

barnet allotment federation

NEWS & NOTES – November 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 has at last persuaded Jenny Warren (Barnet Council) to meet with us. The meeting will take place on November 11. Some of the issues to be discussed were outlined in September's News and Notes and include the following:

- inspections of water installations.
- the timetable for carrying out the essential works set out in our leases.

We also intend to raise the question of how Barnet handles complaints it receives relating to allotments.

As part of the preparation for the meeting, we asked societies to complete a questionnaire about the works specified in the leases that Barnet had or had not done on their sites and return it to Richard King by November 4. If your society has not replied, please do so at once, even after the deadline. It would help us in preparing for our discussions to have an up-to-date picture of what has or hasn't been done.

Water tanks and safety

This message from Andrew Brown was circulated on October 14, but because of its serious nature, it is repeated here

One of the Barnet allotment societies held an open day for their members and the public during the summer. Inadequately supervised small children were on site and one of them got into a full water tank upside down and unable to get out. The child would have been dead within a few minutes from drowning if an adult had not seen what had happened and pulled the child out of the water. Tragedy for the parents was averted. Also averted were enquiries for the society's officers from the Police, the Health & Safety Executive and the society's insurers.

That society has decided to do a number of things to control this and similar risks:

- 1 It is producing an internal guidance sheet listing those safety steps which must be taken prior to and during an open day.
- 2 It is making a heavy wooden lid to fit each of its water tanks so that these can be covered during open days.
- 3 Its new guidance specifies that one or two of its officers must inspect the whole site prior to each open day specifically to discover and deal with any safety issues.
- 4 The society's committee has decided in principle to ban children under seven years old from the site. But it has deferred implementing this decision until the society's officers have had a meeting with the three plot holders whose under-seven children regularly visit the site. This is with a view to having the parents confine their children to their own plots. If this is successful the society may choose not to implement this ban.

Generally, society officers should be aware that allotment sites are not as safe as gardens for young unsupervised children and that accidents to them are likely to cause hard questions being addressed to those officers. This is especially acute during open days when people will visit the site who are perhaps less alert to dangers than plot holders. There is a paper on Site Safety on the BAF website self management page at <http://www.barnetalotments.org.uk/selfmanagement/index.php> Those societies which have not already done so should review their safety regime in accordance with that paper and the resources provided at the links.

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