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**BHAF Committee Meeting, 18 July 2018**

**Brighthelm Centre, 6.30-8.30pm**

**Minutes**

1. **Introduction from the Chair** – Mark Carroll talked about the need for the Committee to fully represent the interests of plot-holders and to take the lead on specific projects and longer term responsibilities. The following roles were agreed:  
   Maureen – Committee Secretary and Site Rep Liaison Officer

Jane – Forum Minutes Secretary and BAHF Rep for Whitehawk Hill

Simon – Ecology and Environment Officer

Richard – Site Elections Officer and BHAF Representative – Moulsecoomb Estate

Giuseppina – Plot holders Liaison Officer

Hannes – Treasurer

Hilary – BHAF Representative – Keston

Lynn – BHAF Site contact for the Weald

**Discussion on payment systems, concessions and voluntary payment scheme**   
Everyone agreed that it was important to progress the proposal to implement a system to enable tenants to make additional voluntary payments to the Allotment Service. This would serve to reduce the Council’s contribution, while ensuring rents did not rise above inflation level. Many tenants already made additional contributions by not claiming their concessions, but others would like to have a system in place to allow them to make additional payments on a voluntary basis. The process could turn out to be complex, but it was hoped a simple and straightforward system could eventually be agreed with the Council. BHAF would seek assurance that any payments would go direct to the Allotment Service.

There was discussion of the Waiting List Fee of £16, which was felt to be too high, and would lead to a drop in allotment usage. Potential tenants on low incomes would be unable to afford to register for a plot, especially as the fee is not refundable and would not contribute to the first year’s rent.

However these concerns need to be balanced against the benefits of the waiting list fee, which has limited the amount of ‘spur of the moment’ applications. Site reps continually reported that when they contact people on the waiting list many do not respond. This wastes their time. It also gives a false impression of the true number waiting as many do not take up a plot when eventually offered. The waiting list fee is also raising money for the allotment service.

It was agreed to wait until a review of waiting list numbers could be undertaken in August, when the system had been in place for a year.

1. **Site rep training** – It was reported that there was on-going discussion with the Allotment Officer about how to ensure all site reps had on-going training and professional support to carry out their role, and it had been proposed that new elements should be incorporated including issues of conflict resolution and equalities. This could lead to much improved support for Site Reps, and better relationships on sites. As Site Reps take a lot of responsibility on their sites, training is essential, following on from the election process, and also encourages more plot-holders to come forward to take on the role. Standards would be raised and a City wide approach to inspections would evolve. Site Reps would then be seen to maintain the service principles at the heart of the Allotment Strategy and the Allotment Service, and their roles fully acknowledged in supporting tenants on their sites.   
     
   There is a need for a Site Rep ‘contract’ to be put in place to protect BHAF, the Council, the Site Reps themselves, and to the benefit of plot-holders. BHAF would be in discussion with the Allotment Officer to put this in place as soon as possible.   
     
   Action: Maureen Winder to update the ‘Site Reps Role’ document to include ‘contract’ for Site Reps to sign.  
     
   The new Allotment rules which had been prepared and discussed at a BHAF AGM two years ago, had still not been signed off by the Council and could therefore not be implemented. This delay was based on the fact that the structure of the latest version was very different to the previous version, and it would be necessary to adapt the structure, so that changes could be mapped across.  
     
   Action: Giuseppina and Jane would work on this.

**4. Reports on BHAF engagement at recent events looking at a future vision for the City**Mark and Maureen had attended two consultation events organised by Brighton and Hove City Council which involved consideration of the role of allotments. One event looked at the future of food in the City, and what innovations could be considered to address inequality, poverty, access to local, nutritious food, and patterns of healthy eating in a modern society. The second event looked at how a network of green spaces could change the shape of the City, and benefit residents and the planning process overall. It would create a multi-hub approach to planning, and involve more residents and local business in allocation of resources in periphery areas.

**5. Water saving measures, provision of water butts and containers**. It was agreed that the current hot and dry conditions were having an impact on allotments, and it was important to consider how to support plot-holders to save water and have more access to stored water. Richard had sought information on the cost of blue plastic containers which could be offered to tenants at a reasonable price, affordable to most people. He had found a supplier in Wales, offering these containers for around £8.80 each plus delivery. A bulk purchase would save on transport costs, and a number could be provided to several sites where demand was high. BHAF would assist in the purchasing and supply process, working closely with Site Reps.

There had been leaks on a few sites, and it was important to address these urgently.

**6. Update on recycling scheme trial at Moulsecoomb Estate.**Moulsecoomb Estate was working to implement the recycling scheme it had proposed earlier in the year. The Council had provided a small number of used household waste bins in which materials for recycling could be put. However, these bins could not be put outside the site for collection by Magpie, and nor could the large rubble bags supplied for the scheme, as Moulsecoomb Estate has a single gate entrance and little space outside the entrance. Work was on-going to find a solution.

**7. Working with a wider range of organisations including Community plots. Responding to the City Plan Part 2.**

It was agreed that it was important to build close partnerships with other organisations, and this could include looking at the range of organisations which had Community Plots on sites.

BHAF should also monitor planning applications or City Plans which might affect allotments or closely located developments.   
  
Simon to examine the proposed City Plan Part 2, to see if any proposals might affect any Allotment Sites.

**8. AOB**

Jane reported that there was nobody to respond to emergency calls over the weekends. For example, if there was a serious leak or broken pipe on a site, water could be left running for two days. It was agreed that Site Reps should know where stop-cocks were located and how to turn the water off in such circumstances.