

Briar Road Allotment Holders Association

Minutes of the AGM of the Association held in the Communal Hut Saturday 17th June 2017

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

Plot holders present: Dennis Marks, Giovanni Fronteddu, Jasmine Brown, Gerald Manning, Keith Goodsir, Roger Wilson

Apologies for absence: Ben Renton, Joan Donaldson, Jean West, Sara Steinke

Matters arising

- Tenants have been better at locking the gate when entering and leaving the site this year
 - **Comment:** it doesn't help that the lock sometimes sticks

Chairperson's report

- Gill Ware thanked everyone for coming and thanked and introduced the committee members
- Committee changes: Dennis Marks and Colleen McKenna have resigned from the committee, Shirley Tubridy has resigned as Treasurer and Kathryn Harrison is now the Membership Secretary. We would welcome any new committee members who would like to join, particularly anyone willing to take on the roles of Treasurer or Media Secretary
- We have Japanese Knotweed and Giant Hogweed on site, which have been treated. These plants are very invasive and cannot just be dug up, as any bits left in the soil will regrow. It must also never be put on a compost heap. The Council now need to talk to Richmond Housing Partnership about infestations in their tenants' gardens. We also cannot let the affected plots for the next three years
- There is a large waiting list for plots, so plots are checked regularly to ensure they are being worked. We will give tenants chances, but with Council support, we will remove tenants if plots remain uncultivated
- Voluntary Management (VM) – progress has been delayed due to the proposed merger with Wandsworth Council. We are now liaising with Steve Marshall, a consultant working on behalf of the Council, and met with him recently to move the project on again.
 - **Question:** Could we get feedback/reassurance from somewhere this has already happened, eg Kingston - did it work, has it been a good thing for plot holders?
 - **Response:** Yes, many Kingston sites have been devolved for years and they are now part of the Kingston Federation of Allotments. The Chair of the Federation and the Chair of a Kingston allotment site talked to us about their move to VM. We can pass this information on to tenants when we ask them to vote on the proposal
- Dennis Leigh and Graham Day represent our site at BRAG (Borough of Richmond Allotments Group) meetings, although BRAG have had issues with resignations over the past year
- We had a great response from volunteers to help empty the communal compost bins. However we have no way on site for dealing with non-compostable green waste, eg bindweed, couch grass and woody material, although some tenants take this home. To stop tenants placing this waste in the compost bins or in the Council bin, we are looking into other options, including mesh cages or fast working hot composters. We could start with two of each type to see how it goes. However we will need help to manage these in the long term
 - **Comment:** We could give out an instruction book to educate tenants on composting as not everyone knows what non-compostable weeds look like
- There is still an issue with tenants dumping rubbish by the bin or the front gate. However when new tenants take over an overgrown plot, there is often a lot of rubbish to dispose of (including a washing machine recently). It was suggested we have a volunteer day to clear the weeds on the path and to gather all the dumped rubbish in one place ready for disposal. We could then get a quote, either for the Council or a waste disposal company to collect, or for a skip. We should have a "rubbish amnesty" prior to this to give all tenants a chance to get rid of bulky items from their plots
- Gill thanked everyone who helped with the charity fair on Twickenham Green where we took over £1000, and won first prize for the best stall. We need suggestions on how to spend the money raised, eg we recently bought a strimmer for tenants to use
 - **Comment:** We should send out a notice to tenants about the strimmer being available and how to book it and use it

- The committee were going to organise a BBQ and competition on 16th July but low attendance at previous events have led to this being postponed. Organising events involves a lot of hard work by committee members, which is not worth doing if people don't attend. The committee will discuss postponing this until September or possibly cancelling altogether for this year.

Site Coordinator's report

- The Council has amended their new bonfire rules to now allow summer bonfires on the first Saturday morning of each month (9am to 1pm) between April and September. From October to March, bonfires are allowed Monday to Friday, but not weekends

Membership Secretary's report

- There are currently no vacant plots, and 200 people are on our waiting list (note that as soon as a plot becomes vacant, it is re-let)
- Between August 2016 and June 2017, 65 applications were processed and 27 plots were allocated to new tenants
- The person at the top of the list applied for a plot in July 2013, so waiting time is currently 4 years
- Question:** What can be done about overgrown neighbouring plots?
- Response:** Although plot checks are carried out regularly, we have to get the Council involved to evict tenants therefore this can take a long time. We will check up on the overgrown plot mentioned

Hon Treasurer's report

- Copies of the accounts as at 31st May 2017 were distributed:

• BRAHA account:	£1.51 (building society)	70p (cash)
• Special account:	£953.39 (building society)	£37.34 (cash)
- Note that money raised from this year's May Fair is still to be added
- We haven't yet received this year's funding from the Council
- 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
- For information, committee meetings are held on the first Tuesday of each month, at 7.30pm in the communal hut

AOB

- A tenant recently left a hose running after they left the site and their hose later blew off resulting in a lot of wasted water (water pressure increases as tenants turn off other taps on site). Tenants need to be reminded not to leave hoses on when they are not on site
- For information, the West London Waste Authority runs five dumps and we can use any of these. Note that the Feltham site has recently changed its opening times for private and trade waste

End of meeting 1215