

**ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING**

 **2015 Minutes**

***Thursday 02nd April 2015, 7.00pm.***

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

**Present.**

***Committee members:***

Allan Brown, Mark Carroll, Anne Glow, Maureen Winder, Giuseppina Salamone.

(Moulsecoomb Association Rep) – Richard Howard.

1. **Welcome:**

Allan Brown welcomed all present to the AGM and explained that due to health issues Emily Gardiner was unable to be present and as he’d stood in for Emily at the last couple of BHAF meetings, he would act as chair for the evening.

 **2.** **Apologies:**

 Steve Miller, John Low, David Medhurst, Hannes Froelich, Pete West, Lizzie Dean, Russ Howarth, Emily Gardiner, Steve Lucas, Gerry Neville.

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

 The minutes of the 2014 AGM have been on the BHAF website for the last year. There were no objections raised so the minutes were voted through and approved.

**4.** **Obituary:**

 Sad to report that John Allam is no longer with us. Long-time chair of Moulsecoomb Estate Allotment Site’s society, site rep., stalwart of the site shop, and friend to many plot-holders, died quietly at home in the early morning of 18th June 2014 after a long illness, aged 67. John was married for very nearly 49 years to Pam and has children and grand children

 **5.** **Strategy Review:**

AB gave a brief overview of the Allotment Strategy Action Plan and how the BHAF, BHCC and Food Partnership (FP) have been working to achieve progress in these areas.

***Plot choice, waiting list and micro-beds:***

AB explained that the introduction of ‘choice’ of plot size, for both new and existing plot holders, has proved to be both popular and effective. Despite some fears at the outset, the policy – combined with the hard work of site reps and the Allotment Office – both the number of vacant plots and indeed the waiting list has continued to fall.

MC displayed the latest figures for number of vacant plots etc. on the screen.



Roedale Valley are in the process of introducing a micro-bed scheme.

A prepared summary by RH was read out by MC

“RAGS have chosen a plot on which to pilot the micro-bed scheme. We were lucky enough to have a full plot that was already broken down into raised beds. It will provide six spaces for either newcomers to allotmenteering or people who are struggling to maintain their existing plots after a long time working them.

The Society will rent the plot (the chairman will be the contact person). The six people who work the manageable beds will be charged slightly more than a sixth of the rent to give the society some funds for water-butts, compost bins, shed repairs, deliveries of manure etc.

The six people will be classified as co-workers which clarifies their legal status and protects the society from most potential problems with terminations, disputes etc. As co-workers they have some restrictions that plot-holders wouldn't have. No play equipment, compost bins, private sheds, polytunnels or individual ponds for example. However there are shared areas on which they can agree amongst themselves to install any of these using the surplus money from their rents or pooling their own resources. Because the Society favours organic methods, and the beds are in such close proximity, only organic gardening techniques will be permitted. The plot already has some fruit trees on the shared areas. The six co-workers will be encouraged to grow annual or biennial crops and share anything perennial.

We will permit people to queue-jump into the smaller beds but they will not get any preferential treatment in their wait for a half or a full plot. Nobody will ever be allowed to increase the number of manageable beds they garden on.

We have some people already keen to start on the micro-beds and we have hopes that they will eventually form their own management group.”

*Russ Howarth*

***Forming Associations:***

AB explained how both the BHAF and BHCC are keen to promote the creation of more allotment societies – especially on the larger sites. There are all manner of benefits, especially creating a cohesive community focal point on a site, ensure good representation and greater plotholder participation in the running of sites.

The BHAF sets a side a percentage of it’s Development Fund grant for both the creation of new and strengthening of existing allotment sites. This year we are delighted that two new associations have been formed – St Louie Home and Cravenvale/ Whitehawk. Both sites have been helped by members of Roedale Valley on the constitutional side of things and financially with grants to help with the building of site huts/ shops.

We hope that smaller sites will either join together to create new associations or twin with larger sites that already have functioning associations.

***Electing Site Reps:***

MC explained that the BHAF is committed to ensuring that all sites have fair and open procedures in place to elect their site reps.

In many cases it is quite hard to find people willing to take on the voluntary role of Site Rep. However seeing as part of this role is to represent the plot holders at each site, there should be an election process so that the Site Rep has a proper mandate, and at sites where there are more prospective candidates, then an open and transparent election should take place.

Brighton and Hove Allotment Federation thanks the Site Reps for their hard work throughout the year and hopes these election processes will endorse Site Reps and give them greater backing in their role.

The 2014 Allotment Strategy requires that every Allotment site should have Site Representatives who are elected by the allotment holders at the site by means of a ballot.

There will be one vote per plot.

Voters will supply plot numbers to ensure no double voting, but plot numbers and all other voting details will be kept confidential.

There will be a poster displayed on each gate of the allotment, for a minimum of 4 weeks, calling for nominations. In the event that there are more nominations than site rep places available, a postal vote will be advertised as above and monitored by either the local Allotment Association or the BHAF.

Richard Howard is the BHAF representative responsible for overseeing fair site rep elections.

***Rules Review:***Giuseppina Salamone explained the process of the forthcoming rules revision and invited people to join the process. After a question from the floor it was agreed that a consultation with our members would take place regarding any suggested rule changes.

***Council Cuts:***

Jan Jonker (Head of City Parks) spoke briefly about the pressures on the council budget. He clarified that the City’s budget had just been voted through and whilst there are no allotment rent increases tabled for this forthcoming financial year, after next year the council has to find another £75 million. So for future years the council have to assess a wide range of options for members to consider, and subsidies for sports and allotments will be something they look at. The current ‘allotment subsidy’ is about £60,000 – the shortfall between income from rents and expenditure on allotment related administration and maintenance costs.

Whether subsidies are reduced across a range of services will be a political decision – not an officer one. We are happy to continue to work with the BHAF to see where savings can be made.

 **6.** **Treasurer’s Report:**

MC read out Hannes Froehlich’s ‘Treasurer’s Report’.

The accounts reported reflect our positions at the end of March 2015 (i.e. the financial year 2014/2015).

BHAF have two funds to account for. One is the development fund and the other is BHAF related expenses.

This year we had £6000 allocated from the council for site developments across Brighton and Hove. We used 96% (£5777) on the following projects:

* Raised beds for the Peacock Lane site (£540)
* Additional supplies for the community shed at the St Louie Home site (£465))
* An apple crusher and press at the Roedale Valley site (to be shared with other sites) (£500)

- A new community shed (container) for the Whitehawk/Craven Vale site (£1673)

Regarding the BHAF and site rep expenses account, we had 2.5% of the previous financial year’s total allotments rent income allocated by the council. I can report that BHAF and the site reps used up around £1538 of that amount over the financial year. This includes communication related expenses like our web hosting and email facilities, poster printing and distribution, room rentals, transport, postage and mobile phone costs. We therefore increased the funds available and this enables BHAF to fund other community projects in the future, as well as the rules review and the site reps focus group which is in the pipeline.

Overall the finances of BHAF can be considered in very good shape. However expenses can vary year on year, and this year there were less meetings then last year (e.g. no strategy meetings), so things may change in future.

*Hannes Fröhlich*

(Treasurer BHAF)

**7.** **Special Thanks:**

AB thanked Emily Gardiner for the good work she did this year for the BHAF and was sorry that ill health forced her to step down. We hope she’ll be able to return in the near future.

Steve Lucas – long time BHAF Committee Member and former BHAF Treasurer was thanked for all his work. He said he’d like to slip quietly away without any fuss, so apologies for ignoring his wishes!

Thanks was also given to Gerry Neville, who is standing down as site rep for Coldean – a position he held for over 30 years. AB read out a short biography.

“I joined the federation committee about 30 years ago when we held meetings at a solicitors premises in Grand Parade. We then moved meeting to the Weald when I became Treasurer with John Smith as president. During a meeting with the council about 1998, the suggestion the Council should make provision for people with disabilities to garden. I said if they gave me £750 I would start to build a Limited Mobility area at Coldean and would apply for Lottery grants, plus raise other funds locally. The Weald also wanted to get involved so together we raised some £25000 which resulted in completing Coldean, Weald and Foredown sites .

My time as site rep has enabled me to meet and encourage new tenants as well as be involved with the annual Coronation bowl and children’s competition.”

Gerry – who couldn’t make the AGM – will be given a gift card as a token of our appreciation. He was also voted – forced into accepting in his absence – to be the Honorary President of the BHAF.

**8.** **Election of Officers and Committee:**

MC nominated AB for chairperson, MW seconded and a vote was taken from the floor.

Bill Parslow was voted in as the new BHAF Secretary.

Richard Howard was voted onto the Committee as ‘Site Reps Election Monitor’.

All other positions were to stay the same as last year and voted in on a block vote. The Committee is as follows:

 **President: Gerry Neville
Chairman: Allan Brown
Secretary: Bill Parslow
Treasurer: Hannes Froelich
Publicity Officer: Mark Carroll
Plot Holders Liaison Officer: Guispina Salamone
Site Reps Election Monitor: Richard Howard
Assistant Secretary, Events and Booking Co-ordinator: Anne Glow
BHAF Wildlife Group: Maureen Winder**

It was stressed that the BHAF is always in need of volunteers, either to sit on the Committee or to work on specific projects and any help would be greatly appreciated.

 **9.** **Short Interval:**

Refreshments were served before and during the meeting. We had wine and cheese, tea, coffee and biscuits, soft drinks etc. This proved poplar!

**10.** **‘Wildlife on Allotment’ – talk by Sussex Wildlife Trust:**

 The SWT gave a most entertaining and informative talk.

 **11.** **‘Wildlife on Allotment’ – talk by Sussex Wildlife Trust:**

 Unfortunately, as we were running out of time, Maureen had to quickly outline her idea of forming a BHAF Wildlife Group – to bring together all those interested in the wildlife that call our local allotments home. People who were interested were encouraged to sign up – this is an exciting development and will hopefully serve to co-ordinate a lot of the good work that is currently going on. Recording the species that live or utilise the greed corridors allotments provide is important – especially for protecting sites under threat.

**12.** **Protecting Cravenvale and Mileoak from Development:**

 Ever since the ‘Urban Fringe’ planning document highlighted both Cravenvale and Mileoak as potential sites for housing developments, the plotholders at Cravenvale have pulled toether a fantastic campaign to both highlight the importance locally of their site. Jane Hawkins gave a brief summary of events thus far and what will happen next. **The meeting closed at about 9.30pm - little later than planned. Thank you to all those that attended and made for a really enjoyable evening.**