**Borough of Richmond Allotment Group (BRAG) – Ordinary Meeting**

**Date:** 20th July 2015, 7pm

**Venue:** Coach & Horses, Kew Green, TW9 3BH

**Present:**

Hilary Denness – Old Palace Lane

Howard Fletcher – Manor Road (Minutes)

Phil Iddison – Bushy Park

Tim McGough – Manor Road (Chair)

Collen McKenna – Briar Road

Ian Micklewright – Mill Road

Chris Morley Smith – Kew Short Lots

Mary Thorp – Hertford Avenue

Richard Ward – Townmead

Gill Ware – Briar Road

Mike Wren – Hatherop

**Apologies:**

Joyce Bentley – Walnut Tree

Robin Hewitt – Bushy Park

Ian Hyde – Walnut Tree

David Mertens – St Anne’s Passage, Westfields

James Simcox – Shacklegate Lane

1. **Roehampton Garden Society**

The meeting received a presentation from Jackie Savage, chair of the Roehampton Garden Society (RGS), who explained the evolution of the organisation into its present devolved arrangement with Wandsworth Council. See notes attached.

Questions resulting from her presentation revealed the following:

* RGS has few problems with rent collection; most are paid by Direct Debit, some by instalments
* Some problems arise from antisocial behavior and the authority of the society relative to Wandsworth Council is not always clear
* There is a strict ‘no inheritance’ rule, although jointly-held plots can be passed on to partners
* It is difficult to control the issue and retrieval of keys

The meeting thanked Ms Savage for her contribution.

1. **Previous Minutes (13th April 2015)**

Item 4.2 of the previous minutes said that LBRuT employs volunteers to clear plots at a cost of £200. This statement was incorrectly attributed to Joyce Bentley but was made by Phil Iddison.

Subject to the above, the minutes were accepted as an accurate record of the meeting.

1. **Membership**

The meeting welcomed Mary Thorp who has succeeded Alex Clarke as representative for Hertford Avenue. Alex Clarke also used to represent, Palewell Fields, Palewell Pavillion, The Priory and The Triangle which are now not represented. The Secretary will contact the new Chair of the East Sheen group, Duncan Hoadly, to ask for representation.

1. **Matters Arising**
   1. **Livestock**

Following various discussions between Bushy Park (Vicky Phillips) and LBRuT (David Allister), a reduced set of standards for keeping livestock has been agreed. Pete Lewis was due to send this to all livestock keepers, but this is not yet thought to have been done.

Also at Bushy Park, a new tenant has requested permission to keep rabbits. This has been refused by the committee, who are seeking support from the Council.

* 1. **Rents**

Rents will increase by 6.3% from October 2015. Pamela Fleming (Cabinet Member for the Environment) claimed to be unaware of this, although she did chair the meeting at which it was agreed.

Any possible impact on rents resulting from future collaboration Between Richmond and Wandsworth councils is unknown.

* 1. **Devolution**

Gill Ware (Briar Road) said that she has now received answers to questions raised with David Allister regarding site-specific costs as part of their investigations into possible devolution. They are still keen to pursue this route.

* 1. **Council Services**

The inconsistency of service levels provided by the Council to individual sites was one of the original issues raised by BRAG and is still contentious. In seeking consistency it is important that all services are not reduced to the lowest level, and it is recognised that sites have differing requirements. However, it was agreed that BRAG should create a prioritised wish list to engage with the Council and drive improvements. As a precursor to this, the Secretary will re-issue the matrix started some time ago for this purpose.

It was agreed that BRAG should attempt to meet with the Council twice per year.

* 1. **Site Maps**

David Allister has responded to Tim McGough regarding Site Maps, saying that this is not now being progressed. We should raise this again at a meeting with the Council.

1. **Bonfires**

David Allister has asked BRAG to consider a suggestion by the Council that bonfires should be completely banned on all sites. The meeting agreed that this would be very problematic as some sites have no other means of disposing of non-compostable organic waste. It would encourage fly tipping on vacant plots, and hoarding of waste leading to vermin infestation.

Bushy Park have a summer bonfire ban (June/July/August) which could be adopted by others. However, any blanket ban would have to be balanced by Council-provided alternatives such as skips.

Tim Mcgough will respond to David Allister suggesting that a July-August ban would not be unreasonable, but that final decisions must rest with site committees as individual needs and limitations will differ.

1. **Any Other Business**
   1. **Antisocial Behaviour**

Some sites have problems with antisocial behavior, and the rules (which are in the T’s&C’s) are difficult to enforce. Incidents should be reported to local police to obtain a Crime Reference Number and the Council should be informed. Neighbourhood Police should be encouraged to patrol sites.

Some sites are used by schools and other organisations for group visits. Site committees should always be given advance knowledge of these, and it is important that the position regarding insurance is clarified.

* 1. **Thefts**

A number of sites have reported thefts, thought to be by both inside and outside miscreants and by invited visitors. These should be reported to police.

The Council have paid for new locks at some sites.

* 1. **New Allotment Sites**

Richard Ward (Townmead) has suggested that the Mortlake Brewery playing fields could be used for allotments as the land is dedicated for non-housing use.

The old Twickenham Rifle Range has also been suggested. These will be reiterated at the next meeting with the Council.

* 1. **Revised Terms and Conditions**

Phil Iddison (Bushy Park) is looking at the Terms and Conditions with a view to proposing revisions. He has noted that the Wandsworth version is better laid out and could be used as a model.

* 1. **Kew Village Show**

Chris Morley-Smith (Short Lots) announced that he Kew Village Show will be held on 5th September this year, and encouraged participation and attendance.

1. **Next Meeting**

The next meeting will be held on Monday, 19th October 2015 at 7pm. The Secretary will ask James Simcox if we may use the Waldegrave Arms.

We need to hold and AGM in November. Tim McGough will ask David Allister if we may use a Council room during the 3rd or 4th week of November.