

ESSEX BEEKEEPERS' ASSOCIATION - ROMFORD DIVISION

Minutes of Meeting held on Tuesday 22nd November 2022, 7.30 pm

Via Zoom

Present: Pat Allen (PA), Dawn Doyland (DD), Rob Hyde (RH), Angela Mander (AM), Rose McCarthy (RMcC), Norman McDonald (NMcD), Jim McNeill (JMcN), Liz McNeill (LMcN), Filippo Negri (FN), Lorna Pattle (LP), Sue Richardson (SR), Terry Watson (TW), John Whittard (JW), Paul Wiltshire (PW).

1. **Apologies for Absence:** none.
2. **Minutes of previous meeting 27.9.22:** Minutes agreed and to be signed.
3. **Matters arising from the minutes not otherwise on the agenda:**

Facebook Page: SR has chatted with Padraig on the phone. He explained that 8 years ago at a committee meeting there was a discussion about the lack of online contact for members and he offered to set up the FaceBook page as a forum for members, which was agreed. SR was not aware of this. Committee could not recall this, but it must be in the minutes somewhere. SR shared the FB page via the zoom meeting and showed the "about section", which has been recently updated by Padraig after the committee's earlier concern about the page. It states "This page is for Romford members, and anyone who wishes to join the Romford Division". There are currently 79 members of the FB page, including a few of our members. The rest are not divisional members. It clearly states where to go to join Romford Division and gives a link to our website. There are not that many posts. The site is monitored closely by Padraig who has the ability to remove people or refuse their joining. Having looked at the page, it was agreed that the site was OK and would be checked by those of us who are members of the division.

4. **Correspondence not otherwise on agenda:**

SR has received the annual request from Havering Council rates department to confirm we are still a charity and confirming what we use Havering Apiary for, so that we can still be given 80% charity reduction on rates bill. Form has been emailed back.

An updated Safeguarding document has been received from BBKA: PW pointed out that the EBKA have their own document, so which one are we meant to use? JMcN to ask at next CEC meeting. Will not need to use safeguarding till next beginners course/ taster session.

PW has received an email from Sharon Leeson, Upminster, whose father was a member of our division, saying that her father has passed away and they have found 2 boxes of honey jars. She has kindly offered them to us and PW has accepted and will collect them; we can use them for the teaching apiary. PW will ask her father's name so we can trace him on the membership records and put a piece in the newsletter.

Hall Hire St Michael's Church: there was no electricity in the hall for the November meeting, and the meeting had to be held in the church. SR contacted the new church hall administrator to give our contact details in case of further issues and then DD received an email from Adobea Obeng, asking when we last paid our hall hire. Over the last couple of years SR has contacted the previous lady without much luck, we have not received any recent invoices. We need to check the accounts to see when we last paid for hall hire, and what dates we used the hall from 2020 onwards. RMcC did not receive previous accounts from BM. RMcC, DD and SR to investigate and reply. **Action RMcC, DD, SR.**

5. **Regular Reports**

5.1 Trustee/DVM: AGM 11th March 2023, at New Hall School, Chelmsford. Wally Shaw will be speaking on the role of swarm control in beekeeping, he is an experienced bee inspector and beekeeper. Ted Hooper Lecture to be confirmed.

The Essex Beekeeper was meant to be distributed by Mailchimp, but nothing has been received yet. PA explained that the magazine had carried paid adverts for several months, but no invoices had been sent out so no income had been received from the ads.

EBKA has run at a deficit this year – large outgoings were a large donation to Bees Abroad, running the Ted Hooper Lecture and the annual conference. The annual conference was not well attended – this may partly

have been because it was held on Remembrance Sunday. It was also felt by the committee that the venue was not good being quite far from a lot of divisions, and it was cold despite promises of heating being on this time. Although 75 places available this is not a large number for an annual conference, only 50 tickets were sold, and less actually attended; it was felt that it should be in a better venue. Venue is planned to be in Shenfield next year so it is hoped this will be better and more accessible.

BBKA may try to put up membership prices for 2024 – CEC/EBKA do not want to put theirs up and are suggesting to keep their subs the same. This will result in divisions getting less per member, if divisions wish to keep their subs the same for members. Membership fees to be discussed at CEC meeting. We should also discuss this at our AGM. Richard Ridler has not yet received any written confirmation of proposed subs increase. If there is to be an increase, it would apply from October 2023 and EBKA would pay from January 2024. There is no scope for reducing EBKA subs, so the only way is for divisions to reduce their part of the subs, possibly down to £10 from £11.50? This would result in BBKA subs going up, EBKA staying the same and divisions receiving less.

5.2 Chairman: PW has contacted South Weald to ask about an apiary site there, but he has not yet received a reply. PW was disappointed about the conference, see comments point 5.1. Not many of our younger members attend these events, need encouraging to attend. PW will be standing down as Chairman at the AGM and we need to find a suitable candidate. It would be a good idea to speak to suitable members before the AGM.

5.3 Secretary: Officers reports need to be submitted for AGM Thursday 5th January.

Havering Apiary Rates Appeal: A year after we submitted a second challenge to the valuation office, and a year and a half since our first challenge, we have been granted a further reduction in the rateable value for the container. SR and PW submitted a second challenge last November with further documents, and SR has just received an email asking for us to withdraw the “description challenge” as the officer could not alter the value per m2 under this challenge. SR and PW had only been able to submit a challenge under either description or incorrect value per m2, not both; both were wrong on the valuation website. We felt that as the description was wrong, if corrected, that the reduction in value per m2 would surely follow. After a long chat with the officer, he confirmed that if the challenge was withdrawn he would continue with the challenge under his own powers. He asked for a copy of the licence showing our rent, which was sent, but it was made clear that we had not paid any rent to Havering since 2016. The valuation office has now agreed to reduce the charge per m2 from £97.50 to £32.50 m2, sadly not the £20.00 asked for, but much better than the original figure. Once the rates multipliers and charity relief is applied, the rates due for 2022-23 should now be approximately £43.00, instead of £130.00; a reduction of approximately £87.00. This revaluation will be backdated to 2018, so there will be similar refunds for the previous 4 years. The valuation office will send notification to Havering, who then send out an amended bill, then we have to “claim” the refund back as before. **Action SR.**

5.4 Treasurer: Current accounts were emailed out to committee prior to meeting. Bank balance is healthy. Note that all the income from apiary rental is currently listed under Brentwood BT as it is not possible to tie up which apiary members are paying rent for which apiary from the eR2 system. The rents need to be allocated to the correct apiaries. Could the wardens please give RMCC a list of who has hives and the number per beekeeper when subs were paid in January. Going forward this will need to be done each year. Honey Show Supper –RMCC needs a breakdown of the income/cost of raffle. **Action Wardens, RMCC, JMcN.**

5.5 Show Secretary: The cups are at the engravers and will be given out at the December meeting.

5.6 Apiary Wardens

5.6.1 BT London Road: JW visited today, 22.11, and has treated his hives with oxalic acid, vaporization method. The bees were flying, and the grass has stopped growing. There were lots of moving boxes in the BT building, but no update on any moving date.

5.6.2 Havering: The water butt was leaning over, so has been emptied out and TW has removed the down pipe. A paving stone needs to be put down with sharp sand underneath. TW will do this in the New Year. Everything else is OK.

5.6.3 Hornchurch: All is secure and OK.

5.6.4 The Chase and Bee Garden: All is OK.

5.6.5 Teaching Apiary: The winter insulation needs to be put onto the hives. Equipment needs a clean up, and combs need to be sorted and old ones thrown away. It is too much work to clean the old ones, if anyone else wants to clean them up they are welcome to do so. There are 5 colonies, they have not been checked for a little while. PA has spoken to Mary Wright at Thames Chase and they are not against us having some storage in the apiary. PA will chat further with them. Storage would be good as the storage area under the trees is a bit damp.

6. Programme 2023:

December – Christmas Social evening. January – AGM. February – Ian Nichols Bee Diseases. March – artificial swarms. April - What I have in my toolbox? May – possibly a talk on plants for pollinators. June and July – summer apiary meetings.

7. Courses 2023:

PA will be standing down as Education officer so we will need a volunteer; PA is happy to help with courses. We will need to think about some candidates.

Beginners' Course: Beginners' course to follow the same format as usual. Regarding extraction being covered in the course, it was felt that this was not appropriate as most beginners are unlikely to get honey in the first year. NMCD said that he does give a chat to those borrowing the extractor that he holds. We could do a demonstration at Thames Chase in the summer with empty frames next year. PA has not had an invoice from Thames Chase for the beginners' course or the taster course, PA to enquire. **Action PA.**

8. Bulk Buys 2022/23: 4 boxes of fondant were bought by JMcN at the National Honey Show and these are all accounted for but not all collected. Fondant has been given out by PA and cash on collection. Any uncollected packs will be offered out and the cash to be given in to the division once all sold. **Action PA.**

9. AOB:

New Hive Sites: NMCD has spoken to Mr Barry Stone, father, and Ms Driscoll, daughter, about the site offered to us which is off Bramble Lane, there are lots of fields along there that belong to different people. NMCD and FN have visited the site. The site offered is next to a lake and faces north, and is shaded by trees. The other side of the lake might be more suitable as it faces south and is not so shaded by trees. It may be possible once we are set up there to move the hives to the other side of the lake. FN has taken a hive over there, and covered it as green woodpecker was seen over there.

Other Sites: it was also discussed whether it might be possible to have hives on Bob Manning's old site. PA said that she had already mentioned this to Debbie Emery, who needed to move her hives on the allotment, due to complaints. PA had passed on contact details but had not heard back from Debbie Emery.

Date of Next Meeting: Tuesday 17th January 2023 via **Zoom**.

Meeting finished at 9.50 pm.

Paul Wiltshire

Chairman