

BRAA Meeting 10/08/23

Current unoccupied plots: 2

Current number of applicants awaiting a plot: 17

1)vermin – in particular rabbits – there have always been rabbits on the site (we think they live on railway banking) there are reports of damage and loss of plants and evidence of the presence of rabbits practically all over the site - the lower allotments are nearly all fenced and netted but the upper allotments are not – there is evidence of rabbit presence on the town side upper carpark – plots at the town side have suffered borrowing damage and loss (plot 38 as an example) - the netting on the town side road gate is damaged and needs replacing – what is the vermin controller doing about the rabbits?

Skipton Town Council are unable to use vermin control for the rabbits on this site as their burrows are on the railway banking and so we are not permitted to conduct any control measures. The cost of having the whole site fenced with L shaped fencing would be in the region of £15,000 which we do not have the funds for. Having spoken to our Chief Officer about this, it is up to each individual tenant to rabbit proof their own plot if desired. The netting on the gate will be repaired.

2)car parks – as previously discussed the carparks are in a bad state and need clearing and scraping – reports regarding the bypass side lower car park being flooded and wet making it slippery and difficult for those less able – piles of poor-quality woodchip on carparks reducing parking spaces/smelling foul/attracting vermin/being fire hazard – when will the council use the new tractor and attachments to improve matters?

In Autumn, Mark & Dale will be sorting the wood chip piles to create some additional space. Unfortunately, STC are currently unable to source hardcore for these areas. This will be re-visited in the future. BRAA have agreed with the U3A volunteer group that they will double park their cars when visiting to help with the issue. The main car park needing attention is the one located on the lower far side.

3)fly-tipping – reports of fly-tipping of rubbish on by-pass side lower car park – tenants have put up signs but can the council please put-up official signs on all carparks that all rubbish should be removed by the producer?

Signs have been made and will be implemented as soon as possible.

4)selling produce - further clarification of rules required – evidence exists of tenants advertising and selling produce to the public on and off site – members loath to report individuals as fearing retribution – please confirm that the rules apply to all, and can the council remind all tenants about the constraints about disposal of ‘surplus produce’? (Items 4, 5, 6(d) of tenancy agreement)

The same terms are still in the tenancy agreement as discussed in our last meeting. We will make some signs to outline this. Confidential reports of such activity can be made to the town council who can then act on this.

5)expenditure on allotments by the council – details requested by members covering the last year (2022/2023) and the current year (2023/2024) to date – can this be supplied as a total and then Broughton Road separately?

More notice for such request would be required to allow time to collate this information. The Councils finances are made public at each quarterly finance Committee meeting. The requested information can be provided to BRAA at this point also.

6)plot sizes – there is still disquiet about the council’s rental charge for allotments of vastly differing sizes and the decision to accept/ignore and enforce the results of the measurement and staff recommendations especially regarding small approaching half size allotments i.e., those near 100M2 previously classed as half-plots and now designated full size plots. Before rents are set for the forthcoming year would it be possible for the appropriate councillors are asked to reconsider rental charging policy and to accept representations, at a specific meeting and not confined to 3 minutes, made by tenants and the associations?

Any complaints received from tenants regarding this decision will be discussed at the next Public Services Committee in September.

7)rental history – anecdotally taking comparisons with neighbouring authorities in connection with 5) above members have requested a history of plot sizes and rents charged for the past 20 years when could this be produced?

Research has already been conducted with other neighbouring town councils prior to this decision been made. Other local Town Councils have decided to increase all allotment rents year on year (YOY) by standard CPI (Ilkley Town Council) and 9% (NYC formerly CDC). STC have decided not to implement an overall increase and to leave rents at the same price despite inflation. We are simply bringing plot pricing in line with relevant garden size measurements, of which there are only 10 plots affected at this site.

We can provide allotment rental rates for the previous 6 years as following auditing guidance, this is the maximum period finance files should be retained.

We will be looking to implement each plot area measurement into next year’s individual tenancy agreements.

8)vacant and un-cultivated plots – comments made about plots not being tended allowing weeds to spread and providing homes for vermin (mice/rats/rabbits) – what is the position regarding letting plots, the number vacant, the waiting list and tackling those who are not cultivating without reasonable excuse?

Our allotment inspection process remains the same. We have just switched to electronic reporting for our inspections which we are learning as we go. August inspections have now been completed; we are just in the process of collating information on the new software before cultivation letters are issued. We are currently looking into other methods of allotment cultivation on relinquishment that will be discussed at the next PSC meeting.

Vacant plots are given out on applicant viewings. We have received a few further plots back but over the last few months but have managed to re-let these through third parties.

It was also raised that not every plot has a water butt / IBC. This is something we will look at discussing at the next PSC.

9)there is a bin at town side entrance to Broughton Road site next to dog poo bags dispenser which is full please can this be emptied? (I do not know who put is there and have doubts about whether it is required)

This bin will be removed from site.

10) would it be possible to provide a 'marriage bureau' between those struggling with their allotment and those on waiting list – the idea being to keep existing plot holders, many of whom have been in place for many years, with those who want to start out on the allotment route and for whom an overgrown dilapidated allotment would prove over-whelming – keeping allotments in good order and reducing waiting list – just an idea to discuss

It is a strategy that can be presented to the councillors at the next PSC.

It would also be an ideal opportunity for the allotment association to offer assistance to the allotment community in these instances. BRAA do not feel this would be possible due to limited resources and manpower.

11) Livestock Tags

Will be discussed at the next PSC meeting on 21st September.

12) BR05 Update

Has the building work of the patio, sheds and green house now been completed?

The second shed has now been felted and is waiting to be painted when the weather is dry. The patio is also complete.

13) BRAA Members

How many members does the BRAA currently have?

32 members currently.

14) Association Community Engagement

What are BRAA plans over the next 12 months to work with local community groups?

Currently looking into working with Men's shed, U3A and Incredible Edibles.

15) Allotment Community Events

What events does the association have planned for the allotment community over the summer and Autumn months?

BRAA currently have a coffee morning planned for September and a garden jumble sale for donations at the end of October.

Next quarterly meeting date suggestion – Thursday 16th November at 10am.