

## **Borough of Richmond Allotment Group (BRAG) – Fourth Annual General Meeting**

**Date:** 27<sup>th</sup> November 2017, 7pm

**Venue:** Council Chambers, York House, York Street, Twickenham TW1 3BZ

### **Present (Site Representatives):**

Wendy Akers – Old Palace Lane  
Christina Aston – Bushy Park  
Bill Collis – Manor Road  
Howard Fletcher – Manor Road (Minutes)  
Derek Lawrence-Brown – Hertford Avenue  
Dennis Leigh – Briar Road  
Paul Leonard – Cavendish House  
David Mertens – St Ann's Passage, Westfields  
Ian Micklewright – Mill Road  
Susan Moore – Palewell Fields, Palewell Pavilion, Priory, Triangle  
Chris Morley Smith – Kew Short Lots (Chair)  
Brian Nicholls – Hatherop  
John Padgett – Palewell Fields, Palewell Pavilion, Priory, Triangle  
Richard Ward – Townmead  
Mike Wren – Hatherop

### **Present (LBRuT):**

Yvonne Kelleher (Parks Services Manager)  
Pete Lewis (Allotments Officer)

Also tenants from various sites

### **Apologies (Representatives):**

None

### **1. Chairman's Report**

- 1.1. The Chairman summarised his report for the year, which had previously been circulated (attached as appendix). There were no issues raised.

### **2. Election of Officers**

- 2.1. The following volunteers for BRAG Officer positions were proposed by Bill Collis and seconded by Ian Micklewright, and unanimously approved by the representatives present:

- Chris Morley-Smith –Chairman
- Derek Lawrence-Brown – Vice Chairman
- Howard Fletcher – Secretary

Chris Morley-Smith thanked Duncan Hoadley for his tenure as Vice Chairman prior to his leaving to work abroad.

### **3. Response to Questions on Allotment Matters by LBRuT**

- 3.1. The new Allotment Strategy paper is still not available for circulation. Yvonne Kelleher said that it would definitely be sent to BRAG before Christmas for review and comment. Chris Morley-Smith said that it would then be circulated to BRAG representatives and comments would be discussed and collated at the next BRAG meeting on 22 January 2018. A meeting would subsequently be arranged between a BRAG delegation and Pete Lewis and Yvonne Kelleher to provide feedback.
- 3.2. Howard Fletcher sought confirmation that BRAG is recognised by LBRuT as a voice representing the allotment community as they are frequently missed off communications sent out by the Council. At last year's BRAG AGM David Allister had asked BRAG to survey plotholders regarding bonfires, and the higher than expected response rate demonstrated effective representation. Only two sites (Queens Road and South Close) are not members of BRAG; all others have nominated representatives, most attend the quarterly meetings and all receive minutes. Yvonne Kelleher said that the Council is keen to work with BRAG and Pete Lewis will include BRAG on future communications to all site representatives. Pete Lewis will forward the names of his contacts on the two non-member sites who can then be approached again about joining BRAG.
- 3.3. The Council's Public Space Protection Orders have recently been revised. These also apply to allotments, being Council land. Yvonne Kelleher will forward a copy to BRAG for circulation. Although they will be enforced appropriately and consider when land is used as allotments, they do provide a backstop for rules regarding antisocial behaviour, dog control, etc.
- 3.4. A number of questions were raised about the 2017 allotment rent invoices. These were sent out with no references to site, plot number, the number of rods or the rate applied. Some had incorrect amounts, some wrong addresses and some have not been received at all. Pete Lewis said that this had been a major problem and had taken up most of his time since returning from a period of sick leave. He will issue a form on which people can report invoicing problems, but it is not intended to reissue invoices. Yvonne Kelleher said that the invoicing had been outsourced and the issues were teething problems with the new systems. Several attendees expressed concern at the scale of these problems and the likely impact on revenue collection.
- 3.5. Chris Morley-Smith said that David Allister had previously shared and talked through the Council's allotment accounts with BRAG. Pete Lewis said that they still showed the greatest costs to be personnel, both for himself and at higher levels. Yvonne Kelleher offered to provide an update at the meeting proposed early in the new year.
- 3.6. Bushy Park representatives said that they now had vacant plots and are waiting for names from the waiting list. Pete Lewis said that in view of the time taken by invoicing problems, he is not treating this as a priority particularly as at this time of year the 6-month probation period for new plotholders covers the

winter months. Representatives from several sites said that they are more than happy to introduce potential new ploholders (and regularly do so), provided names can be supplied. It was pointed out that delays in re-letting plots causes them to deteriorate and make them more difficult to let, and has an adverse impact on rental income.

- 3.7. Chris Morley-Smith said that Short Lots, along with some other sites, manage their own waiting lists and find this quite satisfactory. Pete Lewis said he would rather that all waiting lists are entirely managed by the Council. Yvonne Kelleher said that this should be a topic for further discussion at the new year meeting.
- 3.8. Derek Lawrence-Brown said that East Sheen had been asked not to undertake further plot inspections. Pete Lewis explained that this request was only meant to say that it is not appropriate to enforce cultivation rules over the winter period, and that sites should continue to manage their sites in the normal way.

The meeting closed at 8:15pm