



THE FEDERATION OF
EDINBURGH AND DISTRICT
ALLOTMENTS AND
GARDENS ASSOCIATIONS

Management Committee Meeting

7.15pm on 6th May 2014 at Southside Community Centre

Present: Peter Wright - Lady Road (**PW**) (President) : Ernie Watt - Cambridge Avenue (**EW**) (Secretary) : Stuart MacKenzie - Inverleith (**SMcK**) : Gilbert Clark - Midmar (**GC**) : John Gray - Warriston (**JG**) : Dave Roberts - Restalrig (**DR**) : Patrick Gibb - Dumbryden (**PG**) : Maureen Edwards - Lady Road (**ME**) : Barbara Seel - Leith Links (**BS**) : John McKinlay - Craigentenny (**JMcK**) : Eric Fortune - Restalrig (**EF**) (observer).

1. Apologies: Rik Hart - Warriston (**RH**) : Paul Kerr - Redhall (**PK**) : Willie Aitken - Carrick Knowe (**WA**) : Christine Flannery - Findlay Avenue (**CF**) : Colin Stearn - Bridgend (**CS**) : Ian Woolard (**IW**) - City of Edinburgh Council Allotments Officer.

2. Minutes of Previous Meeting: The Minutes for the 1st April meeting were approved.

3. Allotment Report: **PW** had met with a representative from the Council's Estates Department about the Warriston Crescent site. He was told that the site is to be let as a community garden. It was **AGREED** to ask who will be invited to take on the land and how it will be managed. **ACTION - PW.**

SMcK disclosed that the new 17 mini-plot site at Drumbryden has cost £75K. It has not yet been possible to find sufficient tenants for the site. There was concern that the Council has spent so much money on such a small site. It would appear that the Council has not done sufficient research into the demand for plots in this area. It was noted that the list of sites to be created agreed by the Strategy Committee was not being followed as anticipated. It was **AGREED** to request an analysis of demand by postcode. **ACTION - EW.**

DR said the water supply at Baronscourt was not working, leading to ploholders using the toilets at Morrisons to fill up water containers. The water supply apparatus had been failed by Scottish Water. This will be raised with **IW.** **ACTION - EW.**

JMcK said that FEDAGA should be negotiating to have the allotment estate expanded by an agreed number of square metres. It is no good to agree to 1 site per year and then find that the sites are unfeasably small. It was **AGREED** that it is reasonable to accept that modern plot sizes are reduced as allotment gardening is now a "lifestyle choice" rather than a utilitarian exercise in feeding a family. **PW** noted that SAGS are lobbying the Government to legally define an allotment plot as 250 square metres, with individual plots being made available as a division of that standard dimension. **PG** noted that the standard 150 square metre plot at Drumbryden was often rejected by applicants as being too large to manage and a subdivided plot of 75 square metres being more acceptable. It was **AGREED** to ask for the dimensions of the plots at Drumbrae. **ACTION - EW.**

The Report provided by **IW** was discussed. It was noted that most items have not been progressed. Concern was expressed on items that could endanger allotment users' health

and safety, specifically the wall inspection and tree work. **JG** said the promised tree work at Warriston had again been postponed. As large limbs had already fallen onto pathways there was mounting concern and anger at the continued delays. **DR** recommended that the health and safety concerns should be taken further up the line of command to ensure they were properly addressed. It was **AGREED** to refer our concerns to David Jamieson (Head of Parks and Greenspaces). **ACTION - EW.**

SMcK said that the Council is again looking at Devolved Management as a way of operating allotments. It is proposed that FEDAGA participate in a workshop convened by the Strategy Committee which will also involve David Jamieson, Keith Logie (Parks Development Manager) and representatives from Wester Hailes to look at what functions can be devolved. **EW** expressed concern about devolved management as it has not had a happy history over the past decade. **PW** said that the Secretary, Chair and Treasurer at Wester Hailes regularly put in around 15, 15 and 12 hours a week, respectively. It is unlikely that this level of voluntary action can be found on Council sites. He said that if FEDAGA were to co-operate in this it would be necessary to decide whether to go for a reduction in rents or seek a secure agreement to ensure money was released to provide a significant rise in standards. It was **AGREED** that it was reasonable for volunteers to take on introduction duties (as often happens already) or even maintain a waiting list, but it would not be appropriate to take on responsibility for issues such as health and safety which are currently the Council's remit. It was further **AGREED** that if any form of devolved management were to be adopted, sites would have to be in a much better state of repair before any transfer of powers took place.

Spending Priorities: **DR** undertook to go through the list of items and write to Site Representatives to ask what had been done. **ACTION - DR.** It was also noted that the wall survey had yet to be actioned. **EW** will enquire about this. **ACTION - EW.**

4. Matters Arising: Edinburgh in Bloom: **JMcK** said all arrangements are in place and entries are being submitted. **PW** confirmed that the SAGS trophies are again available for presentation to the winners. **EW** noted that the top two prizes are reductions on rent, awarded by the Council. If an independent site proves a winner this may pose a problem. It was **AGREED** to address this if and when such a situation arises.

Support for Site Committees: **EW** will attend the West Mains AGM on 15th May. **ACTION - EW.** There is concern at Bridgend about how users of the Health Project appear to have little regard for site security. **ACTION - EW** will raise this with **IW.**

Constitution: **PW** proposed a small amendment to the draft constitution to go to the AGM. Potential members shall additionally comprise "individuals, small allotment groups and community growing groups". He said he had considered **GC's** suggestion to hold funds for a year after dissolution to aid any reconstitution. He wondered who would take responsibility for this. It was **AGREED** to seek advice from SCVO. **ACTION - PW.**

Newsletter: **EW** had handed responsibility over to **CF** and Maggie Sinclair (**MS**) who are working on a new issue. **ACTION - CF** and **MS.**

4. Consideration of Reports: Secretary's Report: **EW** circulated a report detailing all significant items of correspondence. He had been told of diseased Catriona seed potatoes discovered by a plotholder who had purchased them through the Trading Scheme. It was not clear if they had been distributed in February or had been bought from the shop. **EW** noted that the temperature in the shop on the sunny day he opened it up was surprisingly

high. He said it may be too high for ideal storage conditions. It was **AGREED** to enquire if any other ploholders using the Trading Scheme reported diseased tubers. **ACTION - EW**.

There had been correspondence from a Greenspace Mapping project in Duddingston. **SMcK** had tried to attend a follow-up meeting at the Informatics Forum, but had been the only person to turn up. It was **AGREED** that it would be worthwhile to extend this exercise and try to link up the availability of potential allotment land to the Waiting List. Postcode information from the Waiting List would be crucial to enabling this. **ACTION - EW** to raise this with **IW**.

Treasurer's Report: There was no report and the Treasurer was not present. Concern was expressed, especially as cheques to Site Associations should have been distributed by now. It was **AGREED** that **PW** speak to the Treasurer. **ACTION - PW**.

Trading Report: **SMcK** said that the shop has closed earlier than scheduled with all paid for produce sold. **EW** said that as the shop now solely exists to sell off surplus orders we should look to shorten the period it is open for. He suggested it be open for business in March only. This proposal was **AGREED**.

Site Reports: **BB** reported that improvement work to the path alongside Leith Links has resulted in the site being closed without prior consultation. She had raised this with **IW** and ploholders took direct action to regain access. It was noted that many other users of the park had objected to the poor management of the work. It was **AGREED** to add our voice to the chorus. **ACTION - EW** to write to David Jamieson.

SMcK said the new raised beds for beginners at Inverleith were in use. A Pest Control operative was in attendance to deal with rabbits and rats. There had been a major flood when a post was driven through a water pipe which had been laid only a foot under the surface. Also, a clothing shop have been in touch to ask if they could use the allotments as a site to photograph models. Further proof that allotment gardening is changing its profile!

JG reported three brass taps snapped by a sharp late frost at Warriston.

Strategy Report: **PW** has written to Mark Turley (Director of Services to Communities) regarding the extension of Stenhouse and reinstatement of Balgreen. Having had no reply he will now write to Sue Bruce (Chief Executive). **ACTION - PW**. A biodiversity booklet is being compiled and a list of inspection dates will be published as it had been noted that this helps to raise standards. **EW** will refer correspondence regarding the involvement of the RSPB on allotments to **SMcK**. **ACTION - EW**.

SAGS Report: **PW** said SAGS awaits the outcome of the CERB consultation. The Annual Conference will take place in Dunblane on 21st June. **PW** will attend as FEDAGA delegate and encouraged others to spend the day there as it is always an interesting event. **ACTION - PW**.

6. Any Other Business: **ME** enquired of progress in the Council's view on polytunnels as Jenny Mollison had written an effusive article in the Scotsman recently on them. Permission must be sought to build a polytunnel and it must be of modest size. **JMcK** asked if anyone had seen BBC Two's Big Allotment Challenge. It was **AGREED** the less said the better.

7. Date of Next Meeting: 3rd June. **EW** gave his apologies as he will be unable to attend.