Notes from Transition Cambridge Food Group Meeting, Wednesday 24th October at Transition Café, 22a Jesus Lane, Cambridge.

Present: Dave, Nicola, Carl, Martin, Jacky, Colin, Gareth

Apologies: Emily, Ceri, Jane

1. Venue

Colin advised the meeting that we need to find a new venue with immediate effect. Another group will be using the Café on Wednesdays in future.

A discussion then ensued on potential venues. Meeting in people’s houses was felt to be unsuitable and meeting in pubs wasn’t felt to be conducive to discussion. It was also felt important to have the same venue for each meeting, as moving around can be quite confusing.

Dave mentioned the Friends Meeting House although this will cost (approx. £17 for a 12-seater room).

It was agreed that this would be the fall back option if a free (or cheaper) option could not be found by the next meeting. Colin will contact Phillipa to see if the option of using a room in at Magdalene is still open to us.

1. Money

Given the potential need to pay for meeting rooms in future, Colin asked the meeting to consider if and when to introduce a membership fee. If we were to have one, it would make sense to introduce this at the time we ‘went public’. He suggested an annual fee of £5.

The matter was discussed at length and it was decided not to have a membership fee or a bank account, as this would be a lot of work. It was decided that the group would instead operate on the basis of event-based donations. This includes asking members to donate at each meeting to cover the cost of the venue. Dave suggested that also apply to the ‘Down and Dirty’ day at Trumpington on October 12th.

In consequence, a collection was taken and £8 .10p was raised.

1. Food and Garden Fair

Dave and Carl reported back on the Food and Garden Fair held at Parker’s Piece the previous weekend. A lot of interest was shown in the Allotments Society display and around 300 names were gathered for the petition to Cambridge Council for more allotment space.

The cut off date for the petition is December 1st and it is hoped to gather at least 500 signatures by then. Signatories must either be on the electoral roll or liable for Council Tax. This is essential to meet the requirements of the Allotments and Smallholding Act 1908. If this requirement is fulfilled then the petitioners have the right to present the petition to a meeting of the full Council.

A number of people were either looking for space to grow their own food or had space that they either couldn’t manage or had had to give up entirely for reasons such as ill health. This reinforced the importance our own proposed garden share
scheme and a brokerage scheme whereby these people could be put in touch with each other.

1. Brokerage/Garden Share Scheme

The meeting discussed how this might be taken forward. Jacky is looking at schemes elsewhere and members discussed key questions to ask these other projects. Issues discussed included what kind of ‘payment’ would be made for using someone else’s garden. It was agreed that we begin with a small-scale trial (recruiting largely by word of mouth and the Transition Cambridge website) and see how that pans out.

One of the issues would be security; how do we ensure that people don’t use the scheme to get into and steal from the property of people, particularly vulnerable people? Colin advised that he had now spoken to Age Concern about the idea. The person he had spoken to had been very enthusiastic about the idea, although was unable to give any hands-on support. However, she had described the security system they have in place for monitoring and recommending tradespeople. This involved a Criminal Records Bureau check and two references. The CRB check is normally very expensive (£250) but Age Concern gets them at a special rate for charities. She indicated that they might be able to get them done at this rate for our scheme (although this needs to be confirmed and formalised).

We have also been invited to speak about the project at the next Age Concern regional meeting on Wednesday 8th October. It would only be a five to ten minute slot but it was offered as a way of helping us gauge the possible level of interest in such a scheme as well as identifying any concerns of elderly people.

Unfortunately this meeting is held from 10.30 a.m. to 1 p.m., which makes it very difficult for anyone from the Food Group to attend. It was agreed that, in the absence of a Food Group speaker, we would prepare a brief written summary of our plans to be read out at the meeting. All contributions to Jacky.

1. ‘Grow Your Own’ Support Groups

Colin tabled a proposal for ‘Grow Your Own’ Support Groups as an activity of the Food Production and Education Groups. (This is being circulated with the minutes so will not be detailed here.)

Some discussion ensued and amendments were made in light of that discussion. This will now be circulated to all members for feedback.

1. ‘Going Live’

Colin has previously circulated his proposals as to what ‘going live’ on November 25th actually means. These are having:

- A general leaflet outlining the aims and activities of the Food Group and indicating what people can expect to be involved with if they join.
- A list of Food Production Group activities
- A position paper on the need for a Cambridge Food Policy/Strategy
- A position paper on allotments
- The Food Group webpage on the Transition Cambridge website being in place and reflecting our activities

After discussion there was general agreement on all of these with the exception of the Food Policy paper. It was felt that more work needs to be done on this to establish the need for such a policy in the first place.
Dave will provide Colin with information on allotments for the allotments position paper. Colin will draft a Food Group leaflet.

1. Mapping Members Postcodes

Colin reminded the meeting that he was currently trying to map local membership by asking members to provide the name of their street and the first part of their postcode. There had been very little response to this. Members present provided the information but it would be helpful if all members could provide this information at their earliest convenience.

1. Next Meeting

The next meeting will be at 8 p.m. on Wednesday 8th October at a venue still to be decided. This will be communicated to members as soon as it is known.

Colin presented his apologies for absence in advance so there is also a need for a Chair for this meeting.