

Drinkstone Parish Council

Allotments

Report to the Ordinary Meeting Dated 7th October 2019

Agenda Item; Councillor Portfolios

During the last month I have visited both sets of allotments and can report that the general condition is good on both sites.

I have spoken to the other 2 Allotment trustees about the 2 trees on the Rattlesden Road site, and Councillor Holborn has had a meeting with a local tree surgeon to discuss in more detail any maintenance required.

The Trustees have confirmed that the trees are the responsibility of the land owner, which in this case is the Parish council. This is also confirmed in the Management Policy for the allotments and other parish lands. The policy states in clause 5 that:

The Parish Council, as landlord, is responsible for the following:

- a. Issuing tenancy agreements, setting, reviewing and collecting rents annually
- b. Managing the waiting list, signing up new tenants
- c. Policing sites e.g. non-cultivation, vandalism, tenant disputes
- d. Maintaining vacant plots
- e. Paying for all outgoings e.g. water bill, insurance premiums
- f. Carrying out/commissioning and paying for all repairs to hedges, fences, gates, sheds, water supply
- g. Commissioning and paying for one off items of capital expenditure e.g. tree maintenance, new fences/gates etc., and drainage.

As for the concern raised, that no precedent has ever been set regarding this, it is noted that in recent years the council paid for the removal of a 25ft hedge/trees and a 40ft Horse Chestnut tree on the Gedding Road site according to one of the trustees.

After further investigation and subject to some clarification the Management agreement also states:

Financial management

10. Rents for each allotment site (Gedding Road and Rattlesden Road) should be the same.
11. Rents should be set at a level which makes the allotments self- financing, and which does not create a barrier to accessibility on financial grounds.
12. Any surplus generated by rents for the allotment and the other Parish lands should be held in the general parish reserve account, subject to an upper limit of £500. This surplus should be earmarked for costs resulting from the council's responsibility for maintaining and improving infrastructure on the allotment sites.
13. Any income above this limit should be made available to fund other Parish Council activities.
14. Annual water costs will be payable by all allotment holders, and calculated per 125m² - equivalent to one half a National Standard allotment plot or smaller.

Therefore within reason, some of the £500 plus any surplus, could be made available to deal with the request for a contribution towards the maintenance of the trees, which Councillor Holborn has confirmed will require a budget of £500 to cover the cost of work to the Oak tree and a provisional sum of £150 be set aside for the Ash.

In preparation for the budgeting meeting, I am finalising a review of rents and terms and conditions in line with reports published by other authorities and will submit my findings and recommendations at a future meeting.

There is one vacant plot on Rattlesden Road currently being used as a tree nursery for the parish with nobody on the waiting list and one person on the waiting list for a plot on Gedding Road.

The Annual return for the Charities commission has been submitted for year ending April 19 and acknowledgement received.

Prepared by Cllr Edmondson

20th September 2019