

Site visits to check cultivation standards

It is important to remember that your tenancy agreement requires you to manage and maintain your plot for producing vegetables, fruit and flowers.

The Society manages the sites on behalf of our landlord, New Mills Town Council, and it is our duty to make sure the plots are used for their intended purpose. We also need to have consideration for other plot holders who might be affected if nearby plots deteriorate and for local people on our waiting list, some of whom wait years for a chance to garden an allotment.

As in previous years, there will be two site visits in 2018 to check your plot is being cultivated, kept relatively free of weeds and being used for its intended purpose. The inspectors are two experienced volunteers from the other site. They use a simple method to calculate the proportion of the plot under cultivation [including land used for sheds, greenhouses, cold frames, water butts, compost heaps etc.] and the proportion of the plot that is tidy i.e. weeded and well maintained. This is for the whole plot, including the growing beds, paths and structures. Although a separate Health and Safety risk assessment is carried out at a different time, obvious risks can be picked up and noted whilst the inspectors are looking at how tidy the plot is. The scores are shown as a % cultivated and a % tidy, thus each plot has a potential total score of 200 at each inspection. The Chair acts as moderator between both site visits.

If, for whatever reason, you have been unable to maintain your plot as you would like to, please inform either the Chair or the Secretary prior to the inspection. Your circumstances will be taken into account. Similarly, if you are going to be away in the weeks prior to the inspection, then again please let either the Chair or the Secretary know. In either situation, a proposed plan of action with timescales would be required.

If you are growing plants that could be misconstrued as 'weeds', e.g. green manure, then it would be useful if the area could be labelled as such.

The results of the inspections are then considered by the committee. Tenancy start dates and any extenuating circumstances that have been brought to its attention are included at this time. Letters [usually by email] are sent to ploholders where problems have been encountered and to ploholders who have made great strides on their plots.

Prior to 2017, the inspections took place in late May and early September, but this was changed due to members' comments that the May inspection was too early and before main planting had taken place and the September inspection was at the end of the school holidays, when plot holders may have been away, but weeds were still busy growing. The proposed timetable for 2018 is as follows, though this may change after our February general meeting. Members will be informed of any changes and given advance notice of any inspections.

Early June: visits to each site by volunteer members from the other site to see if the plots have been prepared for the growing season and some early crops are in the ground.

Early October: A further visit to check that cultivation and general tidiness have been maintained and any crops grown are being harvested, as appropriate for the time of year.

If you have any concerns about the inspections, or if at any time of year your personal circumstances mean your plot will not be tended for a while, please contact the Secretary or Chair as early as possible. The Society may be able to arrange some help or make some suggestions.

Secretary: Steve Evans email: secretary@newmillsallotments.org.uk (Plot 14 Hague Bar)

Chair: David Brown email: mtlanin@supanet.com (Plot 9 Ollersett)