**SITE REPS MEETING – BHAF/ BHCC**

**21st June 2017**

**Patcham Community Centre**

**Present:**

BHAF – Allan Brown, Maureen Winder, Giuseppina Salamone, Mark Carroll, Richard Howard.

BHCC - Rob Walker, David Cooper

Site Reps

**1. Welcome and introductions to all site reps**

AB (BHAF) welcomed everyone to the meeting. It was an excellent turn out for what was probably the hottest day of the year – if not several years! (BHAF provided refreshments which were well received).

AB discussed briefly why it had been decided to restore specific ‘Site Rep Meetings’. Following the restructuring of BHAF meetings after the publishing of the Allotment Strategy, the Site Rep Meetings had been replaced by ‘Allotment Forum Meetings’. Smaller,

**2. Purpose of these meetings** - develop the role of site reps, enable them to contribute ideas for improving the service, share experience and training needs.

**3.  Water saving** - how site reps can encourage plot holders to save water, council initiatives, water storage on sites.

R? (Racehill) mentioned the gentleman that had contacted the BHAF/ BHCC at the end of the BHAF AGM, with regards to offering his experience to assess the smart-meter data that the AO receive from the city’s allotment sites.

RW (BHCC) said he’d spoken with the gentleman in question, but it would appear that no further collaboration has been pursued.

AB (BHAF) mentioned the initiative from Site Reps at Roedale Valley, whereby laminated notices, highlighting the annual cost of water to the Allotment Service, were secured to all the sites taps. Initiatives to reduce the annual water bill were to be encouraged. BHAF/ FP/ BHCC to produce a leaflet to be sent to all plotholders and displayed on BHCC/ BHAF websites.

The BHAF is working with the BHCC to secure guttering from contractors upgrading houses in Moulscoomb/ Bevendean?. This is being collected by the Maintenance Team and stored at the Stanmer depot. These, along with a consignment of old bins (to be used as water butts) will be delivered to the four main allotment sites in the City and distributed accordingly.

**4. Training for site reps** - what is needed and expected, induction and refresher sessions, building confidence and attending BHAF Forums, inviting speakers.

This topic ended up being discussed toward the end of the meeting and was not sufficient time to discuss this fully. AB (BHAF) mentioned that in recent discussions with Paul Campbell (BHCC) and RW (BHCC) that there was some extra cash earmarked for the training of the City’s growing number of volunteers. It was suggested that First Aid training could be extended to Site Reps and that they should contact the BHCC/ BHAF to get their interest recorded and a relevant training opportunity highlighted.

MW (BHAF/ Mousecoomb) had tabled this item for discussion, due to the growing awareness that not all new Site Reps were being given proper ‘Induction Sessions’ (organised and conducted by both the Allotment Officer and reps from the BHAF. It is important that these sessions are carried out for all new Site Reps as well as refresher sessions for longer term Site Reps, to ensure that they are aware of current best practises so as to ensure there is a consistency across all the City’s allotment sites.

Currently there are some sites where no Site Reps ever attend BHAF/ BHCC Meetings and as well as the tenants on that site not being properly represented at meetings, there is no feedback mechanism to ensure that important procedural changes are being implemented.

Currently Site Reps receive little or no guidance or training

**5. Site reps online access to waiting list information**

The BHAF asked on many occasions to be invited to the proposed meeting between The Allotment Office and the Council’s IT team to discuss this improvement. Mark Carroll works with databases and website integrations and was sure his knowledge would be beneficial in any discussion regarding the upgrade to the system. The BHAF had many ideas which they believed would improve the Site Reps role and help increase efficiency. This included access to current live waiting lists and plot availability (which would speed up lettings) and the ability to flag up maintenance issues among other ideas. Sadly the meeting went ahead without asking the BHAF to attend. The ‘upgrade’ has been reduced to the ability for site reps to receive an automatic email from the system every month showing their current waiting list. This is not really much of an improvement at all.

**6. Site inspections** - site reps involvement and input, timing and responsibilities. What should be included, eg. perimeter fences, security, and facilities.

AA (Roedale Valley) discussed the initiative of Site Reps undertaking all but the final inspections. This was done with the agreement of the Allotment Officer and their experience was a positive one. AA said that on the larger sites, where there were more than one site rep and an active Association, site reps undertaking more inspections themselves could free up more time for the Allotment Officer to concentrate his efforts to those sites with new or no current serving site reps.

DC (Allotment Office) gave a brief summary of the current policy with regards to inspections and highlighted that if he conducted all but the first inspection, this protected site reps from any ‘come back’ from disgruntled tenants.

AL (Mile Oak) said he would be happy to conduct second inspections.

Various site reps explained that they put notices up on gates/ store huts etc. notifying plotholders when an inspection is going to happen. Some also advertise the fact in emails or on Association newsletters etc.

AA (Roedale Valley) said that it was important for Site Reps to let plotholders that have received notices, but subsequently passed re-inspection, that they have done so, so they don’t labour under the misapprehension that they are still ‘under investigation’.

RH (BHAF/ Moulsecoomb Eastate) raised the issue of perimeter fences and wanted reassurance from the Allotment Office that all the city’s plotholders are afforded the same security measures, irrespective of the size of the site.

This request was in part triggered by an ongoing issue at the Charlton’s site, where there is a dispute between the plotholders/ Allotment Office and the adjoining houses/ gardens over whose responsibility it is to secure the fencing.

DC (BHCC) had clarified the situation in a previous email, stating that the responsibility was with the tenants of the adjoining house and he had contacted the relevant Housing Officer to work with the house in question and restore a proper boundary.

RW (BHCC) clarified that situations of this nature, were not the responsibility of the Site Reps, but were either the responsibility of the Council or the householder. He also indicated that if householders were unwilling to comply, there was no money within the council to pursue the matter legally.

MW (BHAF, Moulsecoomb Estate) suggested that when undertaking a full site inspection, Site Reps, as part of that process, should identify (in tandem with the Allotment Officer) security issues, fencing, vehicular access, haulage ways etc. ie. ‘Site Issues’.

7. Future meetings - suggested topics for discussion

8. AOB

There was a request from Site Reps that they are to be informed directly when a plot becomes vacant. A delay in receiving this information from the AO, results in plots remaining vacant for much longer than they need be.

Action: DC (BHCC) will ensure that Ben from the AO, will ‘blind copy’ in Site Reps when a tenant has given up their plot.

Also, when site reps are informed of current ‘letting list’ from AO, they are informed of ‘impending plots’ which is helpful.