**

Minutes**

**BHAF Committee Meeting,**

**7 pm 9th March 2022**

**Present:**

Mark Carroll (Chair)

Hilary Standing (Secretary)

Hannes Froehlich (Treasurer)

Josephina Salamone (Tenants’ Liaison Officer)

Vicki Williams

Maude Casey

Nick Fry

Allan Brown

Simon Powell (Ecology Adviser)

**Apologies:**

Andrew Amos (Site Reps Liaison Officer)

1. **Minutes of the last meeting (7.05.2021) and matters arising**

The minutes were approved.

1. **Brief update on Allotment Strategy delivery plan progress**

Mark updated the committee on the cross-party meeting with Councillors from the ETS committee and senior officials from CityParks and on the BHAF-BHCC liaison meetings to complete the Allotment Strategy delivery plan.

Overall, BHAF is very happy with progress. It feels that a corner has been turned in reviving the partnership between BHAF and Council. We now have a very supporting group of Councillors on the Environment, Transport and Sustainability Committee representing all three parties. The recent work we commissioned on the financial benefits allotments bring for the city has been extremely well received and widely circulated.

Things are improving on the ground, with site rep training done and a start on clearing the maintenance backlog. We remain concerned at the slow pace of plot lettings and are continuing to pursue improvements here. Beulah’s role as Project Officer is to be extended for another year and there is some restructuring of roles in the allotments service.

1. **Complaints procedures**

BHAF is leading on a redraft of these from the Strategy Liaison Group. Josephina Salamone (BHAF tenants liaison officer) is our lead member and will be convening a working group to produce clearer and more robust procedures that take account of the different kinds of complaints that arise on allotments. From BHCC, Paul Campbell has worked hard to develop the use of Community Protection Orders in the case of incidents of abusive behaviour.

1. **Development Fund and financial update**

Hannes reported that £800 pounds was disbursed from the DF over the last year leaving £5000 unspent. During the pandemic there have been very few applications from sites. The committee agreed to start actively promoting themes for the development fund that contribute to mitigating climate change and improving environmental sustainability, such as increased water harvesting and storage. We should explore bulk purchase of water butts for sites. We need to showcase the solar project at Moulscoomb, funded out of this years DF. The fitter and which enables plotholders to recharge batteries and machinery. The fitter is keen to publicise to other sites. We could show this at AGM and talk about it at forthcoming BHAF-BHCC forums. Maude will send pictures of the project and write a short account of the initiative.

We should also encourage basic skill development on sites. It was noted that for women especially, they often did not acquire carpentry and maintenance skills at school. We could consider training workshops for site level skills.

Hannes reported that the levy to BHAF from allotment rents has been paid.

1. **Rubbish clearance from sites**

Maude reported that the rubbish at Moulsecoomb has got really serious. She noted two types – One is where it has never cleared from sites when a new person takes them over, and the other is damaged material that then gets piled up by plotholders. She asked if it was possible to use the development fund to clear this. BHAF has paid for clearance from the development fund in the past and it was agreed that this could be funded as it is exceptional circumstances. Most immediately, it was recommended that MAHS finds out the cost to hire a skip or grab machine for a day. It was also agreed to raise the issue of site rubbish at the next BHAF-BHCC liaison meeting.

1. **Planning the AGM on 6th April + practical arrangements**

After the formal business of the AGM is concluded there will be a panel discussion involving three Councillors from the ETS Committee and senior BHCC officials on “the future of allotments.” We are working on some key questions to be put to the panel and which will reference the work of the Value of Allotments study recently completed for BHAF and look to the challenges ahead and the role allotments can play in environmental, health and nutrition benefits for the city. The floor will then be open for discussion.

1. **AOB**

The question of donations was raised. Is it right to ask people to make donations which just go into the general budget when allotments have been shown to be a net contributor to the city’s finances? It was suggested that donations could instead be ringfenced as a fund to assist people who are struggling to pay allotment rents – a form of pay forward. We should think about which organisations could manage the money for us, e.g. community plots. It was agreed to add this to the liaison meeting agenda.

BHAF has been approached by the three Patcham Councillors who are allocating some of their community fund to the three Patcham allotment sites. They have requested us to channel the funds to two of the sites that do not have bank accounts. Hannes has agreed to manage this.