

Wednesday 6th April 2022

The Trinity Centre

10:30am

Present

Cllrs Wood, Briggs, Cooper, Griffin

In Attendance

Olive O’Sullivan—Chief Executive Officer (CEO) and Mark Dixon-Senior Programme Delivery Manager

There were no members of the public present or press present.

1 Apologies for Absence

The CEO had received apologies from Cllr Ashley-Higgins.

Resolved to accept the apologies.

2 Declarations of Interest

Cllr Wood declared a non-pecuniary interest as a plot holder at The Boulevard allotments.

3 Questions from Members

None received.

4 Minutes of Meeting 2nd March 2022

Resolved that the minutes of the meeting of the Sutton Coldfield Allotments Sub-Committee held on 2nd March 2022 be signed as a true record of the meeting.

5 Matters arising

The CEO reported that at its meeting on 10th March 2022, the Amenities, Leisure & Community Services Committee (ALC) approved the adoption of the draft Royal Sutton Coldfield Town Council Allotment Rules and had also approved that the financial remuneration to the Sutton Coldfield Allotment Associations for site management, maintenance and minor repairs be based on 50% commission paid on rents when the allotments are transferred to the Town Council.

The CEO also reported that, at the same meeting, ALC approved that a Quantity Surveyor be commissioned to undertake a detailed cost estimate for the capital improvements identified in the surveys of the Sutton Coldfield allotment sites that were undertaken in November and December 2021. An open invitation to quote for the work closed on Friday 1st April and a paper would be presented to the Strategy & Resources Committee’s meeting on 13th April 2022 to recommend the appointment of a contractor. Cllr Cooper requested that his objection to the commissioning of a Quantity Surveyor be noted.

The CEO further advised that as the draft Allotment Management Agreement between the Town Council and each of the allotment associations had been published with the agenda for ALC meeting on 10th March 2022, the draft agreement could now be shared with the allotment associations in advance of the next meeting of the Sutton Coldfield Allotments Consultative Forum. This is an Officer-led meeting and the outcomes of the meetings of the Consultative Forum would be reported to the Sub-Committee.

Resolved that Officers provide the allotment associations with a copy of the draft Management Agreement, advising that a meeting of the Sutton Coldfield Allotments Consultative Forum would be convened in late May/early June, at which they can feedback comments on the draft agreement.

Cllr Cooper outlined potential works which could take place at Forge Farm Allotments; the West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA) is funding training through the RMF Construction Training Academy which includes the use of construction plant. The practical element of this could be done at Forge Farm Allotments to clear overgrown areas and prepare new plots. Committee noted that this would only progress if Birmingham City Council (BCC), as the site landlord, gives its permission.

6 Legal transfer of the allotments from Birmingham City Council to the Town Council

The CEO reported that BCC had provided to the Town Council all the information it has about the Sutton Coldfield allotment sites. The Town Council's solicitor is working through this information and, in particular, those sites at which easements need to be resolved.

The CEO reported that the four sites without access issues were previously identified by the Town Council and BCC as priorities for transfer and that the Town Council needed to be ready to receive these sites. The Management Agreements are an important aspect of this preparation and the meeting agreed that keeping the allotment associations informed about transfer progress as discussed in the previous item was essential.

In terms of receiving the allotments, Committee noted that the role of Royal Sutton Coldfield Allotments Association (RSCAA) is yet to be defined, especially in relation to mediating in disputes or complaints once the sites have been transferred.

7 Security on sites

The Sub-Committee discussed arrangements for the security of allotment sites after transfer of sites from BCC to the Town Council. It was agreed that new sets of locks and keys would be needed for the Sutton Coldfield sites after transfer and that the keys should not be able to be copied without authorisation.

Resolved that Officers investigate high security, keyed alike padlocks for each of the individual allotment sites.

In relation to site security, Sub-Committee noted that private grounds maintenance contractors had access to a Sutton Coldfield allotment site to deposit green waste arising from their businesses. These contractors are not allotment tenants and the meeting noted that non-tenants should not have access to allotment sites otherwise the allotment associations, which are responsible for access, cannot supervise who is on site. As well as compromising site security, it was noted that only registered sites can dispose of waste for commercial companies.

Cllr Briggs enquired if there were visitor books at allotment sites and it was confirmed that although this wasn't the case, the allotment rules state that visitors are only allowed if accompanied by a tenant.

Cllr Wood asked about issues arising from unauthorised access to allotment sites from neighbouring properties. The CEO reported that the Town Council's solicitor would review access to allotments sites as part of the transfer .

8 Date of next meeting

Wednesday 25th May 2022, 10:30am, The Trinity Centre

The meeting ended at 11:25am

Signed as a true record

23rd November 2022