

## **Notes of a Meeting with LBM Allotment Societies on 2 March 2011 held at Paddock Allotment.**

### **Allotment Society Members**

Jean Hancock, Ruth Whitehead - Paddock  
Kay Prior, Robert Jude – Martin Way  
Bill Bailey, Fred Taylor – Cottenham Park  
Jeremy Riggs, Kerrigan Smith – Western Rd  
Sue Burgin, Tony Sturton, Ian Burgin – Havelock Rd  
Peter Rhind – Haslemere  
Peter Obermuller, Howard Watson, Sara Cornwall – George Hill  
Terry Bhachu, Bob Redmond – Eastfields Rd  
Marie Roda, Mike Gannaway, Letty Foukes – Brooklands  
Richard Lee, Emma Townsend – Tamworth Farm  
David Freeman – Merton Friends of the Earth  
Maire Denny, K Healey, AN Other (couldn't read writing) – Thurleston  
Vernon Jones – Durnsford  
I Cahill – Effra Rd

### **London Borough of Merton:**

Doug Napier (DN)  
Francis McParland (FM)  
Danny Lovelock (DL)  
Simon Woods (SW)

After introductions, DN outlined the background to the letter, which had recently been sent to plot holders ref. Going self-managed. The Council offices had received a very large amount of calls from concerned people

DN reiterated that nothing would be imposed upon any societies; the Council was working toward agreement for any change in current practices

For those who had not attended, DN went on to recap on the meeting held on 12 Jan and explained the Council's financial position and why it was asking societies to consider self-management

DN asked for at least one contact for every site to give their details to the Council. A discussion followed around notice boards and translations of any information sent out

Martin Way said their website had received about 15 comments so far

**Issues/Things to be taken forward:**

Various representatives raised questions, which are summarized below;

Eveline, Tamworth and Eastfields agreed to discuss the possibility of joining together for self-management

The timescale for vacant plots was discussed – the Paddock have a 2 month turnaround

*Can self-managed sites set their own prices?*

Currently the Council sets the Paddock prices, however, this is an area that is open for discussion

FM tabled a spreadsheet outlining the current costs of operating allotment sites. Currently all sites are subsidized by the Council, the full total being circa. 42k

If societies were self-managed, the council proposes taking 7.5% of the income to cover costs such as specialist legal advice and arbitration matters. The cost of water would be managed by the societies and there are possible efficiency savings to be made. The cost of parks staff and the allotment officer would no longer apply, as societies would be managing themselves

FM/DL agreed to produce a menu of costs for services, which societies could buy from the Council

*We will be unable to self-manage properly as we will be inheriting sites, which need a lot of expenditure on them to make the viable*

All societies will be able to work with the Council who would still be writing capital bids. Obviously the success of these bids is at the discretion of the Council. There are a great many bids submitted each year

A discussion followed around insurance costs - The Paddock now have £5m public liability, which costs £44 extra. The full amount is est. £900p.a.

FM tabled a draft agreement for what the Council would do and what self-managed groups would be expected to do

Plan B may be for the Council to consider doubling costs to continue managing societies

It was noted that Wyvale were interested in privately run sites, but were far more expensive than the Council

*What would be the likely dates for going self-managed?*

October or more likely April to fit in with the Council financial year

*Who makes the decision to go self-managed?*

You will need to talk to plot holders and go with a majority. This time of year people are starting to work on their plots more and reps can have more contact with them

The next meeting will be fairly soon and reps are urged to contact their members over the next few weeks and have conversations around self-management