

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

**Date:** 22<sup>nd</sup> January 2018, 7pm

**Venue:** The Triple Crown, Richmond, TW9 2SS

### **Present:**

Wendy Akers – Old Palace Lane  
Graham Day – Briar Road  
Howard Fletcher – Manor Road (Minutes)  
Rosemary Fulljames – Cavendish House  
Richard Gandy – Walnut Tree  
Robin Hewitt – Bushy Park  
Ian Hyde – Walnut Tree  
Dennis Leigh – Briar Road  
Susan Moore – Hertford Avenue, Palewell Park, Palewell Pavillion, Priory, Triangle  
Ian Micklewright – Mill Road  
David Mertens – St Anne's Passage, Westfields  
Chris Morley Smith – Kew Short Lots (Chair)  
John Padgett – Hertford Avenue, Palewell Park, Palewell Pavillion, Priory, Triangle  
Richard Ward – Townmead  
Mike Wren – Hatherop

### **Apologies:**

Bill Collis – Manor Road  
Derek Lawrence-Brown – Hertford Ave  
Paul Leonard – Cavendish House  
Brian Nicholls – Hatherop

### **1. Changes to Representatives**

David Metherell replaces Joyce Bentley as the second representative for Walnut Tree, alongside Ian Hyde.

### **2. Previous Minutes (16<sup>th</sup> October 2017)**

The minutes of the previous ordinary meeting were approved.

### **3. Previous Minutes (27<sup>th</sup> November 2017)**

The minutes of the 2017 AGM were approved.

### **4. Matters Arising**

#### **4.1. Contacts**

Pete Lewis has provided a contact name, Jean Hall, for South Close. The contact for Queens Road, Hugo Swallow, has not responded.

## **5. Allotment Strategy Document**

- 5.1. The long-awaited draft Allotment Strategy document was finally provided to BRAG on 18th January.
- 5.2. Once comments from BRAG have been collated, a small group of representatives will meet with the Council to discuss. BRAG representatives should seek views from their sites as they see fit, but it is expected that at least their committees would be consulted where such a body exists.
- 5.3. All comments should be returned to the BRAG Secretary by Monday, 12th February. These will then be summarised by 19th February for input to the Council meeting which will hopefully be held before the end of February. The summary will be copied to representatives for any further comment or correction.
- 5.4. Although it is recognised that only a short period has been available for review, the meeting ran through the document to highlight immediate issues, as follows:
- 5.5. The document refers frequently to the Allotment Terms & Conditions (T&Cs). These should form an appendix to the document and be subject to the same review.
- 5.6. The document contains no financial information or future projections. The previous strategy document provided estimated costs and rental income for the period covered. Similarly, there is no statement of the current or likely future resources to be provided by the Council. Yvonne Kelleher has promised to share financial data with BRAG at a meeting, but this needs to be set out in the document for future reference and comparison.
- 5.7. The document now covers a 10-year period rather than the expected 5 years. However, there is no timetable or plan for implementation or schedule of costs.
- 5.8. The document reflects on the previous recommendations and comments on their achievement or otherwise. The meeting noted that many of these achievements were due at least in part to input from site representatives, which needs to be recognised in future recommendations.
- 5.9. The meeting welcomes the conclusion of the document that the Council is providing sufficient allotment space (albeit by 1969 standards) and has no desire to decrease (or increase) that available.
- 5.10. The document makes reference to spaces for “commercial food production”. The relevance of this is unclear.
- 5.11. The document refers to the high turnover of new ploholders, which is acknowledged by representatives. It is felt that this is an area in which

representatives can provide practical advice on procedures for mentoring and probation.

- 5.12. Although anecdotal evidence confirms the document's assertion regarding an increased interest in allotments from families and younger people, there are no statistics to back this up. This should perhaps be an area for investigation by periodic surveys to determine trends.
- 5.13. Looking to the future, the document in Section 4 sets out Strategic Principles, Goals and Recommendations. However there appears to be no relationship between them – not all Principles are addressed by Recommendations, and some Recommendations do not relate to Goals.
- 5.14. Recommendation 1 – the relevance (and certainly the priority) of this is questionable.
- 5.15. Recommendation 2 – the recognition of BRAG is welcomed. An exercise to verify BRAG's representation of plotholders was carried out in a bonfire survey early in 2017 at David Allister's request. (Note: Survey sent to Council 19.02.17, acknowledged without comment. David Allister advises on 23.03.17 that bonfire matters will be included in revised T&Cs under new Allotment Strategy document.)
- 5.16. Recommendation 3 – a survey would be welcomed, but identifying a single representative site may prove problematic.
- 5.17. Recommendation 4 – it is agreed that administrative systems need improvement, but it is quite evident that the resources allocated by the Council to manage allotments is insufficient. Without the very considerable assistance provided by volunteer site representatives the current – scarcely satisfactory - situation would be unsustainable. There needs to be support in the case of absence of the Allotments Officer, and a plan for succession.
- 5.18. Recommendation 5 – closing waiting lists may exacerbate problems of plot turnover where potential plotholders are encourage to select inappropriate sites.
- 5.19. Recommendation 7 – refinement of T&Cs should be 'continual' rather than 'constant'. It is agreed that greater flexibility is needed. T&Cs should be included as appendix to the document.
- 5.20. Recommendation 8 – the letter which used to be sent with invoices did state that payment implied acceptance of the T&Cs. No letter was sent this year.
- 5.21. Recommendation 9 – the website should be made clearer and should also provide advice on the work needed to maintain a plot.

- 5.22. Recommendation 10 – the final sentence stating that plots should be re-let before a complaints process is exhausted could not work in practice.
- 5.23. Recommendation 11 – is there really any likelihood of the Council funding this?
- 5.24. Recommendation 12 – the Council cannot unilaterally withdraw from legally binding semi-devolved agreements. There is little appetite (one site only) for full devolution, not least because of the lack of financial information from the Council. Some alignment of the current semi-devolved agreements would be beneficial in helping the Council to manage allotments.
- 5.25. Recommendation 13 – the likelihood of Council funding is low.
- 5.26. Recommendation 14 – surveying of trees needs to be completed sooner than ‘by 2022’ and repeated on a regular cycle.
- 5.27. Recommendations 15-17 – all efforts encouraging sustainable practices are welcome.
- 5.28. Any further comments or suggestions on the document should be submitted to the BRAG Secretary with copy to Chris Morley-Smith in line with the timetable set out in para 5.3, above.

## **6. AOB**

- 6.1. Even after notifying the Council of errors, there are still problems with missing and incorrect invoices. It is also noted that at least one cheque sent in November remains unpresented.
- 6.2. It was reported that allotment keys were given by the Council to a community group to access the Mill Road site without permission or notification of the site committee.
- 6.3. The photographs provided to the Council by Richard Ward for display on the website have been removed. He has requested their reinstatement. (It was noted that photographs used in the Allotment Strategy document are not local and show flower rather than vegetable cultivation.)
- 6.4. Kew Riverside school has included a plot for vegetable growing and is seeking volunteers to assist.

## **7. Next Meeting**

The next BRAG meeting will be held on Monday, 23<sup>rd</sup> April 2018 at 7pm at The Triple Crown pub, 15 Kew Foot Road, Richmond TW9 2SS (room on 1<sup>st</sup> Floor).