BDAC Executive Meeting
Saturday 15th June 2pm
VENUE: Bordesley Green (B9)

Minutes

Present: David Read (DR Chair), Hester Blewitt (HB Secretary), Yvonne Brookes (YB Treasurer), Clive Fenn (CF), Stuart Guest (SG), Kate Martin Smith (KMS), Kerry McGahey (KM), Dave Reece (DRE), Luke Richards (LR), Len Tubbs (LT), Tony Webb (TW), Leslie Whittaker (LW), Keith Yardley (KY)

Apologies: Ross White (RW), Cheryl Butler (CB), Andrew Large (AL)

Minutes of Exec of 11th May 2024 Agreed

Matters arising

- New efforts required for the new logo, to be discussed next meeting (KMS, DR to follow up).
- To request from Allotment Officer on a monthly basis updated information on contact details (HB).
- Flo Pickering Fund – on going. Awaiting dates from Anthony Down for next visits. No financial account available for Flo Pickering funded work. Need to review rules/criteria set for funding, photo evidence etc. YB may have some old documents.
- We are unable to obtain any documentation when Flo Pickering first set up. KY to do more research.

Secretary's Report from Hester Blewitt (HB)

1. There is a new rule on ponds on plots/sites. Sites need to have signs advising about pond. No fence required. Associations should be advised (HB)
2. Three of the Directly Managed Sites are now being managed through Secretary with help from: Dave Hubball at Kingstanding; TW at Matthew Boulton and CB at Hunton Hill. Others not started yet (CF – Chester Road; AL – Eastern Road)
3. Working group reports – HB asks whether all the Working Groups meeting (face to face or otherwise)? Are the groups functional? Have they looked at and adopted the terms of reference and putting proposals to the Exec? Need to know for next meeting
4. Some associations are doing the best they can but a few do have some really serious issues: lots of problems being referred to BDAC.
   Question: Should all complaints dealt with through BDAC be reported and minuted at the Exec when in progress and there are sensitive issues? Discussion about whether to set up a Working Group to deal with complaints only, and going forward, we have documented complaints. We only have a few Local Advisors.
   The Code of Conduct will play its part in ensuring that problems are not publicised when that could jeopardise outcome of investigation and finding solutions. It was suggested we just name the site, reason and issue. DR suggested if there is a conflict of interest, an Exec member could leave the room. MOSA group asked to draft new complaints procedures. Reporting from last MOSA group – only a handful attended and HB (convenor) had to send apologies because double-booked, so KMS's agenda for the meeting couldn't be addressed. A set of policies and procedures for associations endorsed by BDAC is the main objective and should be priority. KMS to circulate policy procedure for plot inspections. Time frame - July – Notices of Re-entry being sent out.
   Structure to be set up for Complaints group with Exec members – linked to MOSA but separate.

Treasurer's Report (YB)

The Treasurer reported continuing problems with trying to get paperwork from the previous Treasurer Dave Rawlings (DRa). While Peter Thomas has delivered Show Accounts paperwork going back to 2017, all very organised, DRa has only handed over very limited paperwork for the time he was Treasurer: a total of 7 pages, 3 cheque stubs, no information in paying in book, no bank statements for past 12 months, and no receipts for any payments made in this year up to April 2024. YB made the point that

an organisation's paperwork is the intellectual and physical property of the organisation, not the person in a role such as Treasurer. The auditors have apparently audited the last 12 months and accepted this state of affairs. DRa said to YB in April and later to DR that he could not hand over all the accounts because 1 cheque hadn't cleared – this is nonsense because there will always be uncleared cheques at the end of a financial year. DR has been trying to negotiate with him (calling round and ringing but DRa has now stopped answering the phone) asking about petty cash information, remittance advice etc. DRa has claimed the paperwork was his property as he had been Treasurer 43 years. CB has also spoken to him and firstly he said he had handed everything over, on a later occasion, CB says he is now claiming that Clive Birch told him to destroy all records on an annual basis. The AGM in March accepted accounts subject to YB getting back up documentation as she didn't and doesn't still know whether the figures are right. YB/DR have obtained legal advice from Tyler Harris NAS Legal Officer and DR has now written to DRa asking him to hand over all paperwork within 14 days (this time is almost up). Next step could be a letter from a solicitor or the NAS, pointing out that the accounts paperwork belongs to the BDAC; it is a legal requirement to keep it for 7 years and an offence/criminal act to destroy it. The BDAC has to do something to cover itself, because it could be challenged in the future by BCC or HMRC.

Agreed:

- **to ask NAS to draft letter on expiry of the 14 days (DR to action)**
- **Ask auditors what level of detail they examined (Jan Spencer and ? Timms) (YB)**

We need to list what we have already received – an evidence pack. Note: DR commented that when he and the Secretary had called round to DRa's house in March before the AGM, they saw a Cathedral ledger book which was half used with 2 pages for the current year, so there must have been records on the previous pages going back a number of years. This has not been handed over to the new Treasurer.

KY commented that Clive Birch had handed over a boxful of BDAC paperwork to him after he retired from role of Chair, but had said to KY that he was destroying the digital records he had on his computer. As a result, KY was having to scan all the paper versions which could have been handed over in digital form. Time-consuming but he is 2/3 of the way through this task.

Regarding the new arrangements, the new signatories for cheques are her, the Treasurer (YB) and the Secretary (HB). The current bank balance is £12,426. A payment of £4,750 from the Council is still outstanding, plus the insurance payment from the Council to pass over to Chris Knott insurers. Further complications are that Santander bank still has J.Hughes on their records and he died 30 years ago but is still listed as a signatory on the main account. Also Chris Brown is listed as a signatory for the Deposit Account and Joe Brown on the Show Account – so no access to these allowed even though they both died years ago. BDAC can apply for death certificates if the families can't supply them, but we still need full information about the deceased to include in the application.
The Treasurer cannot do any transactions at the moment.

Governance Report:
Minutes of zoom meeting circulated. Query about the meeting which took place between BDAC officers and BCC (Val Lecky, Bernie Wilson) on 26th March which was reported to Exec in April. This meeting was to advise what sort of areas BDAC wanted to take on. SG proposed and it was agreed that meetings like this should be minuted for circulation.
At the Seminar on 20th June to launch the Allotments & Well Being Report and Findings from the Allotment Survey, Councillor Mahmood is a guest speaker. Chairperson and others attending from BDAC will speak with him about BCC commitment, finance, budgets etc.

Management of Sites & Associations (MOSA):
BDAC is now starting to offer training to Association committee members and people who may be persuaded to join committees.

26th/29th June- Minding the Money, 10th/14th July – Decision-making and Meeting Skills. One weekday workshop, one at the weekend; one at a site based in South Birmingham (Meadow Rd Harborne) and one in North (Northleigh Rd Ward End). Helpful & constructive moving forward.

Communications, Website and Marketing:
33246 files on the BDAC website which gets 800 hits per week. 550 Face Book members. This Working Group hasn't had meetings and communicates by email.
CCTV on sites needs looking at, sound video needs registering.
Proposed new logo – some designs but not finalised options.
Regarding CF's monthly round-up - comment that still a lot of people on sites don't know anything.
New mobile to be bought for the BDAC – DR is ordering this.
Update developing section on web site – any suggestions welcome.

Show & Events:
KM reported that the show committee hasn't given feedback since last meeting. CB and Dave Hubball are organising the Annual Show on 17th August. The Competition Schedule is on BDAC website and the Show is going ahead in some form. No prize money, budget of £250 available.

Visit of RHS Advisors 21st to 23rd June is going ahead as planned with various sites being visited. Sign in sheets sorted for Q&A sessions. Friday 21st evening at Uplands, Saturday 22nd evening at Moor Green. HB and KM involved in coordinating arrangements.

Code of Conduct:
All comments must be back with the Secretary quickly so we can finally agree and sign document at July's meeting.

Any other business:
1. Questions regarding the Allotments & Well-being Report: What will we do with it? how will we use the info to raise our profile? So many changes are needed in allotments and this unique report which gives a voice to plotholders could be very useful in the future. HB said that currently only 36 people had registered for the Report Launch seminar on 20th June at Birmingham University. All Exec members invited and all associations have been notified by email to send anyone along who is interested. Who's attending from Exec? BDAC officers plus anyone else?
2. Dave Rawlings is a member of the Show committee. YB feels that he should not/ does not represent the BDAC at the Show.
3. Mileage claims were raised to 50p per mile by the previous Exec (prior to May 2023). It will be reduced to 45p as per instructions from HMRC. If BDAC pays 50p a mile it has to be declared as income, so people liable for tax (everyone) would end up getting less money because all of the mileage allowance would be taxed.
4. The BDAC Officers have a concern about discussions etc at the Exec meeting in that they should remain private until such times as they are available on the website (after being agreed). It was noted that there may be a possible conflict of interest given that the Chairperson at Court Oak Allotments is the husband of B.W., the BCC Allotments Officer. We have been advised that Mr and Mrs W. share the same private email address. The Chairperson of Court Oak Road has been advised he needs a separate and confidential email for allotment business