



BIDEFORD TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of the Allotments Committee Meeting

held in the Council Chamber, Town Hall, Bideford on

Thursday 26 September 2024 at 6.30 pm

PRESENT:

| | |
|------------|--|
| North Ward | Councillor K Hind |
| East Ward | Councillor Mrs J Gubb Councillor J McKenzie |
| South Ward | 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 N Wheeler (Handy Cross, Chairman)
2 x Members of the Public

1. ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN

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

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

(Vote: For: 6, Against: 0)

2. ELECTION OF DEPUTY CHAIRMAN

Councillor Mrs Gubb was proposed by Councillor McKenzie and seconded by Councillor T Inch and

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

(Vote: For: 6, Against: 0)

3. **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Councillor Ms R Clarke (South Ward, personal).

4. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST ON ITEMS ON THE AGENDA**

Mr Mitchell declared a non-pecuniary interest in item Agenda item. 10.b. (Application for tenancy).

5. **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PERIOD**

The members of the public did not speak.

6. **MINUTES**

The Minutes of the Meeting held on 1 February 2024 were approved and signed as a correct record.

(Vote – For: 5, Against: 0, Abstention: 1)

7. **QUARTERLY INSPECTIONS**

The Chairman advocated quarterly inspections believing that the cost in resource from poorly maintained plots and their recovery to the Council would be checked.

Councillor T Inch supported the initiative believing that members of the Committee should be invited to join the inspections and have access to the Sites.

(Mr Long joined the Meeting.)

Discussion followed on the general provision of access to the four Sites by members of the Committee generally.

Members agreed that it would be most appropriate should individual members wish to visit any Site they should in the first instance contact the respective representatives.

It was proposed by the Chairman, seconded by Councillor T Inch and

RESOLVED: That Quarterly Inspections be introduced spearheaded by either the Chairman or Deputy Chairman of the Committee; all Members are welcome to attend with the Deputy / Town Clerk in attendance.

(Vote: For: 7, Against: 0)

8. **MARLAND SITE**

The Chairman of the Marland Association, Mr Lamey, thanked the Chairman and Members for their support which provided for the successful Lottery Funding application.

The Project is 99.9% finished; Members will be invited to the official “Open Day.” Six of the dedicated nine raised beds have been let.

He advised that there had been four new plot holders this term and a half plot will soon become available.

This year has been poor for growing notwithstanding the foraging of badgers and foxes!

Overall the Site is operating well and basking in the glory of having won the Inter-Site challenge for the second year in a row.

Site Members had agreed at the AGM to install CCTV; policy is already in place.

The Site Members have contributed 250 – 300 hours tidying the site, including paths, fencing and hedge cutting. There will be a (collective) bonfire on 9 November 2024, the Saturday following “bonfire night.”

The Committee conduct monthly site inspections which are working very well.

The Site introduced a “75% grow,” for each Plot, which has been embraced by everybody and is very impressive.

9. **HANDY CROSS SITE**

The Chairman of the Handy Cross Association, Mrs Wheeler, advised that the Site comprises 41 full and 20 half plots. There are currently two empty plots with a further two subject to Notice at the end of the month.

During the summer the Site members engaged in 3 “work days” attending to the perimeter fence and rubbish clearance; the parking area requires re-gravelling earmarked for the new year.

The rent rate has been increased, in line with inflation, although there had been a good take up from members to provide a higher voluntary contribution; further fund raising has been organised.

A dedicated area has been allocated for the dual purpose of rubbish burning (in bins) and BBQs, for meetings and Open Days.

Additional water butts will be purchased for those plots without recourse to water capture.

10. **POLLYFIELD SITE**

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

There are two half plots (one Notice served) vacant.

It has been a difficult (growing) year; some good some bad growth.

Mr Mitchell was pleased with the tree / boundary works, that provided more light and growth regeneration. (The Chairman believed that the cut could have been perhaps four feet lower.)

- b. Plot 21 Upper. Mr Mitchell, since Notice had been served on the tenant of 21 Upper, had personally cleared the bind week, much detritus and is set to remove corrugated iron from the Plot.

Given that the Site has a large poly tunnel and shed “dug in,” along with the bedrock of shillit the available gardening space is limited (to about a quarter).

Mr Mitchell indicated that he should like to take the tenancy in his name, be responsible for the plot but would make the poly tunnel facility available to those site members who did not have a green house facility.

He had intimated that he would be open to supporting the East-the-Water in Bloom initiative by “bringing on,” their seedlings.

Councillor Hind expressed support for Mr Mitchell’s initiative.

The Chairman thanked Mr Mitchell for his work.

Proposed by Councillor McKenzie, seconded by Councillor Hind and

RESOLVED: that Mr Mitchell be given the tenancy for Plot 21 Upper, effective 1 October 2024.

(Vote – For: 7, Against: 0)

11. **TRICKS SITE**

Mr Long declared the unprecedented availability of six plots without a waiting list, noting the loss of some more senior members.

The gardens are well looked after, there are no (security) issues, the Site runs itself and the communal garden and bee hives remain.

12. **INTER-SITE CHALLENGE REVIEW**

Mr Long indicated that the Inter-Site challenge had been too late for the Tricks Site.

Discussion followed on the format, Site self adjudication, numbering of plots, appetite for continuation and time spent.

It was proposed by Councillor Hind, seconded by Councillor S Inch and

RESOLVED: That the Site representatives canvas their fellow tenants to provide feedback for the next Allotment Committee Meeting.

(Vote: For: 7, Against: 0)

13. **BOUNDARY SURVEY QUOTATION**

The Clerk advised that there was a need to obtain a new survey for all the Allotment Sites (the provider of the last boundary survey had recently retired).

The Chairman expressed the need for haste in conducting the survey prior to leaf loss

(abscission).

Proposed by Councillor Hind, seconded by Councillor McKenzie and

RESOLVED: that the Chairman and Clerk identify and engage a suitably qualified tree / boundary arboriculturist / surveyor.

(Vote – For: 7, Against: 0)

14. **CLEANING AND MAINTENANCE BUDGET FOR 2025/26**

The Chairman expressed the balance of manging allotment provision with inherent draw on resource.

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 McKenzie, seconded by Councillor S Inch and

RECOMMENDED: A budget of £12,697.25 for 2025/2026: the shortfall of £9,159.25 requested from Central Funds combined with an expected income (less expenses to date) of £3538.00.

(Vote – For: 7, Against: 0)

15. **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 raise the level of rents to £45.00 for a full plot and £23.00 for a half plot for the year 2025/2026. The deposit rate will increase to £50.00. The rate charged per plot for the Associations will rise to £2.00.

(Vote – For: 7, Against: 0)

The Chairman, having established that there was no further business to discuss, thanked the Members for their attendance and concluded the Meeting at 7.40 pm. He added that he should like the Committee to convene more regularly.

Signature of Town Mayor:..... Date:.....

Signature of Chairman:..... Date:.....

DRAFT CLEANING AND MAINTENANCE BUDGET FOR 2025/26

| | Budget 2024/25 | Expenses 2024/25 | Income from Rents | Budget 2025/26 |
|--|---------------------------|-----------------------------|------------------------------|---------------------------|
| Pollyfield | | | £1,467.00 | |
| Fence Repair | £225.00 | | | £225.00 |
| maintenance | £250.00 | | | £250.00 |
| Perimeter trees | | | | £2,000.00 |
| Legal Fee | | £45.00 | | |
| Deposit Return | | £25.00 | | |
| Tricks | | | £2,769.00 | |
| skip | £350.00 | | | £350.00 |
| Perimeter trees | £125.00 | | | £2,000.00 |
| Shrub tree Management | £125.00 | | | £125.00 |
| Fencing | £100.00 | | | £100.00 |
| Deposit return | | £82.00 | | |
| General | £150.00 | | | £150.00 |
| Allot Certificate Frames | £80.00 | | | £80.00 |
| Best Allotment cup | | | | |
| Marland Lease | £500.00 | £500.00 | £82.00 | £500.00 |
| Marland Perimeter trees | £250.00 | | | £1,000.00 |
| Handy Cross Lease | £250.00 | £250.00 | £122.00 | £250.00 |
| Handy Cross perimeter trees | £500.00 | | | £2,000.00 |
| Contingency | £1,000.00 | | | £3,667.25 |
| | £3,905.00 | £902.00 | £4,440.00 | £12,697.25 |
| Budget | £4,440.00 | | | |
| Expected Income less expenses to date: | | £3,538.00 | Amount required: | £9,159.25 |