

DEPUTATION ONE – LEEDS AND DISTRICT GARDENER’S FEDERATION.

THE LORD MAYOR: Good afternoon and welcome to today’s Council meeting. Please now make your speech to Council, which should not be longer than five minutes, and please begin by introducing the people in your deputation.

MR I WOOD: My Lord Mayor and Fellow Councillors, my name is Ian Wood, I am the Chair of the Leeds and District Gardeners’ Federation, and this is Phil Gomersall, who is the Publicity Officer for the Federation.

Many thanks for this opportunity to speak to you today.

The Leeds and District Gardeners’ Federation Executive Committee fully supports our delegation. At its meeting last Wednesday they made it clear that we had to say to you we are the voice of the self-managed allotment movement in Leeds, and we run about 65% of the allotment plots in the city.

The Federation welcomes the Feed Leeds initiative, which seeks to encourage residents of the city to grow their own food. We firmly believe, however, that no resources from allotments’ section of the Parks and Countryside Department should be spent on the Feed Leeds initiative. We question whether people really want to grow vegetables and fruit in public parks, where they are vulnerable to vandalism, pollution and contamination, and whether they want to grow their radishes on roundabouts.

My own involvement with community gardening and communal food growing began in 1976. We could not make it work then and our subsequent experience suggests that it will not work now. On the other hand, the allotment movement began in the mid-19th Century and has been the proven model of local food production ever since.

Local food growers need the security and responsibility of growing their own food on a dedicated and safe allotment site where they are responsible for their own plots. When you have a community model of cultivation where many people are responsible for a plot then, in fact, nobody is responsible.

There are 1,500 people on allotment waiting lists in the city and yet there are still many City controlled allotment sites with derelict plots. Why would the Council support this new Community Gardening Initiative when current allotment plots lie derelict? Why are we not responding to this huge demand for allotment plots, this 1,500 people on the waiting list? Even the long promised post of Allotment Manager in the Parks and Countryside Department is apparently due to be lost to this new and unproved Community Gardening Initiative.

This is a reminder that not every new initiative that comes up the M1 from London is worth supporting. I ask you to support our allotments in Leeds, remembering that we were in the national vanguard developing the self-managed allotment movement nationally. Allotments, please, fully supported by the Council; not nut trees in public parks and radishes on roundabouts.

Thank you very much indeed. *(Applause)*

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Lewis.

COUNCILLOR J LEWIS: Thank you, Lord Mayor. I move that the matter be referred to Executive Board for further consideration.

COUNCILLOR G LATTY: I second, Lord Mayor.

THE LORD MAYOR: All those in favour? (*A vote was taken*) CARRIED. Thank you for attending and for what you have said. You will be kept informed of the consideration which your comments will receive. Good afternoon.