

HONITON TOWN COUNCIL
ALLOTMENTS WORKING GROUP

Notes of Zoom Meeting on Friday 5th February 2021 at 2.30pm

Present: Cllr Roy Coombs, Cllr John Taylor, Cllr P Carrigan, Cllr J McNally, T Darrant, Heloise Marlow

1. Representatives on the WG.

Terry Darrant was appointed Chair of the Working Group with Cllr Coombs appointed Deputy Chair.

The following was discussed:

- Having MOPs on the working group was agreed in principle.
- MOPs however should be a minority group v Cllrs.
- Members of any Allotment Committee should be able to join.
- Only MOPs with relevant expertise should be invited.
- The Deputy Clerk would review the TORs previously agreed.

2. Contract commencement.

The Deputy Clerk confirmed that she had spoken with Martin Banks (Contractor) and he was available for a site meeting between 23rd and 26th February.

Cllr Taylor suggested the new gate way up the hill so that the cattle can go between the two fields and building the fence are essential – need to take out the brambles and cut down the hedges before the birds start nesting. JT and Carl could go out next week and cut down brambles as HTC does have the appropriate equipment, apart from leg protectors which would have to be obtained. HM to discuss with SH.

RC requested that the likely presence of hedgehogs and dormice be considered.

HM to arrange a site meeting with Banks Construction on the 23rd February – am.

Martin Banks has advised HM that he does not issue contracts for works – the acceptance of the tender is the contract. Members to consider whether they want a more formal contract with Banks Construction as if so, HTC would have to draft this.

MB has also requested payment in 3 stages – at the start, ½ way through the work and at the end. Members discussed a possible 5% retention for 3 months.

It was proposed that an agreement be drafted setting out terms and stage payment terms based on the schedule of works which both parties could agree.

Agreement to have a start date and a completion date. Allotments holders would want to get onto the site by October – it was agreed that this does give the time for the work to be completed.

RC suggested obtaining the DCC design kit for the footbridge to provide to MB.

JT suggested that the priorities are field gate and footpath.

A letter needs to be sent to those on the waiting list with the 1st 30 offered plots.

Members discussed Buzz who has been living on the verge just up from the entrance to the allotment site. It was considered that he is sufficiently far away from the entrance site and the part of the hedge to be removed not to cause an issue, but he may decide to move on himself. HTC may at some point need to speak with him to advise him of the works proposed. All agreed that the matter needed to be dealt with sensitively.

3. Site supervision and approval.

It was agreed that MB should not need too much supervision, but that HTC should appoint a lead Cllr for the project to liaise with MB and the rest of the Council. There is no need for a third-party project manager. That Cllr/Member of the WG would visit site regularly and then report back to Council and check the work has been done according to the specification before stage payments are made.

4. Communications/PR

It was agreed that a Press release be issued to advise of progress especially as the funding has now been secured with EDDC. As regards communication throughout the build to keep MOPs informed, it was proposed that this be managed by SH/HM using HTC Facebook page and website. Photos can be posted regularly. Initial PR first and then regular updates.

Members were wary of additional persons thinking they will get a plot when we already had a long waiting list, and it was agreed that the PR needed to manage this.

RC has been approached by Tim Dixon, on behalf of the Midweek Herald for an update re the allotments. He read out the emails and confirmed that he would provide HM with copies. It was agreed that if the press contact any member of the WG in the future they should be asked to contact the office.

5. Notification to those on the Waiting List.

It was agreed that the 1st 30 on the list would be offered plots and depending on their response, a further offer would be made to the next 10? It was agreed to include an offer of ¼ plots to see if more plots could be made.

Members discussed offering 1 plot to be allocated to Littletown school or scouts? JT has bought a lot of forks – HTC could give these to the school or scouts – 1 plot for them to share? Need a lock up for equipment? Members queried whether the school pupils would be too young and the site too far from the school,

Should a plot be offered to any Community groups eg Vegbank? Would this be at the detriment of individuals who have waited for years and therefore be unfair?

Tenancy agreements would need to be drafted for each allotment holder – to include a death clause if the plot holder dies so that the plot reverts back to HTC.

6. Ongoing allotment/garden plot management function, options and costs.

WG needs to put together a proposal re management of the site, who will manage, the cost of each allotment, whether there is an Allotment Association, and review the costs of the allotment site to HTC.

Members discussed whether to have an Allotments Warden, non-cultivation clauses to be included in the tenancy agreements and whether to charge in line with other allotments locally.

HM to review the water supply/pipe work with JL from Combe Estates.

Model agreements from the 2 Allotment Associations of which HTC is a member to be reviewed. Due to the site costs, HTC may need to charge more than other sites locally. Should HTC put money aside in the budget for more land to provide additional allotments in the future in view of demand?

The WG will need to do a cost v income analysis – work out the cost of the site and then use this to work out the price for allotments? Cost of the site will include rent £750 pa, water £200 pa, maintenance costs.

Any tenancy agreement should contain rent reviews.

Fencing/Security of the plots to be considered.

HM to check that Combe Estate have not raised a bill for water under the lease to date.

Proposed container – needs planning permission – MB needs to be told where it will be sited. HM to retrieve proposed site plan, prepare planning application and look at purchasing the container.

TD queried whether planning permission was required or whether it was permitted development. HM confirmed this had been checked with EDDC who advised that it required planning permission as the site was in AONB.

Sheds for allotments holders – TD to research the rules. Do they need pp? If HTC manage the site, no PP will be required? Should allotments holders be required to only have standard sheds as approved by HTC?

Insurance for the container and the site generally? Container to house HTC equipment
re Roundball Wood – currently at The Glen.

Heloise Marlow

Deputy Town Clerk

Honiton Town Council