

Boniface Allotments Association

Annual General Meeting

Minutes of the meeting held on 3rd November 2008 at 19.00 at the St Boniface Centre

The evening began with the presentation of prizes for the 'Floral Crediton' competition. After this a local version of *Gardeners' Question Time* took place with a panel comprising Alan Bellamy (the Chairman of the Association), Tony Connell (judge of the Floral Crediton competition and local horticulturist) and Bert Jewell (also a horticulturist).

These minutes relate to the AGM of the Boniface Allotments Association, and not the Floral Crediton presentation when additional people were present

Present: Mr Alan Bellamy (chair) and 22 members of Boniface Allotments Association

Apologies: Mrs Dee Lawrence-Szabo, Maggie Stewart.

Others attending: Tony Connell

1. **Apologies** were received from 2 members of the Association as noted above

2. **Chairman's report**

- a) **Discount scheme for garden products.** It was reported this is in place and available in Mole Avon and Tucker's on some purchases of seeds, plants and garden related items.
- b) **Allotment inspections.** It was explained that these now take place throughout the year, and are undertaken by a Council member together with one of the committee members of the Association.
- c) **Post numbering.** This was found to have been particularly helpful for the judging and also for inspections and reallocation of vacant allotments; making errors less likely. There was still some difficulty in being sure which sheds were associated with which allotment holders, and people were reminded that if they were willing to label their sheds with their allotment number, this would be very helpful.
- d) **Waiting list.** This is still long, but it is not clear exactly how long as some people on the list may no longer want an allotment. The committee are looking into this to make a more accurate and current list. It was however still clear that there were many more people wanting allotments than were available, and it was not anticipated this situation would change. The Chairman suggested some action may be needed and raised the question as to whether it was time to consider whether more land might be available?
- e) **Average size of plots.** It was noted that the average size of plots in Crediton is lower than the National average. This may be partly due to the fact that people are being invited to hold smaller plots if they are finding it challenging to maintain a whole one. This strategy is proving positive in that it seems to be helping keep plots maintained as well as addressing the waiting list problem.
- f) **Exhibition Road site.** The allotments at Exhibition Road were noted as being part of a much larger 'leisure area' within the town, comprising the allotment site and also many sporting facilities.
- g) **Finances.** These are still limited, and people were invited to offer ideas for fund raising activities.
- h) **Local links.** It was reported that links have been made with Haywards School, and that the Chairman, the Mayor and the Mayoress of Crediton have all been involved in working with the school. Other committee members have also offered to help out. The Association has been approached by people from Morchard Bishop who are setting up their own allotment group, and the Chairman has been in contact with them and given some advice.
- i) **Registration of the allotments.** This matter has been questioned in the past. Assurance is given that the allotments are indeed fully registered with the appropriate National body, and this offers some protection should there ever be questions about change of use for the sites.

3. **Treasurer's report**

The meeting was given an outline of the finances from the year ending 1st October 2008. Copies of the report were made available for anyone interested. It was reported that £450 had been transferred from the Council for the year, and the main costs set against this were for the NSALG annual membership and insurance.

Some costs, such as grass cutting are made directly by the Town Council. The costs associated with plot numbering and also noticeboards also came directly from the Council.

It was reported that £500 had been requested for the coming year and this money has now been transferred into the Association account.

4. Committee membership: election of new members

The chairman explained that the committee now had a membership of 9 and more members would be welcome. Volunteers were asked for, but none were forthcoming. People were invited to let one of the officers know if they would like to join the committee.

5. Noticeboards

Alan Stewart explained that the noticeboards had arrived. He added that they are very heavy, and help was asked for to move and install them. One person from each site offered to help. It was hoped that once the boards were in place they could be used for people to share ideas, swap or offer plants, cuttings etc. and generally help with communication.

6. Tree planting at the top of the Barnfield site

Sandra Chalton provided some details of the tree planting to take place at the top of the Barnfield allotments. This was primarily as a landscaping activity. The Association had been told that the area was not suitable to be used as an allotment, although one Association member expressed surprise about this assumption. Concern was also raised about the possibility that the trees might shadow other allotments, in particular the one closest to the proposed site. Concern was also expressed about young people living nearby climbing into the allotment area in order to get fruit from the trees. This potential problem was recognised, but it was also noted that the planned trees would not produce fruit likely to be popular for eating; something which had been done specifically to avoid this problem. Concern was then also expressed about the fence/hedge currently in place on that part of the Barnfield boundary. It was suggested that perhaps a fence could be put up alongside the hedge while it was growing to its full size. The pruning of the hedge was also raised though it was reported that this would be done at an appropriate time by the Council, and currently the hedge was not in need of pruning.

7. Addressing the problem of uncultivated sites

Uncultivated sites were noted as an ongoing issue which has an impact on other allotment holders in the vicinity. Two letters were circulated for people to comment on. It was proposed these would be sent at one month intervals to anyone whose plot was left uncultivated for a period of time. One amendment was suggested, and those present were generally supportive of this way of tackling the problem. It was explained that if the two letters did not have a satisfactory outcome, the matter would be referred to the Town Council who would take appropriate action. The meeting felt it very important that this whole process 'had teeth' and if a plot was not properly cultivated action was taken. Concern was expressed this had not happened in the past. *(Action: Letters to be used as required, and discussions to take place with the Town Council about follow up action (secretary))*

8. Any other business.

- a. Alan Stewart noted that chickens had been referenced by Tony Connell as a good way to keep down the slug population. He asked whether the ruling that chickens were not allowed could be challenged. One member noted that a previous instance of chickens many years ago had caused a problem when the chickens 'escaped'. The question about having bees on the site was also raised.
- b. Tractor access on the Barnfield site was raised. It was suggested that boundaries of some allotments were creeping down, and concern was expressed about one allotment in particular where a shed had been erected in what was believed to be a dedicated turning circle. It was noted that a new 'tipping' space had been made available on the Exhibition Road site.
- c. One member asked about the use of King's Seeds, as he felt the seeds were of high quality. Another member felt that the matter had been well investigated and the outcome was that this was not a practical route.
- d. The idea of Allotment Association representation at the flower festival was raised. It was agreed that Association members who attended the Parish Church could be invited to address this.

The meeting closed at 21.20