

**Minutes of the Meeting of the
Playing Fields, Allotments and Amenities Committee
held on Wednesday 13th March 2024 - 7pm at Diamond Jubilee Lodge**

Present: Cllr D. Maidstone (Chairman)
Cllr N. Barker
Cllr D. Fahy
Cllr S. Gurney
Cllr M Hicks

Also in Attendance:

Mrs F LeBon (Clerk), Mr K Sage (Facilities Manager) and 3 members of the public

The Chairman welcomed all to the meeting and read out the rules relating to openness and transparency.

1. Apologies and acceptance for absence

Apologies were received from Cllr Lowthorpe.

2. Declarations of Interest and Dispensations

Cllr Gurney declared a non-pecuniary interest in the community apiary.

3. Approval of the Minutes from 19th October 2023

The draft Minutes had been circulated from the meeting of 19th October 2023. These were **AGREED** after a proposal from Cllr Barker and a second from Cllr Hicks.

4. Public Participation

A member of the public spoke about the benefits of community gardens and the desire of Hellesdon Horticultural Association to create such a project in Hellesdon. Use of plot 19 on the allotment site had been identified as a potential site for such a project.

Members took the opportunity to ask questions of the member of the public to establish whether the allotment site would be the most appropriate area for such a project, given access requirements, security and the allocation of fees and other costs associated with an allotment plot.

Cllr Gurney had made enquiries of the asset management team at Broadland Council and made suggestions of land in the parish owned by Broadland Council that may be more appropriate for such a project.

A query was made of the car park extension at the allotment site. The Clerk advised that planning permission had been given, arrangements just had to be made with the grounds team for installation.

5. Allotment Site

a. To Consider Parishioner Correspondence with Regards to a Community Garden at the Bush Road Allotment Site

Correspondence from a member of the public had been circulated to members about the benefits of a community garden. Discussions occurred about allotments and community gardens being completely different types of community project and whether a community garden would be best sited elsewhere in the parish as opposed to the allotment site. Mountfield Park was discussed but concerns were raised about parking and accessibility.

Alternative sites under the ownership of other local authorities and under private ownership were suggested.

Standing Orders were Suspended to Allow for Further Public Participation

A member of the public confirmed that the RHS is doing a campaign to increase the number of community gardens. They can be used for multiple purposes, including growing fruit and vegetables, flowers and herbs. It would be preferred if there was some land available that could be locked at night for added security. There would be a club for the community garden that the Horticultural Association would run to ensure that numbers are limited.

A member of the public raised concerns about the naming of the project a community garden, if not all the community had access to it.

Standing Orders Were Resumed and the Meeting went back into Session

It was **AGREED** that the Parish Council was supportive of a community garden in principle. But it is imperative that all site options were reviewed, particularly those suggested by Cllr Gurney, as concerns had been raised with the siting of a community garden at the allotment site. Cllr Maidstone would be happy to assist the group in looking at areas of land.

b. To Consider whether sale of Honey is Permissible

The Clerk provided a report detailing that under the Allotments Act 1922 (s22) and allotment garden is defined as an area which ‘is wholly or mainly cultivated by the occupier for the production of vegetable or fruit crops for consumption by himself or his family’. It is this definition that leads industry experts, in the form of Paul Clayton to recommend a ‘general prohibition on any “trade or business” being conducted on the allotment garden or any part thereof’. This filters through into the lease that the Parish Council holds on the land, and subsequently the allotment tenancy rules of not allowing use of the plot to carry out any business or grow produce for sale.

Cllr Gurney advised that due to a change in circumstances, she would not be able to continue keeping the bees in the apiary. She will continue to check on the hives to see if the bees have survived the winter.

It was **AGREED** that honey would not be sold from the apiary and that it would be a future agenda item to determine the future used of the apiary.

c. To Agree Split of £200 grant between Community Apiary and Allotment Site

The Clerk reported that, upon suggestion from Broadland Council, a grant application was made to the Veolia Sustainability Fund, primarily for stocking the Community Fridge. To pad out the grant, extra funds were included to supply the apiary, and also for a contribution to the allotments so that these areas of the parish could help with the supply of the community fridge with excess stock. Veolia has advised that the purchase of food to stock the community fridge is not in line with their grant, but they

have awarded the Parish Council £200 to be split between the apiary and the allotments, on the grounds that contributions are made to supply the community fridge.

It was **AGREED** after a proposal from Cllr Maidstone and a second from Cllr Gurney that an interim split of £100 would be made to the allotments and the remaining £100 held over until the future of the apiary was established.

The Clerk will liaise with Haha over contributions to the community fridge, ensuring that there is an understanding that the growing season can be extremely variable.

6. Parks

a) To Receive Report into Recent Issues with Park opening / Closing and to Consider Options

The Clerk provided a report about recent incidents of the parks not being unlocked. One matter had been escalated to the Parish Council's contractor and was being dealt with as part of their internal processes.

There were two reported incidents of parks being closed during the day when the Parish Council was due to be responsible for opening the gates. Members of staff had been spoken to and on both occasions advised that the gates had been unlocked as part of the routine unlocking process. With concerns about unauthorised keys it was **AGREED** that the locks from Mountfield Park and, where possible, Meadow Way be removed from site when the gates are open.

It was reported that, due to increased pressure from members of the public, the Parish Council consider leaving the parks unlocked. The Clerk advised that the Parish Council has a duty under s17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998, to give due regard to the likely effect of the exercise of its functions on, and the need to do all that it reasonably can to prevent, crime and disorder in its area (including anti-social and other behaviour adversely affecting the local environment). The police had been informally consulted on their initial thoughts and had advised that there were noticeable benefits of closing the parks to prevent antisocial behaviour especially during the hours of darkness and cited that in summer an increase of antisocial behaviour at Cottinghams Park because of it being open with no gates / fences to prevent congregation for antisocial behaviour. The police had suggested a compromise of an extension of time. This was already covered in the summer opening hours, and unfortunately could not be accommodated in the winter due to the increased risk to the caretakers as a result of lone working in the dark.

There was also a risk of increased dog fouling in the parks when dogs are let off their leads in darkness and owners cannot see when the dog is fouling.

It was **AGREED** that the park opening times should remain as they are.

7. Items for the Next Agenda

Future use of community apiary.

Update on any further issues with park opening.

8. To Confirm Date, Time and Venue of the Next Meeting

To be agreed.

MEETING CLOSED AT 8.40pm