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

**Date:** 26th November 2018, 7pm

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

**Present (Site Representatives):**

Joseph Ambaye – Bushy Park

Christina Aston – Bushy Park

John Coates – Old Palace Lane

Bill Collis – Manor Road

Howard Fletcher – Manor Road (Minutes)

Jim Hawkins – Sixth Cross Road

Derek Lawrence-Brown – Hertford Avenue

Paul Leonard – Cavendish House

Dennis Leigh – Briar Road

David Mertens – St Ann’s Passage, Westfields

Ian Micklewright – Mill Road

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 Service Manager)

Pete Lewis (Allotment Officer)

Erin Dunford (Parks Admin Officer)

**Apologies (Site Representatives):**

Robin Hewitt – Bushy Park

Ian Hyde – Walnut Tree

David Metherell – Walnut Tree

1. **Previous Minutes**
   1. The minutes of the previous AGM (27th November 2017) were approved.
2. **Chairman’s Report** 
   1. The Chairman summarised his report for the year, which had previously been circulated (attached as appendix).
   2. Regarding updating of the Council allotments website, Erin Dunford is still awaiting photos and a brief description from some sites. She will send a list of those missing to the Secretary for chasing.
   3. Following a question from John Coates (Old Palace Lane), Yvonne Kelleher confirmed that revisions to Terms & Conditions were effective immediately for all plotholders once they are published on the Council allotments website.
3. **Election of Officers**
   1. The following volunteers for BRAG Officer positions were proposed by John Coates and seconded by Bill Collis, and unanimously approved by the representatives present:

* Chris Morley-Smith –Chairman
* Derek Lawrence-Brown – Vice Chairman
* Howard Fletcher – Secretary
  1. The officers were thanked for their efforts over the past year.

1. **Update on Allotment Matters by LBRuT**
   1. Pete Lewis said that progress over the last year on the Allotment Strategy and revisions to Terms & Conditions had been frustrated by a number of issues, including the huge number of queries resulting from 2017 invoicing, several significant tenancy disputes and the change of leadership following the election.
   2. Pete Lewis is now working 3 days per week, with administrative support from Erin Dunford. He is now concentrating on site visits. Chris Morley-Smith said that, despite initial concerns, this arrangement seems to be working well. Pete Lewis thanked the site representatives for their support.
   3. Yvonne Kelleher said that there is an internal Council meeting scheduled for 27th November at which it is hoped the updated Terms & Conditions can be finalised.
   4. Questions have arisen lately regarding joint tenancies and whether it is permissible to ‘inherit’ tenancies. Yvonne Kelleher said that the waiting list rules must be applied, although sympathetic consideration would be given on a case by case basis.
   5. Although the invoicing this year was improved following multiple complaints last year, it is evident that there are still some invoices not sent out, or issued with errors. Dennis Leigh (Briar Road) pointed out that payment is due on the 1st October each year, but invoices are sent out much later. Also, the Council is obliged to give one month’s notice of any rent increase but this is only advised on the invoice itself.
   6. Yvonne Kelleher expressed thanks to the site representatives and committees for the help and support given to the Council allotments team.
2. **Any Other Business**
   1. Paul Leonard (Cavendish) said that their waste bins had been discontinued, but the consequent multiple trips by individuals to the Council tip were detrimental to air quality and to the environment generally. John Coates (Old Palace Lane) said that the availability of bins or an alternative waste collection service could help to ease the problems still being experienced with neighbour complaints about bonfires, and a meeting is due to be held with David Allister to discuss this. Yvonne Kelleher said that different sites have different issues and need to be considered individually. Pete Lewis said that sites are welcome to finance their own waste collections (about £940 per annum for commercial waste bins) and would send details to the Secretary for circulation.
   2. Joe Ambaye (Bushy Park) asked about waiting lists. Erin Dunford is implementing a new computer system which will ultimately enable applicants to be removed from all site lists once they have been allocated a plot. She is now giving the ‘top ten’ names to representatives on some sites who are evaluating the continued currency of these applications before inviting to viewings. This is beginning to show benefit. Ian Mickelwright (Mill Road) suggested asking applicants to reconfirm their interest annually, but it was generally agreed that this was not practical.
   3. The Council website now shows the number of applications on the waiting list for each site, so that people can have some idea of waiting times. There have been instances of applications from (or on behalf of) children, presumably to obtain multiple plots for a household. These are not being progressed, although it is possible to have tenancies in different names from a single household. An applicant would have to be at least 18 to sign a tenancy agreement; this should be included in the revised Terms & Conditions.
   4. Paul Leonard (Cavendish) said that they had been working hard to build a good rapport with their plotholders, improving communications, assigning mentors and giving awards for the best maintained plots. Accordingly, their recent AGM achieved a 50% attendance. Every plot is photographed once a year for ongoing monitoring.
   5. Howard Fletcher (Manor Road) asked if it was possible to make membership of a site association mandatory, as non-subscribers still benefit from the efforts and funds of those who contribute. Yvonne Kelleher said that the Council could not support this.
   6. Joe Ambaye (Bushy Park) said that problems with some trees are making certain plots unrentable. Pete Lewis pointed out that Bushy Park is a special case (being crown land), but that Craig Ruddick (LBRuT Arboricultural Manager) is intending to develop a tree strategy for allotments separate from the general borough-wide policy which is currently applied. Pete Lewis agreed to visit Bushy Park to assess the situation.
   7. Bill Collis (Manor Road) said that they are planning a trial with Community Payback workers to clear a couple of overgrown plots. The site must provide tools, toilets and refreshments. He would report back to BRAG on the success (or otherwise) of the trial.
3. **Closing**
   1. The Chairman concluded by saying that the past year has shown how BRAG and the Council can usefully work together and good progress is being made in a number of areas. He also thanked the LBRuT representatives for attending and contributing to the meeting.
   2. The next BRAG meeting will be held on Monday, 21st January and will include a presentation from an external speaker from Froglife.
   3. The meeting closed at 8:10pm.