

Guidelines for the formation of an allotment association.

The first step is to discuss the idea with the local parish council member who has responsibility for open spaces and allotments. It is essential to get support from this member before attempting to set up an association. The council member will be an important figure for the initial and formation stages.

The next step is to convene a public open meeting and invite all interested persons to attend. The purpose of the meeting is to discuss plans for allotments and to establish the basis for setting up an allotment association. At the meeting all those attending will be asked to record their names and addresses and contact details and to indicate if they want an allotment, and if they are willing to become a member of an allotment association.

At the meeting the chairman should be the local councillor who will introduce the session and read an extract of the Small Holdings and Allotments Act 1908 and how this council intends to provide a site, and what it expects the plot holders to undertake as their obligations either as individuals or as a body represented by an association.

At the meeting an outline of the benefits of an association need to be explained and at the end of questions a show of hands to indicate the level of support.

If support is good then a working party needs to be set up to work out the details of the association. It will need to appoint a leader and agree what it intends to do and by when and how this will be conveyed to the future members.

The working party will be asked to prepare a constitution for the association. The headings below are suggestions which need to be developed to suit your needs:

- The purpose of the association and its name;
- The organization and administration processes;
- For members a statement saying who can join and how to resign or be removed;
- Subscriptions and membership fees when and how they are set and any discounts;
- Officers who and how appointed and for how long and how they are removed;
- Rules for membership, very simple must be allotment holders present or past;
- Meetings annual and other events;
- Rules for allotments - some clubs have a statement, which says refer to notice board for all current rules and regulations. Add something about dispute resolution and appeals (the Worthing example is a typical one, otherwise look at the web).

Have a look at the "Now Dig This" leaflet for some ideas. Be careful, the constitution once drawn up is difficult to change and amend so put in something about how it can be changed, for example at the AGM and voted by a majority present, by the committee by unanimous vote or.....

Having prepared and agreed a constitution and appointed officers you can then formalise this and use it to secure a bank account. This is quite a complicated process so go and talk to a local bank to see what they want.

At your public meeting make sure you have this stuff and make a plan to join NSALG as soon as possible. ARI cannot give legal advice so you should check any legal matters with NSALG or a qualified Solicitor.