



THE FEDERATION OF
EDINBURGH AND DISTRICT
ALLOTMENTS AND
GARDENS ASSOCIATIONS

***Management Committee Meeting
7.15pm on 12th May 2015 at Southside Community Centre***

Present: Peter Wright - Lady Road (**PW**) : Ernie Watt - Cambridge Avenue (**EW**) (Secretary) : Dave Roberts - Restalrig (**DR**) (Treasurer) : Maureen Edwards - Lady Road (**ME**) : Jon Gray - Warriston (**JG**) : Neiria McClure - Claremont Park (**NMcC**) : John McKinlay - Craigentenny (**JMcK**) : Rosy Naylor - West Mains (**RN**): Willie Aitken - Carrick Knowe (**WA**) (observer) : Jake Booth - Carrick Knowe (**JB**) (observer) : Ian Woolard - City of Edinburgh Council Allotments Officer (**IW**).

1. Apologies: Gilbert Clark - Midmar (**GC**) : Rik Hart - Warriston (**RH**) : Stuart MacKenzie - Inverleith (**SMcK**).

2. Minutes of Previous Meeting: The Minutes of the previous meeting were approved.

3. Matters Arising: **WA** said that Police had agreed to conduct patrols at Carrick Knowe. He wondered if this might be arranged for other sites. **IW** said that this could be implemented if the Police agreed. **WA** said there had been no further incidents. **PW** and **JMcK** said Community Police Officers had keys to Lady Road and Craigentenny for this purpose. **JMcK** said that this was especially important during school holidays. **PW** asked about the rabbit problem at Inverleith. **IW** was confident this had been satisfactorily dealt with. Only a couple of rabbits are remaining and ploholders seem to have the situation in hand.

4. Allotment Officer's Report: **IW** said he had been extremely busy recently letting plots to new ploholders. Also, 16 half-plots at Victoria Park had just been let. He reported that this site includes a raised bed for the use of Trinity Primary School. Under questioning he said it was unlikely that rent for the raised bed would be charged. **PW** placed on record his objection to ordinary ploholders being required to effectively subsidise the school while the Council is endeavouring to raise allotment rents. He said this matter would be taken up with officials and Councillors.

IW said that the section of wall at Pilrig Park which had been noted as bulging had collapsed. **DR** asked if anyone had been injured. **IW** replied that no-one had. **DR** expressed his relief and asked what action would now be taken. **IW** said that an urgent repair had been sanctioned. Under questioning on which budget would be used to pay for the repair he said that it would come from the Allotment Budget but legal advice was being sought to see if co-owners of the wall would be required to contribute. **JG** noted the wall in question had been repointed only 5 years ago. **DR** said FEDAGA had been asking for a year for action to be taken since the bulge had been noted. All that has happened is a survey has been commissioned, but not completed. He wanted to know who would take responsibility for the delay. **PW** said the matter should be referred to the Strategy Group. It was **AGREED** that **DR**, **EW** and **PW** arrange for a letter to be written to express FEDAGA's concern and arrange for the Wall Survey to be expedited. **ACTION - DR, EW and PW.**

IW said there had been a few burst pipes noted when the supply was turned on after the winter. He said that despite this result, the new lagging seems generally to have worked

quite well. **JG** said that if individuals turn the taps on prematurely water in the pipe can freeze and cause a burst. **PW** requested a circular be issued instructing people to not interfere with taps. **NMcC** reminded **IW** that the burst pipe at Claremont Park had yet to be repaired. **IW** said he would try to have it repaired soon. **ACTION - IW**. **PW** suggested that the Council could consider a reduction in rent for ploholders with rainwater harvesting equipment and a surcharge for those with polytunnels as they are bound to be using a disproportionate amount of piped water.

IW said the new Asbestos Officer is taking a more hardline approach to paying for asbestos removal and future work will have to be paid out of the Allotment Budget. Already there are 2 removal jobs costing £1000 each at Craigentenny and Midmar. He was questioned on the characteristics of the asbestos in question on each site and reminded that in certain circumstances it may be safer to leave the material as it is or paint it over. On one site the material is broken and will have to be removed, on the other it has been identified in a shed that a new ploholder wants to replace. **PW** said that people are often in receipt of compensation if affected by asbestos. It seemed iniquitous that the allotment community should be required to pay to have material that is the responsibility of the landlord removed.

IW said 16 quarter-plots at Northfield Drive are now well established. The only matter to be addressed is the completion of the water supply. He said the cost of connecting the taps and pipes, already installed, to the mains will be £12K. This capital expenditure will not come out of the Allotment Budget. **PW** made the point that as the cost of the allotment service has now been revealed to include contributions to the Capital Debt Repayment Fund all such expenditure can be viewed as a potential contributor to the overall cost of the service and the level of rent the Council may wish to set. To this end he asked that the water supply be re-examined and water harvesting measures more fully explored.

Spending Priorities: **NMcC** has now received the spreadsheet with **IW**'s costings added. **PW** queried a discrepancy in figures supplied by the Contracts Manager and **IW** revealing a difference of £2.7K in utilities expenditure. He questioned the accuracy of the figures supplied upon which FEDAGA is expected to negotiate. **IW** said the most important thing is that there is £20K for repairs and maintenance. **DR** said FEDAGA would now collate the priorities received and decide upon an order of priority. **EW** would liaise with Site Representatives. **ACTION - NMcC** and **EW**. **DR** said that the wall repairs and asbestos removal costs would not form part of the negotiations as FEDAGA's position is that these costs do not form part of the Allotment Budget.

IW said that he intends to order black matting for paths at Findlay Avenue as was provided for Midmar. Ploholders there had agreed to provide the labour if the materials are provided. He estimated this at around £1K. The old conveyor belt which had served as a path surface was now potentially hazardous. This project will be incorporated into this year's plans. There was a discussion on whether this was a justifiable expenditure, the point being made that on most sites paths are the responsibility of ploholders, not the Council.

DR said a long-standing priority was tree work. The work at Midmar had been paid for but not done. He told **IW** to make necessary arrangements for this overdue work to be completed. There was further discussion about the proposed tree work at Craigentenny. **IW** said that Edinburgh Leisure would not pay for the pruning of trees on the golf course that are overshadowing plots. Frustration was expressed. **PW** noted that Edinburgh Leisure are in receipt of a £7.5M subsidy and will not cooperate but ploholders, who are not subsidised, are expected to pay to prune Edinburgh Leisure's trees to allow light into their allotment.

EW asked about fencing repairs due for Restalrig and Claremont Park. **NMcC** said this had not been done and further damage has been caused at Claremont Park. **IW** said the fencing materials he had stored for this job had been removed.

EW asked about the missed bin uplifts reported at various sites. **IW** said he had spoken to the Manager of the service. It would appear insufficient training had been given to a new team. The problem should now be resolved. **PW** said this happened repeatedly and challenged **IW** to give FEDAGA the £9K spent on trade waste uplifts to let the ploholders organise waste removal. **DR** noted half of the waste removed from Restalrig is taken away privately as the bin service is inadequate. **RN** asked why West Mains does not enjoy an uplift. **IW** said Bridgend has no uplift and the reasons for this are historic.

EW asked about the disappointing patchwork repair to the path at Lady Road. **IW** said that no further work other than weedkiller application is anticipated. He also said that the gate repair is still not done. When pressed on a date for this job, outstanding for over a year, he said that the officer responsible would attend to it by the end of the month. **ACTION - IW**. **PW** noted that the Strategy Group's Minutes which he had submitted 2 months ago were still not ratified. He asked **IW** to press for them to be signed off. He said that he should include a clause that allows for publication in 2 weeks whether or not they have been approved. He noted that other Council Minutes are usually published within a matter of days.

5. Consideration of Reports: Secretary's Report: **EW** said enquiries are continuing to be promptly dealt with. There had been a rumour circulating at Carrick Knowe that the site was to be sold off but enquiries soon established that there was no foundation to this.

Website and Newsletter: **EW** reported that the website is regularly updated and another Newsletter was issued at the weekend. There are 634 subscribers. It was noted this still represents less than half of the membership. **PW** said FEDAGA must improve its reach to members. **NMcC** said many don't have computer access and a few just aren't interested. **PW** said they'd become more interested if they found their rents had just risen to £300. **JG** reported a ploholder leaving to live in Falkirk but keeping his plot on. It was established that the rules permit this but the challenge for the ploholder will be maintaining his plot to an acceptable standard from such a distance.

Treasurer's Report: **DR** submitted a report, noting income of £3422.50 for subscriptions from the Council and £216.10 from the Shop and expenditure of £30 for the Apple Press hire. The total funds are £12,512.08 with £8004.02 in the bank and £4508.06 in the bond. It was **AGREED** that the Site Association payment should be £1 per member. Last year's one-off £2 payment should not be repeated while there is a possibility that a Judicial Review may yet have to be paid for if the Council table another excessive rent rise.

Trading Report: It was noted that the surplus potatoes and onions had been sold in record time. £288 profit had been made, further establishing the worth of the venture. It was **AGREED** to better promote the Site Orders scheme in the autumn as members may not find making a spring purchase at the Shop as easy as in previous years. **ACTION - BB and EW**.

Site Reports: **JMcK** said a Community Police Officer had visited Craigentenny after the vandalism attack and said the site was well protected by the fence. He suggested one area for improvement and drafted a letter to neighbours to elicit their vigilance and support. There has been no repeat incidents since.

RN said the AGM at West Mains had been inquorate. A fresh AGM will be attempted soon. **JG** said the Warriston AGM will be held soon.

EW said that a plot holder at Cambridge Avenue who insists on leaving the gate unlocked while on site still persists despite an official letter having been sent to all plot holders. Concern is high as there has been a spate of unsavoury incidents near the entrance recently, with burglaries, vandalism to common stairs and used needles being discarded. **DR** said Bett Homes will apply to have the Planning Committee reconsider changing the status of Telferton from open space to residential on 14th May. The Telferton committee has been approached by a media company working on behalf of Bett who specialise in manipulating central and local government decisions. Bett are hoping to get their way by offering half of the land to be used as allotments. The committee are intending to mount a bid for a community buy-out if necessary. **PW** clarified that only Local Authority allotments enjoy any protection in law.

Strategy Report: **SMcK** and **PW** will attend the rescheduled meeting on 27th May. Cllr. Lesley Hinds will be present. FEDAGA will assert that the terms of the 2009 agreement freezing rent from 2015 to 2020 must be adhered to and will propose that the suggestions adopted by the 2014 AGM be explored. The financial details provided by the Council will be examined. It must be recognised that it is very likely that the Council will seek to impose a rent increase regardless.

SAGS Report: **PW** said SAGS representatives had negotiated hard in Committee and succeeded in keeping their main points in the Community Empowerment Bill (size of allotment, fair rent principle and 5 year period for Local Authority to provide allotment facilities once demand is established). However, the final hurdle comes soon when the bill goes to Parliament and it is anticipated that the Government will seek to water down or remove these provisions. **PW** said he will be standing down from the SAGS committee in June but Andrew Reid will be continuing. However, as Andrew Reid is no longer a FEDAGA committee member, it would be good if someone from the Management Committee stood for election to SAGS.

6. Any Other Business: **ME** will make enquiries about the availability of the Southside Centre during the Fringe and make a booking for the AGM on 20th October. **ACTION - ME.**

7. Date of Next Meeting: Tuesday 9th June.