



BLAA NEWSLETTER November 2008

AGM LOOKS AT NEW IDEAS AND INITIATIVES

Our first AGM was held on Thursday 9th October, and was very well attended, particularly as the date clashed with the AGM of the Chalfont St Giles Gardens Society. We will have to ensure that doesn't happen again.

The Chairman's report began with a summary of the work of the committee in the previous year, but after confirming that BLAA had been fully established and the Agreement to manage the allotments site on behalf of the Parish Council had been completed, the theme of the meeting switched to current initiatives and ideas for the future.

Before the Agreement was signed the Parish Council agreed, at the request of our committee, to arrange for a contractor to undertake work on clearing debris from the site. This work, as well as repair work including the fitting of two new gates to the entrances to the site, has been completed. In addition water taps and pipes will be replaced, repaired and moved where appropriate.

As from next April rents received from tenants will be payable to BLAA which will be responsible for controlling and managing the allotments site as agents for the Parish Council. This will include ensuring that anything carried out on allotment plots, such as the erection of sheds, is done in accordance with the terms of the tenancy agreements as well as letting out new plots, payment of water charges and general repairs to the site. The Parish Council will remain responsible for fencing and other boundary features, the car parks and mowing the field at the 'White Hart' end of the site.

It is intended to enforce the requirement in the tenancy agreement for allotments to be adequately maintained more rigorously in the future. This is felt to be in the interests of all allotment holders because it becomes much more difficult to keep your own plot weed free if the neighbouring plot is overgrown. For the same reason, and also to reduce the costs of maintaining the site, we are looking for initiatives to encourage applications from new tenants for vacant plots.

One of our allotment holders, Nigel Pendall, has set up a website for BLAA, which can be accessed at backlaneallotmentsassociation.org.uk or by inserting *back lane allotments* in google. We hope to establish links with other websites as a means of attracting potential

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new tenants. We will also intend to try to update the website fairly regularly with news and items of interest to members of BLAA.

The existing committee intended that BLAA join The National Society of Allotment and Leisure Gardeners. This would give our members access to additional help and advice, provide a useful web link and perhaps attract some new tenants. The cost would be about £5 to each member of BLAA and it was proposed that this should be added to the rental cost next April.

Suggestions from the floor for publicising the availability of allotments on the site included advertising in the village newsletter and also the booklet produced by the residents association. Approaching the local schools was considered another possibility.

Some potential new tenants might be deterred from taking on an allotment by the initial work to clear the plot, and Tony Farrow may be prepared to use his own equipment to assist, although he would expect to be paid for his time. These would be private arrangements between Tony and the individual concerned and would not involve BLAA.

Turning to financial matters the accounts for the year were presented by Julie Hallam. As the Parish Council had been responsible for the collection of rents and maintaining the site the only income to BLAA has come from the Village Show. We received a donation of £300 from the proceeds of the 2007 Village Show, and the committee organised a stall in the show this year which, despite unfavourable weather, managed to raise approximately £60 of which £30 was donated back in support of the show. The main expenditure had been for the hire of the hall for the AGM and a balance of £304.57 remains. Next year BLAA will receive the rental income (approx £1500) and be responsible for the costs of maintaining the site. The main expenditure is for the water supply which is metered. Water costs therefore vary but in a dry summer can be in the region of £800.

Ideas from the floor for initiatives to be considered by the committee included improving access to plots (particularly where paths next to untended plots had become overgrown), a scheme to offer seeds at less than normal market prices and fitting locks on the entrance gates to provide greater security for the site. The question of security had previously been considered by the committee with the suggestion that special locks be purchased so that keys could only be obtained through the manufacturer. The cost of the locks and chains would be about £200 and each tenant would be asked to purchase his own key for about £10 (this key could be sold back to BLAA or a new tenant if the individual gave up their allotment). This proposal received the support of about 70% of the members present, although it was recognised that the gate at the 'White Hart' entrance might have to be moved to prevent causing congestion in Back Lane when tenants were trying to enter the site.

The new committee elected for 2008/9 was as follows :

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Tracey Allen (Chairman)

Tim Baldwin (Tenancy Records)

Gillian Bickford (Information Publicity)

Bob Burton (Secretary)

Julie Hallam (New Tenancies)

Tony Hubbard (Site Maintenance)

Andrew Ilsley (Treasurer)

Nigel Pendall (Website)

Anne Snow (Information Publicity)

If any member wishes to contact the committee with suggestions or queries an approach can be made via the website at backlaneallotmentsassociation.org.uk