

Meeting Friday 13th January 2023  
Gresty Street Allotments  
At 10.30 am  
Meeting with Anthony Meredith and Dan Lane  
Stoke on Trent Allotment Services

Attending

Nathan Cotton (NC)  
Malcolm Eyre (ME)  
Sarah Hill (SH)  
Dianne Dixon (DD)

Anthony Meredith (AM) Representing Stoke on Trent City Council  
Dan Lane (DL) Representing Stoke on Trent City Council

The Meeting started at 10.45 am, due to the late arrival of Anthony and Dan.

Introductions made by everybody attending the meeting

DL Asked if we were a new Committee.  
ME New this time  
AM Denied knowing anything about a review

A discussion, took place regarding an article written in the Sentinel, indicating a review has been planned for all allotments  
NC asked, who had written the article, dissatisfied with the comments made.

SH Direct quote from Councillor Adams. The review from 2019 was ongoing. We know nothing of this. Received no information.

AM Letters were sent out to all allotments; also the letter, asked if a meeting would be needed.

DL As much information was pushed out to all concerned. If the old committee for Gresty Street didn't hand over the letter or didn't communicate this to the new Committee - can't comment

AM We as a team would be encouraging Self-Managed sites; The Council are not pursuing taking over all of the allotments within Stoke on Trent, impossible job. We wish to work alongside Self-Managed allotment sites. A Site warden, may in the future, be established, on allotment sites and the Site Secretary position will no longer be needed.

SH Asked about the lease for the allotment site. Waiting five years for a new lease

DL The lease needs to be uniform, all the same. All allotment sites have different leases. This will be streamlined in the future.

AM The lease needs finalising by the Council Legal team. All information will be able to be downloaded, once its complete. Posters will be available for all allotments with up-to-date information. AM then went on to discuss what his team are concentrating on: Maintenance of the site, Fees, Application criteria for self-managed sites, as the site will have to apply to continue as self-managed, AM will support with this, Insurance and Risk assessment. AM then went on to the Waiting List that the Council have for allotment sites. Proposing that all new applications will have to go through the Council. If interested in an allotment on Gresty Street, the person must have their name on the Council List. AM has had experiences, in the past, with bad tenants, moving from one site to another, non-payment of rent, and non-compliance with the Tenancy requirements.

NC To confirm - Lease, will all be the same? Need to re-apply to continue to be a self-managed site? Help and support from the Council Team, to apply to continue as a self-managed site?

AM - Confirmed above, but also stated that if the application was denied, then Gresty Street would not be able to apply to be a self-managed site for two years. AM went on to talk about the plot holder of plots 37 & 38- AM advised Anne to speak with the Committee, as we were dealing with her

issues. AM asked for all correspondence to plot holder 37 & 38, to be sent to him.

ME Then went on to explain the procedures already undertaken. The extent, to which the Committee has gone to resolve these issues. The Committee has followed the Tenancy Agreement and Complaint Policy. Explained every step to the plot holder of 37 & 38 and the reasons why. Unfortunately, the decisions are not being accepted by or adhered to by the plot holder.

AM Stated, that the Committee, appear to have followed the process to the full. AM has listened to the appeal. Need to nip this in the bud.

NC A meeting has been arranged with the plot holder of 37 & 38 for 15th January, to discuss things further. NC also mentioned the badger and how the committee are prepared to protect the resident badger. NC also mentioned the biodiversity plan, that the committee are looking to implement, moving forward. Encourage all allotment persons to begin to compost properly. NC also indicated to AM & DL, that the committee have made a decision to stand firm, with the said plot holder.

DL Indicated that Gresty Street Committee, have followed due process. Where is the evidence - letters, emails, keep all correspondence received. No word of mouth at all. Rules changes are proposed - this is why.

ME Since this new committee have come together, we have dealt with fifteen complaints, and have resolved them all. Things are beginning to move forward now,

AM Stated, we are in this all together, and we want to work with you. I was not aware that a new committee had been formed until I received emails from your selves. When you have your AGM, please invite me. Rules and regulations, will all be put in English. The new Lease will adopt Council Rules. Policy and Procedures will become Heads of Terms.

SH Model policies - please send. Can we add to it if needed?

AM We, as a team. Are looking into Risk Assessments, Accounts, and Insurance. Water, if you should have any problems, we will support you. Compost + chippings, we will be doing at some point in the future.

NC We have produced our own website. The committee would like to look at the online shop and how payment can be made. Compost and seeds, would we be able to, in time, sell to the wider community?

DL I will look into selling to the wider community for you. May need special permission for this. I'll get back to you.

NC Went on to say, that, the website has been rebuilt and has a common generic emailing address. All Policies requested to be in place, have been completed and are in place, if needed you can have a copy. Minutes are taken for every meeting completed e.g, AGM; monthly Committee meeting; are all online, for all members to see. We have also installed a Post Box, as another way of communicating with the Committee. We know the full history of Gresty Street, been given full recollection.

DL Your Tenancy Agreement, you are required to use the Council Tenancy Agreement

AM We would like to hold meetings with the committee, and swap ideas. Funding, we could advise what funding is available to you. I feel self-managed sites have become quite insular. If you wish to hold out your hand to the wider community and involve the community in something, maybe in time you could apply to RHS and gain awards, for what you have been doing with the community.

ME We have worked with pre-nursery groups. Ground here has been cleared working with the Police with offenders who have to pay back with Community hours.

AM Could look at, Children in Care, Learning Disability plots, good for your mental health. Teach people new skills. There are college courses available.

NC I had a meeting with Charlotte Eccles, and bounced one or two ideas around. Need a new cafe/meeting area, how this can be achieved. Charlotte stated an architect can draw up plans for your community area. How about two containers, refurbished? May need planning permission for two containers together.

AM I'll ask our property services and get back to you.

ME AGM meeting is coming up. The sites changing, and people are leaving. Sites becoming available, how do we go about filling these sites?

AM GDPR data - give it to the council; If there are five empty plots, I will contact persons on the list, asking permission to give you, the committee, the person's details. You contact them and it is your decision then if you wish to offer an allotment.

NC Rent per year. What will the decision be for rent on the new lease?

DL Proposed rent charge moving forward, could be £200 per acre. Has to go through all due process and absee.

NC The council doesn't do anything for us. We are self-managed. Do any tenders, have to go to the council? Council, we just rent the land. What new benefits would we gain?

DL We would be a constant support to you. Any work that needs doing could be done with discounted rates. Council predominantly charge for the land. We can support keeping plots up to scratch, recycling costs, and tipping costs. Consider becoming a recycling centre. If plots are left a mess, the plot holder can be charged if you as a committee have to put it right before allocating it to someone else. Allotment Law - deterrent.

AM Joint tenancies for all allotment plots will not be allowed. There will be a principal tenant and a co-worker. The principal tenant has sole responsibility for the plot. There will be no right to succession by the co-worker.

NC The plot holder of plots 37 & 38, will be the end of the road this Sunday. The decision is not reversible. Had all the appeals and has been given plenty of time to fulfil the decision. As a compromise, the committee will offer the holder of plots 37 & 38, a spring nature reserve plot. Any more questions?

NC I would like to thank everybody for coming. Thank you to Anthony and Dan. It has been a very productive and informative meeting

The meeting ended at 11.55. am