

**BHAF COMMITTEE MEETING (30th April 2014)**

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

**Present:**

Emily Gardiner (Chairperson)

Russ Howarth (Vice-chairperson & RAGS Rep)

Allan Brown (Secretary)

Hannes Froehlich (Treasurer)

Mark Carroll (Publicity Officer)

Anne Glow (Committee Member)

Giuseppina Salamone (Committee Member)

Maureen Winder (Committee Member)

Richard Howard (MAHS Rep)

**Apologies for Absence:**

Steve Lucas (Committee Member)

Alan Phillips (Committee Member)

*(NB. Committee members are referred to by their initials throughout the minutes.)*

* **Introductions**:

EG welcomed everyone to the meeting and introductions were made along with a quick description of roles.

(RH is attending the meeting in dual capacity as both RAGS rep and vice-chair. GS asked for clarification as to whether the elected Allotment Society members present at BHAF Committee Meetings were ‘reps’ or ‘delegates’ – there is an important distinction. “The essential difference between the two is voting power. A Representative is elected to use his expertise and vote according to his will. A delegate can be called back to brief those who appointed him and then receive further instructions on how to vote.” It was agreed that currently they were envisaged as being ‘representatives’, although it would ultimately depend on individual sites to determine this.)

* Code of conduct

EG clarified that we were all volunteers and that it was important that all our meetings are conducted in a positive and supportive environment. To this end she hoped we could abide by the Council’s ‘Code of Conduct’ guidelines – a copy of these need to be obtained and shared.

* **Matters outstanding:**
  + Speed limits – any progress?

This is in response to an email from Simon Powell (Whitehawk) who asked whether there was any news on speed limit signs for the site. It is understood the Allotment Officer is aware of the issue.

Action: AB to chase this up.

* + MAHS correspondence

EG gave a quick synopsis of the correspondences received from MAHS. (The Chairperson of MAHS had written to EG to formally lodge a complaint about how the Moulsecoomb resolutions/ motions were handled at the AGM.) EG clarified the procedure had been explained by the then Chairperson Alan Phillips to the room prior to motions been heard and this had been accepted. The letter has been forwarded to AP and it was agreed that no further action need be taken.

* + City in Bloom

RH has been covering this. CiB have asked RH if he would like to be a panellist on ‘Gardeners Question Time’ as a rep of the Fed. He was happy to do so as there were no objections or other volunteers wishing to do it in his place. There is an event planned at the level. They have found a sponsor for one of the allotment competitions, so the Fed will not have to cover the Coronation Bowl (best allotment) nor will we be funding any other of the competitions. EG suggested that Meakers the sponsors may be happy to have the prize money shared between other categories, but RH said the competition posters and publicity was already underway.

Insert for CiB sponsors pack – would like BHAF to write something for this. RH makes the point that allotments could be entered into the wider garden based competitions.

Action: RH to write up something on behalf of BHAF for CiB sponsors pack/ publicity.

RH would like to take the issue of competitions to the first allotment forum meeting and encourage local societies to run their own competitions. It was agreed that the prize money was too much and having more smaller prizes would be preferable.

* **Meeting cycle for the year:**

(Dates, locations, chairing, minuting, invitees, publicity, Fed committee representation)

* + BHAF Committee – Robert Lodge

2nd July 2014

24th September 2014

19th November 2014

EG to chair.

AB to take minutes.

* + AGM

(Not necessary for this to be determined at this stage.)

* + Allotment Forum – Patcham Community Centre

June 18th 2014

September 17th 2014

January 14th 2015

RH to chair.

AB to take minutes.

GS asked for clarification as to who would be invited to the Allotment Forum.

RH clarified that it would consist of site reps, allotment associations, community groups with plots, councillors, regular plot-holders, people on the waiting list, Permaculture Trust, Biosphere.

(RiH would like the allotment officer to have greater support.)

There was a brief discussion about whether we need to put up posters on allotment gates to publicise all the meetings for the year. Suggested we send laminated posters to site reps. The following sites already have laminating facilities so a pdf of the poster would be sufficient.

RAGS

MAHS

Weald

Tenantry Down

EG signing in book for Allotment Forum. RH suggested badges/ stickers for identification.

Action: EG to pick up labels and pens.

* + Liaison Group – Stanmer Offices

13th May 2014

22nd July 2014

7th October 2014

It is hoped that the Council will minute these meetings. Traditionally DC took minutes at the Liaison Meetings.

RH suggested the Fed collect physical copies of the ‘Maintenance Report’, which could be pinned on the BHAF display boards and shown at Allotment Forum meetings.

Action: AB to bring BHAF display board to meeting. MC to collect physical copy of ‘Maintenance Report’ from Liaison Meeting.

The BHAF Liaison Group will be made up the existing Strategy Group and GS was welcomed to the team.

EG

AG

MC

AB

AP

GS (site rep)

* + Councillor attendance

It was agreed that we would request that we continue to have a councillor assigned to BHAF. (This follows communication from BHCC, reviewing ‘Outside Bodies’ list – which is done annually.)

* + Co-otion (Emily O’Brien)

It was felt that as the current BHAF Strategy delegation was still largely intact that it would not be necessary to co-opt EoB onto the Fed.

* + Involvement of waiting list

How do we go about getting representation for people on the waiting list? MC suggested that they be invited to the Allotment Forum. RH agreed.

MW expressed concern that the Allotment Forum was becoming too large and unwieldy and the voice of site reps was being drowned. It was suggested that the main issues with people on the waiting list is finding out where they are on the waiting list. HF suggested that if site reps had access to the council’s waiting list data they could take a more active role. They currently do get a list – the whole list – if the site doesn’t have a very long waiting list, but usually just the next 30 or so names if it is long.

Ask site reps at Forum Meeting if they would be happy to have people on the waiting list contact them directly and giving them a rough idea of where they are on the waiting list. It was clarified that the long term goal is to have people on the waiting list pay a small fee for joining the list and the funds generated from this would be put towards updating/ automating the IT system.

Need to raise this issue with DC at the Liaison Meeting – find out how progress with updating the waiting list IT system, so people signing up for allotments would be able to automatically track where they are on the waiting list – as agreed on the Strategy.

Action: Raise ‘Waiting List’/ IT system progress at Liaison Group Meeting.

RH suggested that at the Allotment forum, we hold a ‘surgery’ before meeting starts – so people could discuss details on Security with Plot Liaison Officer, Dev Fund requests could speak to Treasurer etc. There was a discussion about how the agenda would be sorted out.

* BHAF Bank account:

EG felt that going forward it would be preferable that the account is switched from NatWest to HSBC, so HF can easily visit a branch. NatWest have been very poor. HF said when RAGS switched HSBC needed proof that they were a proper association. BHAF would have to do similarly.

HF explained that with RAGS they’d agreed that HF as treasurer he would have sole access to internet banking. The Committee voted in support BHAF having internet banking facility. Only one person is allowed to have access to internet banking. EG explained that the current system of cheques and counter signatures etc. has been extremely unwieldy and has slowed things up considerably.

* **Communications, Press and Publicity:**
  + Reaching non-internet users
  + BHAF PO Box and phone number

EG we need to ensure that non internet users are able to contact the BHAF.

RH suggested we contact Community Base to find out if we can get a PO Box and possibly a phone answering service. AG will chase this one up. (AG informed us after the meeting that she’d contacted CB and they currently don’t have any available PO Poxes, nor do they have a telephone system. EG will see with the Brighthelm Centre have a PO Box system we can utilise.)

* + Publicising the first Forum

(I didn’t capture this – could someone let me know what was agreed?)

* + Website update

EG suggests she goes through website and delete all out of date pages and links etc.

* + Development fund publicity

2013 – 2014 was a very good year, only £200 unused.

Action: Raise at the Allotment Forum.

* + Frequency of newsletters

EG enquired as to how often the group email works. We can send out one a month but currently send out every 2 months. Agreed we should do a monthly smaller mail out. RH suggested that DC could circulate email on our behalf. GS suggested we use a pdf attachment to circumvent strange council text formatting. MC said we have the same email list as DC and the formatting of group emails from BHCC/ Allotment Service is poor. RH suggested that DC could occasionally do the emails as we’re limited to one a month and charged for it.

Getting newsletters printed off by site reps and displayed at shops/ store huts etc.

* + Updates to council website

AB to chase this one up. (See earlier discussion on this)

* + Site liaison :

On-going plotholder feedback

Survey Monkey to plotholders in January so results can be digested before the AGM.

* + - contact with existing societies / associations
    - development of new societies / associations

RH would like to encourage existing societies ie. Eastbrook Farm and the Weald to send a rep to BHAF meetings. What can we do to get Whitehawk and other potential sites to form active associations? EG wondered whether the current ‘minimum requirements’ is putting people off . (The current ‘minimum requirements’ were endorsed at AGM and we have a duty to uphold this. Inviting a rep from the Fed to attend Allotment Society’s AGMs is one of the stated minimum requirements.) Perhaps add an additional page on the social benefits? Ideally make it simpler and less intimidating. There is currently a page on the BHAF website, with example constitutions etc.

Action: MC to add link to Resource Centre to BHAF website.

Brief discussion on the minimum requirements. AB stressed that in order to ensure that any group attending BHAF Committee members were truly representative of their members and site, a set of minimum requirements was essential. EG wondered whether we could be more flexible on the number of meetings a year. We need to encourage groups to communicate with the Fed if they are having difficulties in forming associations or meeting minimum requirements. Letting plot-holders know they can contact the Fed if there are problems with their association.

Brief discussion on how to encourage Whitehawk site reps to form an association.

Action: RiH will liaise with Jane Hawkins

* **Items to raise at Forum** (In future this would include items raised by Forum):
  + Plot choice guidance for site reps & plot holders

MC sent out details to both plot-holders and site reps.

Get DC to contact all site reps and inform them that the email MC sent out is council endorsed and he can help them out clarifying any issues.

* + Micro-bed pilot scheme

AB gave a brief synopsis. Need to chase up DC about the legal issues. RiH – enquired about children’s beds. RH suggested that schools could even run children’s gardening groups along the micro-bed model.

* + Site rep elections – implementation

EG felt there needed to be some degree of anonymity and a more inclusive voting system FH suggested a ‘doodle poll’ type voting system. RH clarified how site rep elections were run at RAGS. (RH to help clarify this section)

DC wrote to us about how we envisage the process of electing site reps. RH felt that it was as simple as asking existing/ sitting site reps whether they’re happy to be nominated and to invite any other site rep. Emails/ gate notices asking whether there are any objections.

Poster put up asking for nominations. (MC to help clarify this section.)

Email/ survey monkey – people could vote more than once?

* + Rules Revision

This will be discussed at the Allotment Forum group. People will be able to sign up to specific working groups. GS felt that a bio-diverse/ wildlife friendly site is not necessarily in accordance with the rules. Brief discussion on rules.

* + Competitions & City in Bloom

(Dealt with earlier in meeting.) Rh feels that the Children’s Competitions – for example – are best done site by site, with support from BHAF. Look at the criteria with which the BHAF judge the best allotment competition. RH suggests we distribute the flyers produced by CiB.

* + Communications - roll-out of notice boards

Chase this up with DC at Liaison Group.

* + Federation constitution

This needs updating. Best done separately from Allotment Forum. Henry Christie, Russ Howarth, Maureen Winder, Richard Howard, Emily Gardiner volunteered to work on this.

* + Bio-diversity
* **Items for Liaison Group**

BHAF Equipment pool/ Stanmer storage.

‘Waiting List’/ IT system.

Update on roll out of site notice boards.

Rubbish clearance from sites.

* **Development Fund**
  + Status update

EG - one application from Eastbrook Farm for rubbish removal. £400 for skip. EG wondered whether rubbish clearance fell under the remit of the Dev Fund. RH felt that this is not good use of the Dev Fund.

A vote was taken and it was agreed that the Fed would not support this request.

RiH suggested collection days by arrangement. Contact refuse department and make arrangements through them

* + New applications

RH In RAGS rep capacity) requested a £50 grant for soil testing course at Roedale. EG asked him to fill out Dev Fund.

AG to pick up a list of funding bodies. Resource Centre has a good list of local funding bodies. Be good to share on website.

* + Criteria for application – society status.

It was clarified that in the future equipment purchases would be prioritised for Allotment Societies. This is both to encourage the formation of societies and greater accountability.

* + BHAF Equipment pool

RH suggested we pursue the idea of a shipping container/ storage at Stanmer/ St Annes Wells Garden. RAGS will store the BHAF rotovator

* **Security**
  + Camera trial / Weald

RH said the camera was trialled at the Weald. The equipment worked but nothing was caught on camera. It has been taken down. It is now available for the next mission.

* **Federation Constitution**

GS enquired

* **AOB** 
  + BHAF History

EG felt it would be good to try and pull together some of the history. John Burns would be a good source on this. AB has some documentation – EG will be point of contact on this.

* + Biosphere – MW and RiH will be the official BHAF delegates.
  + NatWest have compensated BHAF £79. EG suggested that we round it up to £100 and donate to Save Farm Terrace Allotments. Committee in agreement with this.
  + 21st May 6.30pm – Patcham Community Centre AGM. AB to remember to pass on form to be signed. AG and EG to attend – being a member means lower hire rate.

*Meeting ended at 9.30pm.*