

**WALBERSWICK PARISH COUNCIL**

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**REPORT**

**Date:** November 2018

**Topic:** Walberswick Parish Council Allotments

**Author:** Clerk

**Introduction**

A villager has managed and collected rents on the allotments on a voluntary basis for many years particularly during the period when the Council had difficulty retaining a Clerk. He and the Clerk have now worked together to hand over management to Council. On 26<sup>th</sup> October the villager and the Clerk met on site, read the water meter and inspected individual plots to survey the condition and to hand over responsibility for the collection of rents to the Clerk.

**Geography of the allotments**

The allotment is situated behind the Village Hall and is accessed via a track on the seaward side of the Anchor pub. This track is bordered on the pub side by a footpath which has been encroached by planting along the side of the pub. There is limited parking for vehicles part way down the plot on the left and the footpath at this point is obliterated by an overgrown, derelict hedge. Another small parking area is provided on the far end of the plots by Richard Kett who rents a plot for this purpose.

The plots were originally divided into strips running at right angles to the sea, each strip divided into four, at a later stage these have been subdivided and now total 34 plots held by 20 holders. Once an open site that could be accessed by a tractor and implements for ease of cultivation the plots have had to be individually fenced since the return of a rabbit population. Without mechanised work the full plots became too large for people's needs and each of the original strips have become subdivided into 4 plots although these were created to suit individual need rather than accurate quarters. At present there is no vehicular access to some of the plots.

Water is provided via a meter which draws from the supply to the campsite by permission of the owner. The water meter is on the right of the track opposite the car park and marked by a grey plastic pipe. The manhole in which it sits is deep and fills with soil, it requires a torch, a trowel to scrape away soil to uncover the meter and requires lying flat on the ground to reach deep inside to be able to see the figures on the meter.

**Condition of the Plots**

Many plots are well tended and enthusiastically farmed. Several tenants pay rent but do not tend/farm their plots. The Village Hall rents Plot 11c & d as a half plot as extra land for events. The rear of this plot is heavily overgrown with bramble. Brambles have also overgrown Plots 1a, 2a and 3a. Plots 1c and 2c are overgrown and these combine to encourage rabbit and even muntjac deer. Plots 9d and 10d contain a dilapidated greenhouse and a pile of rubbish including polycarbonate

sheets and wire. Plots 1d,2d,3d and 4d are used for pig rearing for part of the year. Plot 5d is covered with a large fruit cage but this is over grown.

### **Rents**

At present the plots are charged at £6.00 per quarter plot and £8.00 for half plots and one large plot at £10.00 at 5a.

Additionally, water is available to some plots and is charged by dividing the total water by the plots supplied using the domestic water charge rate.

Two new tenants have rented plots 3c and 4c recently and these will not be charged until next year to recompense for the work they have had to do to clear the areas.

The Blois estate has doubled the WPC rent for the allotment field from £125.00 per year to £250.00 from 1<sup>st</sup> October 2018.

### **RECOMMENDED ACTION**

1. The Clerk needs to take over responsibility for invoicing and collecting rents and has already begun to do so. The Council and village are highly appreciative of all the work that the villager has done to keep the Allotments operating.
2. Parts of the site are derelict and provide a haven for vermin and an eyesore. Brambles, vermin and weeds spread from these neglected sites to other well-tended plots. It is recommended that the Clerk contact holders of neglected plots to remind them of their responsibility to maintain their allotment. A deadline for 1<sup>st</sup> April 2019 should be set for each plot to be cleared. Vacating tenants should be required to return their plot in good order.
3. New rents need to be assessed to reflect the increased rent being charged by the landowner and any other relevant considerations.

### **CURRENT RECEIPTS/PAYMENTS**

2018 Rent from allotment holders £212.00 to be invoiced

Water - £54.00 to be charged to tenants for £51.15 to be paid to the supplier

Rent to Blois Farms 2018

£62.50 1<sup>st</sup> April and £125.00 1<sup>st</sup> October (£187.50) Rent 2019 1<sup>st</sup> April 125.00 and 1<sup>st</sup> October 125.00

### **Recommended rent for 2019**

Quarter plot increase from £6 to £7

Half plots £8 to £10

The larger single plot from £10 to £14

This will create an income for the year of £263.00 (providing all tenants continue). Water used will continue to be charged in addition to rent. If any tenant vacates their plot without clearing it, WPC should invoice the tenant for the costs as s/he would be in breach of the Allotment Agreement which requires tenants to keep the plots in good condition.

END