**Notes from the B&H Allotment Strategy Meeting, 16 February 2016**

**Attendance: Jan Jonker, David Cooper, Mark Carroll, Allan Brown, Giuseppina Salamone, Maureen Winder, Richard Howard, Vic Burrell (Food Partnership)**

**Report back on Site Rep Elections, Site Rep Role Definition and Induction Sessions**

The BHAF Committee members summarised the successful work initiated on Site Rep elections, through which open and democratic elections had now been held at 17 sites. Discussions were on-going with regard to the election process on sites where an affiliated association already existed, but it was likely that all elections would in future adhere to a consistent process across the City, so that all site reps would be elected in the same way.

Where site rep elections had been held, the BHAF Committee had worked with David Cooper to organise follow-up induction/refresher workshops with elected site reps. Additional sessions would be arranged in the coming weeks. It was important to establish and agree who should officially attend these workshops, so that everyone understood one another’s roles, and could share information in an open discussion.

Successful consultation sessions with groups of site reps had been facilitated by Ben Messer to discuss the evolving role of site reps, and the problems and issues they found to impact on their ability to carry out their role effectively. It was important that site reps could meet together to exchange knowledge and share information, and pass on proposals for new and more efficient ways of working. More training and support was needed for site reps, including risk assessments and first aid training, so that site risks could be minimised.

**Communications and Data Protection**

Members of BHAF Committee found it difficult to communicate effectively with its members because there was no access to up to date contact details for current plot-holders. A legal document (Data Processing Agreement) had been presented to Mark Carroll requiring compliance with restrictive conditions on data handling, and discussions on this issue followed. It was agreed that further work was needed in order to identify what kind of agreement might be appropriate at this point, and what information was required for everyone involved to carry out their roles.

**Allotment Service budget**

It was agreed that for clarity, the Allotment budget should be separated from the City Parks budget. It was important to know the level of subsidy to the service, so that savings could be identified.

Detailed discussions were held on a number of suggestions for cost savings proposed by plot-holders at the previous Forum. Quite significant savings could be identified through various measures, and these would be examined further. As water is a major cost to the service, there were discussions on limiting the hours of water provision each day, and reducing availability of water during months of April and October. This would encourage more sustainable gardening on sites, and plot-holders could be encouraged to grow plants requiring less regular watering. Smart meters had been installed outside all sites, but it was important to know the average level of consumption on each site, so that an assessment could be made of usage and how much could be saved.

It was pointed out that many people are able and willing to pay more for their plots, and this could be an option offered to all. Additionally, a Waiting List registration fee of £15 had been agreed in the Allotment Strategy, and this was due to be implemented. Discussions with Site Reps would be needed to ensure that there would be no additional pressures on them as a result. The fee seemed quite high and was non-refundable, even if someone moved away or no longer required an allotment, and there could be complaints. A trial period of evaluation might be needed.

**Technical updates/Waiting Lists**

Plot-holders would by the end of February, be able to pay their bills by Direct Debit. This would make it easier for all involved, and ensure everyone was paying for their plot. There was some concern that a small number of Community Plots were not paying an appropriate fee in all cases, and David Cooper would be checking how this situation might be updated.

Those on the Waiting List would soon be able to check where they were on the list, and assess how soon they might choose a plot.

**Future meetings**

Jan Jonker proposed that the Strategy Group should meet more frequently to cover all the work needed to address budget issues and developments. It was agreed that the group would meet every two months for the coming year - the next meeting would be on 12 April, and on the second Tuesday of every other month thereafter.

**BHAF Leaflets**

Leaflets for new plot-holders were almost ready for circulation.

February 2016