BIRMINGHAM AND DISTRICT ALLOTMENTS CONFEDERATION

Minutes of Executive Meeting held on 6th January 2024 at Bordesley Green Allotments 2.00pm

Attendance: Hester Blewitt - Ward End Gardeners, Clive Fenn- Birches Green, Dave Hubball - Thornbridge, David Read - Ward End Gardeners, Len Tubbs - The Brambles, Ross White - Harborne Lane, Dave Rawlings - Aldridge Rd; Yvonne Brookes – Pereira Rd; Keith Yardley – Station Road; Peter Thomas - May Lane; Cheryl Butler – Thornbridge; Leslie Whittaker; Stuart Guest – Tennal Lane

Apologies: Luke Richards

Minutes of 18th November meeting accepted as a true record.

Minutes of 25th November Half Yearly meeting accepted as a true record.

Matters Arising:

Allotments Survey – Responses to date are a little over 10% of total number of tenancies, but responses are very patchy, nil responses from a third of associations, very low responses from another third. Only the remaining third of Associations actively promoting feedback. Low responses in North & East of city, and Uplands (biggest site). John Bloomfield concerned about sample being less representative of less well-off areas. Ross White emphasised the need for BDAC involvement in contacting sites as this would serve to raise awareness of the increased role BDAC are proposing in overall management of allotments.

Proposed and Agreed:

Prize draw to include 5 x £50 contribution to 2024 plot rental for plot holders, 5 x £50 contribution to 2024 plot rental for secretaries. Also £10 or £20 vouchers for in-store purchases from sites prepared to donate.

On-line Enquiries:

Clive Fenn reported 24 enquiries since November 2023 but identified potential problems with sites not sharing contact details.

Proposed and Agreed:

Bernadette Wilson be approached for up to date contact information for all sites and Executive Members chase their local Associations where contact details are missing.

Corrugated Iron For Raised Beds:

The suggestion from Barbara Smith and Phil Pjalic for a change to allotment rules relating to the use of corrugated steel sheets was noted but, due to current executive workload, agreed it would be addressed at a later date.

Treasurer's Report from Dave Rawlings

General Accounts

Balance brought forward	£24,605.78
No cheques issued	
Balance carried forward	£24,605.78
No change in the deposit account:	£10,713.33

Dave has experienced further delays with documentation demanded by Santander. It is hoped the new signatories will be approved by time of February meeting.

Show Account.

Balance brought forward	£6,752.69
Show Income	£ 170.00
Payment to Show Judge	(£ 50.00)
Balance carried forward	£6,872.59

Secretary's Report

1. Security Cameras installed at Oldford Farm site have generated complaints from a minority of plot holders over issues of 'Invasion of Privacy'. BCC advice is to ensure plotholders are fully consulted and all regulations on camera use are followed.
2. Discussions with Bernadette Wilson on information available for vetting potential tenants have resulted in a negative response. BCC fearful of breaching Data Protection Laws.
3. Notice is given of a Billesley Ward Council Forum Meeting on 15th January where Parks and Allotments are the main agenda item. Secretary and Chair have accepted an invitation to attend, Associations in Billesley Ward invited to send reps (Sec has contacted them); all other Executive Members are welcome.
4. RHS propose to visit 3 or 4 sites on 21st – 23rd June to offer advice on horticultural matters. The invitation is open to all sites to submit an application to be included, giving information about their sites. Responses to go to BDAC secretary to forward to the RHS team which will include specialist horticultural advisors – they will decide what they can fit in (only a small number out of the total interested); they can do Q&A session sin the evening on 21st and 22nd June eg at venues like Moor Green or Bordesley Green so people from any association can be involved.

Reports from Working Parties

Management of Site Associations Working Group

Site Rules:

A meeting is being called in February with Association Rules as the sole Agenda Item. The Secretary reported that much of her workload related to interpretation of BCC Rules and the degree to which Associations can introduce their own rules. It was acknowledged that there were some conflictions between BCC Rules and the Association Handbook issued by BCC.

Training:

It was accepted that many of the problems on managing sites was due to lack of investment in training Committee Officers/Members in acceptable procedures. The Secretary tabled a survey form and schedule of training topics and sought approval for this to be distributed to all Associations for feedback on training needs and ways of giving support (to go out after Allotment Survey finished) .

It was Proposed and Agreed that the survey should be distributed and an 'on-line' version put on the website. Clive Fenn would carry out this work and collate responses.

Freedom of Information Request

BCC response to a FoI request from Keith Yardley on financing and numbers of plots/tenants was tabled for information. The response highlighted a number of areas where BCC records do not tally with information given previously. It was agreed that Executive members would advise Keith Yardley of any queries they had on the information given, who would then approach BCC for clarification/confirmation on those queries.

Governance Working Party

Following the positive response from Associations to the suggestion that the BDAC becomes Incorporated shown at the Half Year Meeting, arrangements are in hand to progress the process.

Incorporation will necessitate the need for a new Constitution. This is effectively in two parts. Some elements of the Constitution will entail fulfilling Statutory Requirements, e.g Audited Accounts to FCA. Liz Bunting has agreed to examine the Coop Rules (Constitution) template, sponsored by the NSALG, with a view to adapting it to suit an umbrella body. The second element relates to those areas which the BDAC can determine, e.g. Size of Committee, who will be members etc.

Ross White tabled a Heads of Terms document highlighting all the areas the BDAC will need to decide.

It **was Proposed and Agreed** that the Governance Working Party be authorised to discuss these Heads of Terms and incorporate suggestions with those from Liz Bunting. A proposed new Constitution would then be presented to the February Executive Meeting which, when adopted, will enable us to call an AGM in March to formally agree the new body. Negotiations with BCC on a new Management Agreement can then be initiated.

Any other business:

1. It was noted that Water Plus had not issued bills to several sites since May 2023
2. Discussion took place on the need to increase publicity for the Annual Show. It was agreed this could include advance growing notices/advice on the website
3. It was agreed that BDAC needs to investigate ways of encouraging new show judges, which encouragement would include support for training.

Next Meeting: 2.00pm Saturday 10th February at Bordesley Green Allotments

Meeting closed 4.10pm