

Borough of Richmond Allotment Group (BRAG) – Ordinary Meeting

Date: 23rd April 2018, 7pm

Venue: The Triple Crown, Richmond, TW9 2SS

Present:

Sue Childs – Old Palace Lane

Bill Collis – Manor Road

Howard Fletcher – Manor Road (Minutes)

Jean Hall – South Close

Robin Hewitt – Bushy Park

Dennis Leigh – Briar Road

Derek Lawrence-Brown – Hertford Ave

Paul Leonard – Cavendish House

Ian Micklewright – Mill Road

Chris Morley Smith – Kew Short Lots (Chair)

Brian Nicholls – Hatherop

John Padgett – Hertford Avenue, Palewell Park, Palewell Pavillion, Priory, Triangle

Richard Ward – Townmead

David Wetherall – Walnut Tree

Mike Wren – Hatherop

1. Apologies

Graham Day – Briar Road

David Mertens – St Anne's Passage, Westfields

2. Changes to Representatives

Graham Day (Briar Road) and Susan Moore (Triangle, Hertford Avenue, Palewell Park, Palewell Pavillion, Priory) are no longer BRAG representatives.

Jean Hall was welcomed as the representative for South Close.

3. Previous Minutes (22nd January 2018)

The minutes of the previous ordinary meeting were approved.

4. Matters Arising

4.1. Council Meeting

Chris Morley-Smith reported back on the meeting held with the Council on 7th March 2018 to discuss the Allotment Strategy. This was attended by Yvonne Kelleher, Pete Lewis and Steve Marshall on behalf of the Council and by Chris Morley-Smith, Howard Fletcher, Susan Moore and Mike Wren representing BRAG. The meeting was positive and BRAG's points were generally accepted, although no date was given for an updated document. Chris Morley-Smith will chase up a reissue.

A number of action points were agreed where BRAG could help the Council, as listed below:

4.2. Site Mapping/Plot Numbering

Pete Lewis said that Plot Numbering was more beneficial than Site Mapping. It is in the T&C's that plot holders are responsible for displaying the number on their plot, but many sites help with a central numbering initiative using posts, bricks, tiles, etc. New plot holders should have their responsibility highlighted.

Most sites have produced their own site maps and offered these to Pete Lewis for his use. Chris Morley-Smith reported that the Council does now have a person working on this, although it is unclear how these are being kept up to date.

4.3. New/Potential Tenant Advice

It was generally agreed by both BRAG and the Council that it would be helpful for the Council website to have information on what is involved in being a plot holder (e.g. how many hours per week) to enable potential tenants to make an informed decision before taking on a commitment. Bill Collis agreed to take away the available papers and draft a brief article for review at the next BRAG meeting (July). Any contributions should be emailed to Bill Collis, copied to Chris Morley-Smith and the BRAG Secretary. It was noted that this should not overlap with T&C's.

It was agreed that site visits and face-to-face introductions should be encouraged before people take on a plot.

It is noted that the Council is happy for plots to be divided into smaller units, although sites should consider their individual circumstances to assess the practicality of doing so.

4.4. Waiting Lists

Pete Lewis has been working to consolidate waiting lists but much still needs to be done. The Council website now shows the number on the list for each site, together with the plot turnover in order that potential tenants can predict a likely waiting time.

Pete Lewis is piloting with some sites a process whereby unvetted waiting list names are provided to Lettings Officers who then attempt contact. Manor Road has found this to provide approximately 50% continuing interest.

It was suggested that waiting list applicants should be asked to reapply on an annual basis to demonstrate continued interest. This could be combined with an exercise which the Council will presumably need to carry out requesting 'opt-in' for the upcoming Data Protection law changes (see 5 below).

4.5. Terms & Conditions

Phil Iddison of Bushy Park has reiterated his willingness to revisit the T&C's as he offered when he was a BRAG representative. This was gratefully accepted. Robin Hewitt, as the current Bushy Park BRAG representative, should be the contact and

any contributions should be emailed to Robin Hewitt, copied to Chris Morley-Smith and the BRAG Secretary. At this initial stage the redraft should exclude both Termination Procedure and Bonfires pending revision and agreement of separate proposals for these areas. Chris Morley-Smith will obtain from the Council a Word document of the current T&C's.

At the meeting with the Council it was agreed that the target date for updated T&C's should be August, so that they could be adopted by payment of invoices in October 2018.

4.6. Council Website

The Council website could be much improved, and the Council is keen for BRAG to be involved in an update. Mike Wren (Hatherop) and Paul Leonard (Cavendish) have both offered to help with this. Mike Wren will report to the next BRAG meeting (July) with suggestions.

It was proposed that the website could/should include links to other sites such as seasonal recipes and the RHS 'to do this month' advice.

Richard Ward reminded the meeting that members' photographs were supplied to the Council for publication some years ago, but have still not yet been displayed. Following a recent chase-up he was hopeful that this might happen soon.

4.7. Termination Procedure

Pete Lewis has been working to improve the termination procedure and has requested help from Mike Wren and Bill Collis. However, the current procedure is not enforced and any revised process will require more robust application to prevent whole growing seasons being wasted on poor plots.

It was agreed that the process should start with an 'informal' warning letter from the site committee and then strictly time-limited letters from the council. Mike Wren and Bill Collis will liaise to suggest a revised procedure with draft letters by the next BRAG meeting (July).

5. Data Protection

Revisions to Data Protection legislation due to take effect from 25th May 2018 require all those holding lists of data such as names and addresses to obtain positive 'opt-in' permission from all whose data is so held. The meeting was unsure how this relates to allotment sites where data is usually supplied by the Council but used by sites for sending emails, newsletters, etc.

Bill Collis said he had contacted both the NSALG and the Council for advice. Yvonne Kelleher had promised to send an advisory statement to sites. Chris Morley-Smith will chase this up on behalf of BRAG.

Mike Wren reported that he has recently been using a system called MailChimp for sending emails, which sends messages individually without displaying others' addresses and also includes an 'unsubscribe' facility.

6. Bonfires

At the Council meeting, Yvonne Kelleher asked Pete Lewis and Chris Morley-Smith to discuss this off-line. The current permission of Monday-Friday from 1st October to 31st March, plus the first Saturday morning of each month throughout the year, is not practical. Repeated requests have been made for improvement.

It was agreed that Chris Morley-Smith should write again to Yvonne Kelleher, repeating BRAG's request that bonfires are not permitted in June, July and August, but can be held Monday-Saturday throughout the rest of the year.

7. AOB

The problem of subletting was raised. After some discussion it was agreed that, while it is acceptable for plot-holders to have help, subletting should not be allowed. Helpers would have no claim on the plot if the tenant dies or moves away. Subletting is explicitly forbidden in the T&C's but, if evident, is a Council issue and not one for enforcement by site committees.

Richard Ward (Townmead) announced that this year's Kew Horticultural Show will be held in St Anne's Church Hall (not as usual on Kew Green) on Saturday, 25th August.

The Secretary said that information about site open days or other events should be copied to him for circulation to all representatives.

8. Next Meeting

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