

**Minutes of the Meeting of the Site Representatives of the Brighton & Hove  
Allotment Federation  
Patcham Community Centre on Wednesday 16 June 2010**

**Council Officers &  
Committee Members**

**Present:** John Burns (Chair), Matt Hewes (Access Manager City Parks), Tracey Llewellyn (Secretary), Steve Lucas (Treasurer), Melanie Matthews (Webmaster) & Helen Touray (Publicity Officer)

**1) Chair Introduction & Welcome**

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and commented on the good turnout.

**2) Apologies for Absence**

Hugo Blomfield (Countryside Manager), Peter Burrows (Tenantry Down), Tina Huggins (North Neville), Rosie Barnard (Thompson Road), Peter Todd (St Louis Home), Bev Anderson (Foredown), Granville Wilcock (Horsdean), David Medhurst (Hogs Plat & Extn), John Low (Hildesland) and Angela Swinn (Windmill Hill) were unable to attend the meeting and had sent their apologies in advance.

**3) Site Representatives Present**

The following Site Representatives (SRs) were present at the meeting:

Peter Richards	Limited Ability Weald
Mo Andrews	Weald
Len Penfold	Weald
Bert Hay	Weald
Peter Ferris	Weald
Marian Varney	St Louis Home
Alan Varney	St Louis Home
Derek Brown	Walpole Road
Charles	Patcham Court
Coverdale	
Jeff Woods	Ovingdean
Jane Child	Roedale Valley
Mel Matthews	Lower Roedale
Steve Quinn	Craven Vale (North)
Alan Langridge	Mile Oak
Kojn Kay	Race Hill Farm
Jane Griffin	Whitehawk hill
Peter Gorbach	Weald
Terry Paine	St Marks
Gerry Nevill	Coldean
David Warne	Eastbrook
Chris Webb	Old Water Works
Mr Hooper	Old Water Works
David Frost	Keston

Jude Stevens	North Neville
Ian Law	Tenantry Down (Lower)
Jane Hawkins	Craven Vale
Trudi Carter	Tenantry Down
Richard Carpenter	Waverley Crescent
Liz Carpenter	Waverley Crescent
Jacob Newinski	Whitehawk Hill
Charlie Jones	Walpole Road
Steve Chapman	Chates Farm

The present SRs were asked at the end of the meeting to take a bag provided by Matt Hewes which included the plot number fliers for using on those plots which do not clearly mark the plot number, some “no dumping” signs and the important rental notice about the Council’s intention to terminate all contracts where tenants have not paid the 2009/10 rental.

#### **4) Minutes of the Last Meeting**

The Chair confirmed that minutes of the last meeting, held on 20 January 2010, had been taken but apologised that they were not available at this meeting for signing off. The Secretary will ensure that, at the next meeting, the minutes will be available for signing.

**Action: TL to ensure minutes are available at the September 2010 meeting**

#### **5) Matters Arising from the Previous Meeting**

The Chair advised that in view of 4) above, any matters arising from the last meeting on 20 January 2010, and matters arising from this meeting, would be checked at the next meeting.

**Action: TL to c/f to the September 2010 meeting**

#### **6) Presentation from Matt Hewes**

Matt Hewes introduced himself to the meeting, having been in post for one year, and commented that it was good to see so many people at the meeting. He circulated the allotment statistics for the 1<sup>st</sup> quarter 2010.

##### **(i) Annual Inspection Cycle**

Matt circulated the proposed timetable which includes plot inspection, termination notices and re-letting of plots, with the identified aims of the timetable detailed on the other side. Matt advised that he has, quite deliberately, not been carrying out inspections recently because the intention is for the main (first) inspections to be carried out June to September, with follow up inspections in August to November. The idea is that the main growing season will see the majority of plots being cultivated but, if not, the likelihood is that the tenants are not fully committed and are unlikely to be cultivating during the slower winter months. Matt advised that following the first inspections, cultivation and weed notices will be issued and which will remain in force for three months until re-inspection takes place.

Ideally, the initial inspections could be undertaken by the SRs with the re-inspections carried out by him-self but he stressed that there is no responsibility for the SRs to carry out the inspections if they do not wish to do so. He will be taking details at the end of the meeting as to which SRs are prepared to self inspect the plots on their sites. He also advised that, if SRs are aware now of any tenants who should be sent notices, the SRs should email the details to the allotment office and those notices will be issued. Matt will then re-inspect these in August with the other re-inspections. He advised that the Rangers will no longer be involved and that where there are various SRs per site, one list should be co-ordinated for sending to him.

Matt advised that he has left a two month gap before re-inspection because this allows for a period in which some notices may be rescinded or re-letting can take place where notices have been enforced. He wants the main letting season to be in September to April and for SRs not be overloaded in letting plots during May to August.

(ii) SR Responsibilities

Matt circulated a document which set out the SR responsibilities. In essence, they are to let plots, to ring around prospective tenants and meet with them to hand over their plots to them. He advised that a new waiting list would be issued in the autumn and that, having completed a recent post-card exercise to those people on the waiting list, the waiting list will be substantially reduced (see 1<sup>st</sup> quarter allotment stats). He advised SRs to wait for the new list and to suspend any re-letting until then, and when the first inspections and re-inspections would have been completed.

Matt confirmed that the in house maintenance team, due to start working in October 2010, would be responsible for rubbish clearance, general allotment maintenance and minor repairs to fences, taps and locks.

**Action: Matt Hewes to issue the revised waiting list in Autumn 2010**

(iii) SR Training

Matt wanted to make it clear that the SR role was important and that, generally, it was carried out well but that all SRs should receive some guidance, and that he was very happy to provide some training in this regard. He advised that some information had been issued in respect the role of the SRs but he was aware that not everyone had received that information so it was his intention to develop some training material for circulation in the autumn.

Steve Lucas suggested some practical training e.g. on the 75% cultivation rule and it was agreed that SRs should therefore join Matt on site when he carries out the re-inspections in order to gain an understanding of the reasons why a notice might be given.

**Action: Matt Hewes to liaise with SRs regarding re-inspection dates and Steve Lucas to arrange some training sessions at certain sites**

(iv) SR Feedback Form

Matt advised that this form was sent out with the agenda for the meeting. SRs should talk to the tenants on their sites to identify the five highest priorities on each of the sites, fill the form in and send it back to the allotment office where it

will be logged on a new database. This will form the basis of the work allocation for the next three to five years but regular issues like rubbish clearance and minor site repairs should not be recorded on the forms. Matt did request that SRs be realistic in their expectation when identifying the site priorities e.g. to expect that an entire site might benefit from the replacement of an entire set of water pipes would be unrealistic and cost prohibitive.

At this point there was general discussion about issues such as manure, hedging, the delivery of wood chips by the Council and the provision of wood for raised beds. It was noted that some sites arrange a delivery of manure from Meaker's Farm and an application for funds for wood for raised beds can be made to the Federation Site Development fund.

Questions from the floor had been taken ongoing through Matt's presentation.

## **7) Website News**

Mel Matthews advised that the website was coming along and that efforts to make the webpages more open and transparent were ongoing e.g. posting the minutes of the AGM and future SR meeting minutes is intended. She confirmed that she will also be arranging for the role and responsibilities of the SRs to be posted on the pages too. Furthermore, she confirmed that she had been contacting SRs and asking them to check their own site pages on the webpage to confirm if their contact details were correct. She also appealed to SRs to let her have some site photos to make the pages more relevant for plot holders. Finally, Mel said that it was recognised that not everyone has access to a computer and would SRs therefore please print the regular enews letter and ensure that it is circulated as a means of educating and informing tenants.

## **8) Update on Competition Entries**

An update was provided on the entries submitted to date and it was noted that they had doubled the number of entries for last year, although it was agreed that, compared to years gone by, the numbers were quite low. The SRs were encouraged to recommend tenants to enter, given that they know which plots are the good ones! It was confirmed that there are cash prizes, that places are awarded for 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> places and that the judging takes place during July. The number of entries received was confirmed as:

Best newcomer since 2009:	10
Coronation Bowl:	8
Most creative allotment:	5

## **9) Site Security**

The Chair advised of his recent attendance at a meeting in Adur where an allotment watch scheme had come into being, having originally taken off in Worthing. Matt Hewes confirmed that he is in favour of the Scheme and both he and the Chair confirmed that they would be attending a further meeting in July, so further news would be provided at the September SR meeting.

John Kay (Racehill Farm) reported that six sheds and greenhouses had been damaged the previous week and that improved security was greatly needed, with fencing and gates needing to be made higher. Matt Hewes advised that whilst it was recognised that the site would benefit from increased security, the cost of extending fencing was cost prohibitive. He recommended that the issue was put on the SR feedback form and encouraged that such matters must be reported to the police; tenants must be encouraged to take some responsibility for themselves in obtaining crime incident numbers.

Trudi Carter (Tenantry Down) reported a hole in the perimeter fence.

Peter Gorbach (Weald) reported that residents of some houses which back onto the allotments are using the allotments as an access route and that, similar to what has happened at Hove Cemetery, access needs to be blocked.

Terri Paine (St Marks) reported that some tenants are not locking the gates. Matt Hewes advised that this represents a clear breach of the Allotment Rules and that such incidents must be reported to the Allotment Office. The tenants will be issued a warning by way of a written letter and after two such warnings, will receive a notice ending their tenancy.

**Action: TL to c/f Allotment Watch to the September 2010 meeting, SRs to canvass their tenants about putting issues of security on the SR feedback forms and Matt Hewes to check what action has been taken at Hove Cemetery regarding blocking access from residential gardens**

#### **10) Site News**

David Warne (Eastbrook) reported of a very serious situation which had arisen that week regarding the substation located by the side of the allotment site. Such was the seriousness of the health and safety issue identified, it had been proposed by EDB Energy to permit no access to all of the plots west of the haulage way, some 75 plots in total. However, a resolution was agreed with the Council and an exclusion zone created with 13 plots being affected whereby the tenants have no access to their plots until further notice.

There was further discussion of site news on other sites.

#### **11) Date of Next Meeting**

The date of the next meeting was confirmed as the third Wednesday in September i.e. Wednesday 15 September at Patcham Community Centre, 6.30pm for 7.00pm

#### **12) Any Other Business**

- (i) The issue of tree height and the new rules was raised. Matt Hewes advised that when the rules are sent out to tenants, a covering letter will also be sent together with a sheet of Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs). He also recommended that SRs keep a copy of the rules and FAQs in the site huts.

- (ii) The issue of water leakage and the replacement of water pipes was raised, to which Matt Hewes advised that it is an issue that the Council is aware of, although replacement of water pipes universally is simply not possible due to the high costs involved.
- (iii) David Warne (Eastbrook) referred to Tim Reed's plan and that everyone had been very enthused regarding it but that it now seemed that the strategy was becoming condensed, and that the allotment office is not a full time concern. Matt responded by saying that the in house maintenance team would be effective October 2010 and that, with effect from August 2010, a full time administrator would be allocated to the allotment service.

As it became apparent at this point that it would be David Warne's last SR meeting, sincere thanks was extended to him for his valuable contributions to Eastbrook, in particular, and to the Federation generally.

- (iv) A question was asked about the withdrawal of the Rangers from the allotment service and, more generally, about the degree to which there was Council representation of the allotment service and the Resourcing available for it. It was stated that, with allotment rents on the increase, tenants are not happy. The Chair advised that, yes, nationwide it is a recognised fact that allotment rents are going up and that, with the change in Government and cuts in public spending more increases should certainly be expected. However, both the Chair and Matt Hewes, on behalf of the Council, wish to reassure tenants that Brighton & Hove has been ahead of the game in this regard and allotment resources had been ring-fenced in anticipation of future increases.
- (vi) Matt Hewes advised that, after further consideration of tenants feelings regarding the height of trees on sites, he had negotiated a change to the rules and that he hoped a compromise had been reached. The proposal is that trees under 8ft tall (2.5m) will not be assessed but that there is an absolute restriction on "nuisance" trees above this height. A vote was taken with the consensus being approval of the proposal.
- (vii) There was a discussion regarding site gate keys and what to do about the return of them when a SR ceases in the role but the Chair advised that this is a local issue and one which should be resolved locally, although there was agreement that, in general, key deposits should be put up and better local records kept.  
**Action: TL to c/f to the September SR meeting**