

WIRRAL FEDERATION OF ALLOTMENT SOCIETIES
MEETING: - Thursday 18th February 2010, 7.30pm

1. Members present - As per register

Guests - Dave Nicholls, Bob Moon, Jim Lester, Stella Joseph.

2. Apologies - David Earnshaw, Josie Sullivan, Lynne Goddard, David Jones

3. Minutes of last meeting - Slight amendment to wording suggested by Joyce Sumner. Otherwise agreed as a true record

- matters arising - Gardener's Question Time in Wallasey had been well attended and broadcast earlier in the year.

4. Treasurer's update / grants - Current balance is £538, including a grant of £128 from NSALG. The Federation had not received any further applications for grants.

5. Allotment watch - Dave Nicholls kindly came to give a short presentation with Fabienne Matthews. Sites would be visited to assess their priorities for security. Each site could be given Smart Water (and signs) free of charge, with the proviso that it be used for communal equipment stored securely in locked containers on the site. Otherwise individuals can buy Smart Water to mark their own goods on site and at home, for £15 from DN. Further options to consider are Allotment Watch and planting for security - DN left leaflets for these.

6. Guide for new tenants - WFAS will draw together links to existing guides and publish them on the website.

7. Strategy document – progress re 09 action plans - Site survey still to be done. Security audit completed for this year. Plotolders expressed frustration with inactivity of council over security, and asked that they be given access to the audit. Keith Jones mentioned problems with security had led to him being threatened by youths with knives on Newton Park site - FM and Stella Joseph said they would follow this up.

Jim Lester explained that WMBC were intending to make available £150k of capital funding over the next three years - with a view to addressing priority issues on existing sites.

JL also outlined Gateway Review process and explained that it was about who would carry out the day-to-day work on allotments and that actual service delivery would not change.

8. Tenancy agreement – issues from members - This has now gone out to most plotolders. All will sign it, but existing plotolders will have 12 months before new conditions are enforced.

9. Open Space Assessment - JL explained that this is a planning document which will form part of the Local Development Framework. The audit of current provision has been completed and is now progressing to an assessment of need, with

consultation via website, questionnaires and contact with stakeholder groups. The timeframe for this is very tight to fit in as much as possible with the current Core Strategy consultation.

10. Southport show - Roger Merry explained that WFAS will once again be organising the NSALG stand and garden, and would welcome contributions from sites. This will be formalised in the near future to streamline the task of growing and transporting plants.

11. Membership of Federation - Parts of the WFAS constitution were read out which confirmed that membership of the Federation is open to any member of an allotment society (plot holder or not), including societies representing those on the waiting list.

12. Role of Federation representatives - At a recent Steering Group meeting one of the Federation representatives had felt unable to represent the views of the Federation as this conflicted with a strongly held personal view. A solution was proposed and accepted by the committee that a replacement representative be appointed to the group.

13. Steering group / ADO - Bob Moon explained the council perspective on this: The main problems are neglect of sites and long waiting lists; the council would like to help allotments achieve a more sustainable future; the ADO had done a lot of good work and drawn out priorities for action; the council has allocated £150k to work on these priorities along with an attempt to embed £260k into the annual budget for You Decide; Community Asset Transfer is ongoing and includes efforts to build up self-management skills; Council needs to address the waiting lists. Lively discussion followed. Representatives from the site secretaries made it clear that they were against the appointment of an ADO, and the majority of the Federation members were clearly in favour of an ADO. Finally Jim Lester resolved the deadlock by saying that the council would consider the matter and arrive at its own conclusion about how best to proceed.

14. News from sites - Wingate had £940 Area Forum funding for equipment, Coronation Park £2467 from Your Wirral for topsoil, Love Lane £500 from Area Forum for container refurbishment and £1350 Your Wirral for equipment, Tollemache £1700 for resurfacing access road, Bebington Rd £5k from Awards for All for toilet and roadways.

15. Any other business

- Bees - Stella Joseph said that the council was now drafting a policy for bees on sites.
- Hoylake Allotment Society asked for volunteers to judge their site competition.
- FM went to NW Region NSALG meeting and explained that it had been interesting and useful and encouraged others to go.
- A suggestion was made that site secretaries reapply for the post every 3 years.

16. Date of next meeting - Friday 23rd April.