

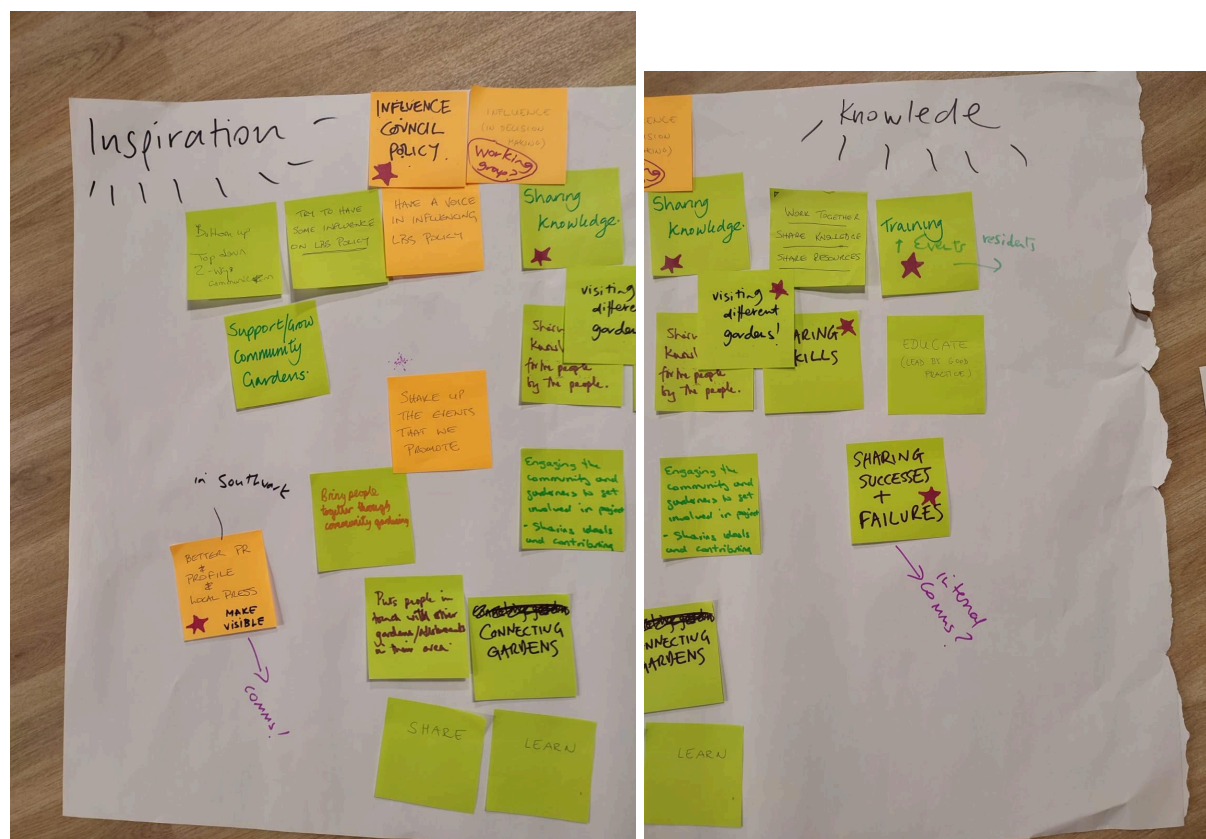
## Walworth Community Garden

### Discussion: what the network does and should do!

29th March 2022

#### What does the network do?

About 10 members came together on Tuesday 29th March 2022 to talk about the network of community gardens that make up WCG, what it is that is currently valued and which these steering group members understand the network to do, and what the network could/should do but aren't at the moment. Then the group discussed what should be considered a current priority.



Blue text indicates wishes for things which aren't currently done; stars (\*) indicate priorities of the group in the short term. Some points in purple can be taken forward to the next, comms, workshop.

#### INSPIRATION

- Bottom up - top down ; 2 way communication
- Support/grow community gardens
- Try to have some influence on LBS policy
- Bring people together through gardening
- Puts people in touch with other gardens/allotments in the area

- Connecting gardens
- Engaging the community and gardeners to get involved in the project - sharing ideals and contributing
- Better PR/Profile/Local press - make WCG more visible → external comms
- Have a voice in influencing London Borough Southwark policy\*

## **KNOWLEDGE**

- Sharing knowledge - for the people, by the people\*
- Education (lead by good practice)
- Visiting different gardens\*
- Training and events to engage residents\*
- Sharing successes and failures\* → internal comms
- Shake up the events that we promote

## **PARTICIPATING**

- Know what the network doesn't do
- Help you feel like you are not alone
- Understand what the network asks of the organisers/contributors
- Membership - be clearer on benefits/responsibilities

## **RESOURCES**

- Sharing ideas and skills
- Exchanging tools and other resources
- Create power\*
- Make more green areas useful and practical
- Biodiversity awareness / sustainability
- Good practice 'manuals'
- More secured funding

The priorities focussed on the sharing of knowledge so that people could become more confident to coordinate their gardens, and understand where things had gone well and not so well on other gardens, or according to other gardeners. There was also a strong feeling that the network does and should continue to focus on building power - in membership, visibility, and voice!

## **Role of the coordinator**

The coordinator contributes to the effective running of the network, but what does the network think would be most valuable so that it can function according to its principles and values? So that the sharing between members can continue without upsetting their peer relationships? And so that the network can thrive into the future?

**These roles were suggested focus areas of the coordinator to facilitate a network that thrives, and are just the beginning of the conversation:**

- Finding out how best to support gardens - this could be through visiting gardens regularly and checking in with people
- Fundraising
- Admin - core stuff
- Connect people who otherwise wouldn't meet
- Being responsible to make sure things happen
- Being the accountable one for matters concerning the network's health
- Informing people and being proactive to find info out
- Delegating tasks
- Potentially not chasing funding/reports as this defines what the network does and constrains time of the coordinator.

There was discussion of the essential stuff that really needs a go-to person, for example the admin, and being responsible for the overall running of the network, as well as holding a general sense of what needs to be done, delegating where appropriate and checking on progress of tasks. As a coordinator being present 'on the ground' was important to some; it means they can see how things work and can listen to concerns of gardeners and bring these into defining their coordination role. Funding was seen as an important role to be held by the coordinator, with a suggestion to deprioritise applications/reports and focus on other things, including following a strategy which prioritizes the vision - drafted and to soon be revisited - and enabling people to connect.

**Participation**

To try and figure out why people would want to join, and so to talk about the virtues to the network externally and when approaching residents, people said what gave them the drive to be involved. These can be helpful to show what needs to be there to make sure people keep on coming back e.g. joy needs to be part of it so people feel happy being involved, and reciprocal relationships so that people can show they value each other, as well as an understanding of the values people have being similar to their own (so perhaps creating places to talk about the big and important things!)

**List of Motivations: why get involved?**

- Finding people with shared values
- Meeting different people
- To get support to set up gardens
- It feels good to do things with/for others
- Feel valued in the community
- Like to share
- Like to make people happy

- Together we have a bigger voice on issues that matter
- We can self-organise as a community

Practically speaking, on the condition that:

- There are less meetings scheduled
- Members know what the meetings entail - set an agenda
- Some meetings are nice, but optional
- Specific working groups are set up to work on different things e.g. policy &

In terms of getting more people involved and committing to the network, it was apparent that meetings were quite a commitment, but that it wasn't always clear what was expected of members, or that meetings could feel too frequent or cumbersome, when there was gardening to do! It was suggested that meetings be given more thought in advance as to what the agenda would be, who needs to be there, and how frequent they really need to be. If they are more specific and organised perhaps they would be enjoyable and inviting to members to come to . Working groups would also take pressure off the agenda for the main meetings.

There was quite a distinct separation between what was considered the network function, and what the coordinator's role should be, which showed a good understanding of the network and the relationship of the coordinator with it - a possible question to put to the coordinator is how could they support the network to meet their priorities?

**Possible actions coming out of meeting:**

- To work with the coordinator to refine their areas of focus to match the discussion
- Have another look at the vision/mission so that it reflects what people want the network to look like, and indicates objectives to reach these
- Write a description of what it means to be a member so people know before/when they join
- To set up working groups to focus on: (1) policy (2) membership