

ASHFORD ALLOTMENT SOCIETY
TRADING STORE

MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY REPORT
SEPTEMBER 2015

MEMBERSHIP REPORT

As of 12th September 2015, paid-up membership of the Ashford Allotment Trading Store stood at ...

Membership Numbers

<u>2013</u>	<u>2014</u>	<u>2015</u>
48	92	118*

Membership Revenue

<u>2013</u>	<u>2014</u>	<u>2015</u>
£192.00	£368.00	£463.00*

* Figures based upon up-to-date new membership and some previously available information.

MEMBERSHIP SUMMARY

Since the last meeting, all available information and member details, etc. inherited from previous membership lists have now been consolidated into one new Membership Register. This new register is held by the Membership Secretary.

Opportunities continue to be taken to update missing membership details and paid-up annual fees as and when members appear during Trading Store opening times. The 'New Member Form' has been used at the Trading Store to gather member's contact information and outstanding membership fees, but has also kindly been sent-out by Eileen Law with the Tenant information pack to new ploholders. The Membership Secretary would again like to thank all customers of the Trading Store for their excellent co-operation and patience for completing the forms and updating their information.

GROUP MEMBERSHIP

During the past few months, a small number of garden and allotment groups have approached the Trading Store directly regarding the prospect of 'Group Membership'. In the majority of cases, these groups comprise allotment societies or garden societies located outside of the Ashford Borough area, but are keen to take advantage of Trading Store membership and the benefits it offers. In all cases so far, members of these groups had been wrongly advised that group membership of the Trading Store was available for any size group in return for a flat fee, but nothing to this end had been agreed in Committee. Therefore, in cases where prospective group members have attended the Trading Store on an open day, individual membership has been offered for 2015 (and in most cases taken-up), with a clear explanation that group membership doesn't actually exist at present, but will be discussed in Committee at some future point.

Group membership offers distinct advantages to the Trading Store, but also has its disadvantages. Obvious advantages include the increased trade and income through sales, plus the wider promotion of allotment gardening and gardening in general. Disadvantages include an imbalance of fees, whereby unless the group membership fee was substantial, a member of a larger group would enjoy the same benefits of the Trading Store, but might pay only a fraction of the £4 annual fee currently paid by individual members. However, increased sales to a wider membership may reduce the significance of the annual fee.

Group membership also demands more administrative control to prevent misuse, but this can be managed easily using the membership register. Note: The number of groups showing an interest is actually quite small and has dropped to zero over the last few months.

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To resolve the issue of group membership, I propose the following items for discussion

- Group membership to be formally discussed, proposed and accepted/rejected
- Seek advice/ideas from other allotment societies operating group membership schemes
- Suggested annual group membership fee of £48 (regardless of size of group)
- One unique 'Group Membership' card to be issued to each group
- Each group to nominate one person to hold the membership card
- Group members must present the group membership card when making purchases
- Group members can transfer to individual membership at any time
- Group membership to develop by osmosis rather than any particular 'campaign'

The alternative proposal would be to leave the existing system of individual membership in-place and abandon the idea of group membership.

2016 TRADING STORE MEMBERSHIP CARDS

Over the past few months, despite gathering a large number of member contact details and outstanding annual fees, the new membership register continues to identify a random assortment of missing membership cards, unused membership numbers and also a significant number of members who appear to be no longer using the Trading Store.

It is therefore proposed to cleanse the data we have collected at the end of the year and revise the existing membership 'yellow card' system with a view to its replacement in 2016 with personalised 'credit card' style membership cards.

I therefore propose to obtain 250 plastic 'credit card' style membership cards and methodically replace the existing 'yellow card' system, commencing at the turn of the year. These cards will be of the same shape and style as a standard credit card and offer greater durability than the existing laminated cards.

Each card will identify the Allotment Trading Store member, the paid annual fee and will have a name strip and a signature strip and a unique member number. The design is not yet finalised, but an example is shown below.



All new members will be issued with the new style card, pay their annual fee and their contact details will be added to the membership register. Existing members will be issued with a new style card as they renew their membership, pay their annual fee and provide any missing details on the membership register. Old membership cards can then be handed-in or discarded. The membership register will be updated with the new membership numbers.

Alex Fraser – Trading Store Membership Secretary