

Briar Road Allotment Holders Association

Minutes of the AGM of the Association held in the Communal Hut Thursday 4th June 2015

Committee members present: Gill Ware (Chairperson), Shirley Tubridy (Hon Treasurer), Dennis Leigh (Site Coordinator), Graham Day, Helena Fogel, Dennis Marks, Valerie Stevens (Membership Secretary), Jim Boocock, Colleen McKenna (Media Secretary), Kathryn Harrison

Plot holders present: Angela Marks, Paul Tubridy, Phillipa McCabe, Ben Renton, Poonit Thakkar, Nicola Thakkar, James Barrett, Sally Barrett, Maggy Ramsay, Ralph Cox, Susan Lee, Keith Goodsir

Apologies for absence: Ron Chappell (User Group Representative), Andrew George, Jean West, Liz Zass, Liz Kelly, Ian Trebett, Conrad Blenman (Lennie)

Matters arising

- None

Chairperson's report

- Gill Ware thanked everyone for coming and explained that the committee changed the day and time of the AGM to a weekday evening to see if more tenants would attend than in previous years (it was thought tenants were too busy on their plots at the weekend to attend a meeting)
- Gill introduced and thanked the committee members, in particular Kathryn Harrison, the newest member of the committee, and Colleen McKenna who is now vice chair
- Gill mentioned hearing a lecture about gardening being good for people's health and mental well-being, with the lecturers suggesting that access to growing areas should be prescribed by the NHS
- Members of the committee have represented our site at BRAG (Borough of Richmond Allotments Group) meetings this year. BRAG now has a constitution but other issues are not being addressed by the Council who seem pre-occupied with the possible merger with other councils. It has been difficult to get information from them and to talk to relevant people about allotment issues. Even when Freedom of Information requests were made, the Council claimed that some information was not available or they gave out pages of figures for BRAG members to have to find the information for themselves
- Bushy Park Allotments have produced a document outlining the minimum welfare standards for livestock for their site and these have now been added to the Council's Terms and Conditions for all sites
- A sub-committee has been formed to progress the site's Voluntary Management (VM) with the Council. The sub-committee drafted a lease based on Kingston's VM lease and sent it to David Allister (DA) with a covering letter asking him to meet us. DA claimed not to have received this information so we need to send it out to him again
- Because plot checks are so time consuming for one or two people, they are now done differently. The site is now divided into four areas and a different committee member now checks each area. Pete Lewis (PL), the Council's Allotment Officer, sends out letters regarding uncultivated plots but there seems to be little follow up by the Council
 - **Question:** Who makes the decision on which plots are allocated and is there a choice of plots? A tenant complained about waiting 4½ years for a plot, not being given a choice and given a plot that needed a lot of work after it had been neglected for a long time
 - **Response:** The Membership Secretary allocates plots as soon as they become vacant so there will usually not be a choice as only that vacant plot is available. We are also dependent on the Council to evict tenants who do not cultivate their plots and this can take a long time (7 years in one case)
- The Twickenham Green May Fair was a big fundraiser this year raising just under £700 and we want to put these funds towards a compostable toilet on our site. Our current toilet is very dirty and poorly maintained
 - **Comment:** We should inform Public Health England about the state of the toilet as they may have some influence over the Council
 - **Response:** Gill has spoken to PL recently about the state of the toilet and was told by PL that the Council's current maintenance agreement was not working
- Other events coming up include our Open Day and Produce Competition on Sunday 5th July and the Twickenham Gardening Association Annual Horticultural Show on 31st August
- The area in front of the communal hut has been improved with more space now available for seating and future events

Membership Secretary's report

- PL sends Valerie a bundle of new plot applications every three months and Valerie currently has 289 applications, sorted by date of application
- 45 applications were processed this year and 16 plots now have new tenants. The other applicants had either already taken on plots on other sites, had moved out of the area or didn't want a plot any more (although we don't find this out until they get to the top of our waiting list and we offer them a plot)
- For information, the next person on the waiting list applied for a plot in August 2011
- New tenants are offered plots on a 6 month probation period

Site Coordinator's report

- There is an issue with tenants putting woody material and stones into the communal compost bins
- Compost is on sale at 50p per bag. Tenants seem reluctant to help themselves to compost but wait instead for bags to be filled
- Can everyone entering or leaving the site close and lock the gate behind them as rubbish is being dumped on the site when the gate is left opened or unlocked
- Tenants were informed recently they could leave unwanted metal near the Council bin as the committee would arrange for it to be collected by a scrap metal dealer. However lots of other non-metal rubbish has also been left by the bin
 - **Question:** Could we pay for a skip for rubbish collection?
 - **Response:** Gill said she could put the question in a newsletter to see if tenants would be prepared to pay for skip hire
 - **Comment:** Some tenants have no rubbish to dispose of so they wouldn't want to pay

Hon Treasurer's report

- Shirley distributed copies of the accounts for the past year which showed a breakdown of figures for:

• BRAHA account:	balance at 31 st March 2014	£4.08	
	balance at 31 st March 2015	£1.80	
• Hut account:	balance at 31 st May 2014	£913.14	(building society)
		<u>£1.59</u>	(cash)
		£914.73	
	balance at 31 st May 2015	£1587.14	(building society)
		<u>£101.36</u>	(cash)
		£1688.50	

Election of officers

- No nominations for new committee members have been received. The current committee members are happy to continue so a proposal was made to re-elect all current committee members:
 - **Proposed:** Maggy Ramsay, **Seconded:** James Barrett
- Gill reminded everyone that any tenants can join the committee
- Despite last year's appeal, no-one offered to audit our accounts (it must be done by someone who is not on the committee). Gill appealed for any volunteers from the floor to give their contact details to Shirley

AOB

- **Question:** Can the committee do something about the current state of the toilet?
- **Response:** Gill will chase this up with the Council
- **Question:** What extra powers would we have if we have devolution?
- **Response:** We can set our own rules for cultivation, we can evict tenants more easily if they neglect their plots and we would be quicker than the Council in maintaining the site, eg repairs
- **Question:** Do we have everyone's email address so that we could email all tenants to see if they would be willing to pay for a skip?
- **Comment:** When we had a skip before, there were complaints because it blocked the path
- **Question:** Do we have authority to remove structures if there are complaints (eg large chicken coops)?
- **Response:** No, it is up to the Council to enforce this
- **Comment:** A final plea to tenants to please lock the gate when entering and leaving the site