

Where has all the money gone!

Posted by Newsline - 09 Apr 2013 13:52

Newsline

Tom Taylor

Reporter

In October 2011 we were informed that a group - Eastwood Nursery Allotments Association (ENAA) had leased a substantial section of land from East Renfrewshire Council.

After much hard work by volunteers on the site, in April 2012 we were then informed that “In a few weeks’ time we would see gardeners starting to sow their first seeds of spring, and this area will become an active and attractive piece of the park” and that in addition a herb garden had been created on the site.

Almost £70,000 in public grants has been received by this group to develop what we would know as good old fashioned ‘allotments’

With the appearance this week of the spring sunshine we went along to see how well these allotments have developed over the twelve months that have elapsed.

When we visited the site we could find no discernable signs of activity by ‘actual’ plot holders in the past year.

This is how the site looks this week.

Papers that Newsline have obtained indicate that there has been £68,795 acquired by way of grants from public organisations. £3600 has been paid for drainage and £225 paid for compost beds.

Of the remaining money £31,546 has been earmarked for connection to water and electricity supply, greenhouse foundations, greenhouse, top soil, individual plot fencing, pathways and disabled surfaces, poly tunnel, communal shed, outreach materials, community event, outreach officer, weighing scales and project management and yet all that appears to be left is a bank balance of £4868.55 and £169.70 in petty cash.

We found no evidence of buildings, greenhouses, plot fencing etc.

These papers also indicate that this sum includes £29,548 that was received via a grant from CSGN (Central Scotland Green Network) and paid to TRA, the chair of which is Lisa Marie Robertson and apparently she holds the audited accounts for these monies.

TRA refers to Thornliebank Residents Association, of which the chair (Lisa Marie Robertson) is also the secretary of ENAA and she is also the treasurer of East Renfrewshire - Disability Action.

Which raises the question, why did monies intended for ENAA end up in the accounts of the TRA?

As TRA's are statutory bodies we have requested to see a copy of their recent accounts.

Enquiries have revealed that a number of people have concerns with regards to other matters.

Newsline has requested comments from the following, amongst others:

1) Iain McLean, Head of Planning - who was referred to by the secretary to the ENAA, as having been involved in the preparation of a new constitution and stating that they could exclude the public from the AGM.

ERC - PR Department refused to answer our questions put to Ian McLean and referred us back to the association.

2) Lisa Marie Robertson, Secretary to the Association

Despite our questions being directed to the secretary, her only response has been she 'would need to put it to the committee'. Newsline has since pointed out our enquiries are centred on 'her' actions and not the committee's, but she has still failed to respond.

3) Councillor Vincent Waters, Convernor of the Environment.

The Cllr has ignored our request and failed to respond.

As a consequence of this silence we have been unable to obtain answers to the following questions.

- Why was it necessary to place a bouncer on the door at the AGM as it is normally incumbent on these associations to hold their meetings in public?
- Why was it felt necessary for the secretary to call the police to remove a member of the public who had simply requested entry to the AGM?
- Why were members of the local community excluded from the AGM yet Cllr Vincent Waters was invited and chaired the meeting at one point.
- Why was it necessary to alter their constitution to include such things as the advancement of the arts, heritage, culture or science. The relief of those in need by reason of age, ill-health, disability, financial hardship or other disadvantage,
- The association's secretary stated that ERC had been heavily involved in the preparation of their constitution. Why would this be so, do ERC not have a potential conflict as the landlords.
- Why did the association's secretary state that Iain McLean, Head of Planning at ERC had advised that members of the public could be excluded from the AGM?
- Why have personal associations that may be relevant not been declared?

- Why will the ENAA's secretary not speak with Newsline on this matter?
- Why will ERC's PR Section not speak with Newsline on this matter?

Given the sums of public money involved, should total transparency not be paramount.

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Re: Where has all the money gone!

Posted by Newsline - 12 Apr 2013 13:25

We keep returning to this very unusual AGM and in this instance wonder why Councillor Waters was present in the first place, permitted entry and indeed we are informed chaired the meeting at one stage - and local residents were barred.

Whilst not a question that was put directly to Cllr Miller he did provide some insight "It was also a surprise to hear that Cllr Waters was present as, if he was there as a local Cllr, then I can only assume Cllrs Fletcher and Wallace were also invited";

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Re: Where has all the money gone!

Posted by Newsline - 12 Apr 2013 14:25

The resident who was barred from entry and joining the association, on seeing Cllr Waters enter the building specifically asked why he was permitted entry and residents were not.

The reply came that he is the "convenor of the environment";.

When he again questioned why as to just Cllr Waters was being permitted entry he was again informed "Convenor of Environment"; - "Landlords";.

Indeed as has been reported to us the replies that have been made to one side legitimate and quietly spoken questions, would sit well with the other side in a typical Glaswegian 'stairheid rammy'.

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Re: Where has all the money gone!

Posted by Newsline - 12 Apr 2013 15:08

This one word response, perhaps spoken in a state of rage and stairheid Sarcasm "landlords";
; may provide an
insight as to the thought process concerning Cllr Waters attendance.

Does this indicate that the other two Cllrs were not invited as they were not convenors and Cllr Waters is, therefore attending in his official capacity on behalf of the Administration of East Renfrewshire Council - Who are indeed the landlords.

Which then brings into question, does anyone know or indeed understand the relationship between landlord and tenant.

The landlord (ERC) rents out the land and the tenant (ENAA) pays the rent and complies with the rental agreement. The landlord never gets involved in their tenants affairs and certainly does not send a representative to chair their AGM's - even for a limited period.

Is this not called a conflict of interest?

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Re: Where has all the money gone!

Posted by Newsline - 12 Apr 2013 15:31

We understand that Cllr Waters was approached at the AGM and it was highlighted to him that members of the public were being excluded.

His response was "You are speaking to the wrong guy";....."What does it say in the constitution";.

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Re: Where has all the money gone!

Posted by Newsline - 12 Apr 2013 15:34

Are there some underlying associations that should have been declared to the membership of the association. We think so but you will require to read on in order to find out who and what.

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