

# **PARKS AND COUNTRYSIDE SERVICES**

## **COMMUNITY SERVICES TEAM ALLOTMENT ADVISORY GROUP**

### **Minutes of Meeting**

**Tuesday 31<sup>st</sup> July 2018, 6-8pm  
Conference Room, Town Hall**

**Present:**

**Councillor Zahira Naz (Chair)  
Ceri Ashton, Allotment Manager  
Caroline Jennings, Allotment Officer (minutes)  
Dave Aspinall, Woodland Manager  
Kayleigh Rodgers RVAS  
Liz Wade Norton Lees and St Pauls Allotment Society  
Michael Booth SAF and Moss Way Allotment Society  
Michael Jordan SAF and Moss Way Allotment Society  
John Howe SAF and Woodseats Allotment Society  
Margaret Boulton SAF and Ecclesall Allotment Society  
Marion Gerson, SAF and Manor Allotment Society  
Ken Croggon Archer Lane Allotment Society  
Sue Lee Woodseats Allotment Society  
Janet Milton Rustlings Road Allotment Society  
Councillor Cliff Woodcraft  
Sheryl Kinsella Victoria Road Allotment Society  
Rob Hawkins, Hangingwater Allotment Society  
Phil Webster SAF  
Jude Lambe Walkley Bank Allotment Society  
Steve Baker representing Carfield Lane Residents  
Angela Barney representing Carfield Lane Residents  
Councillor Douglas Johnson  
James Brown Heeley and Meersbrook Allotment Society  
Councillor Lisa Banes Manor Castle  
Pete Sides Rodney Hill Allotment Society**

<b>ITEM</b>	<b>DETAIL</b>	<b>ACTION</b>
<b>1.</b>	<b>Apologies for Absence</b>  Ann Hopkinson, Hagg Lane Allotment Society Maggy Linford, Crookes Quarry Phil Webster and Margaret Boulton will be arriving late Councillor Johnson will be leaving early	

ITEM	DETAIL	ACTION
2.	<p><b>Minutes and Matters Arising</b></p> <p>P2 Ceri Ashton reported back that Mary Lea decided to keep the fire ban as proposed, to keep it straightforward.</p> <p>Rob Hawkins asked what insurance is available for allotment holders around the city. Ceri Ashton explained that the Council's insurance does not cover tenants' own belongings against theft etc. but that the Council has public liability insurance. If someone was injured and believed the Council was at fault, they could seek to make a claim against the Council. Dave Aspinall explained that the council's insurance arrangements are complex and there is an insurance team, who will look at any claims on a case by case basis.</p> <p>P3 Action point for Ceri Ashton from Marion Gerson and the Allotment Federation has been actioned. The Terms of Reference have been updated accordingly.</p> <p>P3, resurfacing of Carfield Lane was briefly mentioned, Steve Baker said he has been pushing for this to be done as it gets worse every year, and he feels a decision on this just isn't being made. Ceri Ashton advised that this would be discussed under item 5 Site Improvements. It was agreed that the agenda items would be switched round so that this could be discussed earlier.</p> <p>P4 Jude Lambe asked if the groups information pack is available online now, Ceri Ashton advised that yes they were and to locate go to Parks and Countryside then go to Friends of Groups.</p> <p>P6 Sue Lee asked about admin charges, Ceri Ashton said that this would be covered in an agenda item.</p> <p>P7, Rodney Hill water management payments to date were 2016-17 £1173.10, 2017-18 £1795.22.</p> <p>Ceri Ashton apologised as she missed the action about how many students there are claiming a concession, and will circulate subsequently.</p> <p>P8 will there be direct debits available for those paying less than £100 in the future, Ceri Ashton advised that there was no change yet, she realises that this would reduce officer time if accepted but there is to be no change yet.</p> <p>P8, Ceri Ashton explained that apprentices under the age of 18 could not have a tenancy in their name. Those over the age of 18 may meet existing criteria for claiming a concession.</p> <p>P10 Ceri Ashton said that the Allotment Office would not be participating in the Sheffield University's Urban Soils project, due</p>	<p>CA</p> <p>CA</p>

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	<p>to Environmental Protection Services not having the capacity to be involved.</p> <p>P11, Ceri Ashton mentioned that Ouse Road has had the ground taps replaced, apart from one that was accidentally missed but this will be rectified. Janet Milton asked if there are many sites with ground taps, Ceri Ashton explained that yes there are still a number of ground taps. In some instances they are the only option due to lack of space. Standpipes are more susceptible to damage by vehicles, or vandalism. Janet Milton said she would be interested in an assessment of Rustling Road's taps being carried out.</p>	<p><b>JB</b></p> <p><b>CJ</b></p>
<p><b>3</b></p>	<p><b>Site Improvements Prioritisation for winter 2018/19</b></p> <p>Caroline Jennings presented the long list of site improvements. The budget is currently estimated at approximately £55,000.</p> <p>Sheryl Kinsella asked Steve Baker representing Carfield Lane to speak as this item has been on the long list for some time. Steve Baker told the group that the quote they have received for resurfacing the lane is £6,697 to the entrances on the left; a sensible place would be to the new gates. Ceri Ashton explained that Councillor Lewis Dagnall has tried last year to get funding for this from the ward pot, but was unsuccessful. Ceri Ashton explained that because the lane was outside the allotment site, she felt that ideally it should be funded from somewhere other than the Allotments budget. (The Allotment Office has responsibility for half the width of the lane, but allotment holders will not get much benefit from it being re-surfaced). Angela Barney said that the path now wasn't good enough to even walk on let alone cycle on. Ceri Ashton said the condition of the path would be re-assessed. At the last assessment it had not been considered to present a significant hazard, but it sounded like it had deteriorated. She commented that the condition of Lees Hall Place (another similar situation, where the Allotment Office is responsible for maintenance of half the width of an unadopted highway) is in significantly worse condition. Ceri Ashton asked the group for their opinion.</p> <p>Sheryl Kinsella stated that she thought some quotes should be obtained. Marion Gerson stated that she thought the work really should be done, particularly as it is to be match funded to 50% by the landowners on the other side. Steve Baker said that if the tarmac was done correctly there shouldn't be any need for additional drainage. There was general agreement that this project should be taken forward. Ceri Ashton agreed to revisit it. Steve Barker will get an updated quote; the Allotment Office will talk to the Sourcing Team.</p> <p>Rob Hawkins asked about the budget for last year, Ceri Ashton explained that this will be in the annual report discussed later in</p>	<p><b>CJ</b></p> <p><b>CJ</b></p>

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	<p>the meeting. He also wanted clarity on what part of the budget grounds maintenance comes from, Ceri Ashton explained that there was no budget code specifically for site maintenance.</p> <p>Sue Lee explained the car parking issues for Woodseats, advising that there are only 4 places on hardstanding for cars to park, if people park in other areas they have been known to get stuck. She said the Society can make a contribution to the cost.</p> <p>Sheryl Kinsella made the observation that if the two highest sums were removed from the list all the work could be undertaken this year if the budget allowed. This was agreed to be a very valid point.</p> <p>Ceri Ashton went on to explain about fencing at Ouse Road, where there could possibly be some private funding in the future, and the complexities of securing the path at Park Rifles allotments, where residents had a right of access to the back of their houses. Michael Jordan said that more gates can often create more problems. Ceri Ashton suggested that making sites more secure did tend to reduce the incidences of theft and vandalism, although secure sites do still sometimes have break-ins. Sheryl Kinsella said that the additional gates at Victoria Road had dramatically reduced thefts.</p> <p>Rob Hawkins asked if vandalism has been on the increase in recent years, Ceri Ashton said that Meersbrook allotments had been much better in recent years, and that thefts and vandalism tended to go in spates.</p> <p>Jude Lambe said that Walkley Bank Allotment society was keeping information of incidents because often tenants don't report them. Rob Hawkins mentioned that you can go online and access an incident number rather than calling 101 which can be a bit of a hit and miss experience for some. Ceri Ashton said it was great that information was being collected and stressed the importance of reporting incidents so that the police know and might be able to target resources in an area, and so that we can give sites due consideration when considering site improvements.</p> <p>Ceri Ashton went on to discuss possible fencing at Norton St Pauls. She explained that the allotments are in a prominent place on the main road, and despite recent thefts of produce and tools there had not been many issues in the past. It was agreed that people may need reminding not to leave tools on site.</p> <p>Liz Wade stated that the park fencing looks nice but palisade fencing would look awful. Ceri Ashton explained that any fencing for Norton St Pauls would be green mesh fencing, which blends in better but even so there would need to be much consultation with the Parks Officer and people who live close-by. Michael</p>	

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	<p>Jordan asked about occupancy at the site, Ceri Ashton said that it was fully occupied with a waiting list. Kayleigh Rodgers asked if fast growing hedges rather than fencing might be a cheaper alternative. Ceri Ashton mentioned that they did plant some hedging some years ago at Norton Lees and Norton St Pauls. Ceri Ashton also mentioned that with any hedging it would need to be watered and maintained. Ceri Ashton said the society could discuss this option, it was agreed this will be discussed.</p> <p>Ceri Ashton discussed water infrastructure on site. Highcliffe allotments has old pipework but it is currently holding up so it was agreed not to replace it yet. Ceri Ashton asked what the group thought about Elm Crescent Allotments having a water supply installed. Sheryl Kinsella said she thought there was a water point at the back of two garages (near the entrance to the site), so might not be that expensive to get water to the site. Ceri Ashton explained that occupancy isn't high but the lack of water might be putting people off. It was agreed that Caroline Jennings will find out about the actual cost would be, and consult with all current tenants.</p> <p>Councillor Lisa Baines mentioned that some previous water infrastructure mentioned in the annual report was undertaken and it only cost £638 why was this so cheap. Ceri Ashton explained that this site didn't need a new supply; it was just replacement of the infrastructure within the site, the meter was already present.</p> <p>Ceri Ashton mentioned Plumbley Lane as some tenants had requested a water supply. This might not be too expensive because there has been lots of new development recently in the area, so pipework may already run close to the site but again prices would need obtaining from the water company and all tenants would need to be consulted.</p> <p>In summary it was decided that officers would begin work on the following projects: Norwood fencing, securing the lane at Park Rifles, re-surfacing Carfield Lane, re-surfacing at Victoria Road, and Woodseats car park, Caroline Jennings would look in to the consultation of water at Elm Crescent and Plumbley Lane and the costs if applicable.</p>	<p><b>CJ/LW</b></p> <p><b>CJ</b></p> <p><b>JB/CJ</b></p>
<p><b>4</b></p>	<p><b>Annual Report for 2017/18</b></p> <p>Ceri Ashton talked through the report.</p> <p>Rob Hawkins stated that the Council's bank account details had changed. Ceri Ashton explained that this had been several years ago (2015). Tenants were written to, and the current details are given on the invoices.</p> <p>It was asked whether more of the Allotment Office's</p>	

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	<p>correspondence to tenants could be done electronically. Ceri Ashton advised that the legal advice is still to use the post for any formal documents relating to tenancies. This may change in the future, and as and when it did tenants would need notice since this would be a change of tenancy.</p> <p>Rob Hawkins asked about the budgetary impact of Ash dieback on allotments. Ceri Ashton explained that if a tree was dangerous the Trees and Woodlands section were responsible for the cost of work needed.</p> <p>Michael Booth mentioned that one tree at Moss Way allotments was due to have some work done on it by the tree surgeon in the winter but it had been missed. Caroline Jennings said that she realised this and would make sure it got sorted this winter.</p> <p>The height of hedges was discussed; Ceri Ashton clarified that internal hedges should not exceed 5ft and external hedges (at the perimeter of a site, or bordering on a publically accessible path) should not exceed 6ft.</p> <p>It was asked whether inspection letters being sent are having an impact. Ceri Ashton explained that it is complex to analyse the impact. A letter can result in improvement being made, a tenant quitting voluntarily, an extension being granted, or a subsequent letter or Notice to Quit being sent. She agreed to report back some figures on the number of tenants who quit voluntarily following an inspection letter.</p> <p>It was asked if publicity has an impact. Ceri Ashton replied that again it is difficult to quantify. We can count the number of applications received at an event, but if people apply subsequently this isn't captured. Ceri Ashton said she would look at adding a section to the application form for applicants to state how they heard about our allotments.</p> <p>Michael Jordan asked if Ceri Ashton can look at a separate code for a publicity budget. Sheryl Kinsella said that we need to think about what the publicity is targeting.</p> <p>Allotments and Pigeons will be discussed at another meeting as there is a lot to discuss and not enough time at this meeting.</p>	<p><b>CJ</b></p> <p><b>CA</b></p> <p><b>CA</b></p> <p><b>CA</b></p>
<p><b>5.</b></p>	<p><b>Outcomes for Rent Consultation Questionnaire</b></p> <p>Ceri Ashton talked through the outcomes of the rent consultation. Since time was running out, she focussed mainly on the recommendations, and agreed to circulate the presentation. There was insufficient time for detailed discussion, but the main recommendations will be discussed individually in future meetings.</p>	

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6.	<p><b>Items raised by SAF/any other business</b></p> <p>Dave Aspinall explained that the Ecology Manager Richard Harris is taking Voluntary Severance, and as a result Ceri Ashton will be taking responsibility for the Ecology Unit in addition to the Allotment Office on a temporary basis until the end of March.</p> <p>Michael Jordan raised that the use of a treadle feeder (for chickens) had helped solved some of the issues with rodents on site. He offered to share details of the treadle feeder with other tenants. Ceri Ashton thanked him for this.</p> <p>Rob Hawkins queried whether regular Allotment Advisory Group meetings were still occurring. Ceri Ashton explained that this meeting was postponed from June. The next meeting is due in September. The usual number of meetings (3) would still take place.</p> <p>It was requested that the Allotment Office look at ordering some signs to remind tenants about the bonfire ban.</p>	<p><b>CJ</b></p>