

Minutes of open meeting on Friday 28th October 2011

Attendance as in register (26 people from 17 sites)

Apologies - Rose Chandler, Fabienne Matthews, Glenn West, Sylvia Cheater, Peter Mangan, Heather Jones.

1. Background to current situation

Dave Morris explained that the Fed was set up in 2003 to bring together allotment societies and had attracted 20 member sites as well as individuals from sites with no society. WFAS had worked with the Wirral Allotment Association and council on the allotment strategy, new tenancy agreement, and policies for bees & chickens on sites. There had been the appointment of an allotment development officer, significant new funding for site improvement, introduction of peppercorn rents for self-managed sites and the development of a new site. In this time new societies had set up, and more external funding had been obtained by societies.

However, in the last 12 months membership of the Fed had tailed off, and together with the disbanding of the Wirral Allotment Association this had left some sites isolated.

Tony Niblock informed the meeting that the council intends to organise meetings for site secretaries.

2. Do we want a Fed/Assoc for Wirral's Allotments?

Following a discussion it was proposed and agreed that there was a need for a body to represent everyone on all allotments - societies and individuals, as well as those on waiting lists for allotments.

3. What should its role be?

Following discussion it was agreed that its role should be to: strive to include all sites; bring together members; keep open lines of communication with the council; promote allotments; spread good practice and resources; be a forum for discussion.

It was suggested that WFAS writes to all site secretaries to invite them to open meetings.

4. Key issues facing Wirral Allotments in the future.

- rent increase - many councils have increased rents, some significantly, in recent years.
- water charges - the price of water has increased significantly in recent years and many councils are currently looking at charging sites directly.
- self-management - there is no policy of making all sites self-managed. Individual sites need to look at what money they pay to the council and what they get back in return, and work out if self-management is a better option for them.
- waiting lists

5. Membership

Agreed that fees continue - £5 per annum per site, or £1 for individuals on sites with no society.

6. Who is willing to serve on a Committee, be an officer of the Committee?

At the last committee meeting two members were co-opted - Glenn West (Thornton) and Sylvia Cheater (Newton Park) and interim officers had been appointed (Sylvia - Chair, Margaret Campbell - Sec, Ron Jones - Treasurer). All committee members would stand down at the next AGM and nominations would be invited for next year.

Those present at this meeting were asked to nominate 2 further interim committee members. Peter Tame nominated Lynn Goddard (Mosslands), Roger Merry nominated Angela Stewart-Hughes (Newton Park).

7. News from Sites

Wingate had received their new lease and noted that it was different from the Gilroy lease - Q; Should council not have consistency in its dealing with sites? Hilary will forward the new lease for information.

Harris has had an issue with CCTV. After being told that they did not need to be registered with DPA, have now been told that they must do this. This seems to be a change of interpretation rather than any change in law. Other sites with CCTV need to be aware that requirement may have changed for them too.

Recent council funding accessed for Gilroy for water to the site, Dawson for fencing, Harris for new gates.

Fairview has had lottery bid for £8k for fencing and gates.

8. Any other Business

Love Lane commented on the value of the society on their site, how it had brought people together to work to improve the site.

Wingate asked if self-managed sites secs would be invited to the site secretary meetings and was advised that they would only be for council-managed sites.

Fairview commented that the promised newsletters from the council were very infrequent (1 per year, approx).

9. Date of Next Meeting

Thurs 23rd Feb is a provisional date would depend on availability of new committee members.

Agreed that The Lauries Centre was easier to access but that air conditioning in the room was a problem for acoustics. Was there a room with a hearing loop?