

Environment and Allotments Committee



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Minutes of the Environment and Allotments Committee Meeting held on the 13th July 2020, 7:00pm, via Zoom

EA/19-20/5/1 Present

Cllr K Robinson, Cllr C Dickens, Cllr A Cooper, Cllr P Waring, Cllr J Waring, Cllr G Burnett, Mr D Plimbley (Swan Bank Allotments)

In attendance: Sue Davies, Town Clerk

One member of the public was present.

EA/19-20/5/2 To receive and consider apologies for absence

Cllr H Maxfield and Mr Steve Blaze had sent apologies of absence to the Clerk.

EA/19-20/5/3 To note declarations of Member's Interests

None declared

EA/19-20/5/4 To receive and confirm the minutes of the meeting held on the 15th October 2019.

The minutes of the meeting of the 15th October 2019 were received and approved by the Committee.

EA/19-20/5/5 To receive and confirm the minutes of the meeting held on the 6th February 2020

The minutes of the meeting of the 6th February 2020 were received and approved by the Committee subject to corrections to note that Mr Plimbley should be listed under Lamb Street allotments and some repetitive words need removing from EA-19-29/5/7 b.

EA/19-20/5/6 **Public Participation – A period not exceeding 15 minutes for members of the public to ask questions or submit comments.**

No members of the public requested to speak.

EA/19-20/5/7 **Matters arising not covered elsewhere**

a) Footpath – Poplar Drive/Windmill Ave

The Clerk reported that she has followed up Cllr J Waring’s information that she submitted a PROW request several years ago, but that it will not be considered for some time. It was agreed to verify the original date of submission and Cllr Burnett agreed to make some queries at Staffordshire County Council. The Clerk agreed to ask the ranger to keep an eye that the path remains safe in the interim period. The Clerk agreed to email the information to Cllr Burnett.

Action: The Clerk to pursue.

EA/19-20/5/8 **Allotments update:**

a) Crown Bank – To receive an update

i. To consider a request from S Blaze for the placement of hives on Crown Bank Allotment.

The Clerk outlined that the keeping of bees on allotments is encouraged by the Allotment Society and the National Bee Keeping Society, but various precautions are recommended.

Kidsgrove Allotments have three hives and they are managed by a registered bee keeper who has the liability insurance.

It was agreed that although the committee has no objection in principle, that a draft policy should be brought to the next committee meeting for review. It was also proposed that there should be signage to warn anyone who may have allergies.

ii. Update on the lease progression (with Aspire Housing)

The Clerk reported that Blain Boland will be progressing the lease with Aspire. The contact at Aspire will be re-establishing.

iii. Update on Future Plans

The Clerk updates on the lease of the extra land from Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council. The Town Council are waiting for the two higher authorities to progress this although it was recognised that both these councils have had other priorities during the Covid-19 crisis.

iv. Operation update from the Clerk following a meeting with Mr Blaze.

- Sympathy is being shown this year regarding unkempt plots as some allotment holders are shielding.

- The Ranger is looking at the fence repair and is helping with some rubbish removal.
- A plot is almost ready to be offered out to the next on the waiting list.

b) Lamb Street – To receive an update

i. Update on the removal of the asbestos and quotes received

The Clerk reported that two further quotes are required so the item can go to Full Council for approval. It was noted that the plot holders need notifying by Mr Plimbley. However, it was noted the work is essential due to safety issues. Cllr P Waring suggested a further firm for a quote.

ii. Update on the transfer from NULBC

The Clerk reported she will chase the land registry and that all contracts have been written.

The issue of the corner plot needs clarifying, and a site meeting has been suggested. Attendees were agreed to be Cllr Robinson, Mr Plimbley, Cllr J Waring, the Clerk and J Phillips.

iii. Operational update from Mr Plimbley

Mr Plimbley reported that the Rotary Club has attended the site and offered support to develop a Community Garden. The plots are currently full with fourteen on the waiting list. There has been a recent incidence of fly-tipping which has been reported to Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council Enforcement Department.

The Clerk raised about a complaint to the Council from a nearby resident regarding a mast/pole on a site and noise issues. Mr Plimbley agreed to have a chat to the allotment holder.

EA/19-20/5/9

Ranger Report: To receive an update from the Clerk

The Clerk provided an update on the ranger activity. It was stressed to the committee that requests for ranger help must be through the office as the Town Council is wholly responsible for insurance and risk assessments, although NULBC continue to insure the van.

The Clerk reported that throughout the Covid-19 crisis the ranger has been granted Kidsgrove Town Council time to help deliver meals with the Salvation Army Group. The Clerk was asked to speak to the Salvation Army to establish their need for continued support.

EA/19-20/5/10

Play Areas and Greenspace: To discuss progress and actions

The Clerk reported that there had been some correspondence regarding some park schemes involving the Town Deal Board and proposals being put forward. The Clerk had replied to offer a meeting so that any proposals and projects from different organisations would complement each other. It was felt important that suggestions are passed on to the Town Board so that the money available can be put to best use.

It was agreed the committee's reports should be completed and a meeting would be beneficial. It was also noted that there are other sources of funding for parks that may be drawn on.

It was highlighted that public consultation is crucial.

Action: The Clerk to progress a meeting.

EA/19-20/5/11 Footpaths – To receive an update and agree actions required.

The Clerk reported that a meeting has been offered with the footpaths officer at Staffordshire County Council on the 19th August at 2:00pm. Further details will follow.

The Clerk has drafted a Terms of reference which can be discussed by the working party before approval by the committee. The Clerk was asked to circulate the Terms of Reference to the Committee.

EA/19-20/5/12 Parish Baskets and Planting: To discuss planting 2020-21

Cllr Robinson asked that plans are progressed and asked councillors to forward ideas. Two railings have already been identified. Self-watering equipment may be able to be managed by the Ranger for watering as NULBC had informed they have no further capacity for watering.

Cllr Cooper noted that ideas such as Sensory Gardens and Community Orchards should be progressed and would be ongoing.

Cllr Dymond raised about the end of Boathorse Lane and felt it could be improved as it is an entrance to Kidsgrove.

The Committee agreed that improved appearance of the Town is beneficial to businesses.

The bottom of Gloucester Road was discussed, and it was agreed the concrete planters are very unattractive. Cllr J Waring reported that Lamb Street Allotments Association are donating a willow tree for planting

Cllr Burnett noted the front of the Town Hall and it was agreed that the front urgently needs tidying up.

The Clerk reminded that the committees had discussed some more innovative planting such as pollinator gardens and wild flower patches. The Clerk was asked to progress some meetings with experts to help with these ideas.

Cllr Robinson and Cllr P Waring both noted that sustainability needs to be considered.

Members were asked to bring ideas to the next meeting.

Cllr Robinson raised about a complaint he has received about the state of the graveyard opposite the Town Hall which NULBC are currently responsible for. A meeting has been offered by Darren Green and it was agreed the matter should be investigated to see what the Town Council could do to help and that the issue should be brought back to the committee.

Action: The Clerk and Cllr Robinson to progress the meeting.

EA/19-20/5/13 To discuss progression of an Environmental Policy

The Policy isn't yet available for the committee. It was noted that it was agreed that the Clerk should progress a meeting with some experts for guidance. Any ideas need to fit in with the Town Board proposals.

EA/19-20/5/14 Budget Review: To receive a budget update.

The Clerk provided a budget update to the committee.

It was requested that finance and budget information should be requested from the allotment sites.

EA/19-20/5/15 Chair and Clerk's Items

The Clerk raised about some correspondence received from the MP regarding a complaint from a resident regarding Lamb Street Allotments and the time being taken to complete the transfer and the asbestos removal. The complaint also questioned a perceived disparity with the money spent on each site. The committee appreciated the frustration that the situation is causing but felt the delays are not the Town Council's fault. The Clerk reported that she has replied to explain the situation. It was noted the Town Council have no access to the site. It was also agreed that better processes going forward will alleviate the situation.

Cllr Robinson raised that the Woodlands Trust have informed him of a scheme with schools which the Town Council could promote for them. The Clerk was asked to apply for the pack and to help in this as requested. Cllr Robinson agreed to pass the contact to the Clerk.

EA/19-20/5/16 Future Agenda Items

- To consider ways of reducing single use plastics in the town – next meeting
- Community Orchard schemes
- Wild flower meadows and bee gardens
- Off road biking problems (Added by Cllr Burnett)

EA/19-20/5/17 Date of Next Meeting: To be arranged for two months' time, the actual date to be confirmed.

The meeting ended at 20:55pm.