

**AGENDA - BHAF COMMITTEE MEETING (21st November 2013)**

**Essex House, Montague Street, Kemptown 6.30pm**

**Present:**

Allan Phillips (Chair)

Russ Howarth (Vice-chair)

Allan Brown (Secretary)

Mark Carroll (Publicity Officer)

Anne Glow (Committee Member)

Richard Howard (MAHS Moulsecoomb Allotment and Horticultural Society)

**Apologies for Absence:**

Emily Gardiner (Treasurer)

Steve Lucas (Committee Member)

**1. Minutes of the Last Meeting:**

**Matters Arising:**

SL to be advanced funds from the BHAF account to cover the purchase of CCTV camera for trial on allotments.

RH reiterated that personal access to sufficient funds to cover BHAF expenses, prior to reimbursement, could preclude some from sitting on the BHAF committee, therefore no-one should be expected to do so.

Minutes approved.

**2. Allotment Strategy:**

A large portion of the meeting was spent discussing several issues relating to both the timetable and the content of the on-going B&H Allotment Strategy. Two recent consultation events were discussed:

1. ***The B&H Allotment Strategy; Consultation Event.***

“The event, supported by the Brighton and Hove Food Partnership, took place at Dorset Gardens Methodist Church Hall in Kemptown, Brighton on Wednesday 13th November 2013. It gathered together a diverse group of more than 50 participants representing allotment holders, site reps, allotment federation members and other individuals and organisations with an interest in allotments and the Allotment Strategy for Brighton and Hove. Many if not most of the participants had engaged with the on-line allotment surveys carried out by Brighton and Hove food Partnership on behalf of the Allotment Federation and the City Council, and which had over 1800 detailed responses.

The key focus of this event was to provide an opportunity for participants to reflect on the outcomes of the allotment survey. The event was designed in such a way that all participants were given an opportunity to consider key emerging themes from the consultation, provide their perspective on the themes and suggest ways in which the themes could be addressed by the strategy. “

**B**. ***The B&H Allotment Strategy; Site Reps Focus Group Workshop***

“The workshop, supported by the Brighton and Hove Food Partnership, took place at the meeting room of the Brighton and Hove Food Partnership at the Brighthelm Centre, Brighton on Tuesday 19th November 2013**.**

The key focus of this event was to provide an opportunity for the voice of site reps to be heard and their opinions and perspective included in the consultation on development of an Allotment Strategy for Brighton and Hove. The workshop followed hot on the heels of a large consultation event with plot holders and plot waiting listers held the previous week. Outcomes of this event with specific relevance to site reps were incorporated into the workshop for site reps to consider and discuss. “

Quoted from event summaries written up by Emily O’Brien and Ben Messer. These documents will be made available on the BHAF website.

The BHAF ‘working group’ members have written up their draft papers on the areas of ‘Land’, ‘Governance’ and ‘Finance’. These have been read and circulated amongst the ‘BHAF Strategy Team’ and were sent to the BHCC/ FP by AP on Saturday 23rd November. The details of these draft papers will be discussed at the next Strategy Meeting – 02/12/13.

AP proposed a timetable for releasing interesting results of the survey. The first of such releases is the ‘Allotments and Mental Health’ paper. (See appendix 1.) This has now been sent to all local councillors and is available on the BHAF website, facebook page etc.

It is proposed that subsequent releases will cover the following areas:

Food and healthy eating (Quality food, environmental gardening, food miles etc).

Waiting list.

Plot sizes.

Costs.

**3. Competitions/ City in Bloom:**

AG will attend the City in Bloom AFM, which is being held in the Noblesse Meeting Room, Thistle Hotel on Friday 29th November.

Details of how the BHAF intend to run the Allotments Competition next year have yet to be discussed in detail, although, in line with our general policy of encouraging the creation and strengthening of local Site Associations, the general trajectory would be towards inter-site competitions, possibly with site reps recommending plots for entry, as part of the annual inspection process.

**4. Development Fund/ Budget Targets:**

RH submitted a draft paper; “Brighton and Hove Allotment Federation; Development Fund Machinery and Equipment” – see appendix 2. RH also outlined some core equipment that the Federation could own, that could be borrowed by all sites for one off occasions/ special events etc. Not every site need own a rotovator for example, but having access to one would be useful.

**5. BHAF AGM, Dates and Venue:**

The merits of holding the AGM centrally, as was done last year (Brighthelm Centre), compared to years previously where it was held at Patcham Community Centre, given that attendance at the former was less than at the latter – even taking into account the rent rise issue which swelled numbers. Also the timing of the meeting was discussed.

**AOB**

It was agreed that the next BHAF Committee Meeting would be held on Wednesday 15th January at Robert Lodge, Whitehawk Road @6-30pm.

*Meeting finished at 9.00pm.*

***Appendix 1:***

http://www.bhaf.org.uk/page\_id\_\_582\_path\_\_0p72p.aspx

Allotments improve mental health

**92% of plot holders agree**

**By Mark Carroll**

A major survey of plot holders in Brighton and Hove, just completed in October 2013 shows that 92% of plot holders either agreed or strongly agreed that allotments improved their mental health or provided stress relief. 53 % strongly agreed and 39% agreed. According to the survey 4500-5000 people regularly use the allotments in Brighton and Hove.

In the same survey a similar high percentage emphasised the benefit allotments gave through general exercise. 36% of plot holders in Brighton and Hove are aged between 40 and 49. The 40-50 year old age group is notoriously difficult to engage in health related activities.

These statistics were reinforced with individual comments that included:

**“For me it’s about remaining sane”**

**"Best de-stresser ever and so gratifying"**

**“I live in a flat in one of the most polluted areas of town, there is constant noise and I have no outdoor space. When I was mentally ill last year my allotment helped me get back on track. I have always valued and enjoyed having the allotment but it really hit home how much I need it and value it , when I was so poorly. "**

**“Having an allotment has helped me immensely with depression and has brought purpose and much pleasure to my life"**

An ex plot holder told us

**“It’s a place I could go and relax even if I was digging. I did not need to take any anti- depressants. Now I am back on 150 grams a day, I hope this answers the question. "**

 In earlier evidence provided to the Strategy steering committee it was revealed that the NHS estimates that the wider economic cost of mental illness in England has been estimated at £105 billion per year.

<http://www.nhs.uk/NHSEngland/NSF/Pages/Mentalhealth.aspx>

This is equivalent to £2,000 each year for every man woman and child in England.

**"The new strategy must make allotments stress free and ensure that more people who want to improve their mental health can enjoy allotments."** *Alan Phillips, Chairman of the Brighton and Hove Allotment Federation.*

<http://ymlp.com/zmXLSI>

***Appendix 2:***

**DRAFT**

**Brighton and Hove Allotment Federation**

**Development Fund Machinery and Equipment**

***Criteria for grants to be awarded***.

Purpose: The Federation Committee need to know why the piece of equipment is needed at the particular site. The answer may be obvious (“We need a hedge trimmer because we’ve got lots of hedges along the haulage ways”) but it must be given.

Access: The Committee need to know that the equipment will be available to all plot holders on the site. This might mean that a number of trained people are prepared to use the equipment on behalf of plotholders. It might mean that training will be offered to anybody who wants to use the equipment. We need to know that the equipment will be adequately advertised as available and contact details to get hold of it will be published.

The Committee will also want any equipment to be available to suitably trained and experienced federation members at other sites, or available for any practical projects undertaken by the Federation itself.

Sustainability: The Committee do not feel that there are sufficient funds to purchase and replace equipment indefinitely. There should be some way of collecting money for the use of the equipment to save towards its maintenance and eventual replacement. This can include charges to other sites and to the Federation itself.

Safety: The Committee needs to be assured that due diligence will be taken in regard to health and safety procedures. Arrangements need to be made for personal protective equipment to be bought and distributed with the equipment.

Ownership: The equipment must be purchased for and on behalf of the site. There must be some organised group of plotholders who own the equipment. The organisation can be relatively informal but it must be open to all site members to join.

Storage: The committee need to know where the equipment will be stored and what arrangements will be made in the event of a person storing it leaving the allotment site.

Insurance: The equipment must be insured against theft. This may be as an extension to somebody’s personal household insurance.

Appropriate use:

The committee will need some evidence that the site members are aware of the limitations of any equipment. For example a line trimmer (standard strimmer) is not appropriate for clearing bramble patches. Misuse of equipment will certainly reduce its functional life and may be dangerous.

Environmental

Concerns

At present most hand-held equipment operates on two-stroke engines. These generate more pollution than four-stroke engines. It is debatable whether electric equipment is any better for the environment (the original source of energy used to re-charge electrical equipment, and the eventual disposal of dead batteries may outweigh any immediate benefits in emissions). The Committee will want to know that these issues have been considered.

There is also a potential issue of noise pollution. The Committee will want to know what consideration has been given to other plot-holders who may be disturbed by the use of the equipment. We do consider that Allotments are light agricultural sites and that the noise of light agricultural machinery is to be expected. However we are also aware that plotholders view the peace of the allotments as a precious part of their experience. We will want to know that some consideration has been given to these issues. (The answer may just be “We don’t expect to use it that often”.

The Federation committee is very keen to use the Development Fund to make Allotment Gardening an easier and better experience. We are also keen to see an increased sense of “ownership” of common areas. Committee members will be very pleased to discuss these criteria verbally and support members with making applications. We will also support the formation of site organizations to own pieces of equipment, including funding the production of publicity to create such organizations.

RH 21/11/13