

WIRRAL FEDERATION OF ALLOTMENT SOCIETIES
MEETING: Thursday 29 October 2009

1. Members present – as per register

2. Apologies - from David Earnshaw, Roger Calvert, Joy Hogg, John Rigby

3. Minutes of last meeting - agreed.

Matters arising - nothing heard about GQT, but since heard that it is coming to Wirral this month.

4. Treasurer's Update - current balance £373. Total of £215-220 paid out for Garden Organic visit.

5. Steering Group - Last met in August. Dave Morris presented outcome of his job. Found 93 disused plots on 14 sites that needed investigation by the council, and 12 sites which needed work on security.

- David Jones wrote to councillors at recent Scrutiny Committee meeting pointing out the need for investment in allotments, and was disappointed that they didn't seem to have read his letter.

- Gateway Review - **Stella brought PACSPE brief for staff - she will send it for circulation.** Briefly, plan is Report goes to Cabinet Nov 26th, process starts April 2010 and operational by April 2011. **At next meeting Fed will invite someone from NW with experience of effect of Gateway review on their allotment service.**

- Council allotment budget overspent by £35k, half way into financial year.

6. Strategy Document – Summary of progress on Action Plans attached

- Now 575 on waiting list + 70 at Hoylake.

- Discussion about confusion amongst site secretaries about who was administering waiting list, delay in allocating vacant plots. Point was made that council is short of 4 site secretaries.

7. Tenancy Agreement – Goes out 1/1/2010 for new tenants and 12 months notice for current tenants. Main changes: No carpets on plots. Clarification of reasons & notice of termination. 75% cultivation. Sheds etc must comply in size. New Tenants handbook published.

8. Coach Trip - agreed that Garden Organic trip had been a good place to visit and a successful day out.

9. Gardeners' Question Time - To be held in Wallasey in Nov - details distributed.

10. News from Sites - Ken Dowden has been involved with a local schools growing project and was recently awarded 2nd place in the NW region for his work.

Sandringham had £600 grant from Area Forum; Harris had new site secretary; Coronation £1500 from community Fund for raised beds; Ormonde recent break-in when very sharp knife was left behind. Many people commented that they now leave their sheds open or don't have sheds for this reason. Dawson have applied for grant for £1439, and recently started Smart Water initiative on their site.

11. Resignation of Chairman - David Jones said he was resigning for a number of reasons: The position had taken up more time than he had thought, he felt that little was improving despite this. He felt that Parks Officers were doing their best, but there was little interest at the level of Directors or Councillors.

- David thanked Granville for his continued commitment and hard work preparing for meetings.

- David will stay on the Self Management Working Group, Barbara Higson will take over the Police Liaison Group, and Rose Curtis the Steering Group.

- Temporary election of new Chairman - volunteers were requested. Barbara Higson will take the Chair until the next AGM, shadowed by Fabienne Matthews.

11. Any other Business

- Bees on allotments - council officers have stated they are not prepared to look at this issue.

- NSALG NW meeting details given.

- Southport show great success, team will have a more organised approach to requesting plants next time.

12. Date of Next Meeting - 18th February 2010

Update on Allotment Strategy Action Plan September 2009

Quality standard for sites

WFAS has produced an initial draft for a quality standard but there now needs to be discussion to finalise it. Suggest a small working group to meet with council officers.

Investigate the possibility of setting up an allotment Watch Scheme with partners.

Although we would encourage sites to do this, there is now also the Smartwater scheme and we have agreed to provide entrance signs for sites that introduce it.

Investigate the production of a guide for new tenants with partners

This was originally suggested by Barbara Higson who was keen to do the guide herself. There is already a lot of available information on this for new tenants but a guide would be useful to assist new tenants in where to find it. Would the Federation be willing to produce it as originally intended by Barbara?

Investigate a Green Gym and any similar initiatives with partners.

Following discussions with the Fed some time ago it was decided not to implement Green Gyms but to be aware that there may be future opportunities to promote the use of allotments as part of the health agenda.

Carry out a site survey for each allotment site

25% complete and looking to complete all sites by March 2010.

Review current allotment provision and identify future need

Completed as part of Open Space Assessment by strategic leisure (copy issued to David Jones) and partner work will be done on this as part of PPG17.

Review the problem caused by non - recyclable material generated on sites and the provision of skips.

The cost of providing skips and removing rubbish from allotment sites has increased significantly in recent years and is now costing significantly more than our budget (approx £7,000 overspent in 2008/2008). In future we will be looking to restrict the number of skips provided to keep within budget.

Carry out security audit

25% complete and looking to complete all sites by March 2010.

Carry out a survey to establish the type & cost of required toilet provision

This was intended to establish if a low cost, simple one size fits all toilet provision could be made but this is unlikely to be implemented by the council because of cost.

Allotment Development Officer

Application has been made to fill the post which is now being progressed. Hopefully the post will be advertised in Nov/Dec interviews late Dec/Jan and person in post Feb?March 2010. Interview process will be the same as before, involving the federation and Wirral Allotment Association.

Gateway Review - Report to Cabinet expected soon. Implementation by April 2011.