

WORCESTER ALLOTMENT FORUM

ANNUAL NEWSLETTER 2017

November 2017

INTRODUCTION

Dear Plotholder,

I am once again pleased to write to you as we turn the Allotment year to give you a brief overview of the principal events and Allotment news of the past year.

The Forum has held regular monthly meetings in co-operation with Worcester City Council during the year, helping resolve various Tenant and Neighbour issues, as well as seeking to protect the longer term future of Allotments in Worcester. The overall Plot Occupancy rate has held up well at around 96%, enabling the Council to continue to maintain our Rents at the present level.

If anybody would like to assist your Site Reps in carrying out this important work, then please make yourself known to him/her – I'm sure it will be greatly appreciated

WORCESTER CITY COUNCIL

The Council report as follows: "What a marvellous year for allotments even in the face of a rather dry year. Your allotment site representatives have done a great job in increasing the number of allotment plots both rented and in good cultivation, which benefits us all in so many ways. So I am sure you will join me in thanking them for their hard work. Providing allotments supports many of the aspirations in our City Plan, with two of the themes being 'A Healthy and Active City' and 'Stronger and Connected Communities' and so the Council will continue with its promise to keep annual rent increase below inflation, and look to work with your site reps to spend on improvement works as and when we identify funding. The Council's thanks also go to those of you who have represented our allotment community by taking part in the Worcester Show, and the Allotment Competition. Best wishes for the coming year and we hope you yield great results!" – Warwick Neale, Community Services, WCC.

FORUM CHANGES

Meanwhile John Tyndale, Site Rep from Lansdowne Crescent is expecting to stand-down from this role sometime in 2018 – so if you'd be interested in taking up this role please get in touch directly with him, and he'll be happy to explain what the role comprises.

Regarding Site Reps, matters have been more stable this year with just the following Sites having changed their Site Reps, and which are now represented on the Forum by:-

- Droitwich Road – Dave Butler (Succeeding Dan Rob – our new Roving Rep – see later)
- Windsor Avenue – Maz Williams, though John Lawrence is currently serving as Acting Site Rep.
- Hillborough – Victoria Walford
- Waterworks Road – Louise Robertson
- Green Lane – Position still vacant (with our Thanks to Derrick Freeman in the Acting role for the time being), and
- Pitmaston – Position Vacant; since Reg. Perkins stood down recently after many years of dedicated and valuable service to his site and the Forum. Our Thanks go him for all his hard work, along with our Best Wishes to him for the future.

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Where this is your Site, I hope you have been in contact with your New Representative. If not then please introduce yourself to him / her, who I'm sure will be pleased to get to know you – And please give them your support in your site matters where they are working hard to improve the Allotment Experience for all of you.

To the Plotolders on Green Lane, and Pitmaston sites – please do consider putting yourself forward as your site's new Site Rep. The work isn't hard, and can be very rewarding. If you are interested in taking up one of these opportunities do please get in touch, and I'll be pleased to advise in detail what the role comprises.

Our Thanks are also due to:-

- All the Site Reps, on behalf of us all, the Forum and the Council, for their work and support during the past year.
- Also to thank Dawn Morris, who continues as our Livestock Officer;
- Peter Parry for the fine job he has done in helping get our new web site launched – See: www.worcesterallotments.org.uk
- And to Maz Williams, and Maxine hemming for their contribution and hard work in supporting Peter with the Web Site and in maintaining our Facebook page – See: <https://www.facebook.com/worcestercityallotments/>

PLOTHOLDER REPS

Our Constitution allows for up to four Plotholder Representatives on the Forum to work with, and support our work with the Council. The primary objective of Plotholder Reps is to supplement the work of the Site Reps, and to extend the role of the Forum over and above that of simply supervising the sites, and to help improve the overall enjoyment of having an allotment. Two positions have currently been taken on:-

Roving Rep:- One position which has been taken, is that of the new role of Roving Site Rep, which has been filled by Dan Robb who brings with him many years of Site Rep experience at the Droitwich Road site. His keen and able to lend additional weight & support to any Site Rep with site issues, whether they be regarding excessive Vacant Plots, difficult Tenants, Site Maintenance & Security, or argumentative Neighbours. Where such difficulties exist, and the Site Rep is unsure how best to progress, then Dan's experience is available to help them resolve the matter to best effect.

Secretary: As fulfilled last year by Martin Hodgson from Foxwell Street.

We currently have two Plotholder Representative vacancies, so if you'd be interested in putting something back into the Worcester Allotments, to help improve the Allotment Experience for all, then please get in touch to find out more about how such a role might be established for you, and how you could help.

WAITING LIST AND VACANCIES

The situation has continued well over the past year, largely due to the efforts of your Site Reps, and the Forum working closely with the WCC. In summary during recent months the number of Vacant Plots has fallen steadily during the year from around 90 in January to near 50 in September. Meanwhile the Waiting List has grown steadily from just over 80 to almost 110 in the same period.

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Unfortunately due to uneven distribution it continues difficult to reduce these numbers. Looking at the Council's Vacancies recent reports most Sites have fewer Vacancies than Waiters.

However if you know anybody who'd be interested in taking on a plot – do encourage them to contact the Hive, or your local Site Rep and get their name on the Waiting List – the wait is unlikely to be long.

SITE IMPROVEMENTS

The Forum continues to work closely with the Council to effect improvements to all our Sites across the City. However we all continue to experience financial restrictions as you must expect in the current financial climate. Nonetheless success has been achieved at various sites, including:

- The Five sites in the south of the City, where Sec-106 development sourced funds are seeing a wide number of improvements progressing on these sites, with more due in the coming months.
- The Perdiswell's CCTV long running project has now been brought to a successful conclusion and is already started to prove its worth.

Looking to the future there are plans for various other site improvements including: new Utility areas and gateways promised for Northwick Road, and a Car Park within Hillborough, all 'in due course' as funds become available.

SECURITY

Continues to be a concern for us all. We continue to work with the Council, and local Police to improve matters and to reduce theft, vandalism and fly-tipping.

Our local PCSO's continue to advise on precautionary measures, which includes: – Do not keep anything valuable in your sheds – Mark your property to enable tracing if stolen and offered for resale – Keep your eyes open for unauthorised people on your site, and challenge anyone you see acting suspiciously, or report them to your Site Rep.

Your cooperation is essential in restricting and helping control these problems. I'm sure your local PCSO will be happy to attend your site to assist. Your Site Rep will be able to arrange this – so if you feel there is a need, speak to him / her.

ALLOTMENTS PUBLICITY

Maz Williams and Maxine Hemming are primarily responsible for keeping the Facebook page up-to-date, so should you have any article(s), photos etc. you'd like to see on it, or have ideas for such, promoting and encouraging Allotmenting then please get in touch with Maz or Maxine directly. They'll be pleased to hear from you.

NEW WEB SITE & FACEBOOK PAGE

The Forum Allotments Web Site - www.worcesterallotments.org.uk, as well as a Facebook page <https://www.facebook.com/worcestercityallotments/> for the City's Allotments, which are both live. Please familiarise yourself with them, as they contains much valuable information about our

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allotments, the Council's Policies, up-to-date Vacancy, and Waiting List information, Site Maps, photographs as well as site news and promotion.

WORCESTER SHOW

The Worcester Show is run by a committee of volunteers meeting most months, and comprises of the Friends of Gheluvelt Park; the Duckworth Worcestershire Trust; the Council, City Allotments Representatives, and several local residents.

Detailed returns from this year's Show tell of over 13,000 visitors! With more than 140 Entrants submitting in excess of 820 Competition Exhibits. From the Forum's 900 plots (about 750 Plotolders) we saw 204 Competition Exhibits from just 9 Plotolders representing only 7 Sites.

I hope we can do better in 2018 – Remember growing can be fun – The better you grow the better your Plot(s) and Site(s) will be. And 'joe-public' do like to see the results of your efforts, and are often inspired by them to follow in your tracks and take up Allotmenteeing.

The Show Committee are now beginning to look to next year's Show, when they'd like to see even greater participation and competition from more of our Allotment Sites and Plotolders. – Keep your eyes open for the 2018 Schedule whose publication date will be **– Around Christmas - so no excuse for not having time to prepare**

If you can put forward any ideas or suggestions to improve the range of Show Classes, competition categories etc. then I'd be delighted to hear from you, and will put them forward to the Show Committee for their consideration for inclusion in next year's show. Who knows you might even be a winner yourself.

Further updates via our own Web Site & Facebook page, as well as through the Worcester Show's website / Facebook page. www.worcestershow.org.uk / www.facebook.com/worcestershow

This year's winners' trophies are now on display in their cabinet in the Guildhall, with names and photographs of the winners receiving their prizes. For Further Info: info@worcestershow.org.uk

NEW ALLOTMENTS SOFTWARE AT WCC

Update – Training has now been carried out for a small select group of Site Reps – more will follow in due course. The Council have now implemented the add-on extension to their Allotment Management software, which is hoped will lead to improvements in their management, and a reduction in the manpower burden on the WCC, in order to help to keep our rents at acceptable levels. The principal improvement looked for in the coming year should enable your Site Rep to have direct controlled, secure access to the Allotment data-base enabling further operational efficiencies to be realised.

ALLOTMENT COMPETITION 2017

Early this year a couple of Site Reps set out to revive the annual Allotment Competition with the assistance of all Site Reps. The Forum, Worcester Allotment Shop, and the Hop Market Trophy shop sponsored this year's event. 154 Plot entries were judged in late June by Mr Bill Simpson MBE, assisted by Mr Dan Robb. A Presentation evening was organised for 27th September at Worcester

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Guildhall. The Mayor of Worcester presented the Cups and main awards. This was supported by a visual presentation to illustrate the criteria used for judging.

Plotholder Entries & Awards - - -

In the Best Site class it was a little disappointing in that only 6 of the 23 eligible sites entered. The criteria considered the site's condition in respect of it being clean, neat and tidy with clearly defined paths, well managed plots and very little abandoned material on site. The Cup was awarded to the Timberdine site, with Droitwich Road second, and Northwick Road and Windsor Avenue equal in third place.

The Silver Cup for Best Full Plot and Gold Award went to 1st Silver cup Brian Sampson (Droitwich Rd), with further Gold Awards to: 2nd Place to Mrs Margaret Jones (Northwick Rd), and Joint 3rd:- to Lewis Vaggas, (Old Northwick Lane), Jonathan Minton (Droitwich Rd), EE Knight (Northwick Rd), Ethna Sampson (Droitwich Rd). Full details of all Cup and Award winners are to be found on the Forum Web Site.

We are hoping that everyone will be keener to enter next year, and that we can find sponsors who can provide more prizes in the future. It is felt that the community spirit on sites which participate will consequently be greatly improved. We will be looking for any assistance that can be offered to make this event a continuing success.

ALLOTMENT SHOP

The Worcester Allotment and Garden Association is open to all gardeners and allotmenters in Worcester, not just Allotment Plotholders, advise us:-

As ever they have a wide selection of 'what you need' for your allotment & garden at very keen prices. At the end of January a wide selection of seed potatoes will be available; and always available are a wide range of seeds, fertilisers, composts, netting, herbicides, pesticides and sundry items.

Come and see us, our prices are very keen, with net annual profits donated to local Charities - We are by the canal bridge on Lansdowne Road Allotment Site open 10.00 to 12.00 Tuesday, Thursday and Sunday each week.

LOOKING AHEAD

To 2018: We look forward to continuing the development and enhancement of our working relationship & practices with the City Council, with positive results for us all. Improved working methods and efficiencies, coupled with greater involvement by our fine team of Site & Plotholder Reps, are seen as the way forward for us all to continue to enjoy our allotments, with ever improving facilities, at realistic and acceptable rents.

CALENDAR FOR 2017-18

- Annual Rent Payment Deadline was 31 Oct-17, so if you've not already paid, then please do so immediately to renew your Tenancy, else you run a high risk of losing your Plot!
- Forum General Meetings 2017-18 (2nd Wednesday in Month – Jan / Mar / May / Jul / Sep / Nov)
- Forum Exec Meetings (2nd Wednesday in month – Feb / Apr / Jun / Oct)

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- AGM 2018 xx-Feb-18 (TBA)
- Allotment Competition Entry Date (Deadline TBA)
- Allotment Competition Judgement Day (TBA)
- Worcester Show Entry Date Deadline (TBA)
- Worcester Show 11-12 Aug-18
- End of Allotment Year 30-Sep-18

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Will be held early in the New Year, on a date in February 2018, which will be announced shortly

Volunteers & Site Reps will be required to make appropriate arrangements. If you'd be interested in helping with this then please make yourself known to the Forum through your Site Rep.

FINALLY (Well almost)

We hope you enjoy your Site in the coming year and would remind you that at least two thirds of each plot should be in cultivation, the remainder can be fallow as long as perennial weeds are kept under control. The detailed Minimum Cultivation Standard can be found on the Forum's Web Site. All paths between plots need to be maintained by adjacent tenants to comply with Health & Safety regulations. Site Gates should be kept closed at all times to avoid unwelcome visitors and breaches of security.

THANKS TO WCC

Finally my Thanks go to the City, most especially to Warwick Neale and Alex Dentith for all their hard work, and forbearance in working with us to provide, and maintain our allotments during 2017.

Chris Thorp, Chairman

Worcester Allotments Forum (8th November 2017)

Contact via: chris29thorp@gmail.com

WCC Allotments Forum new Web Site: www.worcesterallotments.org.uk

WCC Allotments Forum Facebook Page: <https://www.facebook.com/worcestercityallotments/>