

**BHAF COMMITTEE MEETING (15th January 2014)**

**Robert Lodge, Whitehawk Road, BN2 5FG. 6.30pm**

**Present:**

Allan Phillips (Chair)

Russ Howarth (Vice-chair)

Allan Brown (Secretary)

Emily Gardiner (Treasurer)

Mark Carroll (Publicity Officer)

Anne Glow (Committee Member)

Steve Lucas (Committee Member)

Richard Howard (Moulsecoomb Association Rep)

**Apologies for Absence:**

None

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

**Matters Arising:**

None

Minutes approved.

**2. BHAF AGM:**

A date for the BHAF AGM has been set for 19th March 2014 – 6.30pm for 7.00pm start.

(SL and AB to check for availability of Brighthelm Centre.)

Richard Howard (RH) – on behalf of the Moulscoomb Estate Allotments - would like to raise a constitutional amendment to the BHAF Constitution. It was clarified by MC that “Notice of all intended motions to be put to the AGM must be submitted to the Secretary by the 31st.January each year, or 28 days before the AGM if date of the AGM after end of March.”

In a deviation from the agenda item, RH accused the BHAF Committee of not sufficiently representing its members; failing to satisfactorily encourage more women to join the committee; questioned whether we had been elected into our positions and felt that his omission from a list of meeting attendees from a previous set of BHAF Committee Meeting Minutes was.

The BHAF Constitution was again explained to RH. Previous email correspondences to this end have been shared with the Allotment Officer, in order to establish an independent third party record, of our attempts to answer Richard’s enquiries as to the nature of the BHAF Constitution .

On a point of order, MC again explained to RH that there are minimum requirements needed from all Allotment Associations in order to participate in BHAF committee meetings. (see appendix 1)

RH was asked to forward a copy of the Moulscoomb Association Constitution to the BHAF Committee. RH insisted that he had already done so, but no copy had been received by Committee members. RH agreed to forward this document to the Committee.

RH threatened to leave the meeting and “have nothing further to do with the BHAF”, however AP persuaded him to stay. AP had been invited to speak at a recent Moulscoomb Association Meeting on the Strategy and commended them on their dedication and commitment to improving their site, engaging with their members and for making valuable contributions and suggestions to the strategy process. “We all hope that we can create a mutually supportive and conducive atmosphere in which to effectively conduct BHAF business.”

Discussion returned to the BHAF AGM. The agenda for the evening was agreed.

The AGM agenda:

Welcome to the agenda

Obituaries

Apologies for Absence

To approve minutes of the 2013 AGM

Matters arising from those minutes

Annual report 2013/ 2014

Treasurers report and adoption of accounts 2013/ 2014

Election of Officers

Election of committee members

In addition AP would like us to present a progress report of where we’ve got to with the Strategy.

EG recommended that we make the Strategy discussion appealing; it was agreed that it might include ways of involvement with the 2014 Action plan .

Russ Howarth (RussH) said he’d be interested in doing a short illustrated talk on allotmenteering in the Gambia. This was a well received idea.

RH recommended that we invite nominations for officer posts and ask whether there are any agenda items, by emailing our members and putting up notices on gates.

MC and AG to gather quotes for printing/ laminating costs.

(As the Committee will not be meeting again before the AGM, we will need to organize a distribution of flyers between ourselves and each tackle a few sites, in order to ensure all gates are covered.)

**3. Allotment Strategy:**

AP gave a summary of the Allotment Strategy and outlined where we’ve got to with it. He said we had reported to the last AGM that we hoped that the Strategy would be completed in six months or so (by the autumn), when we invited people to join the working group., However, in reality it has taken far longer and is only now coming to a successful conclusion. We have had two very thorough surveys conducted (Allotmenteers/plot holders and potential allotmenteers/waiting list), which is probably unique in the UK.It is on the basis of those surveys of our current and future members that the Strategy has been predicated, reinforced by the consultative meetings.

Some members at the AGM wanted us to go beyond fine words with actions soon.

It was encouraging to the BHAF Committee that most of the issues that have emerged from that process are strongly in alignment with the position the BHAF has taken.

The three broad categories have been:

Land

Governance

Finance

(These will be discussed on an ongoing basis with the council within 2014 Action plan.)

The waiting list survey

The waiting list stood at 1927, prior to the waiting list survey, the figure now stands at 850 and the majority of the people on the waiting list have had to wait under two years. The ultimate goal is that people would be able to get an allotment in under a year – but certainly no longer that 2 years. (The waiting list may grow slightly as we can’t be certain that some of those removed from the list, will not reapply as they may not realize they have been removed.)

22% wanted full plots

55% half plots

22% wanted micro beds

(The remainder were limited mobility and community plots etc.)

If we continue the current plot splitting policy we estimate that in 5 years time, only 38% of the land will be taken up by full plots. The council are sympathetic to the choice issue and are keen to make choice of plot size integral to the strategy.

We will need to work with the council to ensure that there is sufficient support and encouragement for new plot holders, as well as informing people exactly how much time is required to work a plot, so people make an informed decision as to exactly what size plot they would like.

It has been agreed that allotment rents would be linked to inflation and only if council budgets are cut, would allotment rents be increased to make up the short fall. This would be proportional.

Rubbish clearance of plots has a disproportionate effect on the Allotment Service budget. Further work will need to be done on this to try and reduce the costs – deposits?

RH enquired about sites being self-managed. RussH gave a brief synopsis of the meeting that reps of Roedale Valley and Lower Roedale had with the council. The subject of self-management is going to be presented to RAGS members at the AGM.

There was further discussion on land.

The BHAF are keen to ensure that we maximise the use of existing sites – bring all vacant plots back into productive. The council have no immediate plans to look for further land but the BHAF reserve the right to pursue this if, over the next few years, it emerges that we need more land.

MC gave a brief summary of the plot choice issue. MC said that Jan Jonker has been sympathetic to the BHAF’s recommendations and is keen to pursue choice. They are committed to offering all people at the top of the waiting list a choice of plot size. They are also keen on enabling current half plotters to move up to a full plot if they meet some basic criteria. Similarly struggling full plotters will be encouraged to share their plots with co-workers, swap plots with half plotters on site who would like a full plot, or where no other options are available give up half their plot.

SL – enquired as to how the issue of co-working has been dealt with and what we can do to encourage it. MC recommended setting up a page on the BHAF website to promote co-working.

There had been a constructive meeting between the Chair (AP) and Publicity Officer (MC) with Cllr Pete West and officials earlier that day. There was broad agreement on the major issues of the strategy Co Production, recognizing that it was work in progress with detailed work needed within the action plan.

It was noted that the BHAF Strategy Group (all the Officers and Ann Glow) had the AGM authority to approve the framework strategy with further work on the Action Plan for the new BHAF committee after the AGM.

**4. Governance and BHAF Constitiution:**

Russ H took over the chair for the second half of the meeting.

AP informed the Committee that he will not be standing for Chairperson at the next AGM. He will however, continue to work with the BHAF and Council on the Strategy, as many of the issues raised during the strategy process will be on-going and need further work and input over the coming months.

(AP had to leave the meeting at this point.)

Russ H briefed the Committee on the presentation on Governance he had given at the last Site Reps Meeting and any emerging issues that would need further work/ clarification. For example at the Site Rep Meeting the question was asked as to

“How long would elected site reps remain in their position.” It was suggested at that meeting that a year may not be long enough.

The issue of elected site reps will be raised at the next strategy meeting. ie. clarification on the terminology of site reps/ site stewards. This appeared to cause some confusion/ concern at the Site Rep meeting.

The council felt because of the size of the proposed allotments forum that it should only meet once a year. The BHAF feel that it should continue to meet quarterly.

The council has been slow in taking on board the issues of governance raised by the BHAF strategy steering group.

It was felt that the BHAF Committee should not be larger than 15 members.

SL discussed site patrolling and the reasons why the idea went down so poorly at the site reps meeting.

RussH asked whether one of the PCSO’s may be invited to do an information stand at the BHAF AGM.

**5. Development Fund and Site Reps Meeting:**

A request has been submitted by Joanna Martin from the Weald for £691.44 for a mural on their allotment shop. This would involve all interested plot holders at the Weald.

EG felt that the project should be receipted and they will be reimbursed, as opposed to up front distribution of funds. RussH clarified that we need to ascertain that this proposal has the backing of the Weald Association.

The proposal was agreed in principle. (It was clarified that he amount stated on the dev. fund request is the ceiling amount.)

**AOB**

EG raised the issue of site rep expenses. These need to be receipted but is there a policy on things like mobile phone charges etc.? EG said we need to clarify this and document it, just in case we are investigated. We need to define ‘what is reasonable’, so it can be traced and receipted. RussH suggested that we ask for a receipt from the site rep directly. Or alternatively we suggest an upper limit for claims on phone charges/ stamps etc.

MC – because Gary resigned from the position of Plot-holder Liaison Officer, there is a vacancy. SL and RH would both like to stand for this position – it was suggested that they both share the role. (To clarify - only elected committee members can take officer positions. Those attending meetings in other capacities e.g. as an association rep, may be co-opted to assist, but as such, cannot be Officers of the Committee.)

*Meeting finished at 9.00pm.*

***Appendix 1:***



The Brighton and Hove Allotment Federation are keen to support existing Allotment Associations and encourage the forming of new Allotment Associations. We have a duty to ensure that Associations federated with us are representative, transparent and democratic. To that end we have a list of minimum requirements of Allotment Associations.

**Minimum requirements of Allotment Associations to be federated with the BHAF**

1. **The Association must have a Constitution that is made available to the BHAF.**
2. **The Association must have a Committee of at least 4 people whose names and contact details are made available to the BHAF. There is no minimum membership number.**
3. **The Association should hold at least 4 meetings a year. One of which can be the AGM.**
4. **The meetings should be advertised so that all local plot holders are aware of them, with ample notice given. We suggest laminated posters on all gates or notice boards.**
5. **Plot holders on your site should have access to your meeting agenda and minutes. We suggest printed minutes should be available at the site hut or on a website. The BHAF can give you web space on their site.**
6. **The Association should invite the BHAF to their AGM and also supply us with minutes from the AGM.**

We hope these requirements are easily met, and if you have any concerns in this regard please don’t hesitate to get in touch with us. We will be happy to help.