



THE FEDERATION OF
EDINBURGH AND DISTRICT
ALLOTMENTS AND
GARDENS ASSOCIATIONS

Management Committee Meeting

7.15pm on 12th January 2016 at Southside Community Centre

Present: Committee: Peter Wright - Lady Road (**PW**) (President) : Ernie Watt - Cambridge Avenue (**EW**) (Secretary) : Dave Roberts - Restalrig (**DR**) (Treasurer) : Stuart MacKenzie - Inverleith (**SMcK**) : Maureen Edwards - Lady Road (**ME**) : Brian Bleakley - Midmar (**BB**) : Gilbert Clark - Midmar (**GC**) : John McKinlay - Craigentenny (**JMcK**) - Jon Gray - Warriston (**JG**); Observers: Alexis McKay - Ferry Road (**AMcK**) : Margaret McLennan - Bridgend (**MMcI**) : Alison Hewitt - Warriston (**AH**).

1. Apologies: Alan Wilson - Stenhouse : Liz Grace - Midmar : Neiria McClure - Claremont Park (**NMcC**) : Willie Aitken - Carrick Knowe (**WA**) : Jake Booth - Carrick Knowe : Paul Kerr - Redhall : Lorna Henderson - Carrick Knowe.

2. Minutes of Previous Meeting: The Minutes of the 8th December meeting were proposed by **ME** and seconded by **JMcK**.

3. Matters Arising: Council Allotments Strategy - **PW** had circulated a draft of the Allotment Strategy paper proposed by the Council followed by his comments on it. He noted that the Council is now looking favourably at proposals put forward by FEDAGA, particularly the initiative to involve volunteers from sites in the initial stages of the inspection process. Final say on termination of leases will rest with the Council. **JMcK** noted that the Council uses the phrase "robust management" which is encouraging. It was **AGREED** to propose detail on how best the inspection process could proceed.

SMcK reported on a survey he had made of allotment regulations across the UK, citing examples from Glasgow, Norwich, Birmingham and Brighton. Some were virtually identical to Edinburgh. Some were extremely detailed and further examination established that this has provoked a backlash. Some were very basic and were open to misinterpretation. He suggested a better approach may be to base regulations not so much on prescription, but to protect neighbours

from being affected by bad practice: not allowing wind-blown seeds to grow, not allowing pests to shelter, maintaining sheds and preventing large trees and invasive weeds from growing. There was a general discussion on how best to approach this. **BB** commented that regardless of what is proposed, the most important factor is the political will within the Council to enforce regulations. **SMcK AGREED** to amend his proposals in light of contributions and send a paper to the rest of the Committee. **ACTION - SMcK**. It was further **AGREED** to set up a sub-committee comprising **SMcK, JMCK** and **DR** to take the Strategy proposals forward. **ACTION - SMcK, JMCK** and **DR**.

PW summarised how he saw FEDAGA's position on rent. There should be no "top line" increase. A consensus had been reached that the allotment service should pay its way. However, there was no agreement on how the deficit can be eliminated. Proposals for amending concessions were discussed. The Council would like the criteria to no longer be defined by age, but ability to pay. All suggestions are problematic. **PW** said the best solution would protect those unable to pay by asking more of those who are better off. He said this principle defines a civilised society where those sufficiently well off help those less able. **MMcI** said some may object to being means tested and she felt a standard rate was more practicable. **PW** said many Councils don't have concessions, but their average rent is around £35, so is less contentious.

JMCK expressed concern that FEDAGA be associated with any proposal for the rent to meet the cost of service provision. He said this would force ploholders to be hostages to fortune and noted that many other leisure pursuits are subsidised. **PW** said it is not for FEDAGA to decide these matters. It for the Council. What ploholders will want is a firm agreement that will stick. **DR** suggested Council Tax rebate data might be a way forward as this could be easily administered by the Council. **SMcK** questioned why the Council were bothering about this at all, as the deficit for this year is only £21K and forms an insignificant part of the overall budget deficit.

Telferton - DR said the Council had received 276 objections to Avant Homes planning application. The planning hearing, originally scheduled for January, has been put back to the 10th or 24th of February as officials are overwhelmed. It was **AGREED** that **PW** speak for FEDAGA if the hearing is on the 10th. **DR** said how this case goes will be hugely significant for open space across Scotland as

developers are watching with interest. **SMcK** noted there are already objections to a plan to build a luxury development on the site of Granton Castle Walled Garden, which could be a perfect new “DIY” allotment site. Once built on, these greenfield sites can never come back.

Allotment Show - SMcK reported on the deliberations of a subcommittee set up to examine this. A draft schedule has been proposed comprising vegetables and flowers including new categories, such as heaviest and longest. There would be childrens’ sections, but no handicrafts. The schedule would not be printed but would be available online. It was proposed to run the show from set up to finish on one day, from 8am, closing at 4pm. He said he had identified a suitable venue at the City of Edinburgh Methodist Church in Nicolson Square and Saturday 3rd September would be available. It was **AGREED** to proceed to get costings for this. It was further **AGREED** that **ME** get alternative costings for a single day at the Southside Community Centre. **ACTION - SMcK and ME**. There was discussion about the purchase of plastic trestle tables which could be used at this and any future shows as well as by allotment associations. **SMcK** would look into this. **ACTION - SMcK**.

4. Allotment Officer - No Allotment Officer Report had been received.

5. Consideration of Reports - Secretary’s Report: **EW** noted with regret Warriston representative Rik Hart’s resignation from the FEDAGA and Warriston committees. Rik had contributed greatly to both organisations and was responsible for the resurrection of the Warriston committee. **AH** agreed that his departure was a heavy blow. There was correspondence on a Pre Allotment Project to provide basic training for those on the Waiting List which will be followed up and publicised. Also, an enquiry into allotments for those with mental health issues has come in. The correspondent will be put in touch with Cyrenians, who run several suitable growing projects. **ACTION - EW**.

Website and Newsletter: **EW** said information on a Wildflower and Pollinator Project and a Seed Swap at Gorgie City Farm is on the website and will go into the next Newsletter. **JMcK** promised a piece on Abu Dhabi allotments he had seen. **SMcK** will contribute a piece on the Allotment Show. **ACTION - EW, JMCK and SMcK**.

Treasurer's Report: **DR** circulated a report detailing transactions to 10th January. Income: Trading - potatoes and onions (£592). Expenditure: None.

Paid but not yet banked: Cheques to Prospect Bank, Baronscourt and India Place. Sites with no accounts: Dumbryden, Findlay Avenue and Hutchison Loan, for which £179.70, £37 and £16 is being held, respectively.

The bank balance on 9th December is £6960.96. Committed expenditure: £289.30. Funds minus committed costs: £6671.66. Bond: £4510.56. Total assets: £11,182.22.

DR said he had been contacted by the Treasurer of Dumbryden committee with bank account numbers and is ready to send a cheque. However, he has yet to be given details of the name of the account or to whom he should send it. Attempts to get this information have not yet met with a response.

There has been no progress in sorting out the issue of FEDAGA account signatories with the Bank of Scotland. **ACTION - DR and BB.**

Trading Report: **BB** reported that the seed potato order will be delivered to Inverleith on the morning of Thursday 18th February (probably 10.30-ish). It was **AGREED** that the Shop will be open for sale of the produce remaining after site orders have been distributed on the afternoons of Sunday 21st and 28th February and 5th March (2 to 3.30pm).

Site Reports: **EW** said that **WA** had been in correspondence with the Allotment Officer over flooding at Carrick Knowe. There is a dispute over the effectiveness of the bund that was formed for flood protection. This site has regularly flooded since the creation of the tram line to the south of the site which broke field drains. **PW** reported flooding at Lady Road after the Pow Burn overflowed. **SMcK** is in dispute with Council officials responsible for Inverleith Park as the path to the allotment entrance is sodden and will probably be unusable by the delivery vehicle bringing the potato order.

SAGS Report: No report.

6. Any Other Business: No further business.

7. Date of Next Meeting: 9th February.