

October 2015 Special Edition: Edinburgh Council's Allotment Challenge - Round Two



A year on from the City of Edinburgh Council's out-of-the-blue assault on allotment holders, they're back with a fresh proposal. This time it looks as though they may have actually given the matter some thought before publishing.

The Council's Proposed Budget for 2016-17 has just been issued. It contains a proposal to save £21,000 from the allotment service. They intend to increase rent charges by 10% and adjust the concessions to cover only those in receipt of unemployment benefit or a state pension. This will save £11,000. Also, it is proposed to reduce waste disposal and pest control services to cut £10,000 from expenditure.

The Council says that 2800 applicants are on the Waiting List for an allotment. They note that the Community Empowerment Act requires the Council to ensure this number is no greater than 50% of the number of plots provided. The unstated implication might be that they intend to deal with this challenge by pricing plotholders out. This contradicts the intended effect of the Community Empowerment Act and negates efforts to promote a healthy lifestyle and diet.

The Council's statement goes on to claim that "new allotments strategy is being drafted in partnership with FEDAGA to plan for the new statutory duties". If only this were true! The deadline for issuing a draft strategy document was missed 2 months ago. Over the last year it has become plain that the Council is unwilling or unable to take the time to

engage with positive proposals to improve the management of the allotment service. The forum for discussion has fallen into abeyance. Recent history may prompt one to wonder what is the point in entering into partnership with the Council. In 2009 a two-stage agreement on rent was entered into. The first stage, from 2010 to 2014 saw the rents rise year on year. The Council implemented this. The second stage was to see a rent freeze from 2015 to 2020. The Council has not been so keen to honour this part of the deal.

FEDAGA is concerned what the Council's proposed cuts to waste disposal and vermin control will actually mean. FEDAGA believes neither of these services will be continued as the savings quoted equate to the annual cost of these functions for the last year.

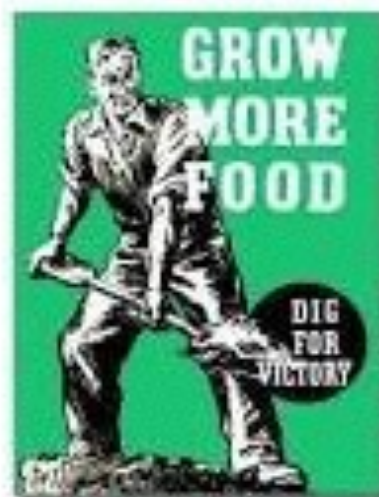
FEDAGA has secured a meeting with officials which will take place later in the month. Before that members have an opportunity to hear how we got to this position and help to chart a route forward. The FEDAGA AGM will be held at 7.15pm on Tuesday 20th October in the Southside Community Centre, Nicolson Street (opposite Tesco's). I hope you will be able to attend.

Ernie Watt (FEDAGA Secretary).

The draft budget document can be downloaded [here](#). (The section on allotments is on page 11.)

Feedback on their proposals can be sent to the Council [here](#).

There is also good news...



The Scottish Allotments and Gardens Society (SAGS) has been short listed for the prestigious Herald newspaper Public Campaign of the Year Award 2015. This is recognition of the collective effort in which the SAGS committee with allotment Forums, Federations, Associations and individual plot-holders from across Scotland worked together on the

Community Empowerment (Scotland) Bill - an effort in which everyone's individual skills and knowledge was needed to respond to the numerous consultations and legal documents surrounding the Bill. The final culmination of an immense amount of time and effort was a concerted campaign involving the press and many MSPs to ensure that the unique identity of allotments was protected and that everyone who wishes can have access to an allotment plot of 250 square metres in a reasonable time scale at a reasonable rent.

For SAGS the legislative process has been a long journey. It began with a petition to the first session of the Scottish Parliament in 2000 and continued with the enactment of the Bill in 2015. However, before Part 9 (Allotments) of the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015 comes into force there will be transition agreements, secondary legislation and guidance notes to be agreed so the process is still ongoing.

SAGS thanks you for all your support over the years.

Andrew Reid (SAGS Treasurer).

©2015 Federation of Edinburgh and District Allotment and Gardens Associations |
FEDAGA