

# Leominster Allotment Association meeting

Wednesday 18<sup>th</sup> July 2012, 7.30pm at Leominster Town Council Offices.

**Chair:** Lesley Marsh

**Attendees:** Cathy Fewlass, Jane Lacey, Viv Pearson, Karen Price, David Russell

**Guest:** Iain Plumtree (Town Clerk)

**Minutes:** Christine Conlon

**Apologies:** Jess Croot, Joan Thwaites

Items	Actions
<p><b>Matters arising</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Allotment sign</b> Thanks go to David Russell for fixing the wobbly allotment sign.</li> <li>• <b>List of 'Flooding' contacts</b> A list of people to contact if the allotment is flooded, still needs to be put on the allotment notice board.</li> <li>• <b>Hand-washing facilities</b> The hand washing water facility needs repairing. Les Price (repairs) is rather too busy at the moment to give it any attention.</li> <li>• <b>Minutes from the previous meeting</b> – approved.</li> </ul>	<p>List to be put on allotment notice board</p> <p>D Russell to arrange repair when possible</p>
<p><b>Management and monitoring of Plots</b></p> <p>David Russell has sent letters to some allotment holders, regarding their plot management. Up until the meeting, there had not been any replies.</p> <p>Some allotment holders have started to clear up their plots, but it is accepted that with all the rain we have had, it is quite difficult.</p> <p>David and Lesley Marsh will meet to view plots on Wednesday 1<sup>st</sup> August and Monday 3<sup>rd</sup> September, both at 5.30pm.</p>	<p>David and Lesley to check allotments</p>
<p><b>Introduction to the new Town Clerk, Iain Plumtree</b></p> <p>The new Town Clerk, Iain Plumtree, was a guest at the meeting. We learned a little bit about him and gained insight into how allotments in other areas around the country were managed.</p> <p>Iain has worked as a Town Clerk in many places, Scotland and Yorkshire being two of them. He is very familiar with running of allotment sites. In one area, he was involved with managing 10 sites – each with 200 plots. He has also managed crofting sites.</p> <p>Iain told us that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Paying water companies can use up 3/5ths of allotments income. In order to keep costs down, allotment holders need to consider using water harvesting schemes.</li> <li>• All sites he has dealt with have had to be self supporting, but there are always hidden costs which are borne by councils.</li> </ul>	

## Questions for Iain

Several questions were raised and some answered by David and Iain about the Leominster allotments.

- **Question:** As the LAA is reliant on income from renting out the allotments, there is concern that there is income lost because of vacant plots, left vacant because of flooding risks. The rent is already £100 per year. Can costs be contained?  
**Answer:** Iain's experience of allotment rent tells him that the annual rent of £100 for a plot is not unreasonable and is nearer to what is needed to cover costs.
- **Question:** What are the costs?  
**Answer:** Water, rental of lane, site rental, mowing grass, mowing track ways, hedges cutting.
- **Question:** Water – how much is the bill for the allotments?  
**Answer:** £1,400 and the water is metered.
- **Question:** Should plot holders insure against leaking pipe work and flooding from other pipes – is insurance necessary?  
**Answer:** Flood protection insurance would be costly. Then you have to get proof of responsibility. Was there a Duty of Care? How would negligence be proved? How could you then prove who the negligent party was?
- **Question:** Who provides the water for the allotment?  
**Answer:** Welsh Water is the landowner and water provider.
- **Question:** Is there going to be any rent increase for plot-holders?  
**Answer:** There is no potential rent increase.

**Marketing the Leominster Allotment Association and the allotments**

- To get more income and interest in the Leominster Allotment Association, we will need to get more people paying the annual fee of £5 and make them aware of the LAA’s existence. One marketing tool which could be useful is the ‘Handbook for Members’ which is in draft at the moment.
- In order to get this informative booklet out to the allotment holders, Cathy, Viv, Jane and Christine are to get together to prepare it for eventual printing as an A5 booklet. David Russell has kindly offered the Town Council resources for this purpose – free to use.
- In Iain’s experience, Interest in allotment associations goes up and down – it’s cyclical. Also, awards and competitions don’t always have to be held annually, if at all. Some people don’t want to be so involved. They just want to get on with their allotments.
- Jessie Croot is to hold an informal meeting with interested parties – give time to plan for events for 2013.
- Changes under discussion may include the subscription being automatically inclusive of membership of the LAA.
- Karen suggested having a tear-off slip at the bottom of the newsletter asking if the person would like to pay the £5 annual fee and to give them more information about the association.
- Viv suggested offering support for 3 months to new people or help for 1 hour per week if someone is temporarily not well or give longer support for people with more long-term health issues.
- Encouragement such as ‘Pay the first year then get the 2<sup>nd</sup> year free’ could be offered to new people.
- Offering a refundable deposit for new starters may help to encourage people to join.
- Suggest a shared plot for disabled users, with raised plant beds and disability gardening equipment for those with mobility problems. Perhaps Social Services would know what kind of tools would be needed. Cost could be cut down e.g. NSALG use crates for raised beds.

Cathy, Viv, Jane and Christine to prepare the handbook.

Jess to organise a meeting about planning events for 2013.

**‘It’s Your Neighbourhood’ Assessment**

The assessment took place on Saturday 7<sup>th</sup> July. Viv Pearson escorted the Heart of England in Bloom, RHS co-ordinator, Angela Pendleton around the allotments.

Joan Thwaites has been preparing our “It’s Your Neighbourhood” entry.

<p><b>Diary</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Wednesday 29<sup>th</sup> August</b>, (time TBA) – AGM.</li> <li>• <b>Friday 4<sup>th</sup> October</b>, (time TBA) at the Forbury – Harvest Supper David has been asked to prepare one of his quizzes.</li> <li>• <b>Events meeting</b> – Jessie Croot to arrange this and notify interested members of the date, time and location.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Any other Business</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Please send articles for the newsletter to David as soon as possible. If the articles don't go into the present newsletter currently in progress, they may be considered for the next one.</li> <li>• If anyone would like some large, plastic, Baked Bean containers (empty), Iain Plumtree is offering 10 - free of charge! Please contact David Russell to pass the message on to Iain.</li> <li>• More water butts are being seen in the allotment. Collection of water is very dependent on whether you have a shed on your plot or not. More sheds – more water collected.</li> </ul>	<p>Anyone can send articles to David for the newsletter</p>
<p><b>Next meeting</b>  <b>Wednesday 19<sup>th</sup> September 2012, *7.00pm, Leominster Town Council offices.</b></p> <p><b>*Please note the new time of 7.00pm for all future meetings.</b></p>	<p>Please bring these minutes with you to the next meeting</p>

**Draft Agenda for Leominster Allotment Association meeting, to be held on Wednesday 19<sup>th</sup> September 2012, \*7.00pm, at Leominster Town Council offices.**

**\*Please note new time of meeting**

- Apologies
- Matters arising
- Management of Plots
- Handbook for members - progress
- 'It's Your Neighbourhood' Assessment
- Events and dates
- Diary dates
- AOB
- Date of next meeting