Byng Road Allotments A.G.M. 19 Sept ’21

1. Apologies for absence – Winnie Mbiyu, Margaret Apicella, Janette Gibson, Sylvia Ong-Morti, Jenny Eaton
2. Approval of minutes for A.G.M. in 2020 – Approved
3. To receive the Annual Report 2020/21 – yes
4. To receive the Annual Accounts 2020/21 – Nick Mackley gave a summary saying all due rents have been received. Hosepipe use is at 42%. The net income was £581 with spends just over £3000 which included £900 for the tree surgeon, deliveries of compost and provision of a portaloo. The insurance premium went up a bit. Our funds in the bank stand at about £18,500.
5. To appoint an independent examiner of accounts – Derek will continue to do this.
6. To accept the retirement of committee members – yes. Gareth Johns is resigning because he has moved away. He was thanked for his very good contribution.
7. To elect committee members for 2021/22 – all re-elected. Two new people – Patricia Yorke ? Anna Robins and Sarah Emsden-Bonfanti have shown an interest and can be given an introduction to the working of the committee. Some committee members will be obliged to stand down next year due to the limit of service rule.
8. To vote on a change in the wording in the handbook concerning plot inspections. -Notice of the new wording that sets out guidelines for action by the committee and those with problem plots was circulated to plot holders beforehand, and the chairperson gave an explanation on the day. After a discussion amongst those present that brought up questions and answers there was a show of hands. The result didn’t show a clear decision. Then a second no vote was held for people who positively were in opposition with the result of 1 against. As some reluctance to accept the new wording was shown it was decided to include the new rule wording but only for the present and have a review of it at next year’s A.G.M.
9. Any other issues which members wish to discuss – provision of a portaloo for next year and for how long was discussed. About half those present (on a show of hands) didn’t use it. A majority agreed to have it for 6 months during the summer at a cost (this year) of £540. Other topics raised were if grassy areas on plots can be made, up keep of overgrown grass paths, and compost availability. Plots should be mainly cultivated. Some paths cannot take a mower. Compost is not provided by Barnet Council; a trailer is necessary to collect from where available e.g. Galley Lane.

Thanks to all members (a fair attendance) who made the effort to turn up on a dull rainy afternoon.

David Wilson

25 Sept. ‘21

**Annual Report 2021/22**

Our allotment group has enjoyed:

* Use of a serviced ‘portaloo’ from April to Septembers
* Free **wood chipping** deliveries and delivery of compost paid for through your allotment fees
* Planting of blackberry bushes around the perimeter as a deterrent to trespassers
* Regular **plot inspections** undertaken by committee members to identify any areas of concern and encourage a higher standard of cultivation
* Fully let with a long waiting list

None of this would have been possible without a team of dedicated committee members together with helpful tenants happy to be involved as needed. I thank them all for their contributions.

Sophie Esplin-Jones

Chair

**Candidates for the Committee 2022/23**

**Tom Koszel (Plot 40B)**

I took on a plot this summer and would like to be involved in committee work

**Debbie Millar (Plot 53B)**

Our family have enjoyed being part of BRAG and I would like to join the committee

**Tony Rowan-Wicks (Plot 5,6, 29, 42)**

I wish to serve on the Committee again - to represent all members of BRAG, long-standing to new. My interests could be used to reflect on the changing weather, local environment and 'nature' we all experience on our gardens. We are having to change how we garden, in good ways and using the information from everyone about successes and failures. We are all available to help new members - getting to know what these plots can provide for individuals and families. Happy gardening.

**Anna Robins (Plot 10)**

I want to continue to be a part of the allotment community so am volunteering my services on the committee once again.

**Patricia Yorke (Plot 24B, 24AT, 25B)**

With my husband , Michael, I’ve been an allotment holder for over 20 years and last year I decided it was time that I made a contribution to the management rather than just leaving others have to shoulder the responsibilities. So, for a year I’ve shadowed Ingrid Nix as Lettings Officer and the two of us ran an Apple Pruning Workshop for members in the Spring. Over the years I’ve been learning a great deal about the cultivation of fruit and vegetables, from all sorts of sources, and I love the fact that BRAG is a community where we share good practice and discoveries together.

**Nick Mackley (Plot 34AT)**

I have been a plot holder for 14 years and on the Committee for the last 9 years. I enjoy being part of the allotment community and I am happy to continue to serve on the Committee.

**David Eaton (Plot 38A)**

I am currently on the Committee as Technical Manager duties including:-

processing applications to erect sheds and polytunnels; monitor and eradicate knotweed; monitor asbestos as required by survey report; turn water supply off to avoid frost damage; assist arranging working parties. I would like to continue and also assist in generally improving the overall standard of the allotments.

**David Wilson (Plot 37A)**

I have been a member of BRAG for over ten years and on the committee for the past seven years. I would like to continue on the committee to help BRAG manage and improve the allotment gardens. Continuing with the role of representative to and reporter for the Barnet Allotment Federation meetings and events will serve BRAG’s interests by maintaining a presence and enable contact with other.

**Review of the change to the handbook wording**

A change to the Handbook was voted in at the AGM in 2021. Since there was no clear consensus it was agreed to include the new wording and then review it at the 2022 AGM. We are therefore asking for a new vote as to whether to keep the following wording in our Handbook:

Below is an extract from our current Member’s Handbook. The full handbook can be found on our website:

https://byngroadallotments.wixsite.com/byngroadallotments/copy-of-events

We proposed some additional wording around management of a plot when the tenant is unable to look after it. The wording is in bold red below.

Cultivation

Our lease defines an ‘allotment garden’ as ‘wholly or mainly cultivated by the occupier for the production of vegetables or fruit crops for consumption by himself/herself and his/her family’ .

This does not mean that part of the plot cannot be used for the growing of flowers or as a leisure area, so long as the growing of fruit and vegetables is the main purpose. What is quite clear, however, is that the plot may not being used to store rubbish or materials unrelated to the cultivation of the plot, or have large grassy areas.

It also means that you (and a joint tenant if there is one) are expected to undertake the majority of the work, but family and friends may assist you. In addition, from time to time, if you are not well enough to manage the plot, friends or other plot holders may temporarily look after it. What, however, is unacceptable is for the plot to be mainly cultivated by someone other than yourself. If you are found to be sub-letting your plot in this way, your tenancy will be terminated.

If you anticipate an extended period of absence from your plot, for example due to ill health or self isolation, it is up to you, the tenant to either find a ‘helper’ and liaise directly with them regarding managing the plot or notify the committee that you are not able to find a 'helper' in which case the committee may approach and enlist a willing 'helper' from the tenant waiting list. The responsibility of maintaining a cultivated plot remains with the tenant and if the plot does not meet the required standards it will be re-let according to our policies. Whether the tenant has found a ‘helper’ or has notified the committee that they need the committee to find them a ‘helper’, the committee will review the situation every 12 months. In the event that the tenant is still unable to look after their plot after a 12 month period any ‘helper’ will not be able to take on the tenancy. Should the plot need to be re-let it will be offered to the next person on the waiting list.

**Increases to rent**

Having surveyed our nearest allotments BRAG still has one of the lowest rent rates per pole. We are expecting to need to cover some large bills in the short to medium term (i.e. resurfacing the tarmac roads, changing the locks and any work needed on the water pipes and butts). The rent for 2023-2024 will increase by 5% in order to shore up our reserves and in light of the changing inflation rate. This is for information only as the allotment rules allow increases of 5% or RPI without a vote. We have not increased the rent for many years.

To date, those over the age of 65 are entitled to pay a reduced rent. We would like to gather views on whether to continue this practice and/or whether to offer this reduced rental to those on low income. We propose sending out an electronic survey to gather anonymous views on this.

**Portaloo fees**

We have rented a serviced portaloo for the past two years from May to September. This is costing around £750 per annum. We would like to consider reducing the expense by having it serviced every two weeks instead of weekly. Again, we propose sending out an electronic survey to gather anonymous views on this.