

Editors: **Stuart and Paula Lawrence**

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CALENDAR

Saturday 7th July 2012

Annual produce Show followed by
BBQ Social. Free for each member and
£10 for each guest.

NEWS FROM YOUR SHOP

We are open as follows:

Wednesdays from 5pm to 7pm

Saturdays from 10am to 1pm

The shop is fully stocked now with Compost and Fertilisers etc. and we are keeping last years prices on most items.

Poul Kristensen

Gate & padlock key with tag, found on allotment site.

Please contact Kristine: 07739361602

PROPOSED ALLOTMENT MANAGEMENT CHANGES

Ealing Council is looking into a range of management options for allotments in order to reduce their costs and workload. One alternative is for a contractor to reduce administration by streamlining many processes, another to have a boroughwide trust such as allotment tenants elected to voluntary roles or a professional body to pool and distribute resources, or finally a local, or self management team responding directly to their collective wishes.

At the Annual General Meeting of the Ealing Allotments Partnership, held on Wednesday 7th March, an introduction to Self Management of allotments was given by Doig Simmons of the Pitshanger Allotments. Below is a summary of his informative talk.

Self management was introduced by Pitshanger Allotments in 2002 after two year preparatory

investigative work carried out by their members. The Self Management Allotments Organisation needs to have a minimum of: a Chairman, Manager, Treasurer (skilled accountant), Secretary and most important a Fund Raiser. The Banking account of the Fund Raiser must be kept completely separate from any other accounts, such as Trading Hut or Shop. Here it was not clear how these accounts will be managed and by whom. The Fund raiser could collect and hold the tenants annual rent and all other funds such as grants and funds acquired from outside sources or organisations. The accounts have to be presented yearly at the AGM and must be audited by a recognised and accredited Auditing Service. This is extremely important when applying for grants.

A good size self management allotments site should have approx. 200 tenants in order to be financially viable and run properly by 9 or more Committee members, who should be devoted and responsible people.

The Self Management Allotments Association (SMAA) must have a written constitution, which is a legal requirement. The SMAA should have Third Party Insurance which can be arranged through the National Society of Allotments and Leisure Gardeners (NSALG) scheme (Insurance for tools etc owned by the association, **not individual members**, would be likewise dealt with). Firstly the Association would have to become a member of NSALG – the current rate is £2 per individual member per annum.

The whole allotment site must be surveyed beforehand so that each plot size should be in accordance with standard sizes (10 or 5 poles), and not to have small plots of various sizes. This should be checked and measured every year with tenants being disciplined should they try to alter plot sizes. Each tenant will receive a booklet with the allotment rules about: site security, bonfires,

locking gates (it is better for security to have fewer gates, possibly 1 or 2), keeping livestock (bees – the bee keeper to have a certificate), chickens and ducks (according to RSPCA rules), the use of water taps, no dogs on the site, only 6 people (including children) to gather on any one plot at the same time. Each tenant must accept these rules and comply with them or their tenancy would be terminated.

To co-operate with other local groups of allotments and share experiences.

The Fund Raiser/Accountant needs to get as many grants as possible for fencing, composting toilets on the premises (approx. £3,000) which will have to be relocated from time to time, for a water bore-hole (approx. £20,000) in order to have free water for the plots.

To have a system for policing/inspecting the condition of the plots by Committee Members to check that the plots are cultivated and properly maintained. Water taps could be replaced by plastic ones thereby removing the theft of them for metal.

New tenants/members to be given a probationary period of approx. 2-3 months to prove that they can cultivate and maintain their plot. Shed size to be restricted to 6/8 feet and NO more. The level of rent to be paid by tenants could rise each year to keep up with expenses necessary to run and maintain the allotment site (Pitshanger increased the rent for a 10 pole plot by £50 last year).

The Allotments Site lease should be agreed with the Council for a period of at least 5 years, preferably 25 years (the cost is not too clear as Pitshanger pay £2,000 a year). The lease is a legal document and should involve a Solicitor in negotiations.

Complaints from tenants should be sorted out by Committee Members (it is not a clear procedure at Pitshanger). The rules of the allotments should be totally accepted and followed by all tenants, if not their tenancy could be terminated immediately.

The small allotment sites in Ealing should join forces (get together) with their neighbouring allotment sites in order to be able to cope with everything (e.g. Joe Lucas with 25 plots in Stanley Avenue).

Management of our Allotments Site is **NOT** to be given to an Agency. This would probably result in the management being done to promote their own interests to the detriment of the tenants, such as letting the site become run down or derelict and then being offered to property developers. This would be dangerous for the life of the allotments in the borough of Ealing. *Our constitution must also include a proviso that the Oldfields Allotments and Gardens site in Carr Road will remain as an allotment site for ever and a day.*

We need more clarification on all aspects of Self Management and a number of Committee Members will be visiting the Pitshanger Allotments site in the near future. We will then report further to members in the near future. No decisions will be taken without a full consultation of our members.

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Volunteers:

Our allotments site has developed well in recent years. In order to continue our good work we need our members to volunteer to help with some of the future improvement projects. Volunteer days: Saturdays 28th April and others to be agreed. Please contact Michel.

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Allotment site safety and security:

The usual gangs of raiders are back in full operation. As usual machinery and metal are the main targets – but they also target petrol, diesel and water taps. We have to recognise that there is really no defence other than to avoid storing anything of value on site.

SO PLEASE DO NOT STORE ANYTHING OF VALUE ON THE ALLOTMENT SITE.

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