

PRESENT:

East Ward:

Councillor J Craigie
Councillor J McKenzie

South Ward:

Councillor Ms R Clarke
Councillor S Inch (Chairman)

West Ward:

Councillor T Inch

Tricks:

Mr S Long

Pollyfield:

Mr A Mitchell

IN ATTENDANCE:

Mr R Coombes (Deputy Town Clerk)
Mr M Lamey (Marland, Chairman)
Mrs M Lamey (Marland, Vice Chairman)
Mrs N Wheeler (Handy Cross, Chairman)
Ms L Stanford (Handy Cross, Secretary)
1 x Members of the Public

1. ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN

Councillor S Inch was proposed by Councillor J McKenzie and seconded by Councillor Ms R Clarke.

RESOLVED: That Councillor S Inch is appointed as Chairman of the Committee for the coming year.

(Vote: For: 6, Against: 0, Abstention: 1)

(Councillor S Inch assumed the Chair and thanked the Members for their votes.)

2. ELECTION OF A DEPUTY CHAIRMAN

Councillor Mrs J Gubb was proposed by Councillor S Inch and seconded by J McKenzie.

RESOLVED: That Councillor Mrs J Gubb is appointed as Deputy Chairman of the Committee for the coming year.

Vote: For: 7, Against: 0)

3. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Councillor Mrs J Gubb (East Ward, personal).

4. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST ON ITEMS ON THE AGENDA

Councillor J Craigie declared a non-pecuniary interest Item 13. (member of East-the-Water in Bloom).

5. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PERIOD

A member of the public explained that he was a resident of Churchill Road, overlooked the Pollyfield Allotment Site, and represented his neighbours.

He spoke about the Council's responsibilities and governance in general in relation to the Allotment Sites as public assets.

From his eyrie he could spy that one or two plots were unkempt; he did not feel that there was sufficient demand for improvement.

He wondered also about one or two vacated plots that similarly appeared untidy and require Council intervention.

The public member noted that Plot 6a had a heap of remnants from a demolished chicken shack.

The Member spoke of offensive noise, noting that noisy equipment tended to be utilised on balmy Sunday afternoons; he observed that Alan Titchmarsh wrote in the Daily Mail that there should be an embargo (from weekend noise).

Bonfires were lit with no regard of the wind direction and invariably when householders had open windows.

He further questioned the advertising of the Allotment Committee Meeting suggesting that the public could miss a meeting; he recommended social media notifications.

Mr Mitchell advised that the Maintenance Team had taken down the chicken shack, a skip had removed much detritus and that, working within wider schedules, the final removal would be processed.

He conceded that two plots were not “up to scratch,” and had spoken to the Allotment Administrator with a view to being stronger when encouraging tenants to attend their plots. He believed that at least 40% of the plot should be cultivated.

He, personally, was mindful of the Site’s neighbours and acted on the change of wind direction but was not aware of overzealous strimming.

Councillor Craigie felt that it should be recognised that not all allotment tenants are retired, and many had work / commitments that provided for only being able to tend their plots at weekends.

The Clerk highlighted that tenants annually receive a Council Allotment Newsletter that included detail on fire care. Should the householder not feel appeased he could approach the District Council’s Environment Department or, indeed, the Fire Service.

He indicated that the Allotment Committee Meetings are not scheduled throughout the year (he had corresponded and informed the Public Member) that they are posted on the Notice Boards and Council’s website within the required time period. (He had forwarded the Agenda to the Member for the present meeting.)

6. MINUTES

The Minutes of the Meeting held on 12 September 2022 were approved and signed as a correct record.

(Vote – For: 5, Against: 0, Abstention: 2)

7. MARLAND SITE

The Chairman of the Marland Association, Mr Lamey, advised that:

- There are no empty plots.
- A tenant who had been absent had been supported by the Association Community where the tenants attended to the plot (during the absence).
- It is a tidy site.
- A bonfire party will be held on site, letters will be sent to the neighbours advising / inviting them.
- There will be a Christmas get together following on from the summer workday party.

Councillor S Inch welcomed the community action and social events.

The Clerk noted that the Marland Site had enjoyed their Inter Site competition “victory.”

8. HANDY CROSS SITE

Mrs Wheeler introduced herself as the new Chairman, in post since the summer.

Whilst there are six half plots available four people have been invited to view / consider them; a number have become available simply because the former tenants have had the opportunity to take up full plots.

Mrs Wheeler has introduced a Newsletter published on Facebook and Notice Board on the site for all inclusivity; a suggestion box had also been installed.

Additional committee members have been recruited and commencing in the New Year, there will quarterly working parties to maintain the tidy site.

She alluded to the weather impacting upon the grass cutting and noted that there were gaps in the hedge, to be addressed, following the arboriculturists’s work and dying back. There had been no security issues experienced on the Site.

9. POLLYFIELD SITE

Mr Mitchell advised that the Site was performing well and that there were no problems.

He noted that a tenant had advised that they are studying at degree level and were not able to fully commit to their plot, at present.

Two vacant plots were due to be viewed / considered by applicants shortly.

A full plot would become available in January 2024.

The recent new tenants have been keen in their application.

10. TRICKS SITE

Mr Long confirmed that the Tricks Site gardens were overall in good condition.

Two vacated plots would soon be occupied.

There were no problems. The source of the rat infestation in a neighbouring house on Clovelly Road had been found in the garden of another house. (The Clerk confirmed that DCS Pest Control had combed the Site; it was reported that there was no evidence of rats on the Site.)

11. ALLOTMENT BOUNDARY AND TREE WORKS

Proposed by Councillor McKenzie, seconded by Councillor Craigie and

RESOLVED: that Wills Tree Services be invited to conduct boundary / tree works, in accordance with their quotation, for the Pollyfield Allotment Site.

(Vote - For: 7, Against: 0)

12. CLEANING AND MAINTENANCE BUDGET FOR 2023/24

Concern had been raised regarding the proposal of running a budget with a deficit.

Discussion included potential to increase rents, the importance of the wider allotment gardening benefits including towards mental health and the extra pressure that a change to rent could have.

The Clerk explained the costs incurred this year, the benefit of having a budget that would provide for the general activities and with an agreed contingency element (that need not necessarily be drawn upon).

Proposed by Councillor S Inch, seconded by Councillor McKenzie and

RECOMMENDED: A budget of £6,564.75 for 2024/2025: the shortfall of £3,000.00 requested from Central Funds combined with an expected income of £3,564.75.

(Vote - For: 6, Against:0, Abstention: 1)

13. LEVEL OF RENT FROM 2024/25

Members having made recommendation on the Draft budget, it was:

Proposed by Councillor S Inch, seconded by Councillor McKenzie and

RESOLVED: That the Council makes no change to the level of rents which remain £37.00 for a full plot and £19.50 for a half plot for the year 2024/2025. The deposit rate will remain at £25.00.

(Vote - For: 6, Against: 1)

The Chairman, having established that there was no further business to discuss, thanked the Members for their attendance and concluded the Meeting at 7.21 pm. He added that he should like the Committee to convene more regularly.

| | Budget 2023/24 | Expenses 2023/24 | Income from Rents | Budget 2024/25 |
|--|-------------------|---------------------|----------------------|-------------------|
| Pollyfield | | | £1,199.25 | |
| Fence Repair | £225.00 | | | £225.00 |
| maintenance | £250.00 | £1,141.24 | | £250.00 |
| Perimeter trees | £1,250.00 | £4,800.00 | | |
| Tricks | | | £2,280.50 | |
| skip | £350.00 | | | £350.00 |
| Perimeter trees | £750.00 | | | £125.00 |
| Shrub tree Management | £500.00 | | | £125.00 |
| Fencing | £100.00 | | | £100.00 |
| General | £150.00 | £44.00 | | £150.00 |
| Allot Certificate Frames | £70.00 | | | £80.00 |
| Best Allotment cup | | | | |
| Marland Lease | £500.00 | £545.00 | £32.00 | £500.00 |
| Marland Perimeter trees | | | | £250.00 |
| Hardy Cross Lease | £250.00 | £250.00 | £53.00 | £250.00 |
| Hardy Cross perimeter trees | £1,000.00 | | | £500.00 |
| Contingency | £1,000.00 | £35.42 | | £3,659.75 |
| | £6,395.00 | £6,815.66 | £3,564.75 | £6,564.75 |
| Budget | £3,564.75 | | | |
| Expected Income less expenses to date: | | -£3,250.91 | Amount required: | £3,000.00 |