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**BHAF COMMITTEE MEETING 27/2/2019**

**Minutes**

**Attendance:**

Simon Powell (Chairing)

Mark Carroll

Jane Griffin

Hannes Froehlich

Giuseppina Salamone
Hilary Standing

1. **Apologies**

Received from Allan Brown

1. **Minutes of the last meeting**

The amended minutes of the meeting of 24th October 2018 were approved.

1. **Letter of complaint**

A written complaint against the BHAF committee has been received from two other members. Chair’s action:

A panel will be set up to consider the complaint. TORs are a) collect further information on the substantive allegations, b) assess the complaint in the light of this information, c) report to the Chair on findings, conclusions and recommendations.

**4. Glyphosate/synthetic herbicides**

There is strong support from both committee members and from many plot holders for banning the use of glyphosate and other synthetic herbicides. However, the Council is reluctant to impose a ban as it is a commercially available product and there are legal complications to enforcing a ban. At the recent site reps meeting, the majority supported a ban but two site reps also spoke out against a ban. The committee would like to see it banned but recognised the need to take people along with us. This requires several approaches. The first is education, promoting the use of alternatives to herbicides. The second is drafting a rule to make it more difficult for it to be used and misused. The third is requesting site shops not to stock it.

It was agreed that a new rule should be drafted for the allotments handbook for further consultation. This could ban its use in different settings and circumstances, including on pathways, for blanket clearance of new sites, in windy conditions and where there is danger to others and risk of spread to neighbouring plots, and where there are likely to be negative effects on biodiversity of both flora and fauna.

BHAF will continue to promote alternatives on the website, in conjunction with BHOGG, and also continue its dialogue with the Council on a possible future ban. The proposed new rules will be presented to the AGM for further discussion.

**5. Allotment rules**

In response to an earlier request by the allotments service, Josephina and Jane have gone through the current allotments handbook rules and made a number of corrections and amendments to the current rules to clarify them and remove repetition. This has been done in an annotated format so that the old and new can be compared. No changes have been made to the order of the rules. These changes will need to be signed off by the Council’s legal department. It was agreed that the proposed changes would be shared informally with Bruce, at the allotments service, but he would be asked not to refer them to the legal department for approval until after the proposed new rules on glyphosate are incorporated and the whole set of amended rules has been discussed and approved at the AGM.

Josephina has been contacted by someone who will send details of a forthcoming meeting about the use of glyphosate in Brighton, to be held at the Cowley Club, sometime in March. She will pass on the information to BHAF.

**6. Defining the role of site reps**

The existing document on the role of site reps was drawn up some time ago. The sense is that it is an aspirational document, rather than a job description. It is good on general principles but does not say enough about the practical role. Concern was also expressed that it expected too much of site reps in terms of the amount of community empowerment and engagement that they can realistically manage. Site reps need a clear understanding of the job and what it entails. Mark has drawn up a draft job description, which can be sent out to people thinking about becoming site reps. It draws on the early document and provides a concise description of the role. This will be sent to site reps for approval.

**7. Complaint**

There is an ongoing complaint of alleged bullying and data misuse by a plot holder. BHAF is involved in assisting the complainant with the complaints process. There has been no response yet from the Council. A follow up email will be sent enquiring about progress.

This case raises wider issues about data protection safeguards for plot holders in the context of an alleged misuse of plotholders’ email addresses. It is understood that the Council is developing a protocol on data protection for Council volunteers. It was agreed that this issue needs to be pursued further with Bruce to find out what is happening.

**8 and 9 Site rep election process and role of associations**

The original strategy stated that associations should be responsible for site rep elections, but there are concerns about the unevenness of the process and a strong feeling that there needs to be a uniform and streamlined process across sites to ensure transparency and meet the requirements of good governance. One option would be to have a once-off call out for nominations for site reps every two years across all sites. This could entail the Council sending out the call for nominations with the annual rent invoice and people sending their nominations and votes directly to the allotments office or BHAF. Elections, if there were any needed could take place in the spring.

 There are a lot of issues to consider, including what sanctions can be put in place against anyone who abuses the election process. BHAF members will meet with Bruce, with a list of minimum requirements, to take these ideas further. BHAF will also approach Democratic Services in the Council, to see if they can help with advice. It was also noted that the Strategy is up for review 2019 and this needs to be raised with Bruce.

**10. Site rep training/mentoring**

RAGS and Roedale Valley Site Rep Andrew Amos has offered to do drop-in training for site reps on Saturdays at the Roedale Valley site hut. This was very much welcomed. Mark will also ask if there are any other site reps interested in doing mentoring.

**11. AGM, 3rd April at the Brighthelm Centre**

Mark has booked Rod Weston to speak on “making your own compost.” He is a past vice-chair of the National Allotment Society and knows everything there is to know about composting. He has turned down a fee but BHAF will pay his expenses. AGM posters have been printed and are being distributed for putting up on site gates.

**12. Development fund application**

A small application for replacement of a site notice board at RaceHill was approved

**13. Management of overgrown trees on allotment boundaries**

Plot holders at Keston have an increasing problem with extremely large trees sitting along their main boundary with the road. They cast deep shade onto the adjacent plots and make some areas unworkable because of tree roots. It was been difficult to get action because of cost and unclear responsibility for the boundary. Committee advice was to look into standards for allotments – they need to be usable. Photos should be taken and a strong case made to the allotment services. There is an arboricultural department which does specialist tree work. Mark has agreed to follow up with Rob Walker.

The meeting concluded at 9.15 pm