# Minutes of a Meeting of the Allotment & Open Spaces Committee held on Wednesday 21st September 2022 at 7.30pm in the Biffa Room at St Mark’s Church and Community Centre, Calder Rise, Brickhill, Bedford.

## Present:

Cllrs Holloway, Fitzpatrick, the Clerk (Mrs S Bottoms) and 5 members of the public were in attendance.

## Absent:

Cllr Jarman-Webb.

### *Summary of the meeting: -*

Table 1- Minutes

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| Item | Description | Action By |
|  | Apologies for Absence: Cllr Jarman-Webb. |  |
|  | Declarations of Interest in items on the agenda: None. |  |
|  | Public Open Sessions (10 minutes)  1. **Bees:**   The beekeeper attended and reported that 180lbs of honey had been obtained over the year from 3 hives. He thanked the Committee for allowing him to have bees on the allotment. He asked for permission to have an additional 2 hives which was approved. The Clerk reported most tenants were supportive of the keeping of the bees but would discuss the one complaint received below under 5b. |  |
|  | 1. **Notice re: turning off the water:**   The Clerk reported that the water is turned on at the beginning of April and turned off September/October. Given the exceptionally dry conditions, the Clerk suggested that it be switched off at the end of October. She would put up a notice in advance on the gates notifying tenants that this is happening.   1. **Action re: state of access road:**   The Clerk reported that Cllr Charles Royden had submitted a grant funding request to cover patching of this road which had been successful. She would contact Cllr Royden to establish any timescale for this work to be undertaken.   1. **Notice for this meeting:**   There was concern that it had only been put up on the gates six days before the meeting and some tenants may not have been aware the meeting was taking place. The Clerk responded to say that this may have been made worse because it had been such a long time since the previous meeting. A date for the next meeting will be set at the end of this meeting and the Clerk will put up the notice in good time in November.   1. **Water pressure at the far end of the allotments:**   The Clerk reported that this had been investigated but it was difficult to establish the run of the water because the pipework is plastic. The costs to improve this would be too expensive. What was needed was for tenants to be considerate in how they use the water.   1. **Bonfires:**   There is currently a notice on the gates stating no bonfires. The Clerk replied that there had been reports from residents of Curlew Crescent of a number of bonfires started during the exceptionally dry conditions. As a result the Clerk, for safety reasons, put up a notice stating no bonfires. Once the weather changes and we have wetter weather, that notice will be removed and the allotments will revert to the guidance in the Handbook.   1. State of the first two plots on the right at the first gate entrance:   The Clerk had already asked for these to be strimmed as soon as possible. The tenant was also given permission to remove the self-set Sycamore trees.   1. Bench on Waveney Green backing onto Francis Groves   Close:  The resident had sent a number of e-mails over the last few months and given in a letter at the September Parish Council meeting. She was concerned about the effect on her enjoyment of her property and that of her neighbours from anti-social behaviour occurring on and around this bench in the evening. The same group were also present generally around the play equipment when Brickhill Primary children were leaving. She requested that the bench be removed, possibly temporarily, to see if this removed the problem. The Committee were reluctant to do so but asked the Clerk to contact the police and ask for regular patrols and for the Clerk to arrange for the trees in the area to be cut back to reduce the secluded nature of the bench. | **Clerk**  **Clerk**  **Clerk**  **Clerk**  **Clerk** |
|  | To confirm the minutes of the meeting held on 18th November 2020: The minutes will be signed off at the next meeting. |  |
|  | To receive a report on the management of Brickhill Allotments to include:  1. To note the current spend against budget:   This was circulated to all councillors and copies made available to others in attendance.   1. An update on the general management of the site since the last meeting:   **Waiting list:**  We currently have 22 Brickhill residents waiting for either a full or half plot with 3 Brickhill residents waiting for just a half plot. There are 50 non- residents wanting a full or half plot. We are experiencing continuing high demand. We have no vacant plots.  **Plot deposit returns:**  5 plots have been given up since April 2022. In the cases of 4 plots, the deposits were retuned as the plots were left in a condition ready to re-let. In the case of 1 plot the cost to clear was £85 so the plot deposit was retained and the leaving tenant paid £40 as a re-charge to cover the remaining plot clearance.  **Complaints about the bees:**  The Clerk had received complaints earlier in the year from a tenant a couple of plots down from the bees saying that they were preventing him from working his plot. The Clerk reported that she had visited the tenant’s plot over a number of days and in different weather conditions and times and saw no bees on the plot. She did speak to the bee keeper who has agreed to put up a covering to help funnel the bees into and out of their hive.  **Asbestos:**  The Clerk reported that since the last meeting of the Committee there was a report from a tenant of a piece of asbestos being found. The Clerk told the resident to carefully leave it in a place for collection. This was collected and it was a small piece of brown tile.   1. **Any other matters:**   **Gardening Competition:**  This will be reinstated in 2023 but the criteria will be revised. The Clerk will put this on the November agenda.  **Security:**  The possibility of a working party was considered to plant defensive planting along the edge of the allotments which border on the industrial estate to improve security. The Clerk will investigate where there are gaps and what would be a cost effective shrub but also one which would act as a deterrent to anyone attempting to access the allotments.  Complaint about the state of the walkways/vacant plots/support with tidying etc:  The Clerk had circulated this correspondence from a tenant which had come via another parish councillor. The Clerk had provided a response for that parish councillor to forward to the tenant. With regards the complaint about walkways not being kept clear of weeds and overgrown trees/plants, the Clerk, following receipt of the correspondence, had visited the allotments and could find no evidence of this. During discussion, it was felt that tenants should be encouraged to keep the section of walkway near their plots tidy.  With regards clearing vacant plots, the Clerk again explained there are no vacant plots. There are some which are not well maintained and the Clerk is in communication with the tenants to rectify the problem.  The Clerk did agree that the tenant who traditionally has helped with regards strimming and tidying of plots does struggle to get work done because of the demands of his own employment. It was agreed that this does get done eventually and it would be difficult to find someone else able to do the work.  **Wasp Nest:**  A tenant had reported a wasp nest in their compost. The Clerk gave the tenant a contact detail at the Borough Council. She explained that the tenant would need to fund this work as it was on their plot. | **Clerk**  **Clerk** |
|  | **To receive a report on the management of Waveney Green to include:**   1. To note current spend against budget:   This was circulated to all councillors and copies made available to others in attendance.   1. An update on the general management of the site since the last meeting:   **Grass cutting:**  This is continuing to take place. There is still no football team needing the pitches marking out.  **Footpath works**:  The dry weather has led to cracking from the entrance to the school up to the dog bin. The Clerk will obtain quotes for work early next year with the aim of getting the work done in Spring 2023. Given this work is unlikely to be completed before the financial year end, monies in the Footpath Repairs budget heading will need to be moved into the Footpaths Ear Marked Reserve at the end of March 2023. The Clerk will confirm that the edging in situ is concrete and not wooden.  **Play equipment:**  The Clerk reported that there had been some vandalism, including moving the memorial bench next to the bench referred to under 3viii above. This was re-sited for us by Bedford Borough Council. It has been a challenging year with dry conditions leading to the ground cracking. The Clerk has regularly put up signage warning users about the condition of the Green. Following an e-mail from a grandfather in August 2022 regarding a gap in the soil adjacent to the footings of the swings, the Clerk went over as soon as she was able and filled in the area with soil. As discussed and approved at the September Parish Council meeting, work to remove wooden equipment and install new swings and wetpour will cost a total of £11,638 and will be funded from budget headings in 22-23 as well as some from the Waveney Green Ear-Marked Reserve.  **Tree Works behind Francis Groves:**  Tree work has been completed along the edge of the school grounds. The Clerk intends to get a quotation for further work for trimming back along the edge of the green which overhangs the play equipment.  **2 new benches:**  These are on order and due to arrive. The memorial bench will be next to the toddler play area and will be funded by a resident and the other will be located towards Falcon Ave and will be paid for out of the Waveney Green Ear Marked Reserve.   1. **Any other matters:**   **Request for more wildlife areas:**  An e-mail had been received asking if next year, it would be possible to keep more wild grow areas, in random places, forming walkways in between. This would create nice areas for children to run in between and would be good for the nature around us.  The Clerk had responded that the only open area the Parish Council is responsible for is Waveney Green and there is already the wildflower area. Consideration would be given to other parts of the Green which could be left.  The Clerk will ask the resident to suggest other areas.  Discussion moved on to the maintenance of the wildflower area with Cllr Fitzpatrick agreeing to give more consideration to it.  **Bird and Bat Boxes**:  Cllr Fitzpatrick thought some of the existing bird boxes will need replacing by now and he would arrange to contact the manufacturer of the existing boxes to purchase more bird boxes.  **Memorial Garden:**  Thought needs to be given to the purpose of this and how it could be developed. I will put on the November agenda for continued consideration. | **Clerk**  **Clerk**  **Clerk**  **Cllr Fitzpatrick**  **Clerk** |
|  | **To receive a report on the management of the Mowsbury Walk Play Area:**  Following the play area inspection, the Parish Council approved expenditure of £795 and as suspected there will be an additional expenditure of £320 to break out the gate and refit to improve closure speed. This is included in part of the expenditure predicted to be spent from the budget under play area repairs.  The Clerk will also get a quote to resurface the path which has sunk in places at the same time as a quote for footpaths on Waveney Green. | **Clerk** |
|  | Date of Next Meeting: Wednesday 30th November at 7.30pm in the Wren Room of St Mark’s Church and Community Centre. |  |

*Approved and signed by*

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Chairman

30th November 2022