

Boniface Allotments Association

Committee meeting

Minutes of the meeting held on 12th May 2008 at 19.30 in the Council Offices

Present: Mr Alan Bellamy (chairman), Mrs Sandra Chalton, Mrs Dee Lawrence-Szabo, Ms Anita Munson, Mr Bill Parr, Mrs Maggie Stewart, Ms Penni Tearle.

1. Apologies: Ms Anne Sweetman

2. Minutes of the meeting on 11th February 2008 were approved and signed.

3. Matters arising

- a) **Invoices (item 6):** It was reported that most of the packs containing invoices, membership cards and newsletters had been sent out, but a few which had items missing, or problems with the invoice were still outstanding. It was noted that several tenants had spoken to the committee regarding the apparent increase in the amount charged, reported as being 33%. The secretary circulated a short statement to explain this apparent increase, which was due to the need to recover a **full year** of insurance (increased by 16%) and membership to the National Association, along with rent for plots (increased by the agreed 1p per sq metre) for **6 months**. Disappointment was expressed that a note of explanation had not gone with the invoices.
- b) **Numbering of plots (item 4):** It was noted this was now complete, and generally it was felt that to have the plots numbered was helpful. A couple of reservations were discussed
 - a. *The screws holding the plastic numbers in place had started to rust*
 - b. *In a couple of places the posts needed to be re-positioned. One was causing problems with a turning space on the Barnfield site, and there were a couple of instances where re-numbering or re-location was needed.*

4. Allotment inspection report

The Chairman reported that the recent allotment inspection had gone well, and that being able to identify each allotment made the task much easier and quicker. He also noted that the general appearance of the two sites inspected (Barnfield and Exhibition Road) was much improved, with fewer allotments not being maintained. Specific points raised included:

- Concern about the gate to the Barnfield site at Cherry Gardens. It was noted this gate was very wide and heavy and had 'dropped', making it hard to use. It was suggested that it should be replaced with a pair of gates or the use of different materials explored.
- Plot 3 on Exhibition Road was to be free from September, and this offered the chance to use part of it as a 'tipping' area, ie only to reallocate part of the current plot.
- Some concern was expressed regarding the ditch on the Exhibition Road site, which needs clearing to prevent nearby plots becoming waterlogged.

5. Noticeboards

The secretary explained that after much searching, noticeboards were to be purchased from 'Village & Urban' as they were able to provide appropriate boards at the lowest price. Town Council agreed to this, endorsing the purchase of two oak noticeboards, each being able to accommodate 8 pages of A4. The order is now being processed. It was agreed that the boards would be placed centrally on each site, and that the Association would arrange for the erection of both boards themselves.

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6. Tree planting on the Barnfield site.

Sandra Chalton reported on progress regarding tree planting at the top of the Barnfield site. She read out a letter she had prepared for all allotment holders on the site, which would offer them detail of the plan, including ideas for specific trees, and invited comment and expressions of interest or concern. It was agreed it should be made clear in the letter that tenants were not going to be charged, or asked for money for this, but anyone who may want to fund or supply a tree was invited to do so. All trees would be less than 3m.

Action: To prepare the letter for distribution and deliver to all tenants on the Barnfield site. (Maggie Stewart, Sandra Chalton).

7. Other activities

It was agreed that for now the Association still had a number of tasks to focus on, and that these should be completed before embarking on other ideas.

8. Any other business

- a) **Categories for prizes in the annual competition:** It was reported that Town Council had asked the Association to consider having alternative/additional categories for the annual allotment competition. It was agreed that for this year little change should be made, but that discussion about 2009 should take place this year. It was agreed however that each site should be judged separately, that the 'best allotment' should be awarded to one person on each site and that on the two larger sites a runner-up should also be identified.

Action: to contact the Town Clerk and propose this course of action (Secretary).

- b) **Soil conditioner:** Sandra reported she had been in touch with Mid Devon regarding the possibility of having recycled soil conditioner delivered and made available to allotment holders on each site. This first enquiry had been unsuccessful, but it was agreed it was worth exploring this further.

Action: to write to Mid Devon District Council (Sandra Chalton).

- c) **Weedkiller:** Sandra expressed concern that weedkiller had been sprayed along parts of Barnfield Hill, and that this had impacted on the edge of the allotments near the main road.

- d) **Allocating new plots to new tenants:** The Committee officials all raised the question regarding the process and timing of allocation of new allotments. It was noted that it was important this was done as quickly as possible after plots were vacated, and that potential new allotment holders were 'shown round' their new plot by another allotment holder. It was felt this would enable discussion to take place about what size of plot was appropriate, what work was involved, etc as well as meeting someone who had a nearby allotment. There was unanimous agreement this process should be undertaken by the Association, but that the formal contracts would still be issued by the Town Council. It was reported that the secretary had already discussed this with Town Council and in principle this possibility was acceptable once the detail had been agreed. Discussion also took place regarding the problems of plots left vacant or untended for periods of time, and it was felt by being more involved in allocation, this would help the Association monitor untended plots more easily.

Action: to contact Town Council and agree detail of how this would work (Secretary).

- e) **Preparation for AGM:** there was discussion about possible speakers and booking a venue.

Action: to book the Boniface Centre (chairman), to contact 'Ann', a medical herbalist, to give a talk about the beneficial effects of herbs in the garden (Sandra Chalton)

9. Date of next committee meeting was set for Monday 18th August 2008.

Action: To book the Council Chambers (Secretary).

The meeting closed at 21.00