

## **AMENITIES COMMITTEE – NOVEMBER 2020**

### **IVER HEATH ALLOTMENTS**

#### **1 INTRODUCTION**

There have been several issues at Iver Heath allotments over the previous 12 months some of which are believed to have been occurring for some time without reports being made to the council. In summary:

- Unpermitted work to make changes to the allotment gardens. This includes the erection of structures, the digging of drainage ditches and the storage of materials not related to allotment gardening
- Damage to trees
- Flooding of some plots
- Insufficient cultivation of plots tenanted
- Damage to allotment track
- Behaviour of tenants
- The import of large quantities of materials
- The placing of construction waste on site
- Deer ingress

The behaviour issues have been addressed and no new complaints have been received.

Site inspections by the clerk identified further issues:

- Drainage arrangements are unmaintained
- Asbestos on site (confirmed by testing)
- Dangerous trees
- Health and safety issues including uneven track beneath straw, unfenced hazards and a broken gate
- Lack of management and maintenance by Council

The tenants also report a water leak.

The purpose of this report is to update councillors on the work undertaken to date and the work still to be actioned.

#### **2 FLOODING AND DRAINAGE**

This is of concern. The drainage ditches have not been maintained and are overgrown, in the main, by brambles. It is considered a high possibility that the drainage ditch is blocked by debris either from the allotments or maybe fallen tree/s. As a priority, clearance work is being undertaken using a third party and machinery to drag out the brambles, chainsaw all fallen trees and branches and work a way as far as possible from the road to the river. The Grounds Team will assist with the debris and will later burn the brambles on site.

This work is considered urgent and has been ordered at a cost of £2150 for two days.

Once this work has been completed the Grounds Team programme of work will then include twice yearly clearance of all drainage ditches serving the site and water flow through the drainage system can be monitored.

### **3 TREES**

An inspection has identified urgent tree works to 2 willows. These works have been ordered at a cost of £360. The wood will be stacked on site

### **4 ASBESTOS ON SITE**

Testing has confirmed the presence of Chrysotile on an untenanted section of the allotment gardens. Due to a lack of maintenance and management this site has become severely overgrown and it is very unlikely that it will be tenanted again due to overhanging trees.

The area in which the asbestos is believed to be scattered is very overgrown and the asbestos was found above the soil in small pieces. After speaking with the nearby allotment holders it is believed that there is considerable asbestos below the ground surface.

The area is currently staked and roped off. Removal of the asbestos has been costed at:

- £1,890.00+vat, per day attended excluding consumables and items listed below
- Waste disposal: 1no. lorry up to 10ton, £1,150+vat, £425+vat per tonne
- Coveralls: £7.50+vat each
- Polythene: £65+vat per roll
- Bags: £2.50+vat each
- Tape: £8.50+vat per roll
- Excavator hire: £650+vat per week
- Excavator transport: £175+vat each way

It is proposed that we do not look to remove the asbestos and that we will fence this area and mark it as 'hazard – keep out'. A further proposal is that the owner of the straw pile be permitted to move the straw to the area that is to be fenced. This will provide an additional protective layer over the asbestos that can then be left to compost down over the years. When the contractor attends site for the drainage ditch work a quote for shifting the straw will be obtained; the Council will look to recharge the owner of the straw.

To give an indication of the volume of straw please see below:



## **6 WASTE**

The site has considerable waste throughout, mostly on abandoned plots. The management of the site is being tightened and the introduction of deposits to new tenancies will enable the council to recover clearance costs before the return of deposits following cessation of tenancies.

The allotment holders have offered to assist with the clearance of the waste and it is proposed to undertake an action day or two to clear the waste. This will require skip/s and attendance and monitoring of skip filling by the Grounds Team.

This clearance will take place over the winter months and will include the removal of construction site waste.

## **7 TRACK AND PATHWAYS**

The Grounds Team spent considerable time excavating the straw that was laid on the access track that obscured the uneven surface. This hidden hazard is heavily rutted and is a high risk of substantial injury through falls. When the contractor attends for the drainage clearance a quote will be obtained for scraping the track and making good the surface. The contractor will also be asked to quote for making good the open drainage channels that have been dug and that are hidden by vegetation.

The cost for this work is currently unknown

## **8 HEALTH AND SAFETY ISSUES**

The key issues are related to the asbestos, and the condition of the track and footway. However, there are also issues regarding the condition of the gateway including a lack of fencing at the side of the ditch 'bridge'. These issues will be dealt with over the winter months and will require a new gate.

**9 WATER**

Water meter readings have been taken weekly and indicate that there is no leak. This is contrary to the concerns of the allotment holders and might indicate that we have a natural spring rising to the surface near the entranceway. Water usage monitoring will continue to be undertaken.

**10 IMPROVEMENT PLAN**

The Amenities Committee is considering priorities for improvement as part of its strategic planning. The ongoing condition and operational issues will be considered in this programme

**11 RECOMMENDATIONS**

Councillors are requested to consider the issues highlighted within this report and the ongoing and proposed actions and highlight any additional actions to be taken or adjustments to actions that they would like to see made.

**For further information contact:**

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