

A meeting of the allotments committee was held at

**The Fellowship Hall,
West Street, Yarm TS15 9BT**

Date & Time: 3pm

Thursday, 16th March 2023

Members of the public were invited to
attend the meeting

**In line with government guidance
as regards COVID at the time**

Juliet Johnson, Proper Officer to YTC



Yarm Town Council
Town Hall
High Street
Yarm
TS15 9AH

In accordance with the Openness of Local Government Bodies Regulations 2014, photographing, recording, broadcasting or transmitting the proceedings of a meeting by any means is permitted; the Chair will notify those present of this at the start of the meeting and ask whether they agree to be filmed, recorded or photographed

Allotments Committee

MINUTES

PRESENT (Allotments Committee - Yarm Town Council):

Cllr John Coulson (Chair)

Cllr Philip Addison

Cllr Chris Neil

Town Clerk - Juliet Johnson

PRESENT members of the public - Yarm Community Allotment Association, YCAA: Mike Raper (Chair); Paddy Pearce (Treasurer); Mike Curno (Member)

1. **Apologies for absence** - N/A re YTC Councillors
2. **Code of Conduct | Declaration of Interest | Dispensation:**
 - a) To record declarations of interest from members of any item to be discussed
 - b) To consider, vote upon and record any requests for dispensation
- 2.1 No declarations of interest were received or requests for dispensation.

3. Matters arising from the previous meeting:

3.1 Proposal for water services expert to review placement and quantity of taps (Worsall Rd. Allotments).

Cllr Addison reported that a number of companies had been contacted by the Clerk and only one had responded to date saying that they could not cover this. The Clerk confirmed 4 companies (water engineers, serving farming etc) had been contacted and that companies that service nurseries might be contacted.

ACTION: **Clerk** to make arrangements with water company to comprehensively review (not visit without warning with neither Yarm Community Allotments(YCAA) or YTC in attendance, as had been the case in the past).

With the exception of any item identified above as containing exempt or confidential information under the Local Government Act 1972 – section 100A(4), members of the public (other than those prohibited from doing so) are entitled to attend this meeting and/or have access to the agenda

ACTION: Cllr Coulson to contact nurseries about water engineers they use.

3.2 Proposal to purchase groundsheets for temporarily covering any allotment becoming vacant/abandoned/unattended for any reason (weed prevention & consequent cost reduction)

The Clerk reported that this had now been ordered based on previous conversation with YCAA (@£66) and would arrive 17.03.23). YCAA commented that a different product had now been identified as preferable and gave specification.

ACTION: Clerk to re-order and request different product / exchange for delivery.

3.3 Use of Pesticides: clarification within rules & regs. & for maintenance

YCAA (P.Pearce) went through how, when, where and what was used - correction was made that the discussion was about herbicides not pesticides; of particular note is that other solutions are generally used by YCAA with herbicide used only once/twice a year when absolutely necessary. The Clerk raised the issue of use of masks and some suggestion that training advice (shared by a grounds worker) had been that cloth masks could capture/absorb and therefore exacerbate inhalation of product (so masks should not be cloth).

ACTION: Clerk & YCAA to check the advice regarding use of masks.

ACTION: Clerk to write up the 'proper use & safe handling' discussed as an addition for the Allotment Regulations (to be approved at a future Ordinary YTC).

3.4 Purchase of generator for Worsall Rd. Allotments (no power)

YCAA (M.Raper - Chair) now felt that the cost of this might better be contributed to any move to address water / plumbing i.e. if new channels are to be dug then overall costs could be reduced by joining mains electricity at the same time. Discussion was held as regards how costly this would be and potentially not affordable currently. The issue of having electricity was also linked to lights for the footpath through Worsall Rd Allotments, the idea being to put 4 on one central post to cover all angles (part of this suggestion being to also counter any ASB that occurred).

ACTION: YCAA and Clerk to look further into lighting for Worsall Rd - consultation with Ward Cllrs/SBC (as lighting would be a principal authority issue), including establishing the status of the pathway through.

3.5 Proposal as regards former allotment holder & previous suggestion for an allotment award/show

YCAA will lead on structuring this. The Clerk now has the cups and trophies from previous shows. Mr Curno (YCAA) will contact an allotment holder whose father runs a major nursery (e.g. to assist / act as independent judge).

(Other Matters Arising: Proposal for giving a vote to Yarm Community Allotments Association on YTC Allotments Committee; height & nature of perimeter fences - discussion re. rules and regulations, in consultation with YCAA).

Other Matters Arising: the question of a vote for YCAA was carried forward for time for further research to add to what the Clerk had already presented at a previous council meeting (at the request of a Councillor).

ACTION: a meeting to be convened in the future to refresh the Allotment Rules and Regs - YTC with YCAA input.

4. Items of Business:

4.1 Update from Yarm Community Allotment Association

4.1.1 YCAA (P.Pearce) gave an update as regards their voluntary work in running the allotments in partnership with YTC. Nearly all allotment holders are members of YCAA (current NAA certificate states 94, but there are a few additions). Once a month, an increasingly well attended social is held (Bacon Butty Sundays) at Brickyard allotments; members of

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both allotment sites are invited and attend (bringing together members of both sites for the 1st time). This has contributed to the really good atmosphere and ambience at Yarm allotments currently; a number of good friendships have developed from this along with a spirit of cooperation. There is a rota amongst YCAA for members who now run the shop, maintain, equip and clean the Brickyard Allotment hut and toilets. The orchard has now been cleared of much overgrowth, along with the front entrance way (previously attended to and replanted) along with the cemetery wall weed clearance which is a work in progress. The YCAA Facebook page is popular, still growing, and aids communications on all of the above and more. The Beekeeper at Brickyard Allotments has a child sized beekeeper suit and has offered to show children the beekeeping that takes place.

4.1.2 YCAA estimate that voluntary hours spent in helping to run the allotments totals 324 hours over the past 2 year period, saving YTC several thousands of pounds (over £3k based on national living minimum wage)

4.1.3 Cllr Coulson, as Chair, proposed a vote of thanks to YCAA for all their work, bringing together both allotment sites and achieving a notable harmonious atmosphere. **Cllr Addison** commented that the decision for YCAA to share in management of the allotments had proved a great success and that he was personally dismayed at any Councillor/person trying to undermine this.

4.2 Update on Tenancies & Waiting List

4.2.1 The Clerk reported that there were currently 97 tenants on 100 plots (with 1 vacant plot at Worsall Road). There are approximately 22/23 people on the waiting list across both plot locations. At least 2 haven't responded re. the offer of the vacant plot so have been dropped to the end of the waiting list and after a further follow-up call will be removed. In relation to current management of plot issues, there are 2 letters/issues re Brickyard currently being managed and 1 at Worsall. The Clerk confirmed that letters (which follow NAA guidance) come out from YTC but confirm that the contents are in full agreement with YCAA.

Letters are also being sent to the tenants concerned as regards the shed nearest the plots for people with a mobility challenge - this shed needs to be demolished (deemed as beyond repair by YTC & YCAA). This letter has been delayed due to illness for one tenant it related to so that proper consideration could be given and consultation take place.

It was confirmed by YCAA that an allotment holder wishes to give up half of a plot to make a 2nd allotment.

ACTION: Clerk to contact allotment holder and agree division of the plot formally.

4.2.2 An Environmental Health Officer (EHO) made a spot check of poultry keeping and met with the Clerk. The EHO confirmed that the provision made at one location for poultry keeping is not the minimum standard required. A letter was sent to this effect and a second letter will be sent to confirm receipt and stating that permission would now need to be sought (with specification of poultry accommodation to be installed) before poultry could be kept on this allotment again. The EHO was very complimentary about another poultry area she inspected, particularly in the context of bird flu; these positive comments have been fed back to the allotment holders in question.

Discussion was held as regards a request from an allotment tenant to keep running ducks (on the basis these are very different to other ducks which are not allowed). The meeting felt that this could not be considered as the current Rules and Regulations are clear that ducks are not allowed.

ACTION: Clerk to re-confirm current position to tenant.

There has also been a complaint regarding cockerel noise (coming from the allotments). Cockerels are no longer allowed on allotments (nationally). This has now been dealt with - the cockerel came in with some very young birds accidentally and could not be moved immediately it was identified due to bird flu restrictions.

4.2.3 The Clerk identified 3 tasks that need to be completed with YCAA: to scope the most important allotment expenditure this year in relation to the YTC budget available (£3k which includes provision for utilities); review of the Allotment Rules & Regulations (e.g. formalising the suggestion of probationary period for new tenants; use of herbicides and pesticides; creating a 'Transfers Waiting List'; establishing an aerial map that contains plot numbers, especially since subdivision of some plots) - all in the context of NAA guidance on various matters.

ACTION: Clerk to set up meeting(s) for the above.

4.3 Allotments Walkabout

The meeting discussed the proposed allotments walkabout. Concern was expressed about this appearing to be done in an intimidating/ oppressive way, people/Cllrs. with clipboards making superficial judgements about allotments without knowing the background as regards individual tenants/tenancies, the pattern over several years or current pertinent issues. It was suggested this had happened in the past and the meeting agreed that creating this kind of negative atmosphere/impression should be avoided & is damaging. The current continual management (observation of allotments and conversations with tenants) on a week in week out / continual basis (between YTC Clerk & YCAA) means that most issues are dealt with as they emerge - walkabouts can be included but do not replace the 'continual management' process. A walkabout should be a positive opportunity for the Allotments Committee to learn more / keep apace re. current issues and practice rather than intimidate.

AGREED: An allotment walkabout will be held with the Allotments Committee & a key representative from YCAA at the end of April (judged to be a good time, seasonally - i.e. state of cultivation / early growing).

4.4 2023 Skip Schedule - to agree timing & noting the available budget for '23 -'24

The Clerk noted that 2 skips per year are normally ordered for each allotment (usually April and October). None were ordered for last Autumn. A simple timetable is useful e.g. to establish ordering and approval at Council. YCAA concluded that, with limited budget available to YTC, they would let the Clerk know 'as and when' a skip is required. These would be advertised to tenants.

ACTION: YTC to ensure skip approval is on the next appropriate agenda.

Cllr Neil had to leave the meeting at this point (3.50pm). The meeting was no longer quorate so was closed and the remaining agenda items are to be carried forward to the next meeting or addressed as part of the Allotments Update at a YTC Ordinary meeting.

The meeting closed at 3.50 pm

[Remaining agenda items:

- | | | |
|------------|---|-----------------------|
| 4.5 | Demolition / Replacement of Shed (currently used by disabled tenants) | - Cllr Coulson |
| 4.6 | Perimeter wall between Brickyard Allotments and Yarm Cemetery Driveway: | |
| | a) weed clearance and b) repair/repointing to wall/railings | |
| 4.7 | Allotment Hut Usage (ensuring inclusivity whilst countering poor behaviour e.g. bullying, harassment and discrimination)] | - Cllr Coulson |