

## ESTATES AND FACILITIES COMMITTEE – 22<sup>nd</sup> June 2022

### ALLOTMENTS

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#### 1.0 INTRODUCTION

On the 21<sup>st</sup> May an on-site ‘meet up’ was undertaken at the allotments with the allotment holders; the Chairman of the Committee was in attendance. This report introduces the current challenges to operating the allotments and recommends strategy options, and operational measures that can be taken with immediate effect.

#### 2.0 WAITING LIST AND NUMBER OF PLOTS

The current waiting list has 54 persons who have registered an interest for an allotment. The Council currently has 28 allotment gardens available of varying sizes; none are disabled accessible.

The site is laid out with allotments in the centre, a track around the perimeter and pathways between the plots. See image below:



### **3.0 GROUNDS TEAM WORKS**

Prior to the meet-up the Grounds Manager had organised the removal of all 'flytipped' allotment related waste from the communal areas of the site; this waste could not be attributed to individual plot holders and was collected and disposed of by the Council. The grounds manager has also liaised with one plot holder whose recycled materials were decaying and had the potential to create plastic contamination; the plastics have now been removed.

An inspection regime is now being undertaken on a monthly basis and plot holders are written to with any concerns regarding their plot. The grounds team has also commenced a spraying regime of the Mares Tail that has established just outside of the allotments; it is believed that dormant Mares Tail was disturbed when the drainage ditch was dug out.

### **4.0 BREACHES OF ALLOTMENT RULES**

There are currently two plots that are in breach of the requirement to cultivate 50% and these plot holders are being dealt with; unless there is a significant improvement in cultivation it is anticipated that these persons will lose their tenancies.

There are plots with sheds and small poly tunnels and we will now monitor this and ensure that any plot holder wishing to erect a structure understands that it must be with the permission of the Council.

The rules do not permit tyres on the allotments however a number of plot holders are following a good practice suggestion and are growing potatoes in tyres. The Committee is recommended not to allow this in light of the potential for contamination and to require the immediate removal upon the harvest of the potatoes that are currently planted.

### **5.0 COMMUNICATIONS AND WORKING TOGETHER**

The allotment holders and the Chairman agreed that improved communications are key. The plot holders asked that communications are empathetic and with an understanding of the difficulties that plot holders experience. It was agreed that a facebook group is set up with closed membership that will enable swifter communications between all members.

The plot holders wish to work with the Council regarding rules and improvements.

### **6.0 PARKING AND VEHICLE ACCESS**

Parking on site is an issue as not all plot holders are adjacent to the track and able to make parking space within their curtilage. A one way system was suggested by one plot holder but this was not supported by others. It is suggested that if plot 25 loses the tenancy that this plot is reduced in size and further parking provision made in that location.

A complaint was received about the condition of the outer track with patch repairs failing quite quickly. It was explained that to undertake a resurfacing would require a scrape and relay of the whole surface which will be expensive.

An option is to permanently lock the gate in the winter months with access only permitted at a pre-arranged time and day. This would preserve the integrity of the track.

## **7.0 DRAINAGE**

Most plot holders experience standing water during the winter months and although not unusual for allotment gardens the amount of surface water indicates that natural drainage is not occurring. It is reported that the original drainage was via ditches through the allotment site however these are not evident. It is not proposed that further ditches should be dug at this time.

## **8.0 COMMUNITY SHED**

It is recommended practice to position a Community Shed on allotments to enable plot holders to leave excess seeds and plants etc for the users and to enable messages to be left on a whiteboard. If plot 25 is untenanted this area could also accommodate a community shed alongside a smaller allotment and additional parking. The Men's Shed has expressed an interest in costing and providing such a shed if the council can provide a specification; it is suggested a 6 x 4 shed with no windows, sloped roof and one door is provided; the door to be locked using a dial code lock.

## **9.0 ADDITIONAL ALLOTMENTS**

The grazing field across Newlands Road from Gang Warily has been fenced through the field to reduce the size. It is offered that this field could provide much needed additional allotments; there is already water on site, there is a safe drop off area and there is adjacent car parking. It is believed that the Council could also provide disabled accessible allotments on this site as well as community composting in partnership with the grazers.

The potential of offering new allotments in this location was very well received by the plot holders with the majority wishing to take up an option for an allotment in this location.

If the Committee wished a feasibility study to be undertaken this can be returned to the next Committee meeting. It is suggested that deer proof fencing would be prudent and we can liaise with NFDC to enquire if CiL monies will be available; and if there are other funding opportunities.

## **10.0 NATIONAL ALLOTMENT SOCIETY**

The Council can join the Society as a corporate member for a cost of £55. With the provision of a community shed the materials received can be provided in the shed. If the allotment holders themselves wished to join as an association this can be added at a cost of £3 a plot. It is recommended that the Council join in the first instance in order to access the advice and help.

## **11.0 RULES AND RENT CHANGES**

The invoices distributed in October 2022 will include a notice to quit and an explanation of why a council undertakes the tenancy renewal on an annual basis. This will enable the Council to refresh the rules and implement rent changes from October 2023

## **12. COMMISSIONED WORKS**

The allotment holders have asked the Council to consider providing a charged rotavation service. Such a service would reduce the amount of rotavators and cultivators required and will assist those who wish to grow food but are unable to dig the plot or afford the machinery. It is recommended that

this is provided twice a year with all work undertaken at the same time; a suitable rotavator will be required.

### **13. RECOMMENDATIONS**

It is recommended that:

- 13.1 If plot 25 becomes untenanted that it is reduced in size to provide additional car parking and a location for a Community Shed. The Men's shed to be asked to provide a quote for a 6x4 shed
- 13.2 All plot holders to remove all tyres by 31 August 2022
- 13.3 A facebook group be set up and administered and the allotment holders be invited to discuss rule changes prior to the rules being considered by Committee.
- 13.4 Officers to undertake a feasibility study of new allotments in the previous grazers field to be presented to the next Committee meeting. The grazing field not to be retenanted at this time.
- 13.5 Council to join the National Allotment Society
- 13.6 Grounds Manager to assess the feasibility of providing a rotavation service to be considered by the next meeting
- 13.7 The condition of the track to be monitored with patch repairs undertaken when essential.

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