

# NORMANTON TOWN COUNCIL



## MINUTES OF THE ALLOTMENTS COMMITTEE

Held on Wednesday 5<sup>th</sup> June 2024 at 1:00pm at Normanton Town Hall

Present: Councillor B Mayne  
Councillor P Mayne – Chairman  
Councillor T Morgan  
Councillor C Parsons  
Councillor R Seal

D Johnston – Town Clerk & RFO  
J Wilkinson – Property Officer

Absent: Councillor C Appleyard  
Councillor M Jennings  
Councillor P Marchant  
Councillor M Rowley  
Councillor A Samuels – Vice-Chairman

### 001. **Appointment of Chairman**

RESOLVED that Councillor P Mayne is appointed as Chairman for the current municipal year.

### 002. **Appointment of Vice Chairman**

RESOLVED that Councillor A Samuels is appointed as Vice Chairman for the current municipal year.

### 003. **Apologies for Absence**

RESOLVED that apologies be received on behalf of Councillors C Appleyard, M Jennings, P Marchant, M Rowley and A Samuels.

### 004. **Declarations of Interest**

There were no Declarations of Interest recorded.

**005. Minutes**

RESOLVED that the Minutes of a meeting of the Allotments Committee held on Wednesday 1<sup>st</sup> May 2024 (Minute Numbers 061-073; Pages 35-40) be received as a true record and signed by the Chairman.

**006. Meeting Dates 2024/25**

RESOLVED that the proposed meeting dates for the current municipal year be provisionally booked as follows:

17<sup>th</sup> July 2024  
28<sup>th</sup> August 2024  
9<sup>th</sup> October 2024  
20<sup>th</sup> November 2024  
15<sup>th</sup> January 2025  
19<sup>th</sup> February 2025  
2<sup>nd</sup> April 2025  
14<sup>th</sup> May 2025

Dates are subject to change.

In addition, it is proposed that at least two informal Allotment Liaison Group meetings are held with site representatives at the start and end of the season.

10<sup>th</sup> July 2024 at 6pm  
13<sup>th</sup> November 2024 at 6pm  
26<sup>th</sup> March 2025 at 6pm

**007. Inspections**

Members discussed the system of annual inspections which had previously been carried out by Committee members.

It was suggested that the current method was time consuming and difficult to organise around everyone's availability. It was also noted that the weather had a big impact on getting out to site at a pre-arranged date and time.

It was agreed that initial inspections would be carried out by the Property Officer. The Property Officer would be delegated authority to issue letters and notices of an advisory nature but would not issue warnings or evictions.

Any plot which required action in the form of warnings or evictions would be referred to the Committee for either a review of photographs or a site visit where required.

It was reported that a portable tablet with cellular connectivity would be required to carry out the inspections effectively on the new Scribe system. This would cost in the region of £265.00 with a sim card at around £9/m.

It was reported that there is an unused device at the office which could be sold to provide funding towards this purchase.

RESOLVED that the inspections would be carried out by the Property Officer and plots requiring more serious action would be referred to the Committee.

RESOLVED that the Committee support the purchase of a cellular tablet on the understanding that the old device could be disposed of with the consent of the Finance Committee.

**008. Vacancies and Waiting Lists**

An update was provided on plot vacancies and waiting lists:

<b>SITE</b>	<b>VACANCIES</b>	<b>WAITING LIST</b>
Cypress Road	0	25
Edward Street	0	0
Ellins Terrace 1	12	13
Ellins Terrace 2	8	16
Gilcar Street	0	9
Gladstone Street	1	26
Heys Buildings	2	17
Newland Lane	2	24
Norwood Street	2	17
Station Road	0	0
The Grove	0	8
Wentworth Terrace	5	20
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>175*</b>

\*Some applicants have applied for more than one site.

RESOLVED that the report be received.

**009. Requests from Tenants**

Members considered the following applications:

Gladstone Street

GS006

Structure request for a toolshed/ greenhouse

Materials – Breeze block and glass

DECLINED

The structure is not in line with the Town Council's structure policy and may be deemed as a permanent structure. The tenant is advised to cease work on the new structure, demolish the work that has been started and make repairs to his existing structure which pre-dates the policy.

Heys Buildings

HB005

Structure request for a greenhouse

Materials – Aluminium and Polycarbonate

Size 2m x 4m

DECLINED

The structure is not in line with our structure policy.

The applicant is asked to revise the plans and put forward a proposal for a smaller greenhouse within agreed parameters.

HB005

Structure request for a fruit cage

Materials – Wooden posts and netting

Size 2m x 2.5m

APPROVED

The application is approved on the understanding that no cement will be used to secure the posts in place.

**010. Newland Lane Fence**

It was reported that no updates had been received regarding the fence.

**011. Allotments Committee Budget 2024/25**

RESOLVED that the Allotments Committee Budget for the 2024/25 financial year be received. The report showed income of £2,106.00 and expenditure of £4,865.96.

**012. Newland Lane Maintenance**

Members considered a letter from the Site Secretary regarding the payment of the annual Maintenance Fee to Newland Lane Allotments.

Whilst members were grateful for the maintenance work carried out by the site and the work of the on-site committee generally, it was not appropriate to treat each site differently. Should maintenance work such as tap repairs etc be required at Newland Lane Allotments then the Site Secretary should

contact the Town Council and the office will make arrangements for a contractor to visit site and carry out the repairs.

Every site should be charging 'site fees' on top of the rent to fund the purchase of fuel for mowers etc and this can also include an honorarium for the Site Secretary to cover their costs, if approved by the Site Committee.

**013. NAS Visit to Ellins Terrace Allotments**

It was reported that a representative of the National Allotment Society had visited Ellins Terrace Allotments to look at the plots following a dispute with a tenant.

His report is as follows:

*My first impression was that the site seemed secure and relatively easy to access, but parking could be better.*

*As we walked round there did not seem to be much evidence of horticultural gardening, however it has been a long cold, wet winter and it may have improved now we have had a couple of nice weekends and a bank holiday.*

*It appeared that one of the plots just had geese and many of the plots seemed below, what I would have expected, if the plan was to grow food.*

*One plot in particular showed little sign that anything much, other than weeds, had been grown in the last year and it would require many hours work to be able to grow anything, of an edible nature, this year.*

*There was a cockerel crowing and it appeared to be coming from this plot, (cockerels and geese are not allowed on allotments unless expressly permitted by the landowner).*

*I was informed that the tenant of this plot subscribed to the 'no dig' philosophy, in my view there should have been significant evidence of areas covered with cardboard or a similar 'green' weed suppressant if an active 'no dig' method of growing was actually being done.*

*There were a number of sheds on site, but little evidence of water harvesting.*

*I was very disappointed by the standard of allotments on the site overall and in my view the plot holders need reminding what an allotment*

*should be used for and if they cannot or will not grow food and enjoy all the legitimate benefits then it should be given to someone else.*

*On a positive note if the current plot holders accept that standards need to be raised they can be helped by the formation of a society which will, with consent, manage plots and have access to funds, (through grants), to create an allotment site where people grow food and enjoy all the mindful benefits of being involved and part of a community.*

*It could be that efficient gardening produces a surplus which could be given to a local school or foodbank.*

Members considered the points made and agreed to hold a meeting with all tenants at Ellins Terrace and the representative from the National Allotments Association, with a view to raising standards across the site.

Consideration could be given to the implications of a self-managed site, if that is something that the tenants would wish to look into.

Further information would be obtained from other local Councils in the first instance so that the full implications could be understood.

#### **014. Site Updates**

##### Cypress Road

Some plots require inspection.

##### Edward Street – N/A

##### Ellins Terrace 1

Light pruning of the tree near the entrance gate has been carried out.

Quotes for the gates are ongoing.

Plots 28-31 are to be the focus with a view to getting them strimmed down and divided up.

##### Ellins Terrace 2

Two plots recently allocated.

Documents sent in Polish for one new tenant who struggles with English.

Fence on plot 92/93 was leaning onto the tap. The tenant was contacted and has carried out a repair to the fence.

An old garage door was being used as a makeshift fence near the entrance – a price should be obtained to repair the fence at this location.

Quotes for plot clearance obtained – 7 plots £37,015

This demonstrates the importance of tenants keeping their plots properly maintained and the importance of inspections and follow ups.

There were not currently sufficient funds available to carry out this work and it was not financially viable when the seven plots would bring in £168 in rent per year. At current rates, it would take 220 years to recoup the investment.

#### Gilcar Street – N/A

#### Gladstone Street

Trees at the entrance and plot 16 have been removed as agreed at the last meeting.

A resident enquired about using part of the site to store a vehicle, potentially renting a large shed. Members were mindful of the recent visit by the NAS representative and the intended use of allotment land and had to decline the request.

It was noted that brambles and weeds were causing an issue to the resident and efforts would be made to have them cleared to maintain a good neighbourly relationship.

#### Heys Buildings

Fencing installed as agreed at the last meeting.

A list of poor plots has been provided but these will not be inspected until the Property Officer gets round to the full inspection on this site.

The Site Secretary had resigned and there was currently no replacement.

#### Newland Lane

Quotes for gates ongoing – contractors are not replying.

#### Norwood Street

Letters sent to a number of tenants regarding weeds after a brief site visit.

Asbestos found during a shed demolition on plot NS023 – Quotes to be obtained.

Tap Leak – temporary repair carried out by a tenant.

#### Station Road – N/A

#### The Grove – N/A

#### Wentworth Terrace

Complaint about overgrown brambles – tenant advised to make improvements.

Follow up on a complaint about ‘rotting vegetation’ in which the tenant was dissatisfied at the description of his plot.

Weeds outside the fence on Parker Avenue – To be reported to Wakefield Council.

**015. Complaints**

RESOLVED that the following complaints be noted and actioned as appropriate:

Heys Buildings

Complaint about a plot being covered in weeds and a second complaint about the same tenant using weedkiller to kill the weeds.

Information to be provided to the complainant regarding our policy on the use of weedkiller. The plot condition to be inspected at the next opportunity.

Complaint from a resident regarding the installation of the fence at the rear of Armstrong Close and concerns that the works weren't approved. The complainant has been advised that it is the Town Council carrying out the work, not the tenants.

**016. Tenancy Issues**

Heys Buildings

The Town Clerk reported on a complex tenancy issue and a series of communications with a tenant.

Norwood Street

The Town Clerk reported on the difficulties faced by a new tenant with a particularly difficult plot. Members accepted the points put forward by the tenant and agreed to accept their termination of the plot and issued a refund on their rent.

Wentworth Terrace

The Town Clerk reported on an overpayment of rent from the last financial year which was not carried over by the new system. The tenant intended to terminate their plot and a full refund on their rent was approved.

In the absence of any further business, the Chairman thanked everyone for their attendance and closed the meeting.