

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

**Date:** 9<sup>th</sup> December 2019, 7pm

**Venue:** Salon Room, York House, York Street, Twickenham, TW1 3BZ

### **Present (Site Representatives):**

Joseph Ambaye – Bushy Park  
Sue Childs – Old Palace Lane  
Andy Chopping – St Anne’s Passage, Westfield  
Bill Collis – Manor Road  
Graham Day – Briar Road  
Howard Fletcher – Manor Road (Minutes)  
Jim Hawkins – Sixth Cross Road  
Ian Hyde – Walnut Tree  
Paul Leonard – Cavendish House  
Dennis Leigh – Briar Road  
Ian Micklewright – Mill Road  
Chris Morley Smith – Kew Short Lots (Chair)  
John Padgett – Palewell Fields, Palewell Pavilion, Priory, Triangle  
Jessie Sheffield – Queens Road  
Richard Ward – Townmead  
Mike Wren – Hatherop

### **Present (LBRuT):**

David Allister (Head of Culture)  
Yvonne Kelleher (Parks Service Manager)  
Pete Lewis (Allotment Officer)  
Erin Dunford (Parks Admin Officer)

### **Apologies (Site Representatives):**

Robin Hewitt – Bushy Park  
Derek Lawrence-Brown – Hertford Avenue  
David Methereil – Walnut Tree

### **1. Previous Minutes**

- 1.1. The minutes of the previous AGM (26<sup>th</sup> November 2018) were approved.

### **2. Chairman’s Report**

- 2.1. The Chairman summarised his report for the year, which had previously been circulated (attached as appendix). There were no issues arising.

### **3. Election of Officers**

- 3.1. The Chairman explained that it is intended in future to have a Chairman plus two deputies – one being the outgoing Chairman (to provide continuity) and one other, prospectively to be the successor.

- 3.2. Howard Fletcher (Manor Road), who has fulfilled the role of Secretary since the inception of BRAG, is stepping down.
- 3.3. In accordance with the above, the positions going forward were proposed by Ian Micklewright (Mill Road) and seconded by Jim Hawkins (Sixth Cross Road) as follows:
- Chairman – Paul Leonard (Cavendish House)
  - Deputy Chairman (Outgoing) – Chris Morley-Smith (Short Lots)
  - Deputy Chairman (Incoming) – Sue Childs (Old Palace Lane)
  - Secretary – Joseph Ambaye (Bushy Park)

#### **4. Mission Statement**

- 4.1. A Mission Statement for BRAG had been prepared by David Metherell (Walnut Tree) for use as a brief summary of objectives when describing BRAG to interested outside parties. This had been circulated and discussed at the recent November BRAG meeting at which a few minor amendments were proposed. The updated draft (attached as appendix) was presented to this meeting and unanimously approved.

#### **5. Termination Procedures**

- 5.1. The updated Termination Procedures devised by the Council in conjunction with BRAG representatives Bill Collis (Manor Road) and Mike Wren (Hatherop) have been incorporated into the new Allotment Terms & Conditions. Pete Lewis (LBRuT) said that these are proving successful, with 120 warning letters sent out resulting in 50 terminations.
- 5.2. There was a question over whether inspections should be carried out once or twice per year. Pete Lewis said that it is not practical to issue warnings in the Autumn and that the key time is April, by which time all plots should be cleared for the coming season.
- 5.3. Thanks to the excellent work done by Erin Dunford (LBRuT) proper records are now being maintained to monitor and challenge those tenants who just do the minimum to avoid eviction without cultivating their plots fully.
- 5.4. The Council is considering issuing new one-year tenancy agreements to ploholders who consistently prove problematic.

#### **6. Invoices**

- 6.1. Invoices were once again this year issued without the necessary details such as site, plot number, etc. David Allister (LBRuT) said that the Council are frustrated by Capita's poor performance and that the issue has been raised with the Deputy Chief Executive.

- 6.2. Yvonne Kelleher said that it has at last been agreed that Capita can include on future invoices a statement that payment signifies acceptance of the Allotment Terms & Conditions.

## **7. Bonfires**

- 7.1. Since the Council's decision to ban all allotment bonfires, David Allister has been visiting sites on request to discuss possible remedial actions. He has offered a range of solutions including communal composting, hot bin trials, waste removal by the Council and provision of shredders for hard green waste. He said that the Council is committed to providing (and funding) workarounds wherever practical.
- 7.2. Bill Collis (Manor Road) said that to prevent the abuse of communal green waste piles awaiting disposal, shredders are needed on Saturdays when plotholders can bring their waste from their plots. Notice of shredder attendance is needed so that best use can be made of them.
- 7.3. It is not considered practical to include mandatory composting in the Allotment Terms & Conditions. However, the Council is looking into the possible provision of discounted compost bins.

## **8. BBQs**

- 8.1. It was questioned whether, given the ban on bonfires, BBQs are still allowed on allotment sites. David Allister said that open fires are not allowed on Council land without express permission, but they are allowed (subject to not causing nuisance) within the Allotment Terms and Conditions and therefore permission has implicitly been granted.

## **9. Apprentice Scheme**

- 9.1. Pete Lewis said that he is happy to work with David Metherell (Walnut Tree) on the suggested Apprentice Scheme to create a proposal to put before David Allister for approval. David Allister said that he would consider such a scheme, but noted that the previous mentor scheme had not had a good uptake.

## **10. LBRuT Update and Comments**

- 10.1. David Allister said that satisfying progress had been made since the first Allotments Strategy paper in 2010. We now have a set of procedures and rules which are workable, and BRAG has contributed positively to this.
- 10.2. Work on Allotment Terms & Conditions and, in particular, revised termination procedures, has seen plot turnover rise from 1%pa to 10%pa, meaning far fewer plots are left untended and unproductive.
- 10.3. Reduction of costs and rising income mean that allotments are now self-financing. Accordingly, they are less subject to scrutiny and their future more assured.

- 10.4. Waiting lists are better understood and now more realistic. Admin and housekeeping within the allotments team has greatly improved, and enforcement can be more robust and consistent.
- 10.5. The new Allotments Strategy, adopted earlier in 2019 leaves much to do, and the Council will work with BRAG through 2020 and beyond to achieve what has been set out.
- 10.6. It is important that BRAG truly represents the plotholders on their sites, and representatives must keep in tune with what concerns their members.
- 10.7. David Allister announced that Erin Dunford, who has been so instrumental in the improvements made, is leaving the Council at the end of the year. She will be replaced and the Council is aware of the need to recruit someone with similar capabilities. The Chairman thanked Erin on behalf of all plotholders for her significant contribution.

## **11. Any Other Business**

- 11.1. Joe Ambaye (Bushy Park) asked if the Council could help with disposal of plastic and timber left by tenants vacating plots. This is becoming more relevant in view of the tightening of rules at the Townmead tip. David Allister said that new tenants should not be discouraged by rubbish left by others. Pete Lewis will work with BRAG and sites having this problem to resolve the issue.

## **12. Closing**

- 12.1. Paul Leonard, as the incoming Chairman, gave a brief introduction to himself and his experience of working with the Council in his previous career.
- 12.2. Chris Morley-Smith said that he had enjoyed his 4 years as Chairman and thanked representatives and the Council for their support.
- 12.3. Chris Morley-Smith also thanked the Secretary for his work on behalf of BRAG.
- 12.4. The next BRAG meeting will be held on Monday, 20<sup>th</sup> January 2020.
- 12.5. The meeting closed at 7:55pm.