

## Allotment & Environment Committee

13 March 2024

5pm Town Council Offices, Kingsway, Bishop Auckland

**Present:** Cllr Michael Siddle (Chair), and Cllr Katie Elliot, and Cllr Kimm Lawson

**Also Present:** Sarah Harris, Town Clerk reps from Pollards Allotment Association, and Edgehill Allotment Association.

**AEC42/23 - Apologies for absence** – were received from Cllr A Legge and Cllr S Zair.

**Resolved:** that the members accepted the apologies for absence.

**AEC43/23 - Declarations of interest** – no declarations made

**AEC44/23 - Minutes of the previous meeting held on 6<sup>th</sup> December 2023 were presented**

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

**AEC45/23 – Town Clerk Report:**

**AEC45.1/23 – Waiting list** – numbers were confirmed as 16 persons on the waiting list. None for Edge Hill, where one vacant plot remains. 2 at Woodhouse, and 1 at Tindale, both need remedial works. New plots at woodhouse would bring the waiting list down to small numbers.

**Resolved:** that the members agreed that the waiting list for Toronto and Broken Banks should be suspended due to the nature of the plots. That the clearance works and be actioned to bring the plots at Woodhouse and Tindale online as soon as possible.

**AEC45.2/23 – Maintenance** - an update was given (see file). Confirmation that costings for comprehensive tree works, fencing and cartways was being addressed. Notice boards would be in situ by Easter at Pollards, Edgehill, Tindale and Woodhouse Close. An issue with tree works has resulted in the clerk being hesitant to use said contractor in the future due to the length of time taken to complete the works and the poor communication.

**Resolved:** members noted the updated and welcomed all of the improvement works, and acknowledged that whilst things often looked slow lots were being done in the background and contractors was often the issue. Confirmation was given not to use the same tree contractor again.

**AEC45.3/23 – Draft Association agreements. (see file copy)** were presented, several conversations had been had with associations and this need to move forward. The Council are keen to work collaboratively with associations to ensure positive outcomes for members.

**Resolved:** that the quoracy needed to remain, and that copies of accounts for transparency would be requested. A final round of meetings would be held with both associations, and then the agreement would be issued for signature. Town Clerk to arrange.

**AEC46/23 – Environment / greening up Bishop Auckland**– the Chair verbally reported that several groups all with environmental concerns were starting to collaboratively work together for improved outcomes for

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Bishop Auckland. These include Bloom, Green matters and Wear Rivers Trust. The Trust is hosting an event in July at the rugby club to raise concerns and provide information to the community in a fun event with a festival vibe.

There are lots of concerns surrounding litter, the Green matters group and volunteers from the Baptist church, are having increasing concerns at the litter at the station and Halfords area.

**Resolved:** that members noted the report, and requested the clerk seeks to see what powers or influence for enforcement action are available.

#### **ACE47/23 – Public Participation**

Pollards Allotment raised if water responsibility and road responsibility removed from the association agreement they think they would be happy, however they still have issues with the accounts and quoracy is an issue of getting members to attend. However, they have installed a post box. Seeds were offered to the Wear Rivers Trust event.

**Edgehill Allotments** – overall happy with the association agreements however as they don't have any shared equipment they have issue with some of the H&S requirements and they welcome a final meeting. Gate codes, and the protocol for issue to contractors. Happy to read water meter readings. Raised issue of rat boxes, as several dead poisoned rats had been found and they were concerned about disposal and contamination as they try to be chemical free.

**Resolved:** that members agreed that the PEST control contract at Edge Hill would be ended.

*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.*

#### **AEC48/23 – Enforcement action**

That the enforcement had been issued, and that follow up meeting had taken place, and the fence would be repaired by Easter, subject to agreed risk assessments.

**Resolved:** that Members noted the report.

**AEC49/23 Correspondence** – that a complaint regarding conduct and behaviour of an existing tenant had been made.

**Resolved:** that members agreed that a follow up meeting would be held with the chair of allotments, and the new code of conduct would help in solving these issues moving forward.

**Allotment Strategy** – that proposed draft strategy (see file copy) was agreed in principle, with further detail regarding the secretary of state de-designation, and to look for alternative sites as necessary.

**Resolved:** that members agreed that the draft strategy to be updated and brought to the April Council meeting for consideration. This includes the consideration to remove some designated allotment land due to health and safety concerns. Waiting lists at Toronto, Broken Banks, Mill Race and West Mills be suspended at this time. Consideration of alternative temp use of former plot at Mill Race by the Rugby Club was given.

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