

Tuesday 2nd September

Trinity Centre

10:00am

Present

Cllrs Briggs, Cooper and Wood.

In Attendance

Steve Hollingworth (SH) – Head of Open Spaces and Environment and Jessica Johnson (JJ) – Project Manager Communities.

There were no members of the public or press present.

1 Election of Chairman

Resolved that Cllr Briggs be elected as Chairman of the Allotments Sub-Committee.

2 Election of Vice Chairman

This agenda item was deferred to the next Sub – Committee meeting.

3 Apologies for Absence

Apologies received from Cllr Griffin.

Resolved to accept the apologies.

4 Declarations of Interest

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

5 Minutes of the Meeting 9th July 2024

Resolved that the minutes of the Allotments Sub-Committee meeting held on 9 July 2024 be signed as a true record.

6 Matters Arising

No matters arising were reported.

7 Questions from Members

None received.

8 Minutes of the Sutton Coldfield Allotment Consultative Forum

Cllr Wood raised concerns about the grass cutting at the Boulevard Allotment site and commented that the method used by the Town Rangers could result in weed seeds being dispersed across the site. Cllr Wood also raised that Boulevard Allotment Association would like their hedges to be trimmed. SH replied that he would take up the concerns raised with the Town Ranger team.

Cllr Wood asked how best to report allotment works. SH replied that the Allotment Associations can contact **himself** or Peter Weston, Allotment and Greenspaces Officer, directly via phone or email to discuss proposed works on the sites.

Cllr Wood raised that the weed, mare's tail was present on an allotment plot at the Boulevard Site. SH replied that he was aware of this issue.

Sub-Committee discussed a visit to all the allotment sites for the Sub Committee to gain a better understanding of each individual site. SH to liaise with committee members on dates for the visits.

Resolved to note the minutes from the Sutton Coldfield Allotment Consultative Forum.

9 Legal Transfer of the Sutton Coldfield Allotments from Birmingham City Council

SH reported that 5 allotment sites have now transferred from Birmingham City Council to the Town Council. These are:

- Forge Farm
- Walmley Ash Allotments
- Boulevard
- Donegal Road
- Sunnybank Fields

The Town Council's solicitors were currently working on the transfer of Newhall and Whitefarm Allotments and that these would be followed by Hill, Four Oaks and Falcon Lodge Allotment Sites.

Cllr Briggs asked if there was a further update on the building at the Four Oaks Allotments site.

SH reported that as the building is on Birmingham City Council (BCC) land, it is therefore BCC's responsibility to resolve any building issues prior to transfer.

10 Allotment Rent and Fees 2025/6 and 2026/7

SH reported the allotment year runs from 1st October – 30th September and tenants must be notified 12 months in advance of any rent or fee increases. It has previously been agreed that until all Sutton Coldfield allotment sites are transferred from BCC to the Town Council, the rent rates would be kept the same as BCC to maintain consistency across all Sutton Coldfield allotment sites.

Cllr Cooper asked if the rent rates would be rounded up. SH replied that the rent rates and fees would be rounded to the nearest pound.

Resolved to note that the Allotment Rent and Fee charges applicable from 1st October 2025 for the Allotment Year 2025/2026.

Resolved to recommend to Amenities, Leisure and Community Services Committee and Strategy and Resources Committee that the Allotment Rent and Fee Charges will be increased from 1st October 2026 for the Allotment Year 2026/2027 in line with the BCC rent increase which in previous years was based on the published Retail Price Index (RPI) as of 1 August 2025 which will be published in mid-September 2025.

11 Annual Health and Safety Inspections

SH presented the Health and Safety report.

Sub Committee received the Health and Safety actions at the Sub-Committee meeting on 9th July 2024, identified at site visits carried out by the Town Council's Health and Safety Advisor, Worknest.

The Health and Safety report detailed the work that has been done to action the points raised at these inspections. Many of the actions centre around tree surveys, asbestos and safety of buildings and structures.

Since the last Health and Safety inspection visits, Sunnybank Fields had transferred from BCC to the Town Council and a health and safety visit from Worknest will be arranged to assess the site, together with annual update inspections / assessments of the sites that have already transferred. Tree surveys and asbestos surveys had also been carried out on the transferred sites and appropriate action taken. These surveys will continue every three years and annually respectively.

Cllr Wood commented that it was evident sites that had transferred had seen investment from the Town Council.

Resolved to note the progress on the Health and Safety recommendations and actions for Town Council and Allotment Associations.

12 Annual Maintenance Expenditure

SH presented the report and commented that the works completed were prioritised based on health and safety actions and concerns, such as asbestos removal and tree maintenance; security, as well as general site improvements.

Many sites had received hedge cutting and trimming. This had been requested by the allotment associations as large hedges were shading plots making them unviable for growing. Details of all works undertaken are detailed in Appendix 1 of the report.

Resolved to note the expenditure incurred by the Town Council on the costs of maintaining the allotment sites for the financial year 2024/25.

13 Allotment Digital Management Platform

SH reported that Town Council Officers were now in the final stages of evaluating the Abavus digital platform. Feedback had been provided to the Abavus Project Manager who will be implementing the amendments. Once the amendments have been made, next steps will include arranging a training session for Officers and a representative of Walmley Ash allotment association, before inputting the final data in preparation for a live trial by the allotment association.

Cllr Copper asked if the digital platform would be used by the five allotments transferred to the Town Council or all sites in Sutton Coldfield. SH replied that the platform would be rolled out to the allotments owned by the Town Council once it is fully tested and operational.

The meeting ended at 10:45am

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Signed

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Date