BDAC Executive minutes 11th May 2024

Apologies – Cheryl Butler, John Whitaker, Ross White, Luke Richards, Stuart Guest

In attendance Hester Blewitt, David Read, Yvonne Brookes, Kate Martin Smith, Kerry McGahey, Clive Fenn, Tony Webb, Len Tubbs, Keith Yardley, Andrew Large

Absent: Dave Reece

Minutes of Exec of 13th April 2024 for approval

Amendments made to notes of Jon Bloomfield presentation of survey results:

3 cultivation levels are: Serious cultivators 16%; Keen Gardeners 44% and Leisure Gardeners 38%. Main benefits selected by plotholders are: Regular physical exercise 17%; Supplies of fresh veg 31% and Peace of mind/relaxation 32%

Other findings: 40% of sites **have (not are)** non-standard tenancies i.e. organisations which rent plots

Keith moved minutes be accepted, Len 2nd Approved

Matters arising from last Exec –

Task	Who's responsible	Deadline
Check all documents and sign off accounts	Treasurer (Former Treasurer)	Handover of documents still not done. See Treasurers Report
Read, agree to and sign code of conduct document	Everyone	After scrutiny exec members want to edit the document before signing. This will be sent out to all exec members by e-mail for them to make notes ready for discussion at June meeting.
Fill in meeting availability document and return to Secretary	Everyone	Done
Sort out dates/arrangements for Working Party meetings if not already organised	Everyone	Done
Find out requirements for Treasurer's laptop	Chairperson	David has got a quote, which will need to be checked before advising exec at next meeting

Prepare costed proposal for laptop for Treasurer for discussion at next meeting	Finance & Governance working groups	As above
If working group meetings happen before next meeting provide feedback	Working group leads	Done
Set up Executive committee WhatsApp group	Secretary	Done
NAS Conference?	Secretary for details Governance Working Party	See item 3

1. **Code of Conduct** – Various people wanted to make amendments to the proposed Code, so they will circulate these via the Exec Email group and it will be discussed at next meeting when there will hopefully be fewer absentees.

2. **Working Groups**– Report back from each Group about Terms of Reference, plans for future and reports of work done since last Exec.

a. **Governance** (Ross, Keith, David Read, Dave Rawlings, Andrew) – zoom meeting held this week, they looked at constitution to see what objective of BDAC is, moving forward on strategic policies – corporate strategies for exec to agree in future.

b. **Finance** (Yvonne, Keith) – Kerry has now joined this group. A meeting will be arranged ASAP. Peter Thomas has just handed over all the paperwork from 2017 for the Show Account. Noted that financial records should be handed over when treasurers resign, and records have to be kept for 7 years. The same applies for the rest of BDAC financial records

Keith and Yvonne have done a draft expenses policy which will need to be reviewed. Hester also did a draft some months ago. Hester commented it's been a year since the 2023 AGM and the finances/bank problems still aren't fully sorted: the aim should be to have finances on a proper footing over coming year using the new system and have a best practice policy in place.

Due to the issues of access to the online account, individuals and Ward End Gardeners Association are still owed money for expenses and other payments such as prize money from 2023 show, money is still waiting to be paid out and on-line payments in are a problem because it's not clear what the name of the account is. Hopefully, this will be sorted out ASAP. Yvonne can provide cheques today if needed.

Noted that signatories can be added - which makes it easier to carry out transactions without having to take signatories off (eg because we can't get the death certificate)

It may be that the bank accounts the BDAC hold will not be compatible with the BDAC changing from Confederation to Co-operative and becoming "limited" new accounts or a different bank may need investigating

Budgets for different areas of expenditure: Keith suggested. This can't be done until Yvonne

has paperwork also if anyone else has information on past or future spending this needs to be given to Yvonne ASAP.

c. **Management of Sites and Associations (**Kate, Kerry, Yvonne, Stuart, Cheryl, Hester). Kate reported on the Cultivation guidelines which she has developed in a 'Manual' form. These look at what is expected and take you through the whole plot inspection process including template letters. They are now being trialled by some MOSA members and we are awaiting feedback. The aim at the next meeting is to go through what people think should be in "The Manual" cross-referencing Hester's Index of policies and the current management handbook. Originally these were written for WEGA and some used for funding bids. They can be used by other associations but they are not BDAC 'authorised'.

The MOSA group meets every 6 weeks and hopefully, we can work on 3 documents between each meeting and have them ready for discussion and sign-off at MOSA level, so they can be then made available as 'official' BDAC documents. Where there are legal implications eg Health & Safety, Equality & Diversity policies, the plan is to get NAS input from the new Legal Officer Tyler Harris who some Exec members met and who agreed to look at them.

Keith was concerned what would happen if, for example, committee members on a number of sites with associations gave up altogether. David pointed out that the Management Agreement between BCC and BDAC which includes provision for directly managing 8 sites without associations cannot assume that extra sites could be added with no extra agreement and financial consideration.

d. **Communication, Website and Marketing** (Clive, Ross, Andrew) – draft logo ideas were sent out to all executive members. Views expressed: they weren't representative of Birmingham, were a bit generic, needed to be more colourful and have plants/tools or references to growing/allotments. David and Kate know graphic designers and will reach out to them to see if they can help.

Registration with the IOC (Information Office Commissioner) Ross is awaiting a response from IOC. From information received so far, at the moment there isn't a need to register, however, in the future if the BDAC will be holding information on 7000+ tenants we will probably need to register then.

Issue about address for BDAC: for Co-op a safe address is needed by Financial Conduct Authority for delivery of post. Bordesley Green not suitable (no postbox or regular contact), so Chairperson's home address is currently being used. Future option could include Maildrop. David consulted with Kate's husband Chris (IT background) for develop a specification for a laptop & IT support for the BDAC. This has been given to an IT consultant for a quote and Chris will be asked to check that it includes everything we need before the quote it is put forward for Exec approval. This is not just about the finance, it's about all the membership and other information and data we need to collect and keep, and admin/secretarial functions. Hester will join this Working Group in relation to this issue. The cost of IT support will vary very significantly depending on what we want included, how complex it is, links to mobile phones and how much access different people will need.
Kerry asked that once purchased any assets such as laptops are added to the asset register so family members know to return them to the BDAC if anything happens to the exec member/officer in possession.

The group has been advised they need to make efforts to get up-to-date contact details for all sites and pass them on (to Secretary and Webmaster for plot enquires). This is a

continuing saga as officers/committee members are constantly changing and don't necessarily tell anyone (BDAC or Allotments Officer).

e. **Infrastructure** (Dave Reece, Len, David Read) – Hasn't met yet. David reported that Anthony Downes, the City Architect, is arranging for contractors to go around sites and see what needs doing regarding the Flo Pickering funded work (approx. 14 sites). No dates yet.

This group to look at the next round of Flo Pickering funded requests, and criteria for work. Decision only to fund driveway and fencing upgrades, plus new toilets (but not toilet repairs) was made some years ago and needs reviewing. The Council want to negotiate the terms of the FP fund.

Form to be created for sites if they want to request works, this will include details such as works requested, locations, pictures of what needs improvement or area where works needed. This can go on the website

f. **Shows and Events** (Kerry, Dave Hubball, Cheryl, Clive, Luke).

A Annual Show No face to face meeting of this Working Group held but members have discussed issues via WhatsApp and a WhatsApp meeting over the past week or so with basic questions being asked like: What is the main purpose of the show in its current form? What is the cost and how should it be funded from now on, given that the Council does not give the BDAC specific show money any more? Could the number of categories be reduced and emphasis put on more inclusive exhibits/entries from a wider range of people? Could the event include alot more than just the competition? A consensus hadn't emerged from this up till today between those involved in running shows up till 2023, and newer Exec members. This morning Dave Hubball made an announcement (he resigned as Exec member in March and at that point said he would continue in his role as Show Secretary taking over from Derek Cullen who died in Sept 2022) He said that he would not continue if the Exec decides that the Show subgroup has the extra responsibility of having to fundraise and organise income-generating stalls etc alongside the show.

In the absence of Dave, Cheryl and Luke from this Exec meeting, we discussed the viability of the BDAC show for this year and for the future. The experience and expertise of the Show team in organising BDAC competitions was recognised, and it's clear that those involved (prizewinners and visitors) value the traditional BDAC show. But in terms of the levels of involvement from sites/individuals, attendance on the day and how much it promotes allotments and the BDAC, that format and the time/expense involved in organising it, is not standing up to scrutiny. We discussed options such as certificates only and no cash prices to reduce costs, Luke's suggestion to 'piggyback' on other summer-time events in Birmingham and shows which already have a good footfall, or possibly this year to have the Show at Thornbridge where the majority of the Show 'team' are based.

Proposed and agreed that it was too late in the year to re-visit the whole rationale for the BDAC show and replan it BUT that the existing Show team be asked if they wished to go ahead with the existing or revised schedule but with provisos:

- The BDAC will not fund cash prizes from its account unless these can be awarded from funds raised, but will provide financial support to produce certificates for prizewinners.
- The Show team is asked to reduce the cost of running the competition for example by holding it at Thornbridge alongside a Thornbridge event which is already being publicised locally.

- A budget of £250 is proposed to provide for Show costs - posters, moving items needed for the day
- The competition could be advertised via BDAC website & notification to site secretaries, but it is not expected that additional Exec members can offer time to promote a BDAC competition as they are likely to be busy with their own site shows in August.
- All the ideas generated in the last week or so can be looked at by this Working Group over the next few months so we can make realistic plans for 2025

B **RHS Visits 21st to 23rd June**

Up till now Hester has been coordinating this event and liaising with the RHS; she has circulated list of applications from sites: Moor Green, a group application from 4 sites close together in South Birmingham - Harborne/Edgbaston (B17,B15) (Harborne Hill (122 plots), Pereira Road (145), Guinea Gardens (87), Moor Pool (77), Manor House Lane association (91), Gospel Lane Association, (100+), Oldford Farm Association (143 plots), Ward End Gardeners Association (185 plots in 5 sites (22 to 54 plots), Walsall Rd Association (110 plots), Uplands (390 plots), West Heath (form not circulated). Other possibilities including Hall Hayes (32 plots), a directly managed site in Kingstanding, Castle Vale and Marsh Hill. There is representation from different parts of Birmingham, but few smaller sites. The RHS Advisors will be looking at the selection shortly and then deciding where they want to go. It's up to us to help with travel and other logistics to make best use of their time. Moor Green will host a Q and A session on Saturday to pull in people from South Birmingham and another Q&A session could be run in North Birmingham on Friday, at a suitable venue.

Kerry to coordinate and be link with RHS from now on.

3. NAS A. Conference in June

The agenda for the one day annual NAS Conference in Sheffield was noted - motions to increase membership fees, other usual AGM items & reports and 2 talks in the afternoon on microbial soil health and pests. Nothing specific that the BDAC has discussed or needs to make an input to on this occasion and the costs of a BDAC rep attending are likely to be over £200. **Agreed** not to send an official BDAC delegate but if individuals wish to attend for interest, that's up to them.

B. **Meeting with Legal Officers** The meeting held on 29th of April between the BDAC and the NAS in Birmingham city centre was informative (attended by Yvonne, Kate, Hester, Tony, Cheryl). The outgoing NAS Legal Officer who retired on 10th May was there as well as Tyler Harris, who is our new Legal Officer contact, and Colin Bedford (NAS Regional Mentor). We can contact Tyler with ongoing questions and issues.

4 Finance/Treasurer's Report

Finance/Treasurer's Report – Yvonne is now a signatory on the bank account and is in the process of setting up online banking. As there is still no access yet, she cannot see the true balance. A cheque has been made out for £14,506.92 for Chris Knott for the insurance liability cover for the BDAC/sites. The invoice has been sent to BCCl. Yvonne still awaiting paperwork from Dave Rawlings, and the paperwork received from Peter Thomas for Show accounts just handed over..

Insurance update – Liability insurance has now been renewed, originally it had an endorsement stating all ponds have to be surrounded by a metre-high fence regardless of size. As this is in contravention of allotment rules it has been agreed with the insurance underwriters that 1. All sites are to have a sign on entry stating children under 16 years old must be supervised at all times and nobody is to enter another person's plot without the permission of the tenant. 2. All plots with ponds must display a warning sign (regardless of the size of the pond). This information is to be forwarded to all sites.

5. Secretary's Report including report on Directly managed sites:

Hester is now getting help with 3 of the Directly Managed sites, specifically signing up new tenants : Kingstanding - Dave Hubball, Hunton Hill - Cheryl, and Matthew Boulton College - Tony. Andrew Large offered to be involved with Eastern Road, and Clive at Chester Rd - need explanations from Hester about what needs doing. Some Letters of Concern may be sent out on plots which are clearly being neglected on these sites some of which are supposed to be full up; if these are then given up, it will create opportunities for people making enquiries now. Pembroke Croft derelict - will need future discussion.
Other report: Secretary/Chair giving advice and information and dealing with a range of enquiries by phone and email on issues like oversized sheds, chickens, bees, repairs, water, rubbish and access to the Allotments Officer, also recently lots of insurance queries. More complex issues requiring intervention (following complaint or discussion with Secretary) are being followed up - these usually involved tenants and committees. They are time-consuming and care needed especially when it could have consequences for many other people, sites, situations eg discrimination allegations, associations making provision for people with existing disabilities, or people who have become disabled over time. We will be getting legal advice from NAS about these when needed.

6. **Agreeing dates, times and venues for future Exec meetings**

The next meeting 15th June, 2pm Yvonne to arrange venue. Future meetings: 13th July,

10th August, 14th September, 12th October, 16th November.

7. Any other Business - none

Task	Who's responsible	Deadline
Read through current version of Code of Conduct, make notes and e-mail to group ready for discussion at next meeting	Everyone	1st June
Complete handover of accounts	Dave Rawlings/ Yvonne/ Hester/David	ASAP
Review laptop/IT quote	Kate (Chris-Martin-Smith) David	Before next meeting
Once access to accounts gained find out if they still be used once the BDAC becomes a CO-OP, if yes, complete any paperwork ready for when FCA registration complete. If not investigate new bank/accounts	Yvonne (Kerry to help as already doing this at West heath due to also going CO-OP)	ASAP
Chase up IOC about if and when BDAC need to register	Ross	By next meeting
Speak to graphic designers	Kate & David	Before next meeting

re new logo		
Find contact details for all sites	Communication group Hester to pass on recent updates	ASAP/Ongoing
Create application form for sites requesting works under Flo Pickering fund	Infrastructure group	ASAP

Decide what on what basis the show will go ahead this year if any	Events group	1 week
Send pond liability info to all sites	Hester/David	ASAP
Direct Managed sites	Hester liaise with Andrew and Clive about Eastern Rd and Chester Rd sites	ASAP
RHS	Kerry liaise with Hester & RHS to plan itineraries etc for visit	Before next meeting
Working Groups	All: people on each Working Group to check Terms of Reference, current objectives and ways of operating and confirm for next meeting	For next meeting