**NOTES FROM THE BHAF COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 11 MAY 2016**

1. **Welcome and apologies**

The Chair welcomed new members, and reported that Bill would no longer be the Secretary to the Committee. Apologies had been received from Giuseppina. Members of the Committee would take notes of meetings wherever possible, until another Secretary came forward.

1. **Update from the Strategy Meeting**

Allan updated the meeting on the recent Strategy Meeting held with Council Officers. Data Protection issues had now been resolved. Other issues discussed included ways of cutting the remaining subsidy of almost £40,000. There were ways of increasing income through increasing the age at which concessions would be applied, water efficiency savings, and waiting list charges which would shortly be introduced. It had been proposed that some plot-holders on higher incomes would be willing to make higher payments on a voluntary basis, but this was rejected as impractical as the contributions would be uncertain and variable. It was pointed out that we have very little accurate information to support any decisions that might be made, and therefore we should focus on obtaining a full break down of the current subsidy and where efficiencies might be identified. Jim and Maureen were happy to work together on this.

1. **Weald Self-Management Proposal**

At the Strategy Meeting, it was revealed that the Weald had proposed they should trial a self-management approach. It was not clear what this would mean for the Service overall, or the impact on other sites. BHAF Committee members believed that no cost savings would result, and there would be risks to service and resource provision in the long term. It would be important that all plot-holders had the opportunity to vote on this proposal. Other considerations to bear in mind were the need to ensure appropriate standards were maintained, representation of plot-holders interests, and implications for the Allotment Strategy. What would happen if the current Weald Association members could no longer run the site, and nobody came forward to replace them? Would the site return to Council management and what costs might be involved?

1. **Site Rep Consultation meetings**

It was agreed that a further facilitated meeting would be arranged at the end of June. It would be announced at the Forum on 8 June.

1. **Rules Revision**

It was agreed that further checks might be needed before the document was sent to David Cooper for Council/Legal comment and input. Giuseppina had worked very hard to complete the document and include suggested changes submitted by plot-holders, but it was important to avoid complications which might delay agreement and implementation. One important aspect was the need to control dogs on sites, and ensure safety of plot-holders. It was also necessary to ensure the rules would not conflict with BHAF policies on wildlife/environmental considerations.

1. **University collaboration and design opportunities**

Jim and Allan had visited the University of Sussex to explore opportunities to work in collaboration to develop projects which could lead to design innovations for allotments, eg. Contributing to water savings, green roofs, specific structures on sites to build community facilities.

1. **Surplus Food Initiative**

Jim and Richard had met with the Food Partnership to discuss opportunities to distribute surplus crops from allotments to organisations supporting families and homeless groups across the City. It was hoped to map links between sites and community cafes or food banks. Moulsecoomb Estate allotments had previously trialled linking with a local school to encourage parents to make a donation in return for fresh vegetables and fruits when available. Other groups in the City might welcome a regular supply of fresh food, eg. The One Church Chomp project, but it is not clear how much surplus there actually is. It would make sense to take this idea forward on a small scale initially and map out different models on a trial basis. It would be important not to promise food that could not then be delivered and lead to disappointment, so planning and consultation was crucial.

1. **Next Forum – 8 June**

Mark agreed to organise the next Forum meeting in June. There was discussion of the Forum structure, as it does not currently comply with the way this was set up in the Strategy. This might need to be thought through in more detail, as Site Reps do not have a meeting space at which they can address policy issues or improvements, which can then be implemented. Nor does the Forum currently use the opportunity to engage with external organisations at a strategic level. Mark suggested having a speaker at the Forum in June, as an interim measure, which would create a positive focus to the meeting. It was agreed we invite Ruth Urbanowicz from BHOGG.

1. **Open Spaces Strategy**

There would be a meeting with Paul Campbell – Strategy Manager for Green Spaces – to discuss how allotments were to be involved in the Green Spaces Strategy currently being formulated. One problem is that voluntary groups in parks are being asked to take on more self-management and responsibility and they are feeling that this is an expectation, but it is not clear how effective it can be. Volunteers are being asked to do more and more. It was proposed that we ask for a meeting with Gill Mitchell, Lead Councillor for the Environment, to put the case for maintaining the Allotment Service at a consistent level. It was agreed we must represent plot-holders at the highest level to protect their interests.

1. **Allotment Open Day – 14 August**

It was agreed to promote this initiative and publicise the benefits of allotments to the local community. Each site could decide what times they would open to the public, and what they might offer, eg. Tea and cakes, short tours of the site, etc. It was an important message that allotments are for all, and not just a few people who might not be representative of ordinary families and individuals.

1. **Close of meeting**