

WISBECH TOWN COUNCIL

ALLOTMENTS COMMITTEE

1 FEBRUARY 2016 – 8.00 pm

MINUTES OF MEETING

Present: Councillor Mrs MacRae, Vice-Chairman in the Chair; Councillors Mrs Cox, Hodgson and Oliver.

Apologies: Councillors Hill and Tibbs.

Public Participation: None requested.

The minutes of the meeting of the Allotments Committee held on 8 June 2015 were confirmed and signed.

A5/15 Allotments development works and operational issues

The Clerk reminded members of the council's declared ambition to enhance and develop the council's allotments and invited the Assets Manager to explain to members any operational issues in relation to the council's allotments sites and the development works which had been carried out to date and are planned for the future.

The Assets Manager outlined a number of operational issues in relation to management of the allotments sites, including tenancy levels at each of the sites.

The council's Assets Manager informed members that there are currently no proposals for development of the sites at Cox's Lane and Mile Tree Lane; they will, however, receive maintenance as and when required. The development works to date have focussed upon the sites at Waterlees Road and Dowgate Road.

With regard to the Waterlees Road site, installation of the boundary fencing approved by this committee at minute A3/15 has been completed and members viewed a short video film of showing the completed works. Further to minute A3/15, it has been ascertained that it would be necessary to obtain planning permission for the proposal to improve the access arrangements at this site; the Assets Manager is hopeful that it would be possible for the works to be completed before the end of 2016.

Some further spraying of vacant plots is required at the Waterlees Road site and some further planting of hedging and trees is proposed.

With regard to the allotments site at Dowgate Road, the Assets Manager informed members that, further to minute A3/15, two storage containers, one of forty feet in length and another of twenty feet in length (to provide storage for various items owned by the council), are now in situ.

The Assets Manager informed members that it had been necessary to clear from the Dowgate Road allotments site a large amount of burnt material, which had proved to be a relatively costly exercise (skip hire etc). Plans are in hand for the spraying and subsequent ploughing of land at the Dowgate Road site, as a result of which an additional 120 plots (of a smaller size) could be created.

The Assets Manager provided each member with a copy of a rough sketch plan of the Dowgate Road allotments site, upon which he had shown proposals for the provision of allotment plots for use by disabled persons - providing raised planting areas and an appropriate means of access to those plots - and a "social" area (which could be used for the delivery of horticultural learning events and an area where allotment tenants could meet and share ideas etc). He explained the details of how he thought these arrangements could operate and a possible timescale (over three to five years) for delivery of the scheme.

The Clerk, the Operations Manager and the Assets Manager responded to members' questions.

The Chairman enquired of council officers as to the possibility, given the fact that some allotment tenants make a considerable investment in time and money in their allotment, tenants being able to have a tenancy of greater than one year's duration (albeit that the tenant is able to renew that tenancy each year). In response, the council's Operations Manager explained that a tenancy for a statutory allotment has a duration of one year; if a longer period of tenancy were agreed, the tenancy would not be an allotment tenancy.

Members decided that

- (1) the information reported by council staff be noted;
- (2) council officers would produce a business plan - supported by detailed sketch plans - in relation to the development proposals for the Dowgate Road allotments site; the business plan should detail: the proposals; a timescale; consultation which would be undertaken (to include the occupiers of nearby residential properties; estimated costs of the various elements of the works; a recommendation as to the manner in which the costs would be funded by the council.

(Councillor Mrs MacRae declared her non-pecuniary interest in this item of business by virtue of her husband possessing an allotment tenancy)

Meeting finished at 8.50 pm.

Signed.....

Dated.....