**NOTES OF THE BHAF COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 27 JANUARY 2016**

Allan Brown, Mark Carroll, Hannes Froelich, Jane Griffin, Josephine Salamone, Maureen Winder, Richard Howard

**Apologies Bill Parslow, Secretary**

**Chair’s introduction**

Allan Brown reported that Anne Glow had stepped down from the Committee, and thanked her for her contributions over several years. Bill Parslow was unable to attend the meeting.

**Preparation for Strategy Meeting to be held on 16 February at 9.30am**

Jan Jonker had talked to the Forum in January. It was not clear how funding for the allotment service fitted within the Parks budget overall. It would be important to clarify the actual allotment service budget and what the subsidy is currently. Accurate figures are essential, if the allotment community is to work with the Council to make savings.

The Committee accepted that the service should be cost neutral, but the approach to achieving this must be reasonable.

**Planning the BHAF AGM on 16 March 2016**

Mark Carroll reminded the Committee that Bob Flowerdew would be the speaker for the AGM, and he would be talking about ‘No Work Gardening’. It was possible that if news of the speaker were circulated too widely, more people would come along than could be accommodated at the Brighthelm Centre. It was agreed that it should be advertised as a meeting for allotment holders and co-workers only.

**Mindful Gardening**

Mark Carroll was considering more workshops that plot-holders might enjoy, following the success of the apple tree pruning workshops. The BHAF Committee wanted to offer appropriate sessions which would extend the gardening experience, and were especially interested in improving mental health and lowering stree. Mark proposed some sessions on Mindful Gardening, perhaps with a trial session to begin with. There were some concerns that this might not be suitable for all plot-holders, and other courses were proposed, eg. Composting methods, water saving, different cultivation methods. These could be rolled out over the summer months.

**Butterfly Leaflet and Starters Pack**

Mark and Allan reported that the Butterfly Conservation Leaflet and the Starters Pack for new plot-holders were in preparation. The drafts would be shared with the rest of the Committee for comment before printing.

**Report on recent workshops for site reps**

Maureen Winder reported that the latest consultation workshop exploring the role of site reps had been successful, and also the workshop organised by David Cooper for newly elected site reps. These sessions brought people together to discuss a range of issues and shared experience and knowledge. There was some concern over the way plots were being let on sites where there were no site reps in post. It was felt that if David Cooper visited a site to let plots, it would be a good idea if a locally based site rep accompanied him, or a site rep member of the Committee could go along to assist. This would help to build contact between BHAF and sites, and ensure consistency.

**Site rep elections**

Richard Howard reported on the sites where he had overseen elections, and provided a list of the 15 completed. It was agreed that the approach to the elections should be consistent, even where sites had affiliated associations and carried out elections locally, as some site reps would see any differences as unfair and unclear. The election of site reps should take place every two years, to ensure that the process was the same for everyone. This would need to be discussed in more detail, as some sites would need more support and encouragement to hold open, democratic elections.

**Rules revision**

It was agreed that comments on the proposed rules revision should be submitted by 16 February. If any more comments were made, Giuseppina Salamone would attempt to incorporate them, but after that, the draft rules would be presented to the AGM for approval before going to the Allotment Officer for legal checks and final edits. Some contractual elements might also need to be considered, but these may not necessarily become part of the rules.

**Development Fund allocations**

It was agreed that funding for the roof of the shed at Moulescoomb Estate site should be a priority, as the asbestos sheets were decaying. This was a substantial sum, but would be allocated in two parts to allow for other projects to be funded. Richard Howard reported that he was assisting Spike Ekipse to formulate an application for modernising the Coldean site toilet facility to a compost toilet, but this would not be ready for a few weeks as more estimates were needed.

**Proposal for an Allotment Day**

Maureen Winder proposed that BHAF might support and promote an Allotment Open Day, to encourage people to visit their local allotment, and see the value they had to the local community. Allotment Week takes place from 8-14 August, so Allotment Open Day could be held on 14 August, a Sunday. The Committee agreed this, and decided it would be publicised to members, and sites would be encouraged to take part.

**Dates for future meetings**

It was agreed that Hannes Froelich would now book the dates for future meetings, and inform the members well in advance.