**BHAF Committee Meeting, 27th November 2019**

**Minutes**

**Attendance:**

Mark Carroll (Chair)

Milda Liuolyte

Simon Powell

Josephina Salamone

Angela Jane Swinn

Hannes Froehlich   
Hilary Standing (Minutes)

**Apologies**

Jane Griffin, Allan Brown, Andrew Amos

**Minutes of the last meeting and matters arising**

The minutes of the last meeting, held on 30th September 2019, were approved. Matters arising were dealt with under existing business.

**Report back on state of play with Allotments Service**

The Chair updated everyone on the current situation. Communications from BHAF to the Allotments Office continue to go unacknowledged and unanswered. Following concern at the situation expressed by Councillors, a meeting has been arranged with Rachel Chasseaud (now postponed from December to early January). This will also be attended by Rob Walker. Mark and Hilary will attend from BHAF.

At the meeting, the critical role of BHAF in allotment management will be clearly explained to Rachel Chasseaud, along with the importance of the Allotments Strategy in enabling openness and accountability through the three-way relationship between the Council, BHAF and plot holders.

We also intend to raise concerns about the lack of gender diversity in the Allotments Service, the unsatisfactoriness of the rolling month by month contract for the Allotments Officer, and the issue of serious water loss on certain sites and the urgent need to tackle this. BHAF has been raising additional money through the voluntary donation scheme to help with the deficit yet large sums are being wasted through water leakage.

There has been an exchange of emails with Rob Walker over getting an agreed arrangement for site rep elections. However, his response was that we need to trial BHAF’s proposed arrangement on one site. It was pointed out that the proposal is for a whole-site arrangement so it cannot be trialled. Since then, there has been no further communication from him.

The committee agreed that we can go ahead and develop a code of conduct for site reps during election process. It needs to be kept plain and simple, covering issues such as correct use of communications and ensuring there are no conflicts of interest. Milda has offered to draft this and other members, particularly site rep members, are asked to send points to Milda on relevant issues for site reps.

**Issues for further discussion**

The committee discussed ways of increasing BHAF’s engagement with its membership, particularly reaching out through social media. There is a lot of traffic on the website already, and this has been steadily increasing. It was agreed to target Facebook and possibly Instagram – this is particularly good for allotments as it is so visual. We need to remind people of what BHAF does, and also revisit the content of the leaflet that goes out to new tenants. Mark will create a private community group on FB with some committee members as moderators. BHAF members will be invited to sign up.

There was also a discussion on how to increase diversity and inclusion in engagement with allotments among less represented groups. It was noted that RAGS has a refugee group. Following on the comments and suggestions of Victoria Williams, who attended the last meeting as an observer, it was proposed to draft a job description for someone to support BHAF outreach, reporting to the committee. Hilary will circulate a draft for feedback.

**Proposal on chemicals “hand-in”**

In the light of the concern to reduce or stop use of chemical pesticides and move towards more environmentally friendly ways of dealing with weeds and pests, Simon has suggested setting up a way of helping plot holders to dispose of any unwanted material. He has emailed Veolia to ask about disposal but has not yet had a response. It was agreed that this was a good issue to discuss on social media and to raise at a future allotments forum meeting.

**Stall at Seedy Sunday**

Mark was approached by the organisers of this regular February event to ask if BHAF would like to have a stall. It was agreed that this is good idea. We need to get materials together, including maps of all the sites, and how to apply for an allotment. Volunteers will be needed to staff the stall on the day.

**Planning for next AGM**

After a lot of discussion of possible speakers, we agreed on the theme of “No dig” gardening. Joshua, the no-dig gardener will be approached.

We discussed the committee elections process. Hilary will draft a fuller account of the process and what is required of committee members, to go out before the AGM.

Dates need to be agreed for the AGM and the next three allotment site reps and associations forums. Issues for the forums include the proposals on site rep elections, and the chemicals amnesty.

**Development fund applications**

None currently outstanding. The members’ levy has finally been paid to BHAF after a long delay.

**Date of next meeting**

To be agreed by Doodle poll

**AOB**

There was no other business

**Follow up actions**

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| Site reps code of conduct | Send comments and suggestions to Milda |
| Terms of reference for BHAF outreach | Hilary |
| Seedy Sunday stall | Mark to confirm and let everyone know what is needed |
| Request to Joshua re AGM talk | Mark |
| BHAF committee elections – communication to members re process and requirements | Hilary |
| Dates for AGM, forums | Hannes |