

Cabinet to be asked to help residents continue to enjoy allotments

Published October 06, 2020 4.02pm

Councillors are being asked to approve the use of compulsory purchase powers to ensure residents can continue to enjoy tending to their allotments.

Councillors are being asked to approve the use of compulsory purchase powers to ensure residents can continue to enjoy tending to their allotments.

Our Cabinet is next week being recommended to agree to the making of a compulsory purchase order on behalf of Witton Gilbert Parish Council to ensure that allotments in the village remain available.

The Cabinet meeting on Wednesday 14 October will hear that the site has been rented by the parish council and sub-let to residents for use as allotments, something the land has been employed as since 1910.

Cabinet will meet virtually at 9.30am on Wednesday 14 October. Members of the public can view the meeting at [DCC on YouTube\(http://www.youtube.com/DurhamCouncil\)](http://www.youtube.com/DurhamCouncil).

Request to acquire land

All 47 plots are occupied and there is a waiting list, with the average time to secure an allotment being 14 months over the last six years. The number of plots increased to its current level following a sub-division of the site by the parish in response to demand.

In summer of last year the owners of the land served the parish with notice to quit the site by November of this year.

A report to the meeting tells Cabinet members how the parish has approached the county council and asked it to use its compulsory purchase powers to acquire the land on its behalf.

The site would transfer to the parish council should the purchase go through and that authority would be legally bound to meet the county council's costs in making the order.

The report to Cabinet sets out how the parish and county councils have sought to negotiate with the owner with a view to voluntarily acquiring the land. While there has been no resolution to date, attempts to negotiate continue.

Community need for allotments

Cabinet will hear that the county council is satisfied that there is a need for allotments in the vicinity of the land and that there are no suitable alternative sites which would be available.

Letters of support for the making of the order have been received from allotment holders and local primary school children.

One letter from a holder states: "During the depression and two world wars allotments were the saviour of many families and although people are better off now who knows what the future holds. It would be a disaster for Witton Gilbert if these gardens were to go. What price would you put on the value that our allotments bring to the village. They are irreplaceable."

Councillors are being asked to approve a series of recommendations including the making of the compulsory purchase order.

Health and social benefits

Cllr Kevin Shaw, our Cabinet member for strategic housing and assets, said: "Allotments have very real health and social benefits. They provide healthy food; reduce carbon emissions by cutting deliveries and shopping trips; and increase social interaction which helps

reduce loneliness. They also present educational opportunities for our children.

"In this case it is clear that there is genuine community desire for this land to continue to be used as allotments. As well as all 47 plots being in use, people have been on the waiting list an average of 14 months over the last six years.

"We have also received letters of support from allotment holders and school children for the making of the order which would safeguard a use which dates back more than a century."