

barnet allotment federation

NEWS & NOTES – September 2014

Please send any page contributions, news or events for News and Notes and/or the Federation website to barnetalotmentfederation@gmail.com

Issues with Barnet Council: The Federation team are seeking a meeting with Jenny Warren (Barnet Council) to discuss a number of issues including the following:

(1) inspections of water installations. Andrew Brown sent some advice on handling these inspections by email to self-management contacts on 20th August. (Please contact him - achbrown1946@gmail.com - if you didn't receive it). First indications suggest that Thames Water may be quite lenient - we have yet to hear about an inspection by Affinity. But in case one or both companies end up imposing stricter requirements which could cause problems for allotment holders, we should want to discuss with the Council just how they propose to implement the changes. We would hope for an outcome that is compliant with the regulations, practicable for societies and their allotment holders and reasonably economical for the Council. In the meantime, please tell Andrew the results of the inspection on your site so that we can build up an overall picture. It would also be worth asking the inspector - particularly if he/she is coming again to check that the work has been done - to provide a written statement that your installation complies with all current requirements;

(2) the timetable for carrying out the essential works set out in our leases. Under the terms of the leases, the Council is obliged to do all the work within two years of the start date of the leases i.e. by April 2015 in most cases. It is not clear at present whether the Council has obtained the extra funds they need or whether the work can feasibly be completed by that deadline. At present, the Federation team would recommend that:

- your society doesn't nag the Council at this stage about doing the essential works. We can all keep our ammunition ready in case there are serious problems next year;
- we review collectively later on whether to allow the Council a little extra time beyond next April to finish the works, provided they have been started and provided there is a credible schedule for finishing them.

Current issues and future problems?

The Federation meeting on 15th September will provide an opportunity to discuss with colleagues from other societies any current issues and potential future problems under the broad headings of managing your society, managing your site, and managing people and tenancies.

As far as potential problems are concerned, our regular workshop discussions and the guidance available on the Federation website may well give you what you need to tackle tricky issues. But the Federation team are also available if you prefer to talk about potential problems more privately so that help can be offered at an early stage before things develop into a crisis. Early warning signs might include for example: a steady drop in your financial reserves, or increasing and serious difficulty in getting people to help in managing the society particularly on the committee, or a continuous increase in the number of unoccupied plots. While the Federation team can't work magic, they may be able to offer help or advice which could at least avoid the problem getting worse. If things are left until there's a major crisis, it may be too late for anyone to help. So please feel free to contact the team if you feel that your society might be getting into trouble and you're not quite sure what to do.

Contact details are on the website at <http://www.barnetalotments.org.uk/contact.php>