

ALLOTMENTS COMMITTEE

Minutes of a virtual meeting on MONDAY 12th OCTOBER at 7.00pm

This meeting is allowable under the Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority and Police and Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020 (“the 2020 Regulations”) which came into force on 4th April 2020 in response to the COVID-19 outbreak. The 2020 Regulations enable local councils to hold remote meetings (including by video and telephone conferencing) for a specified period until May 2021. The published agenda for this meeting stated that members of the public wishing to attend should contact the Clerk prior to its start to receive an invitation containing a link that could be used to join it.

Members Present Cllr Palmer (Chair), Cllrs Cockwill, Holt and Williams

Also present

Mr John Brooks (ASR Ryeworth) and Helen Johnston (Administrative Officer).

There were no members of the public present.

The meeting was opened at 7.00pm.

15/20/21 Recording and filming of meetings There were no requests to record or film the meeting.

16/20/21 Apologies Apologies were received and accepted from Miss Michelle Kirby (ASR Ryeworth).

17/20/21 Declarations of interest Cllr Cockwill declared he is currently an allotment holder. No other declarations of interest were received.

18/20/21 Minutes of the previous meeting The minutes of the meeting held on 23rd July 2020 were received, accepted and signed as a correct record.

19/20/21 Report from Site Representative Ryeworth – Dr John Brooks reported that some Ryeworth allotment holders were looking into hiring a pest controller to deal with the recurring mole problem on site. The Chairman asked that the office be kept aware of any arrangements once confirmed.

20/20/21 Rules on Bonfires The current rules on bonfires were discussed in light of increased complaints from neighbouring residents and less tolerance of bonfires generally. It was AGREED UNANIMOUSLY that a seasonal ban be implemented, in that all bonfires are prohibited from 1st April until 30th September annually unless specifically authorised by the Clerk. This is in line with the Prestbury Allotments rules on bonfires. It was agreed that the enforcement and penalty process needs to be clarified.

Cllr Williams to draft a rephrased paragraph to be included in the new version of the Terms and Conditions

21/20/21 Provision of skips The potential option of providing skips on site periodically was discussed. Skips have been provided in the past, but they have attracted fly

tipping and consequently have required to be 'staffed' by the allotments community. It was UNANIMOUSLY AGREED that the committee would not currently pursue this option.

22/20/21 **Contracted Handyman** The possibility of contracting a handyman to assist with the maintenance of allotments sites was discussed. The Chairman reported that Cllr Williams has voluntarily undertaken a lot of 'handyman' jobs over the years in his spare time. It was proposed that the regular contracting of a handyman to take on these jobs should be included in next year's budget. The committee UNANIMOUSLY AGREED with this proposal.
Cllr Palmer will approach the Clerk to request the creation of a call-off contract in line with the recurrent maintenance schedule.

23/20/21 **Plot Inspections** The Administrative officer reported on the recent plot inspections. There was a total of 8 eviction letters issued, 11 'red' warning letters issued and 6 plots removed from the inspection watch list.

24/20/21 **Vacant Plots** The Administrative Officer reported on the current position on waiting lists and vacant plots, 1 vacant plot with a waiting list of 34. Cllr Williams discussed the possibility of reconfiguring some large plots to relet sections that are unused. 3 plots on Sappercombe were identified as having consistently untended sections. It was proposed that these sites are used as a test to determine reaction to this as a potential wider project in the future.
Administrative Officer to draft letter to be sent to 'test' Sappercombe plot holders, asking if they might consider releasing a section of their plot for relet.

25/20/21 **Update on Current Projects**
Sappercombe Easy Access Plot – Cllr Holt reported that the contractor had indicated a start date of mid- October to commence work on this site.
Administrative officer to contact contractor to confirm start date for the Easy Access Project work

Deer fencing at Ryeworth and Haver – Cllr Palmer reported that we had received a quote from Greenfields for the provision and installation of deer fencing along the main access points to both sites. However, it is understood that following a discussion with Cllr Williams, AW Fencing reconfirmed their intention to proceed with this contract and we hope to receive a formal quote soon. In the meantime, the committee UNANIMOUSLY AGREED with expenditure of up to £1600 to supply and install deer fencing at key access points at the Ryeworth and Haver allotments sites.

Administrative Officer to follow up with AW Fencing with a view to obtaining a formal quote for the deer fencing work, to allow for the formal order to be issued

Ryeworth Drainage Ditch – The Chairman reported the successful completion of this project.

Ryeworth Path Stabilisation – The Chairman reported the successful completion of this project.

Ryeworth Plot 40 bank Stabilisation – The Chairman reported the successful completion of this project.

Cllr Williams raised the issue of the fallen ash tree, which fell from inside the neighbouring grounds on to Ryeworth plot 6 in early October. The estate has agreed to employ a tree surgeon to remove the tree this week. Cllr Williams

stated that he fully expects to see all the ash trees come down in the next 5 years or so due to Ash Dieback. Consequently, it was suggested that some contingency be created in the budget going forward to have these trees felled.

The Committee will consider creating contingency in the budget to tackle the effects of Ash Dieback disease.

26/20/21 **Allotments Competition** It was agreed that the existing process is fit for purpose for the running of the 2021 competition. It was proposed that a flyer be produced to include in invoicing mailshot in March 2021.

Administrative Officer to include development of competition flyer as agenda item for February's committee meeting.

27/20/21 **Allotment charges** The Chairman expressed her concerns regarding the ability to stay within budget given the number of potential unexpected costs that could occur such as emergency plumbing repairs, tree removal, extra fencing, etc. It was suggested that the current usage of the RPI/CPI to set allotment charges was not an adequate measure. It was UNANIMOUSLY AGREED to discontinue the link with the RPI/CPI and instead base allotment rental charges on the aim to break even at the end of the financial period. The introduction of a risk budget as an addendum to the general budget was also suggested.

28/20/21 **Action Plan 2020/21** The Committee reviewed the current Action Plan and Recurrent Maintenance Work Schedule. The Chairman reported good progress with the current action plan with the successful completion on budget of a number of projects. The Administrative Officer reported that a recent plumbing emergency call out for the Croft allotments has exhausted the plumbing budget for this year. It was discussed that overspend on plumbing can be offset by the underspend on the competition or by the built-in contingency.

29/20/21 **Project for 2021/22** The Committee reviewed potential future projects for 2021/2022. The Chairman discussed her recent assessment of the allotments noticeboards, in light of the general noticeboard refurbishment project being led by Cllr Parnham. The Chairman reported that only one of the current allotments boards follows CKPC branding. Furthermore, the Sappercombe site rep has requested that an extra board is supplied on site to cover an additional access gate. The Chairman queried whether the allotments boards could be funded under the general noticeboard project. However, it was decided that the allotments boards serve a very different purpose to the general noticeboards so would not be included in that project. The Chairman suggested improving the existing boards rather than replacing, by installing a metal backboard to allow for magnets to be used instead of pins.

Administrative Officer to obtain quote for installing metal backboards to existing allotments noticeboards.

30/20/21 **AOB** None

Meeting Closed at 9.20pm

Date of next meeting: 11th February 2021 at 7.00pm