



THE FEDERATION OF
EDINBURGH AND DISTRICT
ALLOTMENTS AND
GARDENS ASSOCIATIONS

Management Committee Meeting
7.15pm on 7th October 2014 at Southside Community Centre

Present: Peter Wright - Lady Road (**PW**) (President) : Ernie Watt - Cambridge Avenue (**EW**) (Secretary) : Brian Bleakley - Midmar (**BB**) (Treasurer) : Stuart MacKenzie - Inverleith (**SMcK**) : John McKinlay - Craigentenny (**JMcK**) : Gilbert Clark - Midmar (**GC**) : Maureen Edwards - Lady Road (**ME**) : Rik Hart - Warriston (**RH**) : Paul Kerr - Redhall (**PK**) : Patrick Gibb - Dumbryden (**PG**) : Dave Roberts - Restalrig (**DR**) : John Gray - Warriston (**JG**) Liz Grace - Midmar (**LG**) (observer) : Neiria McClure - Claremont Park (**NMcC**) (observer) : Willie Aitken - Carrick Knowe (**WA**) (observer) : Jake Booth - Carrick Knowe (**JB**) (observer) : Ian Woolard - City of Edinburgh Council Allotments Officer (**IW**).

1. Apologies: There were no apologies.

2. Minutes of Previous Meeting: **EW** said there was a mistake in the minuting of the Allotment Officer's Report. The work to the path at Findlay Avenue had not been carried out. **GC** had two amendments. The reference in Site Reports to Carrick Knowe should read: "The Council had apparently accepted a defective specification before the work started and now seemed unwilling to accept responsibility for this and correct the error as they seem to have done elsewhere on the tramway route." The report of his contribution to Any Other Business should read: "**GC** has brought to the attention of the Inch-Gilmerton Community Council, which includes local Community Councillors, the inclusion of land previously identified as possible future allotment land into the present Local House Building programme." With these amendments the minutes of the previous meeting were approved.

3. Allotment Officer's Report: **PW** asked **IW** when he first heard of the proposed Allotment Rent increases. **IW** said that it was when the Evening News reported on the 2015-16 Council Budget proposals on 26th September. Under questioning, he said that he believed that the BOLD task force is a permanent operation instigated to address the Council's well-publicised financial difficulties. The proposal for extra income to be generated by the allotment service is only one of many across a large number of Council functions. **PW** said that the matter would be returned to later in the meeting.

IW addressed the Report he had circulated. He said that good progress had been achieved in September. At the end of the month he and **DR** had met up to discuss the execution of the Spending Priorities programme. £5168 remains in the budget. 75% has been spent.

DR asked site reps to look over their priorities and confirm that the report is accurate. He agreed that progress is satisfactory and the budget is on course. Not all items on the Wish List can be addressed. The estimated cost for this would be around £70,000. He said that he would try to ensure that each site's Top 3 priorities would be achieved by the end of the Financial Year. There are some other items that have arisen that will also have to be accommodated.

IW said there had been a delay in commissioning the Wall Survey as it now looked as though it could be compiled in-house after all. This is the preferable option. The sites that

gave cause for concern are Redhall, Warriston, Pilrig Park and Claremont Park and these will be subjected to an immediate structural inspection. If repairs are required **IW** will seek funding from outwith the allotment budget. He **AGREED** to a target for the inspection to be completed by Christmas. **ACTION - IW.**

IW reported that Phase 2 of Drumbrae has been opened and a water supply turned on. Under questioning, he said that each plot was really a raised bed of 2 metres by 6 metres and in total there are 21 of these. The cost, provided by the Neighbourhood Partnership, is £75,000. **PW** considered the exercise to be a waste of money. He calculated that the whole site is not much more than a standard sized plot. **IW** said that he had no control over the creation of these sites. He is there to manage them once they are created. **LG** asked what the annual rent is for a raised bed. **IW** said it is £25.

IW said that the Neighbourhood Partnership site at Northfield Drive would be opened next month. He was pleased to say that he had been able to influence the design here and the plots are not small raised beds, but more traditional half-plot sized areas. 16 plots had been created here at a cost of £50,000.

IW reported that tree work was continuing. Today the squad was working at Redhall. Inverleith had been dealt with and work would move to Midmar soon. **WA** asked about the tree work at Carrick Knowe. **IW** said it would take place later in the year.

DR was thanked for the work he had done for FEDAGA on this matter.

RH asked if there had been any action on asbestos. **IW** replied that he and the Asbestos Officer had attended to a shed at Warriston, the roof of which was of concern. Removal and disposal of this would be paid for by the Council from outwith the allotment budget. Due to the work recently undertaken in the cottage at Warriston a survey of the roof would be made.

ME asked about the proposed work to the main path at Lady Road. **IW** said the price had changed so the contract had to be renegotiated. This had been done and work would start soon. He said the welding work to the front gate would be carried out shortly.

PW said another meeting between himself, the Council's Flood Team and Scottish Water had taken place at Lady Road at which he had pointed out that leaves and branches from overhanging trees upstream had clogged the grills. He suggested it may be cost-effective to prune these trees to prevent further blockages and flooding.

4. Matters Arising: Rent Increase: **PW** addressed the Council's intention to raise an additional £150,000 from allotment holders. He said that we have to make our voices heard and proposed a 3 point plan.

1) All ploholders should contact their local councillors. He suggested it is most effective for this to be done in writing and by post. FEDAGA should prepare a short and simple message that can be used as a basis for these letters.

2) The Council Leader Lesley Hinds has offered to meet a FEDAGA delegation. Preparation must be made to ensure that our representatives approach this meeting armed with the correct facts and figures to back up our case.

3) A coherent message to the media must be formulated and effectively articulated. The BBC had already been in touch and may be prepared to interview a representative.

It was **AGREED** that a subcommittee be formed to take the campaign forward. It was **AGREED** that this comprise **PW**, **EW**, **SMcK** and **JMcK**. It was further **AGREED** that **PW** draft a message comprising the salient points that members could use. This would be circulated amongst the committee and an agreed version issued as soon as is possible.

ACTION - PW.

PW said that SAGS was aware of this development. It was similar to an attempt to raise allotment charges to £120 per year in Aberdeen, where facilities are minimal. The Chief Executive of Edinburgh City Council was previously the Chief Executive of Aberdeen City

Council. There are similar cases across England of councils dramatically raising allotment charges, but nowhere has approached the scale of the proposed increase in Edinburgh. After further discussion it was **AGREED** that as well as writing to Councillors, members should e-mail the Council officials via the Council website. (The consultation period is until 19th December.) It was **AGREED** the delegation to Cllr. Hinds will comprise the subcommittee. It was further **AGREED** to make further preparations before speaking to the media. The official position will be that “plottolders are surprised and upset at the proposal, particularly as there had been no prior consultation”. Only when a water-tight case has been developed will representatives speak to the media.

Edinburgh in Bloom: **RH** noted that the Awards BBQ had been successfully and enjoyably carried out. **LG** was thanked for her help with organisation and hosting.

AGM: **EW** will issue a Final Agenda. It was **AGREED** that the Motion to change the Constitution be Proposed by **PW** and Seconded by **EW**.

Apple Press: **DR** reported that all arrangements were in hand for the events at Midmar, Inverleith and Claremont Park in early November.

5. Consideration of Reports: Secretary’s Report: A report had been circulated prior to the meeting. It was **AGREED** that **EW** and **LG** attend the Dumbryden members’ meeting arranged for 29th October. **ACTION - EW** and **LG**. It was **AGREED** that FEDAGA should not create a Twitter account. Jaap Prins of Telferton has been asking some site reps to answer a questionnaire he has prepared concerning fencing and site security. **EW** had asked **IW** to provide a list of Site Inspection dates, but **IW** was unwilling to do this due to pressure of work and the frequency of unexpected and disruptive issues that took priority over planned work. After discussion, he **AGREED** to prepare a framework of intended site visits which he would endeavour to work to. **ACTION - IW**.

Website and Newsletter: Two Newsletters have been issued since the last meeting and a great many enquiries and suggestions had been received via the website concerning the rent proposal.

Treasurer’s Report: **BB** has prepared a draft Balance Sheet for the year 2013-14.

Accounts examiners **RH** and **PG** will leave the meeting early to go over the paper with **BB** as it will not prove possible due to work commitments to meet up again before the AGM.

Trading Report: Before he left the meeting, **BB** was able to report that he has the relevant catalogues and is now able to issue the Trading Scheme papers to site reps. **ACTION - BB**.

Site Reports: Before he left the meeting **RH** was able to report on progress at Warriston with the cottage being powered by solar energy to provide light and heat. **RH** also said that Lorraine Corbett, site rep for Ferry Road, had been in touch as she wanted to be able to access site funds. As there is no formally constituted committee this is not possible. She is considering how to take the matter forward as no-one has been identified who may be willing to organise the reconstitution of the committee. Before he left the meeting **PG** was able to report that a meeting for Dumbryden members has been arranged for 29th October with a view to setting up a site association. It was **AGREED** that **EW** and **LG** attend.

ACTION - EW and **LG**.

Strategy Report: **PW** said that the Strategy Meeting business has already been covered by the Allotment Officer’s Report. Work on Allotment Regulations is still waiting for the CERB legislation to be passed by the Scottish Parliament.

SAGS Report: **PW** said the team responding to to CERB consultation exercise were engaged in a mighty task. They are in discussions with civil servants and are required to provide satisfactory evidence to back up their submissions. They will then be called to give evidence to the Parliamentary Committee in Holyrood.

6. Any Other Business: **JMcK** noted that expenditure for printing Plotolders' guides was noted in **IW**'s report. He asked if the printing had taken place as he was considering an update. **IW** said that they had been printed and were ready to be distributed. **ME** asked about the trade waste uplifts over the winter. **IW** confirmed that the uplifts would continue over the winter as it had proved impractical to cancel and then reinstate them in the spring. **PK** asked when the water supply would be turned off for the winter. **IW** said this would be at the beginning of November. **SMcK** revealed that he had been approached by an allotment holder in Leipzig who had approached him about setting up an international allotment twinning arrangement.

7. Date of Next Meeting: The AGM will be on 21st October and the new Committee will meet on 4th November, both at Southside Community Centre.