

Leeds District Allotment Gardeners Federation

The future of allotments in Leeds – questionnaire

We'd like to know what you think about the future of allotments in Leeds – your views are very important. **Please read the information above each question and then tick yes or no.** (All personal information you give us will be made anonymous – it will not be possible to tell which answers are yours)

This year (2013/2014), the basic rent paid to the council for a full-sized plot is £38.50 plus extra site charges (for example water charges and, for self-managed sites, insurance and other charges, depending on facilities). Next year (2014/2015), the basic rent goes up to £58, the following year to £64 and in 2016/2017 to £72. In these years, you may have to pay extra site charges to your allotment association as well as the increased rent. The council also wants to reduce the concession for state pensioners to 20%. All other concessions would be 50%, including for people receiving State Pension credits.

1. **Do you agree with the council's proposed rent increases?** Yes No

This year, as in previous years, self-managed sites keep 66.6% of the rent collected to help pay for managing, maintaining and improving the site. This amounts to £25.64 per full-sized plot. In 2014/2015, the 66.6% will be reduced to 40% and in 2015/2016 to 36%. By 2016/2017 it will be 32% – this will amount to £23.04 per plot. This is slightly less money per plot than we get this year but may be worth even less when rising costs and inflation are taken into account.

2. **Do you agree with the council's proposal that self-managed sites keep only 32% of rent by 2016/2017?** Yes No
3. **In 2014/2015 when the proposed rent increases start, will this extra financial burden cause you to give up part of or the whole plot?** Yes No

We were formed in 1917 to bring together allotment associations across Leeds and the district to work with the council for the benefit of the council and plot holders. We believe that by continuing to work with the council through the Parks and Countryside department we can help to improve the allotment service, reduce costs, introduce new ways of making income and keep rent increases to a minimum.

4. **Do you support us to work in partnership with the council to help improve the allotment service in Leeds?** Yes No

High Court judicial review

Judicial review is a way of trying to have the council's proposals declared unlawful because they may not keep to section 10 of the 1950 Allotment Act. This act states that allotment rents cannot be increased unfairly compared with charges for similar leisure services, for example bowls, swimming, tennis and football. This could be the first time such a case has been brought in times of central government cutbacks, so it could be argued that cutbacks are an 'extreme case' as defined by the 1950 act. We have asked our solicitors for advice about taking the council to the High Court and are waiting for their reply.

Taking the council to the High Court like this is very risky and we are not guaranteed to win. Also, we don't have enough money to do this. For a legal firm to take on the case at no financial cost to us, we would have to identify any of our members who are eligible for legal aid. Or we could raise a fighting fund to pay for the court action.

5. **Would you be willing to donate to this fighting fund?** **Yes** **No**

Some of our members may be eligible for legal aid – with our support such a group of people could lead our campaign. This is a complex and sensitive issue. If you think you might be eligible for legal aid and are willing to take legal action, please get in touch with Ian Wood for a confidential discussion (134 Gledhow Lane, Leeds LS8 1PG, phone 0113 266 6748, or email chair.ldgf@gmail.com).

6. **Your views**

Please use this space to tell us anything that's important to you – particularly if you have any ideas about how allotments in Leeds could be better managed and developed.

We would like to keep you informed about our progress. You can go to our website to look for updates (www.ldgf.org.uk) and you can ask your site secretary to keep you up to date. If you would also like to receive your own personal updates, please give your address and postcode or your email address (or both).

Your address and postcode

Your email address

Once you've finished, please give this paper back to your site secretary. You can also email or post it to secretary.ldgf@gmail.com or Judy Turley, 29 Fearnville Terrace, Leeds LS8 3DT.

Many thanks and best wishes

Ian Wood

Chair, Leeds and District Allotment Gardeners Federation

