



Exeter City Council

**EXETER ALLOTMENTS FORUM
THURSDAY 28 JANUARY 2016
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 8 October 2015	3 - 8
To receive the minutes from the meeting held on 8 October 2015.	
3 Neil Dixon (Regional Representative of the National Society of Allotment and Leisure Gardeners) is invited to make a presentation.	
4 Portfolio Holder Update	
Councillor Owen, as Portfolio Holder for Health and Place is invited to provide an update.	
5 Chair and Vice Chair Update	
Councillor Bull, Chair and Ms Faith Stafford and Mr Bill Martin (Joint Vice-Chair) are invited to provide an update	
6 Allotment Service Update	
Roger Crane will provide an update.	
7 Advance Topics Raised by Forum Members	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Item from Graham Yarwood – Use of the MMAA proposed agreement as a basis for the formal Shared Management Agreement.Item raised by Becky Wells - Minute 27 Bonfire Timings - Further to the last meeting when the timing of bonfires on site was discussed. A suggested way forward would be that the changing demographic of allotments tenants means that many more work full time and not available to have bonfires on Tuesday afternoons during the winter months. May the number of Saturday (or Sunday afternoons be increased to give	

all tenants an opportunity to have a bonfire at least one dry day?

8 **Topic Raised by the Chair** - Community Composters

9 **Future Meeting Dates**

To note the date of future meetings:-

Thursday 26 May 2016 - 7.00pm Annual Meeting

Thursday 21 July 2016 - 7.00pm

Thursday 6 October 2016 – 7.00pm

Thursday 26 January 2017 - 7.00pm

EXETER ALLOTMENTS FORUM

Thursday 8 October 2015

Present:-

Bull (Chair)
Councillor Owen

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*

PCSO Ellen Holah – Devon & Cornwall Police Constabulary
Daniel Smith - Exeter City Council
Sharon Sissons – Exeter City Council

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WELCOME

The Chair welcomed both designated representatives of the Forum and also welcomed the observers to the meeting.

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APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Councillors Denham, Packham and Bill Martin.

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MINUTES AND MATTERS ARISING

The minutes of the meeting held on 16th July 2015 and were agreed as a true record.

Minute 11 (6) Communication with Allotment Sites

In reply to a representative from Ashwood Road Allotment site referred to the previous request for a list of vacant plots and contacts on his allotment site, Daniel Smith agreed to make this available. The representative also referred to the timetable for the management of overgrown plots on sites. Daniel Smith had liaised

with the Parks Department team to ensure new tenants received their plot in a decent state, but the Rugby World Cup and use of Northernhay Gardens for the associated Fanzone had committed their time but he anticipated will resume their normal level of service very soon. As the autumn season draws to a close, the Parks Department would be able to put more resources into allotment sites throughout the city. They would be making every effort to focus on the more extreme cases. Councillor Owen would also ensure this issue was raised at his regular meeting with the senior officer, the Assistant Director Public Realm, to see if there could be a degree of priority.

A representative from Ide Lane Allotments site referred to the list of priorities and commented on the state of the site. Daniel Smith referred to his range of duties, which included facilitating the allotments, and had noted the matter and would ensure that every effort was made to address as quickly as feasibly possible. An observer from Prince Charles Road Allotment's site referred to the waiting list and suggested that rather than have plots empty allow plots to be let for potential new plot holders who might be prepared to clear the plot and in return allow a bye of 12 months fee. Daniel Smith referred to the suggestion that may be considered as an exception on an individual case by case basis, but could never be considered as a formal policy. Councillor Owen said that he would follow up with the Assistant Director Public Realm and report back.

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COUNCILLOR OWEN - PORTFOLIO HOLDER UPDATE

Councillor Owen referred to the Devon and Cornwall Food Association who are a charity who coordinate the distribution of food in the city. He referred to a welcome initiative involving the Mincinglake allotment, who offer donations of surplus fruit and vegetables to them. The Exeter Depot is at premises in Spinning Path, off Blackboy Road and is staffed with a part-time coordinator and volunteers, including Exeter University students. They coordinate surplus produce which is collected from allotments as well as supermarkets such as Aldi. The food is donated and sorted and then distributed to a range of recipients including soup kitchens, St Petrocks, the St Sidwells Community Cafe as well as supporting some school breakfast clubs. This welcome initiative increases the quality and opportunity for fresh food and clients are grateful for the chance to have more fresh and varied food. Councillor Owen suggested if any allotments members wished to offer surplus produce from their allotments they could speak to him or contact the Devon and Cornwall Food Association through their web site www.dcfca.org.uk

A representative for Cowick Lane Allotment Site advised that they also offered produce to Age UK in Cowick Lane.

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ALLOTMENT SERVICE UPDATE

Daniel Smith provided an update and confirmed that over 1600 invoices had been sent out to plot holders to gather the rents for the coming year. He confirmed that every effort was made to maintain and update the records but there were instances when the contact details did not match.

A representative from the Cowick Lane Allotment Site referred to the mapping of the plots and agreed that the identification of individual plots was useful but there seemed to be no consensus as to how this could be achieved. The norm was to identify plots with stakes at the head of the plot, but often these rotted, and more recently numbers painted on sheds was more noticeable. Daniel Smith welcomed where possible, painted numbering on plot sheds.

The representative from Cowick Lane Allotment Site also spoke in her capacity as

a member of the St Thomas Allotments Association sites and updated the Forum confirming that some sites had completed voting and signed up to a management agreement. Daniel Smith agreed that moving this forward and the priority was to fill any vacant plots. The representative for Marypole and Mincinglake Allotments sites advised that they had recently contacted individuals on their waiting list and had been successful in letting to 10 potential tenants out of a possible 45. Daniel Smith referred to the similar dilemma managing the allotment waiting list to ensure plots were still needed. He would contact the representative to see if he could provide him with any more names. He in turn would contact Daniel Smith to update his list.

Daniel Smith sought the views of the Forum members as there was an issue with leakage from frozen pipes on three or four sites. He canvassed views on the possibility of turning off the water supply for allotments sites during the winter's coldest months to avoid damage and leakage which was both expensive in terms of water loss and to the environment. A representative from Cowick Lane Allotment site considered that this would be an issue for the Guys and Hylton site which supplied their kitchen and some plot holders also kept chickens. Daniel Smith noted these comments and would not make any further changes to the water supply throughout the winter.

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MANAGEMENT ARRANGEMENTS

The representative for Marypole and Mincinglake allotments sites referred to the management arrangement process and enquired if the onus was on the Association to apply to the City Council to pursue the agreement. They had reached an interim agreement, but were not yet in a position to finally enter into such an agreement as there were issues such as utility bills and liability insurance to discuss. Daniel Smith advised that a draft agreement could relate to each individual site as part of a shared management agreement. The Allotment representative from Whipton Lane Allotment Site suggested a separate meeting might be held with allotment holders to pursue this. Daniel Smith referred to a basic level agreement for all sites and then discuss the individual responsibilities. The Chair advised that if an Association did sign up to a management agreement, the cost of the insurance would be reimbursed by the City Council.

The representative from Cowick Lane referred to a previous meeting with Roger Crane in 2014, when allotment responsibilities was discussed. The opportunity for greater site involvement and management on all the aspects of sites should pass from the City Council to an Association and it was relatively easy to accomplish. The representative from Whipton Lane Allotment Site requested more information on maintenance costs. They did not have site specific experience and it was important to know what the responsibilities and commitments of the site would entail. Councillor Owen said that it was not possible to provide a breakdown of maintenance or running costs (other than water) for each site. The representative for the Prince Charles Road Allotment Site asked if the responsibility included the perimeter fencing. Daniel Smith said that at moment, the City Council would retain the responsibility to maintain the perimeter boundary.

The representative for the Ashwood Road Allotment Site suggested looking at 'Level 1' and then discuss further progression. The representative for Cowick Lane Allotment Site suggested that the next level of activity on each site might include recognising their responsibility for their own path and grass maintenance. Daniel Smith agreed that was a perfect example of the additional responsibility that Associations could take on. He was keen to achieve 'Level 1' with all sites and then move on from there.

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UPDATE ON SMART WATER KITS FROM ELLEN HOLAH, PCSO

PCSO Ellen Holah attended the meeting and provided the Forum with an update on the continuing successful roll out of the Smart Water initiative to help prevent crime, by enabling a unique mark on property. She planned to have covered nearly all of the city's allotment sites by the end of October. One of the last opportunities this year was to collect a Smart Water kit from the Guys and Hylton allotment site on 17 October. She welcomed any allotment holder who had not collected one to come along.

It was an initiative not only aimed at allotment holders, as Exeter University had purchased 1,000 kits for students and staff in recognition of the success of the kits as a tool in the prevention of crime. She would set up another launch and likely lead another drive next Spring. She also encouraged any new allotment holders to contact Daniel Smith to contact her to obtain a kit and ensure that the appropriate registration procedure was followed. A representative from Cowick Lane agreed there had been a lot of interest and they also had to ensure that the information that plot holder's property had been marked with SmartWater should be include on notices at the allotment site gates.

The Chair and Members thanked Ellen for all her efforts.

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CITY WIDE-WIDE ANNUAL ALLOTMENTS PRODUCE SHOW

A representative for Cowick Lane Allotment Site proposed that following the example of the excellent produce show run by the St Thomas Association in July that the possibility of holding a city wide event could be explored. The representative for Ashwood Road suggested an Allotment Week.

It was agreed that this would be discussed in more detail at the next Forum meeting in January.

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SUSTAINABLE ALLOTMENTS TECHNOLOGY

A representative for Ashwood Road Allotment Site, Rob Edwards advised that he had attended a two day course at the Trafford Hall Centre on sustainable allotments technology. Following the course he has offered to run a one day course at the Exeter Community Centre on 7th November 2015. Participants would be shown how to build systems to improve services and utilities for their allotments and areas to be covered include building and installing a compost loo, setting up and using water catchment and how to light sheds for free! Contact could be made via RobertWEdwards2@btinternet.com

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BONFIRE TIMETABLE

The Deputy Chair and representative from Prince Charles Road Allotment Site referred to a request from Bill Martin requesting the possibility of an earlier start date to have bonfires. There was only one opportunity in a week and one Saturday in the month and an earlier start time was unlikely to make much impact neighbours. Daniel Smith referred to the pre set dates in the allotment rules and there might be an opportunity for a review to bring the October 1 date forward slightly. Councillor Owen supported bringing the matter back to the Forum meeting in January.

The Deputy Chair and representative at Prince Charles Road Allotments Site also referred to an issue of trees on allotment plots. She thought that planting was

restricted. Daniel Smith said he would speak to her directly.

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TO AGREE DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

The following dates were agreed, meeting at 7.00pm until 9.00pm (with a networking session commencing at 6.30pm prior to the meeting).

28 January 2016
26 May (AGM)
21 July
6 October
26 January 2017

(The meeting commenced at 7.00 pm and closed at 8.10 pm)

Chair

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