

BIRMINGHAM AND DISTRICT ALLOTMENTS CONFEDERATION

MINUTES OF EXECUTIVE MEETING HELD ON 5th June 2023 AT BORDESLEY GREEN ALLOTMENTS

Attendance: Hester Blewitt - Ward End Gardeners, Cheryl Butler - Thornbridge, Clive Fenn- Birches Green, Sue Griffith - Harborne Hill, Stuart Campbell Guest- Tennial Lane, Dave Hubball - Thornbridge, David Read - Ward End Gardeners, Peter Thomas - May Lane, Len Tubbs - The Brambles, Ross White - Harborne Lane, Keith Yardley – Station Road

Apologies; Leslie Whittaker- The Leys, Dave Rawlings - Aldridge Rd, Luke Richards - Thornbridge, Joe Brown -
May Lane

Observers: Charles Bloom, Chris Cullen (Ward End Gardeners)

The meeting was opened by Hester Blewitt, who'd been elected Secretary at the AGM suggesting that David Read chair this initial meeting of the post-AGM Executive. He introduced the meeting by saying it was a period of change for the BDAC and the Council, where we need to consider getting incorporated, and that the way forward is to allocate various tasks to sub-groups of the Exec to develop proposals . In the meantime, the Management Agreement should be put on hold for 6 months while we develop BDAC Mark 2, as many associations are unlikely to sign an agreement which puts too much onus on them with no funding other than the 10% rent commission & devolved budget (which is only a share of the surplus funds after BCC costs taken out). Economically the new agreement is not viable.

A diagrammatic representation of a new structure was tabled for the meeting to consider. To move forward as an Exec and working through subgroups, we need additional members too.

In terms of the vacant role of Chairperson, Hester said there were various options – from having a rotating chair (different person at every meeting) to electing someone now as an on-going leader till at least the next AGM, but then no-one was prepared to stand at AGM, and situation hasn't changed. Another option is to have someone with some chairing experience to chair, say, 3 meetings, then change, so at least we call on people with chairing skills (interesting that most on Exec are secretaries and treasurers, not chairs, commented Ross). Let's focus on smaller groups for starters.

Financial mandate/additional cheque signatories: Agreed Hester Blewitt and Peter Thomas as well as Dave Rawlings the existing Treasurer (to replace retiring officers).

Regarding the respective roles of officers, this list of responsibilities is available on the website. The key role of chair is in making decisions, and Secretary the initial point of contact. We need to work as a team and involve BDAC members more. On issues like insurance, it wasn't clear who should deal with this and it's an item which needs major negotiation. For continuity, it was suggested that if there are 2 individuals doing a task or role (1 main, 1 assisting and being coached), it would help.

Proposal for an Interim Chairperson for 3 months – proposed Clive Fenn, seconded Sue Griffith. Agreed with one abstention. David Read to do first 3 exec meetings chairing.

Discussion about the way forward

Sue Griffith said it was a new dawn for the BDAC, and we need to emphasize we are positively moving forward. Sharing out the roles relieves the workload on one or two people, and we need to prioritise using working groups on management agreement, shows etc. Advisors should be encouraged to join the Exec or be involved in working groups. A restructure would help clarify important issues, improve guidance notes and BDAC's reputation.

Further discussion covered: stakeholders and who they are; meetings of the Exec, groups and local advisors; panels to represent what's going on, contributing personal skills to various areas, change management and the fact that only 28 associations were represented at the AGM out of over 100.

Proposed, seconded and **agreed: to discuss various areas with small groups of 3-5 individuals drawn from Exec, amending the titles (as given on the tabled sheet) if necessary and prioritising the importance of each, to be done for the next meeting**

Sue, Hester, Ross and Keith to be on Sub-committee which will meet to discuss and then circulate ideas for consideration at July Exec with a view to proposing and adopting a formal proposal for a new structure and change management.

Minutes of Last meeting – Matters Arising which are not on agenda

Flo Pickering Fund. David Read reported that the monies from Court Lane sale of land have gone into the Fund, and its new building is being costed at the moment. Once the figure is finalised, the City Architects Dept will know how **much** is left to be allocated to the other 13 applications under consideration, so there will be further delays to work this year. Capital Works – a possible topic for a working group in new structure.

Main Agenda Items

Objectives and governance of BDAC- Proposed management structure and short term priorities

The paper outlining proposals was discussed.

Key Issue Discussion - The importance of key issues and ideas for key issues that need priority discussion, one at each meeting suggested, starting with the topical issue of cultivation.

❖ Priority 1. Non cultivation problems and eviction process

In terms of key issues, the Secretary reported that since Barbara's handover, the email postbox (50 so far including items from the Allotment Officer) was a good indicator of the issues the BDAC needs to deal with including conflicts on sites, complaints, non-cultivation notices (and appeals against eviction). Suggested we could have a more flexible notice in terms of expectations on cultivation, develop good practice guidelines eg on recordkeeping, photo evidence. Proposed: to formalise cultivation procedure and mechanisms for surveying plots through a working group, and asking members to suggest model cultivation guidelines. The current system and procedures are inefficient. The next newsletter could feature a standard of cultivation. User groups could be set up amongst sites, bringing good practice together.

Newsletter: Barbara is going to produce it – contributions requested within next 2 weeks. The newsletter should also have a statement about new beginnings for the BDAC. Ross will write a draft proposal which could be agreed with 4 nominated Exec members.

Also discussed: the need for local advisors to have some training in handling conflict.

Summary: If adopted, the working groups to discuss on-going issues relevant to their area of consideration; e.g. good practices, research Insurance summary and policy, training of advisors.

Any other business

First aid course. The Secretary reported the availability of European Social Funding available (through a small company called New Training) till the end of the year for first aid training for eligible people ie. Retired and not working. This means courses could be held at minimal cost promoted by BDAC. This was agreed.

Green framework and Birmingham Open Spaces Forum. 13 allotment associations have joined the Forum, the issue is that although allotment sites are green, they are not open to the public at large.

Summary of meeting action points

1. Dave Rawlings to advise the bank that Hester Blewitt and Peter Thomas are to be made authorised signatories to the two main bank accounts
2. Hester Blewitt, Sue Griffith, Ross White and Keith Yardley to meet before 3rd July to plan proposed working groups and their areas for consideration. Their suggestions to be made available to Exec members before 3rd July.

The meeting closed at 9.20 pm