

Borough of Richmond Allotment Group (BRAG) – Ordinary Meeting

Date: 11th November 2019, 7pm

Venue: The Triple Crown, Richmond, TW9 2SS

Present:

Joseph Ambaye – Bushy Park
Sue Childs – Old Palace Lane
Bill Collis – Manor Road
Graham Day – Briar Road
Howard Fletcher – Manor Road (Minutes)
Ian Hyde – Walnut Tree
Dennis Leigh – Briar Road
Paul Leonard – Cavendish House
Ian Micklewright – Mill Road
Chris Morley Smith – Kew Short Lots (Chair)
John Padgett – Hertford Ave, Palewell Park, Palewell Pavillion, Priory, Triangle
Jessie Sheffield – Queens Road
Mike Wren – Hatherop
Richard Ward – Townmead

1. Apologies

Andy Chopping – St Anne's Passage, Westfields
Robin Hewitt – Bushy Park
Derek Lawrence-Brown – Hertford Ave, Palewell Park, Palewell Pavillion, Priory, Triangle
David Metherell – Walnut Tree
Brian Nicholls – Hatherop

2. Changes to Representatives

David Mertens (Westfield and St Anne's) has sadly passed away. His place on BRAG will be taken by Andy Chopping.
Derek Lawrence-Brown's place as representative for Hertford Avenue will be taken by John Padgett together with other sites in the East Sheen group.
We are delighted to welcome Jessie Sheffield as representative for Queens Road.
Howard Fletcher will be replaced next year as Manor Road representative (not BRAG Secretary) by Peter Dunning.

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

The minutes of the previous meeting were approved.

4. BRAG Committee Positions

4.1. Chairman – Paul Leonard (Cavendish) has offered to stand as Chairman for 2020. Chris Morley-Smith (Short Lots) will step down to deputy chairman to provide continuity. Sue Childs (Old Palace Lane) offered to stand as the second deputy. These positions are all subject to confirmation at the AGM.

- 4.2. Secretary – a replacement is sought for Howard Fletcher (Manor Road) who will stand down at the AGM. Joe Ambaye (Bushy Park) offered to canvass his members for a volunteer. Others are also asked to offer candidates.

5. Matters Arising

- 5.1. David Metherell (Walnut Tree) has drafted a BRAG Mission Statement. This was well received by the meeting, which requested the following amendments:
- Bullet Point 1.1 – Providing exercise, fresh air *and horticultural education to the wider community*
 - Bullet Point 1.6 – Providing community and social values *within and beyond the allotment community*
 - Bullet Point 1.8 – Providing access to land for all *borough residents* regardless of income and housing status.
- David Metherell is asked to revise the draft accordingly and then it will be circulated by the Secretary prior to seeking formal approval at the AGM.
- 5.2. Plot numbers as provided to Bushy Park will not be made more widely available by the Council. Dennis Leigh (Briar Road) reported that the Council had funded some plot numbers when plots are re-let. There is no Council standard for numbering medium or style.
- 5.3. Bill Collis (Manor Road) reported on experience with Community Payback helpers. Success is dependent on the supervisor and the numbers present but can be very helpful. The site is required to provide tea and coffee plus changing and toilet facilities.
- 5.4. The revised termination letter procedures appear to be applied inconsistently by the Council. This previously worked well in the spring. The original intention was to follow up inspections in both spring and autumn, but recent requests for Council letters has been met with refusal by Pete Lewis who says it is inappropriate at this time of year. Clarification will be sought from the Council at the AGM.

6. Bonfire Remedial Measures

David Allister has been visiting individual sites as requested by Cllr Elengorn to agree measures (and funding as necessary) to alleviate issues resulting from the Council's bonfire ban. The following were reported:

- Manor Road – two shredder visits per year, with material held on plots until present. Community Payback waste removed. Hot composting trial.
- Bushy Park – funding for community composting on two half-plots.
- Old Palace Lane – funding offered for community composting, but no site appetite.
- Briar Road – two shredder visits per year. Compost bins. Site already has community composting and self-funded hot compost trial.
- Walnut Tree – two shredder visits per year. Community composting agreed but not yet implemented.

- Cavendish – contractors to trim boundary. Community composting. Note pallets are available free from Squires. Note Council will collect and remove asbestos if bagged.

7. AGM

The AGM will be held on Monday, 9 December at 7pm in the Salon Room at York House. Council representatives will attend.

8. Feedback from Site Reps

- 8.1. Richard Ward (Townmead) noted that water is being turned off w/c 18 November. Discretion previously afforded to individual sites no longer applies, so any livestock will have to be provided for separately.
- 8.2. Bill Collis (Manor Road) proudly reported that plotholders at his site had been award both 1st and 2nd prizes in the Council allotment competition. It was disappointing that the awards ceremony was poorly attended, possibly due to lack of promotion. The Deputy Mayor who presented the prizes has recently become a plotholder at Cavendish.
- 8.3. John Padgett (East Sheen) said that problematic locks had been promptly replaced by the Council. Several reps noted the need for frequent application of WD-40 (other water dispersing lubricants are available).
- 8.4. Joe Ambaye (Bushy Park) said that Pete Lewis will arrange the removal of plastic waste where necessary.
- 8.5. Sue Childs noted that there is nothing in the T&Cs to regulate the growth of trees on plots. Some are growing to the extent that they exceed the 3" limit for pruning by plotholders. There should be a requirement to keep all trees within manageable size.
- 8.6. Dennis Leigh (Briar Road) reported that their site chairman is stepping down. The site was recently raided by travellers, although the police identified the culprits and achieved the return of stolen chickens.
- 8.7. Ian Hyde (Walnut Tree) said that, along with some others, he had been approached by a company wishing to film on the site. Previous such occasions had resulted in a financial donation to the site, although the Council took a large proportion.
- 8.8. Paul Leonard (Cavendish) said that for the past 10 years his site has photographed and scored every plot in summer, and has awarded prizes accordingly.
- 8.9. Chris Morley-Smith (Short Lots) said that their AGM includes a seed swap. Garden Organic operates a Heritage Seed Library which is very worthwhile.

9. AOB

- 9.1. David Metherell (Walnut Tree) circulated details of their 'Apprentice Scheme' which allowed potential new ploholders (from the waiting list) to work with outgoing ploholders to learn the ropes and effect an orderly handover. It was agreed that, although only applicable in a limited number of cases, this is an excellent idea. Council approval has been requested (to cover non-tenants having access) but is not yet forthcoming. Clarification will be sought at the AGM.
- 9.2. In response to a question from Joe Ambaye (Bushy Park) it was agreed that the Council would not (and probably should not) allow waiting list members to jump the queue by offering to clear a problem plot.
- 9.3. It was agreed that it is not advisable for sites committees to arrange the loan of power tools due to insurance complications. Many sites do have insurance to cover open days, etc. Insurance is available from NSALG.
- 9.4. There was general disappointment that 2019 invoices have again failed to show proper details (site, plot number, size, rate, etc.) and that the promised message deeming payment to demonstrate acceptance of T&Cs was omitted. The Council allotment team has blamed the finance department, but the situation remains wholly unsatisfactory and will be raised again at the AGM. In the meantime, Chris Morley-Smith will complain in writing to the Council referring to previous meetings and minutes.

10. Next Meeting

The BRAG AGM will be held at 7pm on Monday, 9 December 2019 in the Salon Room at York House.

The next BRAG meeting will be held on Monday, 20th January 2020 at 7pm at The Triple Crown pub, 15 Kew Foot Road, Richmond TW9 2SS (room on 1st Floor).