Minutes of the meeting of the Transition Cambridge Food Group
Friends' Meeting House
8.10.2008

Present: Dave Fox, Phillipa Grimstone, Carl Myhill, Martin Roach, Nicola Terry, Rowan Wylie
Apologies: Emily Bingley, Colin Clews, Jacky Sutton-Adam

1. Minutes
Discussions arising meant that the minutes of the last meeting were not conclusively approved. Only 3 of the current attendees had been at the previous meeting.

2. Venue for meetings
Phillipa reported that she had enquired about booking a room at Magdalene College, but had not yet had a response. Martin reported that only 3 people were in the Café (Jesus Lane) when he had passed, so perhaps further enquiries should be made there. It was noted that Sustainable City had no food group, and that the group could perhaps fill this gap, getting a room in return. Martin offered to make enquiries. Nicola also offered to make enquiries about CB2. Carl volunteered to contact Jenny Bailey and Dick Fenner, both about a room, and to interest them in the work of the group. It was agreed that Magdalene was the first choice venue of those discussed, if free or at low cost. The Friends' Meeting House was generally felt to be better than pubs (too noisy and distracting) or meeting in members' houses (a burden on those who hosted meetings, and not fixed), although it had to be hired at some cost.

3. Brokerage
There was some discussion about how brokerage schemes would work in practice, and what liability the group might have if arrangements went wrong. Carl agreed to discuss the legal situation with his lawyer girlfriend. Eight people had given details of wants and offers at the Food and Garden Show, and Dave had entered these into a Google document. However, these contacts had not been acquired through the internet, and it was not clear whether they would transfer to an internet-based resource. Craig's List was mentioned as a possible model for how an internet brokerage service might be set up. The possibility of having a non-internet-based scheme was also brought up, to avoid the issues of putting personal information on the internet. Any scheme would need people to manage it, and there was some question as to whether the group would have the resources to do this.

Several possible brokerage schemes were discussed. Contact had been made with Winston House, a residential home for those recovering from mental illness and drug abuse, at the Food and Garden show. The staff wished to create a vegetable garden to provide meaningful activity for residents, as well as supply some of their catering needs. It seemed that there was enough space, but it was not clear what funds would be available for seeds and tools, and if CRB checks would be required. The group did not want to get a reputation for creating gardens, as it did not have enough members to undertake many projects of this kind. However, if those without gardens or on waiting lists for allotments could be matched with similar projects, maybe getting produce in return for labour, they might work. Dave had arranged to visit to discuss the project, and Emily and Phillipa had volunteered to go too.

Contact had also been made with Age Concern regarding the possibility of matching those with gardens which they could not fully utilise with those without gardens who wished to grow food. Rowan had agreed to attend a meeting to explore the idea. A report was not available, as the meeting had not yet taken place, but it seemed that an opportunity to speak would not necessarily be available. Flyers had been prepared, and it was hoped that feedback, especially experience of similar schemes, would be forthcoming.
Ceri Galloway had requested help with running a seed swap event in January. It was felt that this was a good form of brokerage, which fitted very well with the group's aims, encouraging both the sharing of resources, and food growing, and that it would be publicised via the Transition Cambridge website and newsletter. Group members were happy to help on the day, and with publicity. Dave agreed to publicise it to allotment societies, and Nicola agreed to contact supermarkets about advertising possibilities. Ceri also asked for help with digging and strimming on Hazel Plat. It seemed less clear that this would involve any kind of brokerage, although it was agreed that it should also be publicised in the Transition Cambridge newsletter.

The "Dig for sustainability" project was not discussed, as Clayton Lavallin was not at the meeting.

Another suggestion for brokerage was setting up a tool swap, or borrowing scheme.

4. "Grow your own" support groups
There was a brief discussion about the setting up of "Grow your own" support groups. A short course of perhaps 6 talks on growing food was suggested, to be held January to March, which could be followed by further informal get-togethers to share ideas and help with problems. Keith Jordan was suggested as someone who might give the talks. Dave agreed to invite him to a meeting to discuss the project.

5. Food-related links for the website
Nicola asked for further ideas for website links. Allotment societies, Trumpington Community Orchard, the Cambridge Farmers' Market, Dunarbon (free compost), Recyclenow.com (cheap compost bins), a "make your own" compost bin site, Jacky's website on foraging for wild food, the local producers' shop on Lensfield Road, the Cambridge Organic Food Company, and the Hauxton organic shop were all suggested, plus as many other local suppliers as could be found. Adding events to the calendar on the site was also important.

6. "Going live"
A date of 25 November had been put forward at the previous meeting, and Colin had agreed to draft a leaflet. It was felt that concrete aims and policies were needed, to ensure that the public would know what the group was trying to do, and also some practical activities which they could get involved with. The seed swap, "Grow your own" support groups, list of local suppliers, allotment petition, and possibly brokerage schemes were suggested as examples of what the group was doing on a practical level. A pledge list was also suggested.

7. AOB
(i) The possibility of liaising with gardening societies was brought up, and a few were mentioned. Dave said that there was some co-operation between allotment societies already, though mostly for the joint purchase of gardening supplies. He had contacts with all local societies, and could publicise activities.
(ii) Dave reported that over 400 signatures had been received for a petition to the council, asking for more land for allotments. He needed 500 in order to be able to claim a right to address the council meeting on 4 December. The group offered to give him a dry run for his speech. Suggestions of where to put copies of the petition were received.

It was anticipated that the next meeting would be on 22 October, tbc.