

Starting an Allotment Association

One of the first steps to improving an allotment site is the establishment of an allotment association. While this involves a reasonable time commitment from a number of people, it can bring a number of benefits:-

- An association is able to apply for grants from external funding bodies
- It may be able to get better rates on insurance, seeds etc.
- It allows the allotment users to have a say in the management of the site.
- It gives the site an united voice

An association must have a constitution; this is a document which sets out the structure and objectives of the organisation. The association also needs to have a set of rules. Most funding bodies will ask to see a copy of the association's constitution together with any application, so it is important that it is of an acceptable standard. A model constitution and set of rules are attached; alternatively your local Council for Voluntary Service or Rural Community Council should be able to help you produce a constitution.

An association is managed by a committee, which is elected by the members at the Annual General Meeting. The committee is legally responsible for the actions of the organisation. The committee consists of Officers, who have a specific role, and ordinary members who support them. All committee members have equal voting rights, except for the chair of a committee meeting, who has a casting vote if there is a tied vote.

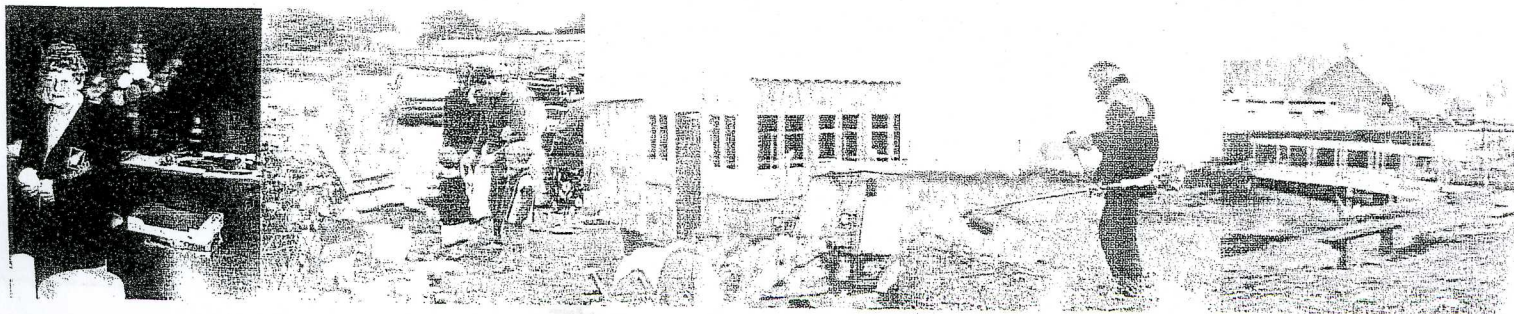
The duties of the officers are:-

Chairperson:

- Provide leadership.
- Set the Agenda for meetings.
- Welcome and involve new members.
- Ask for apologies for absence.
- Follow the Agenda and control the discussion to ensure that everyone has had a chance to put forward their views.
- Summarise the decisions which have been made by the committee on each point of the agenda.
- Sign the approved minutes of the last meeting.
- Set a date for the next meeting.
- Write an Annual Report in co-operation with the secretary.
- Sign cheques for the organisation with one other committee member.

Secretary

- Liase with the Chair to prepare an agenda for the meeting and send it to members.
- Make the physical arrangements for the meeting (booking rooms, preparing any documents).
- Ensure that the rules for calling meetings which are set out in the constitution are observed.
- Check that there are enough committee members present at each meeting to make the meeting quorate (ie able to vote on decisions - this will be defined in the constitution).
- Take minutes detailing the decisions made at the meeting and any action points. These should be agreed by the Chair, and ideally should be sent out shortly after the meeting to remind members of the action points. Some groups prefer to send them out together with the agenda for the following meeting.
- Record attendance at the meeting.



Treasurer

- Handle financial transactions: pay bills, prepare cheques and co-sign together with another member of the committee, issue receipts, count and bank monies
- Maintain the financial records and monitor funds.
- Report income and expenditure at meetings
- Liaise with the bank to make any changes to the bank mandate (people authorised to sign cheques)
- Draw up the annual accounts. These should be passed on to an Auditor, then presented to the Annual General Meeting.
- Deal with charitable registration and Gift Aid if appropriate

The fact that the committee is responsible for running the association does not mean that they should do everything themselves – they may delegate responsibility for specific tasks to individuals outside the committee or to sub-committees. This is especially advisable if there are large tasks such as organising an open day.

Most committees meet on a monthly basis. All members of the association should be invited to the Annual General Meeting; there may also be open meetings during the year to which members are invited.