

**ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING**

 **2014 Minutes**

***Tuesday 13th March 2014, 7.00pm.***

***Brighthelm Centre, North Road, Brighton, BN1 1YD.***

**Present.**

***Committee members:*** Allan Brown, Mark Carroll, Emily Gardiner, Anne Glow, Russ Howarth, Steve Lucas, Alan Phillips alongside approximately 60 other Allotment Federation Members.

1. **Welcome:**

*Apologies:*

David Cooper – Allotment Officer

Caroline Farmer - BUCFP

David Medhurst - Site rep, Hoggs Platt/ HP extension

Emma Scott

Pete West - Councillor

Diana Woodward – Waiting list

Alan Phillips (the Chairperson) welcomed everyone to the meeting. He explained that unfortunately Pete West was unable to attend due to illness but that councillor Lizzie Deane will be representing him.

1. **Minutes of the last meeting:**

*Approval*

AP noted that the minutes of the last BHAF AGM (2013) have been on the BHAF website for the last year and no amendments had been submitted. The minutes were approved by the meeting.

*Matters arising. All matters arising would be covered during the meeting.*

1. **Strategy:**

*Progress and Action Plan - Alan Phillips* introduced the allotment strategy, noting that it was a joint Council /BHAF strategy designed for the next decade. However it was ‘framework’ document with an Action Plan that can change and develop, but provides a structure around which we can work together. In summary it was designed so that everyone should be able to enjoy having an allotment, while we and the Council want to ensure that allotments are inclusive, affordable and sustainable. Specifically:

* Everyone, both new and existing allotmenteers will have a choice of plot size
* Biodiversity and organic gardening will be promoted.
* There will be no major rent increases, apart from inflation linked increases.
* Existing staffing levels will be preserved, with no cuts or increases, but there may be changes in the way the service is staffed and managed.
* We need to reduce the costs e.g. high costs of water and rubbish so that they are affordable to us and the Council together.
* We will encourage people on higher incomes to contribute more on an entirely voluntary basis. This way allotment rents can be kept affordable for all.
* There will be a radical review of the waiting list and the service provided.
* New rules will be written this year – based on allotments being enjoyable, inclusive, sustainable and rules being manageable. Together we need to encourage greater local participation on allotments – i.e. more allotment societies and more volunteering.

900 people responding to the allotmenteers survey was an unprecedented response, while a similar number responded to the Waiting list survey. It was interesting to hear all the thoughtful and often moving comments from our members. Their views played a key role in forming the strategy, which had attracted many supportive e-mails with helpful suggestions.

Priorities 2014:

* + Promotion of local associations, encouraging more volunteers on sites.
	+ Piloting projects for developing the micro beds and water harvesting.
	+ Reform of the waiting list and ICT system.

“With your support we can make this action plan actually happen. Crucially we need to continue to work co-operatively, the council, allotmenteers and the Federation in a very positive spirit.”

AP thanked our members for their contribution. He thanked the council and particularly Jan Jonker, Pete West and support of all the political parties, also offering considerable thanks to the Food Partnership – especially Vic Borrill and Emily O’Brien.

AP thanked all the people who contributed hundreds of hours to the strategy through the various working groups in addition to the BHAF Strategy Team, naming and thanking all those listed in the strategy document..

 *Address by Councillor Pete West (Cabinet Member)*

(Unfortunately Pete West was taken ill and unable to attend. Councillor Lizzie Deane was invited to speak in his absence.)

Councillor LIZZIE DEANE (Green Party) was invited to address the meeting.

She began by thanking everyone for all the work that went into the strategy, especially BHAF, the FP, the Council Officers and the plot holders themselves.

She had intended to provide detailed aspects of the strategy itself, making some notes, but these had already been very well covered by the Chairperson that she could now speak from the heart.
It had been heartening to see all the goodwill and how support for allotments has cross party support.

Allotments with the huge variety of fruit and vegetable grown on them are vital to health, and are instrumental in keeping older, heritage varieties of fruit and vegetables going: without individual gardeners and allotmenteers, some of these varieties may be lost. Allotments are also of huge importance to the city, they are its green lungs.
The innovation of micro plots are an excellent development in the strategy, and will enable a lot more people to have access to small plots to get started in growing their own food, while she was pleased that full plots would continue to be available.

LD wished everyone success in the year ahead and continuing the good cooperation between the Council and BHAF. "

ALAN ROBINS (Labour) said that he was very pleased that clearly people with knowledge and experience have been listened too. AR stressed the importance of allotments to mental and physical health .He stated that many people in their middle age were being actively involved. He was very pleased that this strategy had been adopted.

TONY JANIO (Conservative) welcomed the valuable Allotments' Strategy and that it had attracted all party support. TJ urged everyone to support the strategy and help push it forward.

1. **Work of the Committee including Budget.**

AP thanked the help and input of the site reps across the city – without which we would not be able to enjoy the allotments in the way we do.

AP thanked Russ Howarth, for his work as Vice Chairman, Allan Brown as Secretary, Emily Gardiner as Treasurer, Mark Carroll for his work as the Publicity Officer and Anne Glow, who coordinated work on City in Bloom and helped run the allotment competitions. All had played an active role in the strategy development. He also thanked Steve Lucas for his work on security and in his role as plot liaison officer.

In the past year work on the strategy had dominated much of the work but the Committee had also targeted the Development Fund to specifically support allotment associations and to encourage more to be set up.

AP will be standing down as Chairperson for personal reasons although he will continue to support the committee.

*Treasurer’s report:*

EG presented the BHAF accounts. Rather than just presenting us with the figures she thought it would be helpful if she ran through exactly where the various funds come from and how they are spent and the procedures involved.

We receive a levy from the council, which is based on a small percentage of the rent from all plot-holders. (All B&H allotmenteers are members of the BHAF.) We use this for site rep expenses – primarily phone calls and postage. This is paid for on a receipt basis. We also use the funds for room hire, website hosting and email, committee expenses as well as the printing and laminating of posters for site gates and general administration.

The BHCC Levy for 2012/13 was £2,605.00

 2013/14 was £2,510.75

Thus the amount received by the BHAF for this last year was £94.25 down on the previous financial year.

Expenditure

2013/14 = £2175.53

General admin = £1,144.20

Room Hire = £366.20

Competitions = £524.39

Site rep expenses = £140.74

(Expenses for allotment competition were higher this year because one of the sponsors pulled out and the Fed had to cover the shortfall as entries had already been received and the competitions under way. The BHAF Committee is currently re-evaluating how best to run the allotment competitions in the future.)

EG spoke about the Development Fund. The Development Fund is for projects that improve a whole site.

*How do I apply?*

BHAF website

Download application form

Discuss with Site Rep

Return completed form to BHAF

*What happens next?*

Committee review

BHAF invoices BHCC

Funds into BHAF account

BHAF liaises with applicant over purchase

BHAF purchase direct, e.g. AMP

Reimbursement with receipt

N.B. BHAF payments are by cheque

*If in doubt:*

 Talk to us - we’re here to help!

Typically eligible is equipment for a site (strimmers being one such example) and additional security that isn’t covered by the council – e.g. planting hedge whips and community projects.

A proportion of the Dev Fund has been set aside to help sites get an association under way. The BHAF will help with publicity, room hire etc. to facilitate this.

The BHAF is trying to sort out an equipment resource that all plot-holders would be able to access - this being a work in progess.  And that any equipment purchased through the dev fund is to be made available to other allotment sites if required.  (Logistics of that still to be worked out.)

All cheques issued by BHAF need to be counter-signed for security purposes. If you’re not sure, get in contact with us and we will endeavour to help.

2012/13 = £3,493.23 (70%)

2013/14 = £4,630.02 (93%)

 + £1,136.79

(If the Dev Fund is not utilised in full, the unused portion is reabsorbed by the council. It cannot be carried over to the next financial year.)

NB: The figures presented on the night were based on the Dev Fund being £5K, but in actual fact it should have been based on £6K. Thus the percentage figures for how well the BHAF did in getting positive take up for the fund weren’t quite as good as we’d hoped, but still a significant improvement on the previous year. They should have read:

2012/13 - 58%

2013/14 - 77%

A question from the floor, “Should the competitions be self-funding, the amount we spent seems disproportionate?”

The Vice Chairperson (RH) answered and explained that due to one of the sponsors pulling out once the competitions were already underway, the BHAF had no choice but to cover the shortfall, but agreed that the prizes were currently too generous and a comment from the floor suggested that most growers would be happy with a token prize. RH felt we could be far more creative about how the competitions are run and funded.

A plot holder (Camp site) asked about shared equipment and manure delivery. Allan Brown said site associations are the best way to organise these activities.

A plot-holder (Craven Vale) asked about general costs accrued by the Federation, which EG answered with a quick breakdown of costs – printing, laminating, electronic mail outs, web hosting etc.

1. **Security**

A ‘progress and action plan’ was introduced by Steve Lucas

The police are interested and concerned about theft and vandalism on allotment sites. There are regular meetings with PC Funnel, who is in charge of ‘Allotment Watch’. On some sites PSCO’s have been meeting site reps and plot holders – there have been some equipment marking events.

BHAF is going to trial a security/ wildlife camera, while night patrols are being considered involving the police. They will give a serial number, so who ever reports intruders on a site the police will respond accordingly. Sites that are geographically close together will work together. If enough people volunteer, rotas can be arranged.

If a crime happens on your site please report it as the police respond to hotspots.

Gerry Neville commented that all security is initially predicated on the security of the site. Barbed wire on fences is a no go because of the height of fences. Discussion on locks/ combination locks become redundant unless regularly changed.

Sally Griffin (Moulsecoomb Estate) mentioned logging vandalism but crime numbers aren’t being issued.

Steve Miller – clarified that he is given a crime number when as a site rep he reports vandalism.

Mel Mathews – clarified that the police require the individual who has had the theft or damage to report the crime. They will not issue crime numbers to a site rep reporting vandalism/ theft on their behalf.

Ron Nichols said that a neighbour was woken by a patrol that Steve and Gary conducted. He said that they now have their own light and security system that would be disrupted by a patrol.

Mick Wallace (Moulsecoomb Estate) was concerned about vigilantism. If people break in what protection do we have if we were to confront the intruders? (Minimum force laws etc.). This concern was shared by others. SL said that confrontation should be avoided at all costs and the responsibility of the patrol was to report the incident to the police immediately, quoting the pre-arranged number.

Anne Drummond (Racehill). Had an allotment at Racehill for 9 or 10 years and when she first started there was no fencing. Recently saw a gang of 8 boys heading up the allotment and phoned the police. That night when it got dark numerous sheds were burnt down. She was very disappointed with the police response. She recommended that gates should have an overhang.

SL thanked the floor for their input.

AP emphasised strengthening Associations as the key as we want to prevent not respond to crime.

1. **Elections of Officers and Committee.**

AP formally thanked the committee for their work. He suggested that for the future he would recommend nominations four weeks or so in advance of the AGM with a short biography. Names for possible co-option could be accepted later.

The Secretary AB – introduced the nominations, noting that the following Emily O’Brien, Diana Woodward and Emma Scott would be considered for co-option by the new Committee.

***Chairperson:*** Emily Gardiner (currently Treasurer), *Keston*

***Vice-chair:*** Russ Howarth (currently Vice-chair), *Roedale Valley*

***Secretary:*** Allan Brown (currently Secretary), *Roedale Valley*

***Treasurer:*** Hannes Froehlich, *Roedale Valley*

***Publicity Officer:*** Mark Carroll (currently Publicity Officer), *Roedale Valley*

***Site Liaison Officer:*** Steve Lucas (currently Site Liaison Officer), *Pankhurst Avenue*

**Committee Members:**

Alan Phillips (currently Chairperson), *the Weald*

Anne Glow, *Racehill*

Giusipina Salamone, *Moulsecoomb Estate*

Maureen Winder, *Moulsecoomb Estate*

Sally Griffin, *Moulsecoomb Estate*

The Chairperson AP asked whether there were any other nominations and then went through the list individually, asking for both ‘hands in favour’ and hands against’.

 All candidates were voted in.

Following a question from the floor on ‘What is co-option.’ AP clarified the process of the Committee considering adding additional members.

A suggestion from the floor encouraged the inclusion of people from the waiting list to be involved on the committee.

1. **Election of Honorary President and Vice Presidents.**

John Allem was elected President and Gerry Neville elected Vice President.

1. **Procedure for Rules Review.**

AP described what he foresaw as the procedure but asked for comments. There would be consultation with all the members at the outset, draft rules would be developed and then they would be open to comment once again.

All rules need to be workable and designed around the strategy, predicated on the commitment to ensure allotments are enjoyable and stress free.

Peter Burrows (Tenantry Down) felt the rules from the last rule review were good – the three key issues were extra expense incurred by council by people breaking rules on keeping paths/ walkways clear, bringing non allotment material onto sites and getting rid of rubbish.

Anne ? (Racehill) – There needed to be rules for maintenance staff with attention to Health and Safety. She complained about site rep parking his car at allotment entrance which was anti-social for others.

Charlie Coverdale (Patcham Court) believes a key issue for security was bad fencing He recounted that he’d asked the council to replace a low fence and it was done. It cost £3000. He queried as to why the council can’t improve fencing across the city.

Liz Yeates (Moulsecoomb Estate) said there were a huge amount of rules – 90% are what the plot holders shouldn’t do, but we should be working together and there should be equivalent rules for the council.

1. **Resolutions/ Motions - for future work.**

4 resolutions/ motions had been submitted to the BHAF on the 31st January 2014 by MAHS (Moulsecoomb Allotment and Horticultural Society).

AP suggested we take each resolution one at a time, with one speaker proposing the motion for up to 5 minutes and anyone opposing also having up to 5 minutes to speak.

1. *Minimum Requirements of Allotment Associations to be Federated with BHAF – Moulsecoomb Allotments and Horticultural Society.*

Sally Griffin spoke for the motion:

*This is an aspect of the all-important matter of the relationship between the Federation and Site Associations. We appreciate that over the past couple of years a great deal has happened on the allotment front in Brighton and Hove, and that nationally we live in “interesting times.” To fulfil l the laudable overall objectives of the Federation as expressed in its constitution, with which we wholly concur, it is essential that we get this relationship right.*

*We believe that our affiliation to the Federation should be in the nature of a voluntary and mutually respectful relationship between equal parties. To this end we propose that the title and status of the above document be rephrased as “Guidelines for the formation of Constitutions for Allotment Associations.” That is, if the document is necessary at all, which is open to debate.*

*We maintain that it is for our members, the plot-holders, to determine whether we are sufficiently “representative, transparent, and democratic.” We certainly make every effort to be so, but we are in no doubt that they will tell us if they think we are not. We have great respect for the work done by the Federation and its Committee, but we consider that we are accountable to our members, not to the Federation, and we do not acknowledge that it has a right to “police” our Association.*

Mark Carroll, spoke against the motion.

*A motion at the AGM two years ago suggested that the federation needed to be ‘more representative’. We understood that some people, on local associations might not want to actually join the federation Committee, but would like to be able to come along as and when they had issues to discuss.*

*The mechanism we came up with was that local Allotment Associations could send along a representative to attend our Committee meetings as and when they wished and therefore be represented and have a vote on issues.*

*The possibility that anyone could turn up and say ‘I’m here representing so and so Allotment group’ to get a vote when in fact they didn’t really represent anyone had to be considered. So we need to be sure that anyone turning up and saying they were representing a site or community actually were being properly representative, transparent and open.*

*The only way to know if a group are actually representing people would be to see its constitution and make sure they were operating in an open and transparent manner. So a list of minimum requirements was discussed and decided upon. We set the bar as low as possible and said that we would help groups meet these requirements if they felt they were difficult.*

*However, it’s a real shame that problems arose straight away. Moulsecoomb Association sent along a delegate to our meetings but refused to show us a copy of their constitution, saying that we have no right to ‘police them’. They also refused to tell us who was on their Committee.*

*An allotment group’s constitution should not be a secret document. It should be a publicly available document.

The question is: Does the BHAF want people to be able to sit on our committee meetings and have a vote that might affect everyone without showing that they actually are representing anyone? Without a minimum set of requirements, anyone could just turn up and vote. If the motion is requesting that the minimum requirements should just be ‘guidelines’ then I ask the floor to reject the motion as guidelines would not be robust enough.*

The motion was put to a vote:

**8** votes for

**30** votes against

**10** abstentions

**The motion was defeated**

1. *Strategy Framework Consultation and Revision of Allotment Rules – Moulsecoomb Allotments and Horticultural Society.*

Sally Griffin, the proposer, wanted to amend the second resolution as the Strategy, by this stage, had already been passed in council and therefore no longer relevant. Sally Griffin then spoke in favour of the amended motion.

(NB. I did not have time to capture the wording of the revised resolution, so I have reproduced the original in its entirety. I believe the revised version was essentially the final paragraph.)

*Moulsecoomb Allotments and Horticultural Society recognises the sterling work of the officers of the Federation, and the Council’s Allotments Officer, in conducting the city-wide consultation on the Allotment Strategy during 2013, and wish to express our appreciation of their efforts in relation to this mammoth task.*

*We believe that Allotment societies such as ours should be able to make continuing input into the formulation of the final Strategy Document, and we should like to be kept up to date on the progress of this work so that we may remain in dialogue with the Federation. We believe that, if necessary, the deadline for completion of the Strategy Document should be extended beyond the end of March 2014 to allow for more input from sites.*

*In relation to the forthcoming revision of Allotment Rules, we should like to understand better the process by which this will happen, and, likewise, we wish to ensure that contributions to the discussion from Moulsecoomb Estate site will be considered, and we should like to be clear about the channels through which the views of Site Associations can be expressed and taken into account.*

Simon Powell (Whitehawk) spoke briefly against the motion. SP said that he didn’t think what was being proposed actually amounted to a resolution/ motion and wasn’t clear what he was actually being asked to vote for.

The motion was then put to a vote:

**16** votes for

**11** votes against

**20** abstentions

**The motion was defeated**

1. *Facilitating new Allotment Site Societies in Brighton and Hove – Moulsecoomb Allotments and Horticultural Society.*

Sally Griffin spoke for the motion

*MHAF heartily applauds and supports the Federation’s stated aim as enshrined in its constitution (Article 7) to encourage the formation of autonomous allotment societies on sites throughout the city. To this end, we propose that:*

1. *The Federation compile, and offer to Allotment Site Associations in the process of formation, a list of resources, such as the website of the National Association of Allotment and Leisure Gardeners, and, more locally, the Resource Centre at Tilbury Place in Brighton, which offer useful practical guidelines including suggested outlines for constitutions and for the functions of officers, in civil society and voluntary organisations such as Allotment Associations.*
2. *Since the existence of a meeting-place on site is a prerequisite for a democratically functioning Allotment society, we propose that the Federation give serious consideration to grant-funding a site hut (this could be an inexpensive wooden shed with sufficient room to accommodate a meeting and some chairs) for each new or embryonic Association. Where two or more small sites are joining to form one Association, they would share a hut and make arrangements for access to it for their colleagues from the other site.*

*3.) Given the reluctance of the majority of plot-holders to engage, during their limited free time, in what they may see as the bureaucratic business of signing up to and participating in an Allotment  Association, there has to be a tangible benefit to membership; we propose that consideration be given to facilitating “pop-up” shops at each site hut, where members can buy seeds at a discount in return for a nominal annual membership fee. Sites should be encouraged to collaborate so that they can bulk-buy from one of the suppliers that have schemes for allotment societies, where a 30% or 50% discount is available on orders.*

*The advantages of this arrangement, beyond the obvious, of enabling plot-holders to purchase necessaries inexpensively and conveniently on site, are that it facilitates informal communication, and helps to consolidate a sense of community on site, as well as creating a focus point where information can be exchanged on allotment matters both horticultural and organisational (e.g. between sites and the Federation). In particular this is essential for those allotmenteers who are not internet users, and who are liable, therefore, to be inadvertently left “out of the loop” by an over-reliance on electronic forms of communication.*

 Russ Howarth spoke against the motion. *He raised the obvious problem about BHAF sufficeint funds to enact these suggestions. The Federation has already considered many of these issues. The federation can support sites that wish to pursue these objectives, but we are limited in what we can actually do. RH pointed out that RAGS don’t meet at any huts/ buildings on site but use Laburnum Lodge (a building in the local community) in exchange for maintaining their garden.) The implication that previous Federation committees have not considered these issues is not fair. We should vote against this.*

The motion was then put to a vote:

**4** votes for the resolution

**33** against the resolution

**9** abstentions.

**The motion was defeated**

1. *Self-management and resisting any developments which result in job losses in the allotment department – Moulsecoomb  Allotments and Horticultural Society.*

Maureen Winder (Moulsecoomb Estate) proposed the motion.

*The committee of MAHS recognises that, in the current financial climate, Brighton and Hove City Council is under pressure to reduce expenditure and to cut jobs. At the same time, we are aware that there is a move to encourage self-management of sites by voluntary committees of plot-holders. We propose that BHAF, while encouraging active participation by plot-holders in many aspects of improving and managing sites, should resist any developments which result in job losses in the allotment department, or in the substitution of unpaid workers for salaried employees.*

A speaker from the floor (name and site not recorded) spoke very briefly against one aspect of the motion but as AP did not feel that this constituted a fuller exposition of the case against the motion, he allowed Mark Carroll (who had been previously nominated to speak against the motion) additional time to make the case.

Mark Carroll said that: *First of all, I’d like to point out that there is already a degree of self management on the allotments in Brighton, as we use site reps, and some sites (like Moulsecoomb) even have maintenance reps. These are jobs once undertaken by the Council and now taken by volunteers. It should therefore be recognised that there are many levels of self management from partial to full self management and we are currently at the first level.*

 *Personally I think that the Allotments service is a service that the Council should provide, and I am against self management, but open to helping the Council run the service. I am also against people losing their jobs. However for the BHAF to have as one of its objectives to ‘resist job loses’ as proposed by Moulsecoomb, seems to represent a political stance that I would prefer we didn’t take. The strategy received overwhelming cross party support, and it would be a shame to alienate come of our members or any party by taking an openly political position. I therefore vote that we reject this motion.*

Jim Grozier and several other members of MAHS objected to a second speaker being allowed to speak against the resolution. The Chairman apologised and allowed another speaker (Jim Grozier) to speak for the resolution. The motion was then put to a vote.

**13** for

**21** against.

**14** abstentions.

**The motion was adopted**.

1. **Constitutional Review.**

AP noted that the new committee will be looking at the current constitution, there will be a consultation process and the Committee will come back to next year’s meeting to report on progress or propose changes in the Constitution.

1. **Any other Business.**

David Armstrong (Whitehawk) asked why water is turned off during the winter. He mentioned a recent fire at Whitehawk, where the fire-brigade was unable to put out a burning shed because the water is turned off over winter.

RH clarified this is the council’s decision. We can take this to a Liaison Group but the Fed don’t take a lead on this. The fire brigade do not keep allotment keys as they would be unable to locate the correct key in an emergency and as a result they will always have to cut the lock.

Andrew Amos (Roedale) confirmed the water does need to be turned off because of burst water pipes, turning to ice in cold weather, while it was also pointed out by Mick Wallis (Moulsecoomb Estate), a retired fire-fighter that fire engines carry over 600 gallons of water and could not draw water off a regular tap.

Steve Miller (Eastbrook Farm) asked if we could put something up on the BHAF website about the different types of self-management. He also asked if individual sites can be forced to be self- managed.

RH responded and clarified that no site could be forced to become self-managed

Chris Morris (Tenantry Down) enquired about the procedure for sizing up from a half plot. Melanie Matthews (Lower Roedale) said as a site rep also said that she wasn’t sure as to what the new procedures were.

It was pointed out that this was the responsibility of Site Reps and the Council and there would be a briefing meeting between the Allotment Officer and site reps about this, facilitated by the Food partnership .

Pete (The Weald) referred to the problem of site reps/ associations forming unaccountable cliques that failed to represent the plot-holders.

A plot holder (Racehill) enquired about receiving physical mail notices on BHAF events.

AP answered pointing out the outreach of e mails but the need to keep the minority that did not have access to the internet informed through site reps, who have a role here to ensure information to be displayed on boards. There was a problem of the cost for physical mail outs.

There was a suggestion from the floor that people without email pay a contribution to having physical mail outs.

Anne Drummond (Racehill) enquired about the council’s obligation to keep paths strimmed back and complained about a someone parking his car in such a way that they were forced to walk on slippery mud in order to get past it and when challenged refused to do anything about it.

Simon Powell (Whitehawk Hill) asked for more information on the commitment in the strategy to keeping rent increases linked to inflation.

AP stated that whilst none of us can guarantee what will happen in local government funding, the agreement that was made that for the coming year the allotment budget will only be inflationary linked. The understanding is that in the longer term that a similar policy would continue with proportionate increases but not more. If Council budgets decline still further then discussions would need to take place. It is crucial that we work together to reduce costs and ask for voluntary contributions to help balance the books.

**Close of Meeting.**

The Chairman thanked everyone for a successful evening and closed the meeting at **9-30 pm**

Following the official close of Fed business, there was a well received slide presentation on ‘*Allotments in Gambia*’ by Russ Howarth.