

HALLS AND GREEN SPACES COMMITTEE

Date: Monday 9th March 2020
Title: Allotments Update
Contact Officer: Operations and Estates Officer – John Hickman

BACKGROUND

The purpose of this is to update Councillors regarding the current position at the new West Witney Allotments at Windrush Place and the recent meeting between the Witney Allotment Association [WAA], Councillor Gwatkin and Council Officers.

Lakeside Allotment fencing.

These works have now been completed.

Complaint Regarding Large Structure Overshadowing Adjacent Property at Hailey Road

The Operations and Estates Officer an found to be a 6m x 3m polytunnel structures over 2.5m x 2m are not supposed to be constructed without WTC approval. There was also a second structure of the same size and type at Hailey Road both have been constructed recently. Consequently, he has asked the WAA why these structures had been built without WTC approval.

It appears the WAA had not been asking tenants to apply to construct structures on allotments and also tenants were not being made aware of the requirement to gain approval especially regarding structures over 2.5m x 2m

These items were discussed further at a meeting with Councillor Gwatkin and Officers noted below. It has been agreed that all tenants at all sites with structures over 2.5m x 2m will need to apply for retrospective approval.

It should be noted that the tenant at Hailey Road the complaint was raised about has now removed the cover from the polytunnel and has requested permission which has been granted permission by the WAA permission to contract a 2.5m x 2m polytunnel instead. The Operations and Estates Officer has asked if this is being constructed in the same place and

has pointed out to the WAA that this will still overshadow the neighbouring residential property somewhat.

A request for approval for the second oversized Polytunnel at Hailey Road has yet to be received the Operations and Estates Officer has asked what is happening in this case.

It should also be noted that Lakeside allotments have informed the Operations and Estates Officer that they have a number of oversized structures that all tenants are being informed to apply for retrospective approval.

Allotment Association Meeting with Councillor Gwatkin and Council Officers

Items discussed were,

- Lakeside tenants being individually responsible for their sheds.
- A form that tenants must use in future to request permission for the erection of sheds, glass houses or polytunnels with the requirement for approval to be gained from WTC for structures larger than 2.5m x 2m.
- Tenants that have already put up structures over 2.5m x 2m with out WTC consent to apply for retrospective approval from WTC.
- WTC to remove any structures over 2.5m x 2m that fail to get WTC Approval.
- Discussed Criteria that might be used to refused permission to construct a structure.
- Lakeside tenants that allotments abut the roadside/public footpath hedge be responsible for maintain the allotment side of the hedge, WTC would continue to maintain the top of the hedge and the road and footpath side.
- Trees grown on the allotment sites only be of nut bearing or fruiting type.
- Allotment association to state their case to WTC for removal of Silver Birch Trees planted at the Lakeside site outline how they purchase fruit/nut trees in replacement and produce a green plan for the entrance and central allotment area to encourage biodiversity and pollinating insects.
- Allotment association to take forward idea of group composting on all sites but starting initially at one site to see what lessons could be learnt before starting all sites.
- WTC if requested may be able to assist with shredding composting materials when sufficient was available if approached by the Allotment Association. (2 x trained works team members and WTC chipper/shredder as required to clear required compostable material shredding/chipping.
- WAA to carry out further research into suitable group composting systems.
- WAA would ask Council in the light of the usefulness of this meeting to consider calendaring bi-annual meetings in future to maintain the current good communications.

West Witney Allotments Windrush Place Witney

The section 106 specification stated that soil testing should be carried out on the allotment site. It transpires these works have not been done with only the initial site investigation works which indicated there was no contamination at the construction site

The Operations and Estates Officer has taken guidance from ERS Publica Group and has requested that soil sampling is carried out in 6 locations at the allotment site itself with specific contaminants that should be analysed for as suggested by ERS Publica Group. The Builders Project Manager has agreed to carry these soil tests out as long as the samples are acceptable WTC will take the allotments on with a target date of mid-April.

The Town Clerk is confirming if WTC are dealing directly with Persimmons Homes or if WTC are involved due to the Section106.

The Operations and Estates Officer is not able to commission the associated fencing access, parking works until after soil sampling and WTC's agreement to take on the allotments is made.

There will be a lot of other associated works to be carried out prior to the allotments being ready for use once in WTC possession also the allotments would not be able to be handed to the WAA until a new lease agreement is made.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

Having declared a Climate Change Emergency at its Council meeting on 26 June 2019 – with this in mind Councillors should have due regard to the environmental impact of any decisions they make with regard to its facilities and services it operates.

RISK

In decision making Councillors should give consideration to any risks to the Council and any action it can take to limit or negate its liability.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no direct financial implications arising from this report.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Member are invited to note the report and consider possible assistance with the shredding of larger composting materials at allotment sites.