



Exeter City Council

EXETER ALLOTMENTS FORUM
THURSDAY 8TH OCTOBER 2015
RENNES ROOM, CIVIC CENTRE 7.00PM – 9.00PM

**PLEASE NOTE THAT A 30 MINUTE NETWORKING SESSION STARTING AT 6.30PM
WILL PRECEED THE MEETING**

Pages

1 Apologies

To receive apologies for absence.

2 Minutes

3 - 6

To agree minutes from the meeting held on 16th July 2015.

3 Councillor Owen - Portfolio Holder Update

4 Allotment Service Update

5 Update on Smart Water Kits from Ellen Holah, PCSO

Ellen Holah will also provide an update on the progress of the Smart Water Security initiative for allotments and also refer to further information/ launch sessions on the on the following dates :-

Marypole Allotments - 11th October at 10.00am, and

Guys and Hylton Allotments - 17th October at 10.00am (*an invitation is extended to all allotment holders*)

6 City Wide-Wide Annual Allotments Produce Show

Discussion on the possibility of a City Wide-Wide Annual Allotments Produce Show (St Thomas Allotments Association)

7 Sustainable Allotments Technology

7 - 8

See attached details of course on Sustainable Allotments Technology

8 To Agree Dates of future Meetings

28 January 2016

26 May

23 July

6 October

26 January 2017

EXETER ALLOTMENTS FORUM

Thursday 16 July 2015

Present:-

Councillors Bull (Chair) and Owen
Councillors Harvey, Holland and Morris

Also Present

Allotment Representatives from :-

Ashwood Road

Topsham

Cowick Lane

Guys Hylton

Hamlin Lane

Ide Lane

Marypole Road

Mincinglake

Newman Road

Pinces 1

Prince Charles Road

Sweetbriar Lane

Trews Weir

Whipton Lane

St Thomas Allotment Association

Roger Crane – Exeter City Council

Daniel Smith – Exeter City Council

Sharon Sissons – Exeter City Council

10

APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Councillors Denham and Lyons.

11

MINUTES AND MATTERS ARISING

The minutes of the meeting held on 9th April 2015 were agreed as true record.

The Chair said that every effort would be made to structure the agenda and although the Forum was not intended to deal with individual requests, they would ensure that an update on generic issues across the allotments would be made each meeting.

Minute 3 - Terms of Reference

The shared role of the Deputy Chair was discussed and it was suggested by one of the Deputy Chairs, Faith Stafford, (Prince Charles Road) that it would be more helpful if the role could be shared concurrently throughout the year rather than as a consecutive arrangement. She proposed that there be two Deputy Chairs. Bill Martin (Deputy Chair and a representative from Pinces), seconded this proposal. The proposal was agreed.

Councillor Morris sought clarification over the status of councillors in respect of

their voting rights at the Allotments Forum. Councillor Owen considered that as Councillors had a vote when Council matters relating to the Allotment service was discussed, that only the designated representatives of the Allotment Forum should be eligible to vote at the Forum.

Minute 6 Communicate/Engagement with Allotments Sites

The representative from Ashwood Road Allotment referred to the difficulties he faced with communicating with other allotment holders on his site, and reminded Roger Crane if he would be able provide a list of names and allotments numbers. Roger Crane confirmed he would provide this information.

12

ALLOTMENT UPDATES

Councillor Owen provided clarification over the way that items for discussion at the Forum would be addressed. He also responded to a comment and confirmed that the City Council was a Labour-controlled council, and the starting point was always that there was opposition to contracting out the Council's services, as this handed to a third party, the control of the service provision. There may be circumstances where contracting out would be a viable option, but he did not see that this applied in this case.

Roger Crane advised that his colleague, James Sprague had left the City Council, and Daniel Smith was now in post as a Public Realm Customer Services Team Manager, and his role included dealing with day to day issues relating to allotments.

Work would continue in September to move forward the agreement initiative with existing associations and he provided a brief update on recent progress. He advised that a Shared Management Agreement was now in place with the Whipton Allotment and the Sunhill/Cemetery sites were due to formalise their agreement shortly. Two volunteers had been identified from the Hamlin Lane site, and dialogue had commenced with the Beacon Lane and Sweetbriar Lane sites. It was a challenge for some allotments sites to identify two representatives, particularly if it was small group; however, such sites could have a *Partnership Lite* arrangement and engagement would continue with all sites to encourage allotment holders to move to some sort of partnership arrangement.

Roger Crane also provided an update on the issue of data protection which still prohibited allotment holders' contact details being shared unless there was an agreement in some form. A representative from Guys Hylton Allotments referred to the draft agreement and a reference that an Association would have to make their own insurance arrangements. Roger Crane advised that any individual working independently was not covered for insurance purposes by the Council, unless they were involved in activities as part of a programme of volunteers. He added that any Association would be eligible to arrange their own insurance, either through the Royal Horticultural Society as an Affiliated Association. Councillor Owen welcomed any feedback and referred to the possibility that household insurance could cover some activities. A representative from Guys Hylton Allotments commented on her experiences relating to employer liability, public liability and third party insurance.

13

PRESENTATION ON SMART WATER KITS AS A MEANS OF SECURITY FOR ALLOTMENTS - ELLEN HOLAH, PCSO

PCSO Ellen Holah, covering Heavitree and Polsloe areas referred to a number of recent break-ins on allotments sites across the city and made a short presentation on a security system which may deter thieves called the Smart Water security

scheme. Smart Water was a traceable liquid and forensic marking system that could be applied to personal, commercial or industrial items of value to deter theft. Only a few drops of the non hazardous liquid were needed, and the substance left a long lasting and unique identifier that could only be picked up under ultraviolet light. It could be used on metal equipment, does not contaminate any produce and each bottle of liquid was unique. PCSO Holah was due to run a pilot scheme involving a small number of allotments and had obtained funding for over 300 kits to be given out to encourage as many allotments holders to take this up. The kits had been paid for by funding from the Exeter Board, including contributions from Exeter City Council and Devon County Council. The Lord Mayor of Exeter would launch the Smart Water Scheme on Saturday 1 August at the Sweetbriar Lane Allotment. An invitation was extended to as many allotment holders to attend the launch of the scheme, which was being backed by both local authorities and the Devon & Cornwall Police.

PCSO Holah had spoken to allotments holders at Whipton, Sweetbriar Lane, Polsloe Bridge, Polsloe Road and Prince Charles Road who would be included in the pilot scheme. Although she was unaware of any disadvantage, it was intended that this would be rolled out quickly, so as not make one allotment site more vulnerable than another. It was hoped that kits would also be made available at a preferential discount? A representative for Whipton Lane and also Trews Weir Allotments shared their experiences of recent break- ins. It was noted that such incidents should be reported to both the Council and the Police, and though it might appear to be an unnecessary duplication, the Council still reported this to the Police. The Deputy Chair (Prince Charles Road) referred to recent thefts of stealing manure and she welcomed any ideas to stop this.

Roger Crane confirmed that the detail on Smart Water would be placed on the Allotments User Group page on the City Council web site. Any questions to be directed to Ellen on her email - Ellen.HOLAH@devonandcornwall.pnn.police.uk

The Chair thanked her for the information.

14 **COMMUNICATION/ENGAGEMENT WITH ALLOTMENT SITES UPDATE**

The Chair referred to the progress made on communication and engagement with sites over the last year and the restructure of the Allotments Service was largely complete. Roger Crane acknowledged that the changes made to deal with enquiries, including the introduction of a dedicated allotments email address allotments@exeter.gov.uk and web page including the User Group web page had all made positive effect. Daniel Smith was also now in post and he would be making every effort to develop the relationship with the individual allotment sites. Allotment representatives from Guys Hylton and also Ashwood Road raised some issues in relation to the disposal of excess green vegetation and the height of grass on sites which Daniel would discuss with them.

15 **SHARED MANAGEMENT ARRANGEMENTS PROGRESS BY THE COUNCIL**

The Chair referred to progress made on the shared management arrangement. Councillor Owen anticipated continuing working together to provide a reasonable level of service to ensure that the social and economic value as well as health and well being benefits from the allotments in the city continued.

An Allotments representative for Whipton Lane enquired about the shared management arrangements. Roger Crane referred to the basic level of self management that would be introduced, but he hoped that the eventual outcome

would ensure there was a total self management arrangement ensuring that the sites were managed with the Council just retaining ownership of the land. The Deputy Chair and representative for Pines sought some clarity and also the timeframe for what would be offered. The Allotments representative for Marypole Road also enquired whether it would be organised as a charity or limited company. Representatives discussed their concerns over ensuring that any necessary services to keep the allotment running would continue to be funded. An Allotments representative for Sunhill/Cemetery referred to a successful self management arrangement in Exmouth, but he agreed the costs of general maintenance would be an unknown. An Allotments representative for Hamlin Lane agreed it was worth thinking about carefully, but it could be a long process to get all tenants on board.

16

TIMETABLE FOR MANAGEMENT OF ALLOTMENTS

Roger Crane provided an update on the timetable for management of the allotments sites. The Allotments representative for Ashwood Road referred to the action planned for clearing overgrown plots - Daniel Smith advised that he was currently devising a plan of action. He was made aware of the efforts of some plot holders to keep their plot clear and reminded the Forum to share with allotments holder that every tenant was required to keep the plot at least 60% cultivated? Daniel Smith said that his priority would be to identify those plots that were uncultivated or that did not meet he required standard. His would identify the vacant plots and aim to relet to those individuals on the waiting list and in future manage the plots as efficiently as possible.

The Chair referred to a number of forthcoming events organised by St Thomas allotments and with an open afternoon and Gardeners Question Time attended by representatives of the Royal Horticultural Society the Fruit, Vegetable and Herb Committee, on 22 July. He also provided details of an open day workshop at the Guys Hylton allotment on Sunday 6 September 2015 from 11.00am to 1.00pm to encourage allotment gardening and healthy eating. There was more detail on the St Thomas Allotments Association web site.

17

DATE OF NEXT MEETING

It was noted that the next Allotment Forum meeting would be held on 8th October 2015 between 7.00pm and 9.00pm (with a Networking session commencing at 6.30pm prior to the meeting)

(The meeting commenced at 7.00 pm and closed at 8.45 pm)

Chair



St Thomas Allotment Holders Association

Sustainable Allotments Technology

Course to be held at Exeter Community Centre,
St Davids Hill, Exeter, EX4 3RG

Saturday 7 November 2015 10am – 3pm

Cost £15 (Excluding Lunch)

Course Leader: Robert Edwards

This course has been designed to integrate simple technology to allotments.

Participants are shown how to build systems to improve services and utilities for the allotment.

Examples of areas covered include:

- How to build and install a composting loo
- How to set up and use water catchment and human powered irrigation systems
- How to light sheds for free.

Lunch can be provided by the Mulberry Café at – order on application.

Apply to: Robert Edwards,

The Garden House, 28a Richmond Road, Exeter EX4 4JF

Or e-mail RobertWEdwards2@btinternet.com

if possible include an e-mail address or telephone number for confirmation of place.

Cheques should be made out to St Thomas Allotment Holders Association

Or using BACs : St Thomas Allotment Holders Association

Sort Code 77-10-02 Account number 18157060

Lunch can be booked at The Mulberry Café at The Community Centre.
Menu will be sent when booking made!

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