

Minutes of Allotments Working Group Meeting
Thursday 10th September 2009. 6.30pm Civic Centre

Present

Mike Armstrong (In Chair), Sue Stokel-Walker, Helen Raper, Louise Hetherington, Honor Cooper, John Tucker, Donald Robinson, Hugh Smith, Stu Gilhespy, Steven Coates, Peter Horrocks

Apologies

John J Brown, Peter Whewell

Minutes

Accepted as a true record

Matters Arising

A sub-group consisting of Hugh Smith, Peter Whewell and Sue Stokel-Walker will meet soon to finalise the questionnaire to be used to determine the demand in the city for allotment provision. The document will then be presented to the next working group by Lisa Grabham; she will also update on the dates her researchers will conduct the surveys.

No details are yet forthcoming as to the date of a meeting with the leader of the council and this group regarding the Denton Bank allotments problem. The fence at Chelmsford Grove will be complete by the end of this week. The Terriers department at the Civic will be chased up by SSW to try and determine the ownership of the two parcels of land discussed last month. The final version of the strategy will be sent via e-mail to all group members this week, SSW to arrange this. Four candidates will be interviewed this month for the Allotment Officer vacancy. In the period before appointment, all allotment queries and requests should be addressed to SSW. . We still need to investigate the possibility of establishing allotments in the area of the disused boxing club in Cowgate. Preliminary talks have already taken place between Dave Roberts, the neighbourhood response manager and MC. This will need to be progressed by MC's successor as a matter of urgency

Show

LH has managed to obtain tombola prizes worth hundreds of pounds for the expenditure of only £50 of funds, well done Louise! Any other prizes for the show would be most welcome. All prize winners have been contacted re the prize giving ceremony. MH has arranged some publicity in the run up to the show during this week and weekend. An applicant requiring a stall to publicise a forthcoming book will be offered the chance to enter some photos in the competition instead. HR outlined to the group the rest of the arrangements for the show which would be broadly in line with last year's. A list of volunteers was drawn up and times for stewarding agreed.

Budgets

The balance on the NAWG account was the same as last month. Allotment budget funds stand at around £48,000. A report was presented by SSW detailing recent expenditure was discussed and approved. The use of skips was commented on but all those provided were only being used by groups employing self help measures to reclaim derelict plots..

AOB

Copies of The booklet 'Your Association, Your Committee' were distributed to the members of the group, copies will be sent to all sites this coming week. SSW will also arrange for the document to be made available on the website in pdf format to enable a wider circulation to be achieved. SSW told the meeting that Nigel Hails, Director of Neighbourhood Services, would still like to attend the next meeting of this group, he will be welcome. The joint Council/Freemen inspections of all Freemen sites appeared to be on hold for the moment, all Freemen sites will be told in advance of the dates involved.

SG raised the problems the sites along the Ouseburn Valley were facing due to sewage overflowing during episodes of heavy rainfall. The problem had been brought to the attention of the Northumbria Water company who had investigated the drains in the area and found some which were blocked by tree roots. It seems likely that an increased capacity drain will need to be installed as soon as possible. The water authorities are sending in teams after each overflow to pick up what they refer to as 'Litter', but the problem of having your allotment covered in raw sewage is one that needs to be addressed as a matter of extreme urgency. SG will meet this Friday with a senior representative from the Engineer's Department at the Civic to try and find a temporary solution to the problem. SG also asked for three tins of anti-vandal paint and some warning signs to be supplied to some of the sites along the Ouseburn Road who were experiencing vandal attacks by groups of human sewage on a regular basis.

It was pointed out that this paint should only be applied to the interior sides of the fences.

There being no further business the meeting closed at 8.00pm.

Next Meeting Thursday October 8th at 6.30pm in room 701.

Website www.newcastleallotments.co.uk