

Notes of the Allotment Site Secretaries Meeting

Wednesday 23rd February 2022

Via Microsoft Teams

ITEM		ACTION
	<p>Present:</p> <p>Cllr Maya Evans Judy Clark (Bembrook) Andrew Colquhoun (Lower Torfield) Mike Moore (Lower Torfield) Colin Blackman (BOS Field) Jill Kaye (Marina) Claire Humm (Fernbank) Neil McKinnon Terry Drinkwater (HBC) Clive Read (HBC) Marian Hollingsworth (HBC)</p>	
	<p>Cllr Evans welcomed everyone to the meeting and introductions were made around those attended.</p>	
	<p>Apologies for Absence and non attendance</p> <p>Lynda Murray (Collier Road), (Lower Torfield), Dianne Huggins (Downs Road), Sue DeHaviland (Choice), Andrew Johnson (Tivoli), John Funnell (Choice), Holly Clamp (Lower Clive Vale)</p>	
1.	<p>Minutes of the last meeting held on 25th May 2021</p> <p>Agreed as read.</p> <p>Matters Arising:</p> <p>3. Condition Survey – an Agenda item 4. Tree Programme – an Agenda item</p> <p>5. <i>Security on Sites</i></p> <p>TD informed that all tenants were notified of the link to the allotment website where information is now posted and can be accessed by tenants</p> <p>6. <i>Glyphosate and Creocote</i></p> <p>TD advised that the use of legal Glyphosate and Creocote cannot be banned – we can only provide guidance. We want to work with Site Secretaries and encourage tenants to access the guidance. RHS guidance put on website</p>	

	<p>AC informed that they carried out a survey with regard to this at Lower Torfield. Had a good response with a small majority for banning but some reserve the right to use ie. on pernicious weeds.</p> <p><i>7 – Badgers</i></p> <p>AC asked if anything was being done about this issue given the damage associated with them.</p> <p>Some sites have electric fencing but this would be a budget issue for HBC. HBC will not be installing electric fencing to deter badgers as this is not in agreement with the council's animal welfare charter. There is information via the internet on deterrents for badgers on allotment sites.</p> <p><i>8. Creation of new Allotment sites – clear up days on allotment sites – provision of a skip</i></p> <p>TD informed that it is his intention to try and work on the provision for skips from April 2022, however, this will depend on whether we get the financial resources.</p> <p>JC asked if it is just the communal areas of allotment sites that HBC will be concentrating on.</p> <p>TD advised that although he is fully aware of rubbish on ploholders plots, we will have to deal with the communal areas first. We will work with individual ploholders requests as we receive them. This work would require assistance from work parties.</p> <p>CB (BOS Field) informed that following storm Eunice lots of rubbish and broken glass had been blown across the site.</p> <p>NMcK – discussion about disposal/recycling of broken glass at the tip. JK noted greenhouse glass is different to window glass. MM to initiate a working party at Lwr. Torfield. JC had contacted plot holders advising of storm damage.</p> <p><i>10. AOB – ways of communicating and sharing information.</i></p> <p>TD informed that this is now done through the website announcements and that any ploholders can put through concerns to parks@hastings.gov.uk</p>	
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2.	<p>Expenditure Progress Report 2021-2022</p> <p>Allotment Revenue report circulated to Site Secretaries. The majority of which has been completed. We have had to outsource some of the works.</p> <p>It does not include works to steps which will be another £2K. This work was allocated to TCV.</p> <p>TD informed that additional funding will be required in next years budget and that he is seeking additional funds to supplement work on the Action Plan.</p> <p>As the grounds maintenance contract has evolved over the past years some of the contract work on the common areas of the allotments have declined. We have now carried out a review of our allotment sites and intend to review the grounds maintenance specification to address this decline.</p> <p>Cllr Evans queried the cost of padlocks (£85) why does it cost so much? TD advised that if we change the padlocks, keys have to be changed as well.</p> <p>There has been an increase in break-ins over this last year with repeated vandalism to locks across our parks and gardens including allotments.</p> <p>CR informed that because of the break-ins at Choice allotment, the council's community safety officer liaised with the Police and was able to get a grant from them. The same will be pursued for BOS Field.</p> <p>CB – advised there are many allotment volunteers who want to carry out work at BOS Field allotment. However, as HBC have no budget for repairs, works cannot be carried out as he has only got £5million liability insurance, this does not meet the council's £10m requirement. TD informed that it is really important that ploholders notify Hastings Borough Council of works required on the common areas of allotment sites.</p> <p>TD said that the parks team are mapping concerns on allotment sites and will endeavour to fulfil its responsibilities as landlords.</p> <p>Cllr Evans questioned £120 to remove a dead fox. TD advised that this was contractual rates.</p> <p>Noted £2,635- for planter on Bembrook 67a was external funds collected by plot holders held by HBC paid out to suppliers/contractors</p> <p>Downs Road hedge pruning £400- TD advised at contracted rates and CR noted hedge cut back previously</p>	<p>Note</p>
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	by adjacent householder but reduced activity required a hard cut back.	
3.	<p>Condition Survey</p> <p>Report circulated to Site Secretaries. This is part of the 5 year programme. All of which are in the expenditure report.</p> <p>CH of Fernbank informed that the site has become more exposed now as trees have come down damaging the perimeter fence. CR advised the communal shed had been broken into and fencing is on his list but will have to be considered in the April budget.</p> <p>TD noted 5 year condition survey plan to be updated and prioritised from April.</p>	Note
4.	<p>Tree Programme</p> <p>Report circulated to Site Secretaries. £2K is allocated from the tree budget for works to trees on allotments. TD advised that health and safety inspections on trees on allotment sites across the borough will now be carried out and that the findings from these inspections will be included in the 5 year programme in accordance with policy on all amenities land.</p> <p>MM informed that on the eastern side of Lower Torfield Allotments, trees are too tall blocking out shade to plots in this area and affecting the toilet solar panel</p> <p>TD will take away for further consideration with the tree officer.</p>	TD
5.	<p>Allotment Action Plan</p> <p>Action plan previously distributed to all Site Secretaries and ploholders to ensure transparency.</p> <p>TD advised that hopefully now everyone will have seen the Action Plan and the recommendations that we have actioned to date.</p> <p>We will also be reinstating the annual review of the Allotment Rules.</p> <p>We will work with ploholders with regard to the Environmental Plan and guidance for the use of chemicals on our sites.</p> <p>JK – chasing rent is time consuming and explained Marina's Notices procedure.</p>	TD/CR/MH

	<p>MH – advised the council’s process. Rules/appendices all available on the allotment website.</p> <p>Discussion about cultivation evasion, CR noted ready to listen to mitigating circumstances. AC supported more inspections. Cllr Evans questioned severity, there was agreement that the council should be “draconian” dependant on individuals situation</p>	
6.	<p>Tenancy Situation</p> <p>Report circulated to Site Secretaries. As of 8th February, 487 on the waiting list.</p> <p>MH carried out an exercise in July 2021 writing to all tenants on the waiting list from 2018 up to December 2020. Many joined during the first covid pandemic year. As a result of the exercise, approximately 100 waiting tenants were removed from the lists. Returned to work, moved out of area, ill health or simply do not wish to remain on the list for an allotment.</p> <p>It is intended to carry out the same exercise again sometime this year.</p> <p>Collier Road was closed in June 2019 as there was about 42 on the waiting list at that time and with no movement on site, the waiting time was about 5 years.</p> <p>As the numbers on the list has reduced now, Collier Road will be re-opened on the 1st April 2022, although there still won’t be much movement and waiting time could still be about 4 years.</p> <p>The average shortest waiting time now for a plot in the borough is about 3 years.</p> <p>JK – Marina informed that there is 110 on their waiting list.</p>	NOTE
7.	<p>Any Other Business</p> <p><i>Growing Hastings</i> – more space necessary for producing more local food. This document produced by AC was circulated to Site Secretaries. He asked that HBC consider the recommendations raised in the report given the demand is at a historic high.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. HBC to work with BOS Field to facilitate the restoration of plots at BOS Field currently not available for cultivation. 2. HBC to undertake a Feasibility study for the restoration of the site at Upper Clive Vale with a 	

	<p>view to being cultivated by a local community group.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. HBC to work with Speckled Wood group to find ways of transferring ownership of the land to facilitate the development of the old allotment site there. 4. HBC should include a Planning Obligation for the provision of space for growing food in new housing developments. <p>TD advised allotment sites will require more resourcing over the coming years. At this time, we cannot allocate additional resources beyond what we have to do already. Any additional allocation would have to be set as a political decision. Items 1 and 4 listed above would be progressed within our current resources, however, items 2 and 3 are outside our current scope of works.</p> <p>With regard to Planning Obligations for new developments, we have been looking at contributions and to develop new strategic documents that our planners can use for green spaces, allotments, play and leisure. Taking into account costs/size and dwellings so that it all fits into that viability negotiation.</p> <p>This will be going to the Secretary of State in July this year. TD informed that he and CR have been meeting weekly with planning with regard to the local plan.</p> <p>JC asked - Can the Council licence Upper Clive as a community group orchard on a peppercorn rent Cllr Evans said that perhaps HEART can assist. AC welcomed initiative towards a growing space planning obligation and has discussed with Cllr Kim Forward.</p> <p>Cllr Evans thanked everyone and said she would take this to members.</p> <p>AC – Fencing on two sides at Lower Torfield. No provision for this was made in the Condition survey. He asked if funds will be allocated for this?.</p> <p>TD advised that there are no funds available for this yet but happy to add it to the 2023/24 budget.</p> <p>JC – Bembrook – Should allotment tenants be allowed to plant trees/shrubs that will (eventually) grown very large and shade neighbouring plots/are difficult for subsequent tenants to remove?.</p> <p>CR referred to 5.6 of the Allotment Rules and will investigate this.</p> <p>JC to do a list of shrubs/trees causing problems.</p>	<p>Cllr Evans</p> <p>TD/CR</p> <p>CR</p>
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	<p>JK – Marina have not increased rents as accounts balance – currently £6.50/rod/year plus water.</p> <p>CB: asked if the council was going to be increasing the rent in April? MH advised that the fees and charges will be increased to £9.40 per rod per annum and water to be £1.89 per rod per annum.</p> <p>Note of the new allotment fees are put on the allotment website 1st April every year.</p>	
8.	<p>Date of next Meeting</p> <p>To be arranged</p>	