

Rotherham Allotments Alliance

Board Meeting No.16

Meeting Date: Monday 18th November 2019 at 2.00pm

Meeting Location: Garden House, Clifton Park, Rotherham.

Meeting Called By: Councillor Brian Steele

Chair: Councillor Brian Steele

Secretary: Jack Taylor (Minutes John Palmer)

Present: Directors: - Al Dean, Councillor Emma Hoddinott, John Palmer, Councillor Brian Steele, Jack Taylor.
RMBC Officer– Andy Lee.

Apologies: Mike Farrell, (Tim Archer – RMBC)

1. Declaration of interests by any board member.

There were no declarations of interest.

2. Minutes of Board Meeting No 15 held on Monday 11th November 2019.

The minutes were agreed a true record and duly signed by the Chairman.

3. Matters arising

- Chair reported that to date six applications has been received for the post of ‘Allotments Support Officer’, a number also having informal discussions with the Chairman. Closing date for applications being the 24th November. If possible the interviews would take place on the 29th November with the successful applicant commencing duties as soon as practical. (Hopefully attending the Board meeting scheduled to be held on the 16th December).
- Chair also advised he had now received email contact details for all Societies and would draft letter for circulation to societies along with copy of meeting notes of meeting on the 17th September 2019.
- Position on the establishment of the web-site and related email addresses for RAA Officers (i.e. chairman@, secretary@, treasurer@) was still unclear. Linking into Colony was an option still to be pursued. AL and MF to follow up.

4. Allotment Rentals for 2021

In view of the requirement to give 12 months’ notice of pending rental increases Directors considered rental charges effective from January 2021. Not yet being fully aware of the financial commitment for that period at this moment in time it was agreed to advise all tenants that an increase of 2% would be implemented on all allotment rental charges from the 1st January 2021. However, the Board agreed that the increase would not be implemented unless absolutely necessary. AL agreed to send the letter on behalf of the RAA – RMBC still holding the tenant detail at this time. The content of the letter would be agreed with the Chairman and sent on RAA headed paper including full contact details of RAA. **File ref 16/85**

5. Assistant Treasurer

It was agreed that the position of Assistant Treasurer would be created. MF had advised on his willingness to complete these duties. This was agreed. **File Ref 16/86**

6. Treasurer’s Report

- 1. VAT and HMRC Registration** – AD advised he has sought details from HMRC. The threshold for VAT registration being compulsory if turnover greater than £85000, below this registration was

voluntary. The question of charitable status and possible benefits concerning VAT payments were discussed and it was agreed that JT would contact 'Cooperative UK' to clarify the position with regard to RAA status as a Community Benefit Society.

2. **Timescale for yearend accounts audit submission** –AD advised that accounts should be submitted as soon as practical following end of year and August at the latest.
3. **Budget cash flow projections for 2020 and 2021** – Due to lack of information AD had been unable to complete. Directors considered the projected cash flow example for 2020 discussed in May (prepared by AD/RS/JP). This was refined by Directors to take account of changes made since then and projected costs:- Allotment Support Officer; Colony and training; expected means of fulfilling site maintenance. (AL prepared a spreadsheet based on these discussions for circulation.)
4. During above discussions Laptop provision was discussed. Those provided by RMBC were loaded with a version of windows thought to be obsolete and not able to be updated. It was agreed that JT would investigate possibility of update and cost and also seek costs for purchase of three new laptops with current version of windows and for comparison.
5. **Insurance Costs** – Consideration was given to the NAS membership issue (£3 per plot holder/member) in that this automatically gave public liability cover. It was agreed that MF should discuss this matter with NAS – seeking details of the cover which would be offered to RAA if it enrolled approximately 1000 plot holders on 26 allotment sites 13 current Society sites and 13 current directly managed sites (3 of these sites becoming Society sites in January 2020). Could Building cover (fire only) be added? NAS may have to consult with their underwriter to arrive at a suitable arrangement to meet RAA needs.
Employee liability cover may not be required at this stage RAA not proposing to employ any staff directly during the first year of trading 2020.
6. **Charitable Status** – (See above JT seeking more information).
7. **Financial Regulations** – JP to look at editing a version from download provided by AL.
8. **Software to be used for accounting purposes** – 'Quick-book' was preferred option of Brearley and Co. This programme allowed on-line submission to HMRC.
9. **Obtaining Accounting Services** – AD to seek quotations from at least three accounting services.
10. **Procurement Process** – this to be included in Financial Regulations. Suggested spending limits without prior Board approval to cover emergency works be delegated as follows: - £100 maximum Chairman/Treasurer to approve - £500 max Chairman/Treasurer/Secretary to approve – above £500 all Board members to be advised a minimum of 50% to approve. All emergency work expenditure to be reported formally to Board as soon as practical.
11. **Bank Mandate – Cheque signatories** - AD reported on the Banks advise concerning mandate for cheque signatories in that they advised 4 directors be named for security reasons, these being Chair/Sec/Treas/Assis Treas.
12. **PO Box Number** – AD advised that application had been made. It was agreed that as soon PO Box was activated arrangements should be made for Chair/Sec/Treasurer to be 'authorized' for collection and distribution of the mail. (Treasurer to provide PO Box number to Secretary ASAP to allow application to 'Information Commissioner' to be completed. Also to Chair to allow addition to letter head etc.).

File Ref 16/87

7. Agenda items for the next meetings.

4th December (Note change of date/time now 10.00am)

- Financial Matters
 - Insurance costs – public liability/employee liability/building (fire only). (Treasurer – Assistant Treasurer to report).
 - Charitable status. (Secretary to report)
 - Financial regulations. (JP to report)
 - Laptop Provision (Secretary to report)
 - Software to be used for accounting purposes and accounting service. (Treasurer to report).
- RAA Policies. (JP)

- Status report on RMBC lease with RAA.
- Status report on Administrator post.
- Secretary to report on 'Handyman' position.
- Status report on web-site establishment, Colony links and email addresses.
- Update on new society formation or active contacts willing to assist RAA (MF).
- Publicity

16th December

- Consider 100K grant available from RMBC 2020/21.
- Financial Regulations.
- Sandymount Road Allotment Wath – Fitzwilliam Estates site – status report.
- Agree dates and times (and venue?) for 2020 meetings

8. Date and Time of Next Meetings.

16th December 2019 at 2.00pm



Signed (Chair)