

Borough of Richmond Allotment Group (BRAG) – Ordinary Meeting

Date: 29th July 2019, 7pm

Venue: The Triple Crown, Richmond, TW9 2SS

Present:

Joseph Ambaye – Bushy Park
John Coates – Old Palace Lane
Bill Collis – Manor Road
Graham Day – Briar Road
Howard Fletcher – Manor Road (Minutes)
Jim Hawkins – Sixth Cross Road
Ian Hyde – Walnut Tree
Derek Lawrence-Brown – Hertford Ave, Palewell Park, Palewell Pavillion, Priory, Triangle
Dennis Leigh – Briar Road
Paul Leonard – Cavendish House
David Methereil – Walnut Tree
Ian Micklewright – Mill Road
David Mertens – St Anne's Passage, Westfields
Chris Morley Smith – Kew Short Lots (Chair)
John Padgett – Hertford Ave, Palewell Park, Palewell Pavillion, Priory, Triangle
Mike Wren – Hatherop
Richard Ward – Townmead

1. Apologies

Rosemary Fulljames – Cavendish House

2. Changes to Representatives

Berny Simcox has stepped down as representative of Shacklegate Lane. The Secretary will enquire whether this is due to closure of the site, which has been anticipated for some time.

3. Previous Minutes (Ordinary Meeting, 29th April 2019)

John Padgett's apologies were not recorded. Other than this, the minutes of the previous meeting were approved.

4. Matters Arising

- 4.1. Will Turner's legal challenge to the bonfire ban has been abandoned due to the potential costs involved in taking LBRuT to court.
- 4.2. Cllr Lotte Campanale's objections to twitter posts referencing BRAG by an individual plotholder have ceased thanks to the intervention of Cllr Gareth Roberts.
- 4.3. Bushy Park has gained Council funding for plot number signs. It was agreed that other sites would wait for these to be trialled before asking for similar. It is possible that the Council could obtain a good deal for a combined order. The company supplying the signs is <http://gingerwick1.weebly.com/allotment-signs.html>

5. Bonfires

Responses by individual sites setting out plans for dealing with the bonfire ban implications were collated by the Secretary and sent to David Allister.

David Allister has offered to meet any site on request (not proactively as previously understood). Meetings have so far been held with Old Palace Lane, Walnut Tree and Cavendish House, with further meetings planned at Manor Road and Bushy Park. He has so far appeared to be supportive, including offering financial and practical help with communal composting, boundary hedging, provision of a shredder and clearing debris as appropriate.

David Allister has not agreed to the provision of large poly-bins beyond those already in use, although some sites see these as the only effective solution to pernicious weeds and diseased material.

All sites holding meetings with David Allister are asked to feed back agreed actions to the Secretary for a summary report at the next BRAG meeting.

6. Points raised by Walnut Tree

- 6.1. It was suggested that mandatory on-plot composting should be included in the T&Cs. Discussion showed this might not be appropriate in all circumstances and would be difficult to enforce. Whilst it should be encouraged, it was agreed that it would be impractical to make it mandatory.
- 6.2. It is noted that applications for an allotment plot now have a minimum age of 18 years.
- 6.3. Concern was raised about 'serial plot neglecters' who can receive multiple warning letters over a period of time. The strengthened termination procedures in the updated T&Cs should now make it easier to evict such offenders. Pete Lewis has reported that 35 tenancies have been ended under the new rules, with much improved administration being handled by Erin Dunsford. Paul Leonard (Cavendish) said that he will always try a friendly, personal approach before resorting to formal procedures.
- 6.4. Walnut Tree reported suspected incidents of subletting and/or multiple people working on a single plot. Bill Collis (Manor Road) said that this is clearly against the T&Cs and a reported incident at Manor Road had been dealt with swiftly. John Coates (Old Palace Lane) said that they maintain a list of authorised 'helpers' to keep track of non-plotters coming onto site.
- 6.5. Joseph Ambaye (Bushy Park) said that they have seen instances of 'single cropping' for sale or for use in the plotholder's restaurant business. Again, this is clearly against the spirit and the letter of the rules, and should be stopped immediately and/or reported to the Council.

7. Horse Manure

Richard Ward (Townmead) said that following a talk by Riding for the Disabled, Park Lane Stables in Teddington offered free manure to allotments. Those wishing to accept the offer should contact Natalie at parklanestables@gmail.com. Manure is also available at no charge from Ham Polo Club and Ealing Riding Stables.

8. Feedback from Site Reps

- 8.1. Paul Leonard (Cavendish) said that they have some sheds containing asbestos. Bill Collis (Manor Road) said that the Council had offered to remove asbestos provided it is deconstructed and wrapped ready for collection.
- 8.2. Joseph Ambaye (Bushy Park) said that they have some oak trees labelled two years ago as infected with processionary moth but nothing has since been done. He was advised to contact Craig Ruddick at LBRuT.
- 8.3. Richard Ward (Townmead) said that the Kew Horticultural Society show will be held on 24th August in St Anne's church hall.
- 8.4. Richard Ward (Townmead) had again followed up the request from Erin Dunsford for site photographs for the Council website. She has now said that such detail is not permitted by the Council web team and that sites should maintain their own sites. John Padgett suggested that any site with their own website, twitter feed, etc. should forward the details to the Secretary who will add the them to the register of representatives for distribution.

9. BRAG and Committee Positions

The Chairman asked whether representatives continue to find BRAG relevant and useful. The general view was that it is still viable both as a communication channel between sites, and also as an advisory and consultative body for the Council as recognised in the Council's Allotment Strategy document. BRAG's work on the revised T&Cs and termination procedures has been beneficial and showing results.

It was agreed that BRAG still does not have a high profile within either the Council or the allotment community. The Chairman will ask for it to be mentioned on the Council website. David Metherell (Walnut Tree) offered to draft a BRAG mission statement to be sent to all councillors. He will send the draft to the Secretary and Chairman for review and discussion at the next BRAG meeting; the Secretary will forward a copy of the BRAG constitution to assist. Bill Collis (Manor Road) reiterated that councillors should be invited to site AGM's and he had always had a positive response.

Chris Morley-Smith said that he would look to be replaced as Chairman in the near future as he felt that it was time for new blood in the leadership position. Paul Leonard (Cavendish) suggested that a new post of Deputy Chairman be created, who would follow the Chairman each year and then take over to provide continuity. Representatives were asked to consider this further for discussion at the next meeting prior to officer elections at the AGM.

Howard Fletcher said that he will not be standing again as Secretary and asked for a replacement from the next AGM. He said that the role is not particularly onerous, requiring the taking and sending out of meeting minutes and maintenance of the register of representatives.

10. Next Meeting

The next BRAG meeting will be held on Monday, 11th November 2019 at 7pm at The Triple Crown pub, 15 Kew Foot Road, Richmond TW9 2SS (room on 1st Floor). A provisional date for the AGM was set for Monday, 9th December (subject to Council room availability).