delayed. The level of general underspend suggested that there would be significant benefit in planning proposed spending at the start of the financial year to ensure that the funds available could be more effectively used.

10. Allotment Waiting List

To receive a report on the number of applicants on the current allotment waiting list. (Information Only)

Waiting lists have remained relatively constant in spite of several applicants receiving offers of plots over the last two quarters. Allocations had been made on Alkincoates, Broken Banks, Basil St, Carry Lane, Castle Road and Sutherland Street, resulting in nine new agreements being signed. The number of new people coming onto the list over this time has to a large part replenished the numbers of people waiting.

11. Allotment Inspections

To note plot inspections undertaken in March. (Information Only)

Inspections were undertaken the details of which have been placed of the Teams web area. Carr Road could not be inspected due to poor access, and Granville Street was not recorded due to technical issues.

It was suggested that future rounds of inspections were spread over a one-month period with approximately one quarter of the plots being inspected each week. The next round of inspections could be scheduled on Thursday afternoons from the end of April/May 2022.

12. Bonfire Guidance

To consider a request to review the Councils guidance on allowing bonfires on allotment plots. (Decision required).

The allotment agreement was silent on bonfires. The agreement focuses on preventing nuisance being caused by plot holders to other plot holders. The Council has and continues to offer guidance on what may cause nuisance and the restriction on bonfires is included within it.

The number of complaints regarding bonfires or barbecues are negligible and there is general good compliance with the existing guidance.

The committee was minded to prepare a consultation with plot holders on the subject of bonfires on allotment sites to assess the extent to which it presented an issue. Further consideration was also required to ensure the allotment agreement could effectively address the issue of nuisance on and around allotment sites.

13. Hedging and wildlife corridors

To consider a proposal for the installation of hedging on the Broken Banks Allotment. (Decision Required)

The installation of hedging and wildlife corridors fell outside the current remit of the Allotment Committee and this issue would need to be addressed in the first instance by the Council as a policy decision. There were also restrictions as to what the Committee may or may not do on tenanted plots without the plot holders' consent, which were outlined within the allotment agreement.

The Committee requested that a list be drafted to identify areas which may accommodate additional tree planting without detriment to allotment sites should the Council decide it would like to consider this matter further.

14. Allotment Awards

To consider proposals for the Allotment Awards 2022 (Decision Required)

There was some discussion in previous years as to the nature of the award evening and who might be invited to take part. It would be useful to have some guidance from the committee as to who it would like on the judging panel and the format of the awards evening.

A project outline has been produced along with a timetable and a set of standard conditions.

In general, there were a limited number of plot holders entering the awards. It was suggested that members of the committee may wish to consider nominating a number of plot holders for the awards where they thought their plots were of a sufficient standard.

15. Alkincoates West and Plot 16X Alkincoates

To consider the future use of the Alkincoates West Allotment site and Plot 16x on the Alkincoates site. To suggest proposals that may be included in a report to a future meeting of the Allotment Committee for consideration. (Decision required)

Allocations of Alkincoates West is problematic due to issues over accessing the plot through a field. There is reluctance to reinstate access to the site via the park as this is likely to result in unauthorised access to this and the main allotment site. The allotment officer has been advised that Pendle Council intends to plant trees on both neighbouring fields which will mean that the land will no longer be available for grazing by the occupiers of the allotment stables. The continued use of the site for allotments is likely to be problematic if it is eventually surrounded by trees and alternative uses may need to be considered. It was suggested that consideration be given to future viability of this site for allotments once access arrangements and the planting of the adjacent fields has been confirmed by Pendle.

Plot 16x is on land believed to have some ground contamination and is therefore no longer used for allotments and was until recently let on a rent of 1p per meter. It is proposed that this plot be utilised by the Council to support planting in the park and Colne In Bloom work within the town. The plot would accommodate one or more polytunnels which would provide a good environment for cultivation and maintenance of plants and shrubs prior to relocation. The plot would be used by the Lengthsmen and the Friends of Alkincoates Park as a nursery for young plants and for plant storage.

16. Allotment Updates

To receive a verbal report to update Members in relation to general issues arising since the last meeting. (Information only)

The Bunkers Hill allotment site was now vacant. It had been inspected by the Allotment Officer and a member of Pendle Council Estates and was in the process of being handed back to the Borough of Pendle in accordance with the original agreement between the Councils.

The Allotment Officer had been advised of a plot holder dispute on the Knotts Lane site, but no formal evidence of nuisance has been presented by the plot holder as yet.

The Carr Road Allotment has been subject to flytipping on land at the side of the garages and in front of the site entrance. Quotes have been received to remove the rubbish and install a new gate to discourage further fly tipping.

Together Housing, who own the garage site, had been informed of this work and that the Town Council would be removing a large layandi tree close to the garage to avoid potential damage to the garages and neighbouring properties. This work would be arranged once consultations had concluded.

17. Items for future month's Agenda

Points raised under this item are for information only, any debate should be limited to five minutes only and to consider them for the agenda for future months.

The Committee expressed concern over the length of time currently being taken to transfer the remaining allotments sites from Pendle to Colne Town Council as this was now affecting necessary investment at some of the sites such as Sutherland Street.

18. Date & Time of Next Regular Meeting

The next Allotments Committee meeting is scheduled for 14th June 2022 at 6.30pm.