

Borough of Richmond Allotment Group (BRAG) – Ordinary Meeting

Date: 29th April 2019, 7pm

Venue: The Triple Crown, Richmond, TW9 2SS

Present:

Joseph Ambaye – Bushy Park

Sue Childs – Old Palace Lane

John Coates – Old Palace Lane

Bill Collis – Manor Road

Graham Day – Briar Road

Howard Fletcher – Manor Road (Minutes)

Rosemary Fulljames – Cavendish House

Jim Hawkins – Sixth Cross Road

Derek Lawrence-Brown – Hertford Ave, Palewell Park, Palewell Pavillion, Priory, Triangle

Dennis Leigh – Briar Road

Ian Micklewright – Mill Road

David Mertens – St Anne's Passage, Westfields

Chris Morley Smith – Kew Short Lots (Chair)

Mike Wren – Hatherop

Richard Ward – Townmead

David Allister – LBRut (first item only)

1. David Allister

David Allister (LBRuT) was invited to address the meeting on the subject of measures which could alleviate the issues arising from the ban on bonfires imposed by the Council as from September 2019. Note that the previously agreed summer ban starts as from 1st May, so effectively 30th April is the last day on which a bonfire can be used.

David said that he was not present to defend the ban, but to discuss how the Council might be able to help overcome any resulting problems.

Davis said that he considered it part of the role of BRAG reps to communicate the decision to ploholders. The T's&C's have been updated on the Council website. The Council will issue notices for display at each site.

David had previously issued an email (circulated to all reps) setting out some suggestions. He recognised that each site would have its own challenges and needs, and is keen to ensure that appropriate steps are taken in each case. These should be discussed between site committees and their ploholders as he is aware that there are both positive and negative views. David said that he, together with Pete Lewis, is happy to attend site committee meetings if so requested.

Communal composting was discussed. David has said that the council would be prepared to allocate one or more plots on a site for longer-term composting of

woody material. These could be delineated by dead hedges, and conservation volunteers could be brought in to advise on methods. It would be possible for Council contractors to attend on, say, an annual basis to chip remaining material which would result in a useful product. This was well received, although the problem of fly-tipping was raised. David said that any such abuse with non-compostable items should be reported to the Pete Lewis, and tenancies could be terminated. The general mood was that material should be kept on the originating plot until such time as a chipper is present.

It was agreed that each site should prepare a brief statement saying how they would prefer to deal with issues resulting from the bonfire ban, and what they would need from the Council. This should, in particular, highlight any issues arising from boundary vegetation. Statements should be sent to brag.sec by 1st June, who will collate them and circulate a summary to all reps. Where individual on-site meetings with the Council are needed, these should be arranged locally to take place before the next BRAG meeting on 29th July, at which it is hoped a final list can be compiled.

Chris Morley-Smith thanked David for his attendance and contribution.

2. Apologies

Paul Leonard – Cavendish House

Robin Hewitt – Bushy Park

Phil Iddison – Bushy Park

David Methereil – Walnut Tree

Brian Nicholls – Hatherop

3. Changes to Representatives

Sue Childs will be the nominated representative from Old Palace Lane.

4. Previous Minutes (Ordinary Meeting, 21st January 2019)

The minutes of the previous meeting were approved.

5. Matters Arising

None, other than substantive items below.

6. Meetings with LBRuT

Chris Morley-Smith reported on meetings held with LBRuT – on 5th March with David Allister and on 28th March with David Allister, Cllr Martin Elengorn and Paul Chadwick.

It was clear that the Council is not prepared to revisit the decision to ban bonfires. There was, however, a genuine recognition that this would cause a number of issues and the Council would be prepared – even to the extent of committing funds – to help alleviate these.

7. Further Discussion on David Allister Suggestions

There was further general discussion on David Allister's points. Written comments from Paul Leonard (Cavendish) and Phil Iddison (Bushy Park) were also considered.

The meeting was concerned about David Allister's comments regarding representation. Reference was made to the survey carried out in 2017 at his request, which received a substantial response. Of those present at the meeting, 14 of the 16 reps were nominated by their site committees, the only two exceptions being very small sites (Mill Road (24 plots) and Townmead (16 plots)).

Several sites are finding it helpful to communicate with their local councilors, e.g. inviting them to attend open days and AGMs.

8. Allotment Strategy Document and T's&C's

The formally adopted Allotment Strategy and the approved T's&C's are now on the Council allotments website. These reference the bonfire ban.

Also included is the updated terminations process. Mike Wren reported that the new jogging letters appear to be working well. Pete Lewis and Erin Dunsford are visiting sites when requested to view plots reported to be poorly maintained, although it is not clear how far this has progressed in the April timeframe intended. Chris Morley-Smith will ask Pete Lewis for an update.

9. Feedback from Site Reps

Bill Collis (Manor Road) said that a plotholder has set up a Twitter account for use by all plotholders in the borough and was asking BRAG to publicise and support it. Howard Fletcher said that one was already in existence (BRAGCOMMUNITY), but it has never been used and there appeared to be no demand.

A Manor Road plotholder (Will Turner) has arranged for a solicitor to produce a letter challenging the bonfire ban on equality grounds, which has been sent to the Council. The meeting agreed that BRAG should not overtly support this, but will follow with interest. The Secretary will circulate a copy of the letter to reps.

A newspaper article has appeared which reports potentially fatal fungus emanating from compost heaps. The Secretary will circulate a copy to reps.

Mike Wren (Hatherop) enquired whether any sites had received Council funding for toilets. Negative response.

Mike Wren asked how sites deal with plot numbering. Most use painted wooden signs on posts. At Manor Road, painted bricks have also been used successfully.

Joseph Ambaye (Bushy Park) said that they are having issues with their deteriorating driveway.

Richard Ward (Townmead) repeated his plea for allotment photos to be sent to Erin Dunsford.

John Coates (Old Palace Lane) said that the Council is helping with communal composting space. He is pressing the Council to clear boundary ivy.

John Coates said that OPL has trees which are getting too big. This is an increasing problem now on several sites.

Rosemary Fulljames (Cavendish) said that they had accepted the offer of a talk from the T.O.A.D. representative who recently spoke to BRAG. Other sites are welcome to attend.

Derek Lawrence-Brown (Hertford Avenue, BRAG vice-chairman) will represent BRAG at the reception for the centenary of the Twickenham & Thames Valley Beekeepers' Association.

Howard Fletcher (Manor Road) said they are looking for an alternative supply of nursery plants as their current supplier (Dunkirk Nurseries) can no longer deliver.

10. AOB

Richard Ward proposed a vote of thanks to all those involved with recent Council discussions.

11. Next Meeting

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