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

**Date:** 21st January 2019, 7pm

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

**Present:**

Sue Childs – Old Palace Lane

John Coates – Old Palace Lane

Graham Day – Briar Road

Howard Fletcher – Manor Road (Minutes)

Jim Hawkins – Sixth Cross Road

Ian Hyde – Walnut Tree

Derek Lawrence-Brown – Hertford Ave

Dennis Leigh – Briar Road

Paul Leonard – Cavendish House

David Metherell – Walnut Tree

Ian Micklewright – Mill Road

Chris Morley Smith – Kew Short Lots (Chair)

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

Mike Wren – Hatherop

Richard Ward – Townmead

1. **Presentation by T.O.A.D.**

Emily Millhouse gave a brief presentation on the work of T.O.A.D (Tails of Amphibian Discovery), which works with councils and schools to raise public awareness of the benefits and the plight of amphibians. The organisation is largely funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund. It is best known for its “Toads on Roads” campaign.

The UK toad population has reduced by 68% over the past 30 years, mainly due to loss of natural habitat. A toad will typically live for 25 years. Toads return to the same breeding grounds each year; if the location is no longer habitable they will not look elsewhere to mate.

Toads are nocturnal and navigate by the moon using a sort of internal compass. They can travel up to 10km in one night.

They are friendly to allotmenteers, eating slugs and slug eggs and are a useful link in the natural chain. They cohabit with frogs, but their eggs are eaten by newts which can quickly become dominant. They excrete toxins from their backs as a defence. Slug pellets are harmful to them.

Toads need water only for breeding. Ponds large and small suffice – just a bucket sunk into the ground is helpful given some access slope – but compost heaps, log piles, etc. also provide useful habitat.

T.O.A.D will give presentations on request to allotment groups of ideally around 15 people to explain their work and to identify potential site opportunities.

1. **Apologies**

Bill Collis – Manor Road

Joseph Ambaye – Bushy Park

Phil Iddison – Bushy Park

David Mertens – St Anne’s Passage, Westfields

Brian Nicholls – Hatherop

1. **Changes to Representatives**

Jim Hawkins has replaced Alan Billany as a representative for Sixth Cross Road alongside Jackie Bradford-Turner. John Coates has replaced Wendy Akers as representative for Old Palace Lane. Graham Day has resumed his position as the second representative for Briar Road alongside Dennis Leigh. Val Lowman is the new Honorary Secretary at Cavendish and will be an alternate representative.

1. **Previous Minutes (Ordinary Meeting, 15th October 2018)**

Robin Hewitt was not present at the meeting as recorded in the attendees list. Other than that, the minutes of the previous meeting were approved.

1. **Previous Minutes (AGM, 15th October 2018)**

The minutes of the previous meeting were approved. Chris Morley-Smith said that Cllr Elengorn had been invited to the meeting, but did not attend. It was noted that Cllr Julia Neden-Watts is likely to succeed Cllr Elengorn with responsibility for the Environment (covering Allotments).

1. **Matters Arising**
   1. Yvonne Kelleher promised at the AGM to provide a template for a ‘jogging letter’ to be sent by Site Committees to holders of poorly-maintained plots but had not yet done so. Chris Morley-Smith will chase.
   2. John Coates said that at Old Palace Lane, David Allister is encouraging proposals for communal composting. Bonfires remain an issue with neighbours, and may come under review again as part of air quality considerations.
   3. David Metherell reported that some plot swaps had taken place at Walnut Tree and this is now working well.
2. **Terms & Conditions**

Yvonne Kelleher has responded to BRAG’s comments on the draft revised Terms & Conditions dated 10th October 2018 and also provided a new updated draft dated 16th January 2019. The meeting was pleased to note that most of BRAG’s comments had now been adopted into the revised text. A few points remain outstanding:

3.8 – the height limit on fences should also apply to hedges;

5.2 – it is unclear whether the rules relating to livestock could and/or should be applied retrospectively;

6.4 – the responsibility for maintaining clear pathways varies from site to site – in some cases it is shared, in some cases a tenant may be responsible for a path on one side of a plot.

The meeting discussed at some length item 1.5, which states that plotholders may not stay on site beyond one hour after sunset. Whilst the reasoning behind this is appreciated, it was felt to be not appropriate in all cases. It was agreed that we would request appending of the text “without the approval of the Council or the Site Committee where appropriate”.

It is recognised that some plotholders may not have access to the internet for reference to the Terms & Conditions. Accordingly, the note on annual invoices should read “Payment implies acceptance of the Terms & Conditions as published on the Council website *or available on request*”. A copy of the current Terms & Conditions should also be posted on site notice boards.

The Termination process has changed. It is noted that item 2.2 does not give guidance on how to deal with responses received following warning letters – these would best be determined on a case by case basis. Walnut Tree representatives will speak to Pete Lewis to understand the implications on their current procedures.

Chris Morley-Smith will now respond to Yvonne Kelleher to confirm BRAG comments as above.

1. **Allotment Strategy Document**

The latest issue of the document is version 10, dated 23rd November 2018. Chris Morley-Smith had confirmed to the Council that BRAG would provide their comments by end of January, although it is now understood that this draft will be put before the Council Scrutiny Committee on 28th January.

BRAG’s latest review had raised a few further points (a collated list issued with this meeting agenda). One of these was substantive – that waiting lists should not be closed when exceeding 5 years as this will disguise the real demand for plots.

In appendix 2 of the document there is a note about allowing areas to remain fallow. If still required, this would be more appropriately placed in the Terms & Conditions, but it is probably now superseded by rules governing cultivation.

Dennis Leigh said that Briar Road has now formally halted discussions with the Council about site self-management. No other sites are considering this route.

The strategy attempts to cover a 10-year period. It is likely to require revision during this time and should be seen as a living document. BRAG will periodically review the implementation plan to monitor progress and identify potential areas where we can assist.

Chris Morley-Smith will now respond to Yvonne Kelleher to confirm BRAG comments as above.

1. **Feedback from Site Reps**

Richard Ward has discussed the annual Allotment Competition with Pete Lewis. The Council has to pay independent judges, which is seen as burdensome. Individual sites, or in some cases individual plotholders, nominate potential plots for review when the Council issues a general invitation. The meeting felt the competition is worthwhile and asked Richard Ward to follow up with Pete Lewis.

The Secretary had issued in December a list of plots still required to submit pictures and descriptions to Erin Dunford. Any outstanding should be sent in immediately to complete the Council’s website information.

Briar Road has suffered a break-in, with many sheds broken into although strangely nothing appears to have been stolen.

John Padgett enquired about motion-sensing cameras. There is some experience at Cavendish House – Paul Leonard will put him in touch with Mike Wood.

Howard Fletcher said that seed potatoes will be on sale at the Manor Road trading hut from 26th January.

1. **AOB**

In response to a query from Pete Lewis the meeting confirmed that BRAG does not condone the bringing onto sites any household or garden waste for burning. (See also T&C’s item 4.7.)

1. **Next Meeting**

The next BRAG meeting will be held on Monday, 29th April 2019 at 7pm at The Triple Crown pub, 15 Kew Foot Road, Richmond TW9 2SS (room on 1st Floor).