

## **Allotments**

Over the past couple of years, work on the allotment sites has not been a priority for the Council due to other Facilities issues and subsequently, the impact of the pandemic. Allotment tenancy agreements were not renewed last April and again due to the pandemic, we did not undertake full site inspections last year.

During the past year, we have received a large number of enquiries from members of the public seeking an allotment plot and to notify us that some plots appear to be vacant/not cultivated. We currently have over 100 people on the waiting list.

We are keen to get back on track with the allotments and this month we will be issuing the tenancy agreements and collecting the rent due for 2020-21. Usually during this process, some people decide not to renew their tenancies and we reallocate plots to the next people on the waiting list.

### **Allotment Tenancy Renewal & Rent Collection**

The tenancy agreements and rent collection for period 1<sup>st</sup> April 2020 – 31<sup>st</sup> March 2021 would usually have been collected in April 2020 but will now be collected in January 2021.

The tenancy agreements and rent collection for period 1<sup>st</sup> April 2021 – 31<sup>st</sup> March 2022 would usually be collected in April 2021. Given the delay in issuing tenancies and collection of rent for the current financial year, Council need to consider if it would like to continue with the April 2021 date or select a different date for the collection of rent for next financial year.

### **Allotment Issue 1 requiring a decision:**

Historically, the Town Council has always given precedence to applicants living within the Town Council wards of Oldcastle, Newcastle and Morfa. People from outside the wards have been able to add their name to the waiting list and could be offered a plot if there are no residents within the wards waiting for a plot or ready to accept a plot at the time a vacant plot is available. The reason for the preference to people living within the wards is because the administration costs for the management of the allotment sites are covered by the precept levied to the local residents.

We have recently received communications from a member of the public who has informed us that he registered his name on the waiting list in 2016 for an allotment plot in Waunscil Allotment Site. He is frustrated that he is still on the list and has not been offered a plot.

The gentleman has advised that he lives 50 yards away from the Waunscil Allotment site, however he has been informed that as his address is within the Brackla electoral ward, not the BTC ward, we are unable to offer him a plot for a considerable time as we currently have over 60 residents from the BTC wards waiting for a plot.

The gentleman claims that when he joined the waiting list, the former Town Clerk told him that he could have an allotment when one became available but that he was never informed that priority was given to people living within the BTC wards. He states that although he has contacted the Council several times to enquire about the waiting list, he has never been told that he lived in the 'wrong ward'. He would now like to escalate this issue and would like to know if, given the length of time he has waited for a plot and his close proximity to the allotment site, if he can be allocated a plot soon?

The current acting BTC Facilities Manager has liaised with the gentleman several times and has explained that when he first applied to go on the waiting list, the list was not the length it is currently therefore there was a chance that he would be offered a plot. She also explained that interest in allotments has grown and the impact of the pandemic has seen a huge increase in registrations for the allotment waiting list from people living within the wards.

The Facilities Manager has since conducted further research and discovered that Welsh Government guidance indicates that if an allotment site is close to the border between local authority areas it should be accessible to people from either county:

<https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2018-05/allotments-and-community-led-gardening-guidance.pdf>

Council is requested to consider the current policy of priority to those living within the BTC wards and provide a decision on the individual matter described above.

#### **Allotment Issue 2 requiring a decision:**

Three allotment plots at the Coychurch Road allotment site are badly infected with the weed Mares Tail. For this reason, historically the Town Council has offered these allotment plots free of charge for a 3-year period to encourage people to take up the challenge of clearing and cultivating the allotment plots.

The three year rent free period for these plots has now passed, however due to the fact that the tenancy for these plots has changed several times and the weed has not been eradicated, the current tenant of plot 9 has enquired if they can still benefit from the rent free period?

Council is requested to provide a decision on the rent charge for plot 8,9 and 10 at Coychurch road allotment site for 2020-21 and 2021-22.

#### **Allotment Newsletter, Cultivation & Inspections and COVID-19 restrictions**

The Facilities Team are receiving many enquiries about allotments, skips, fires on allotments etc. therefore we have developed a newsletter in a bid to improve communication with tenants. Please see Allotment Newsletter attached for information.