

10th August 2021

GREAT WESTERN ALLOTMENT SITE VISIT

As agreed at the last Town Council meeting, Cllr. Alan Wathan and myself, along with the Facilities Team, met on site on Thurs. 29th July to assess matters relating to the joint fencing with 97A, Coity Road; and to discuss other allotment issues with various tenants.

We spent an hour on site and whilst the Facilities Team took notes of actions decided, I felt it was important to set out matters from the democratic perspective; and am copying this to Cllr. Wathan for his information and any further comment.

a) FENCING ISSUE WITH 97A, COITY ROAD

The current fencing between the above property and the allotment site was erected in 2011 and I took a lead involvement at the time so am well versed in the history.

We met the owner of 97A and fully inspected the fencing from both sides.

The majority of the fencing remains in good order so there is no question of a full replacement.

However, a couple of main posts are now 'rocking' when pushed and require attention.

It was agreed that BTC would seek a view from a professional fencing contractor as to the way forward and this action was welcomed by the houseowner.

This now needs to be actioned when possible.

b) GENERAL WEED/GRASS GROWTH AT VARIOUS SITE LOCATIONS

There are several locations throughout the entire site that BTC needs to address and I have sketched out a map (enclosed) to highlight those areas for attention.

Quotations need to be sought and our usual contractor (Rob Chumley) should be contacted along with any other contractors felt appropriate for this work to be completed by the end of September.

c) CLEARANCE OF DUMPING OF GREEN WASTE/CAR PARKING AREAS

Skip(s) need to be provided for tenants to fill with the debris currently around the site, including car parking areas.

Note: BTC staff are NOT expected to load skips.

Again, this clearance work needs to be completed by the end of September.

Such indiscriminate dumping will no longer be tolerated.

d) 'TATA SHED' - CURRENTLY OVERGROWN AND NOT AVAILABLE FOR GENERAL USE

Behind the main front area pylon, there is a shed donated in the distant past by Tata Steel for the use of all tenants.

Currently this is badly overgrown all around and not fit for use. Keyholding is extremely limited which is causing tensions with tenants and this has to be normalised so it truly becomes a communal shed.

At the time of the skip clear up, all the ivy and dross around the shed needs clearing and its future communal use assessed.

There is currently a disused toilet within but it is doubtful if this is properly connected to mains drains - and whether any sewerage charges are payable.

With a large site, there is no doubt toilet facilities would be hugely useful, but the finances need to be thoroughly assessed. This is a secondary priority at present and can be looked at next year.

e) DEMOCRATIC SITE REPRESENTATIVES FOR GWA

There is clearly a huge problem on this site with a stark clash of personalities and mistrust among tenants as to whether their general best interests are being served with their current representation. Almost Civil War!

For many years, former reps kept the peace on our most diverse site, but that harmony seems to have disintegrated in recent time.

It is therefore viewed as necessary to convene a general meeting of GWA tenants sometime in October to discuss matters of concern and to hold a new ballot for two reps and to be overseen by either Cllr. Wathan or myself as felt appropriate.

We cannot allow disharmony to fester at the site and this needs addressing.

f) GENERAL FUTURE OF ALL ALLOTMENT SITE INSPECTIONS

As indicated in my paper to the Planning Committee earlier this year, I expressed the view that the whole allotments situation had lost the 'democratic touch' of annual site inspections at which immediate decisions on issues noted could be taken without any need to bother full Council with them, which has recently become the norm.

Now that the Facilities Committee has been formed, I believe the annual site inspections should be re-instated from July 2022 to address immediate problems with Chairman & Vice of that committee dealing with any intermediate issues at other times of the year.

g) ANNUAL ALLOTMENTS COMPETITIONS

These were introduced during the previous Council cycle but have fallen into decline in recent years.

Consideration should be given to re-introducing this annual event.

h) DAINTON SITE

There is clearly a problem with growth alongside our fencing adjacent to the Dainton site and I have drafted a letter to be sent to Dainton in the hope they will respond and cut back their growth so it does not affect our site.

If they do not comply, it would be a matter for the Planning Committee to inspect the original planning conditions for the Dainton development and to make a formal approach to BCBC for legal action.

i) NOTES FROM TENANT - MICHAEL SCALES

This tenant handed me some e-mails and handwritten notes which I agreed to ask you to put on record. I have highlighted his main points in the paragraphs above.

Cllr. David Unwin
Chairman of Finance

NB: Apologies for there being no lower case ^{n'} i - it has just broken off and I cannot locate a way of replacement!!