

North Staffs Allotments Network Meeting
Sunday 7th January 2024

Attendance: Jayne Stokes, Fenpark; Bruce Jarvest, Thistley Hough; Victoria Shepherd, Newford Crescent; Nicola Farrin, Richmond Street; Paul Myatt, Richmond Street; Sarah Hill, Gresty Street; John Birch, Uddallsfield; Jayne Birch, Dollys Lane; Lynn Hensman, Dollys Lane; Kris Reant, Dollys Lane; Jamie Preece, Cauldon & District; Jim McDermott, Uddallsfield; Gayleen Milward, Campbell Road; Alan Adams, Campbell Road; Kate Mannion, awaiting plot Newcastle; Sheena Pearce, Turnhurst Road; Sharon Martin, Caverswall Lane; John Storer, Heathfields; Steve Plant;

Introduction: Bruce welcomed everyone and went through the housekeeping requirements.

Minutes from previous meeting 3rd December: Due to printing issues no copy for meeting.

Minutes from this meeting: Bruce asked everyone for their thoughts on the draft constitution and to let him know. Emphasised that it is a working document and things can be changed with the appropriate consultation and meetings.

A discussion then took place on how to fund the Network. Bruce asked everyone to look out for any avenues of funding and sponsorship and to apply for them. Sarah Hill mentioned that councillors can award grants, and for this financial year they have to be in by end of February.

Sarah Hill gave an update on the progress with the allotments service. A draft copy of the new rule book will be sent to all sites for consultation. Victoria asked if it was sent electronically could it have a comments link. Sarah will pass on that comment. The update on leases is that it is going to the legal department. No time scale as to when it will respond. A great number of council plots have been let and there is improvement on evictions for non paying or anti social tenants. This was down to Sarah passing on comments from sites about the length of time it takes to evict a bad tenant, but there is still room for improvement.

Victoria confirmed that the domain name for the website has been secured and that two email licences have also been set upon Office 365. Also, many thanks to Moorlands Lawn Care who have sponsored some of the costs for the first year. Bruce asked if people would review the site and sign up for the £1 membership, as that will help to fund the Network.

Jayne has been asked by the sites in the Leek area to accompany them to a meeting with the council in February. It is to discuss the running of sites and general issues. Will report back after the meeting.

A.O.B

Steve Plant has woodchips available for free.

John Birch asked for thoughts on allotment holders who are not working their plots but claim mental health issues when challenged. Most thought that initially you would give some allowance, but if they continually failed to work the plot, then you go down the standard procedures of letter to bring up to standard in a set time scale. If they don't then standard eviction notice should sent.

Nicola asked about gate locks and what would be the best around former tenants not returning keys. Suggestions given for digital locks that only needs the code to be changed. Also, suggested a heavy duty lock would be a better choice.

A request was made for the description of a site secretary role from the council.

Need to see if there are any free venues that the Network could use for the meetings.

Meeting closed.

Date of next meeting

Sunday 3rd February 2024

10 am till 12 noon