

## Rotherham Allotments Alliance

# Board Meeting No.20

**Meeting Date:** Monday 20<sup>th</sup> January 2020

**Meeting Location:** Garden House, Clifton Park, Rotherham.

**Meeting Called By:** Councillor Brian Steele

**Chair:** Councillor Brian Steele

**Secretary:** Jack Taylor (Minutes Donna Bushby)

**Present:** Directors: - Al Dean, Mike Farrell, John Palmer, Councillor Brian Steele, Mohammed Suleman, Jack Taylor. Allotment Support Administrator – Donna Bushby  
(RMBC Officers – Tim Archer for items relating to Transfer and Transitional issues).

**Apologies:** There were no apologies tendered.

### **013/01/20 Introduction new Admin Officer**

Cllr Steele introduced DB to everyone present. DB gave a short description of her employment background.

### **014/01/20 Declaration of interests by any board member.**

There were no declarations of interest.

### **015/01/20 Minutes of Board Meeting No 19 held on Monday 6<sup>th</sup> January 2020**

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

### **016/01/20 Matters arising**

016.1/01/20 - BS - Mobile phone set up – DB advised of requirements to set up a contract in the business name. To Liaise with AD to get set up.

016.2/01/20 - BS – Cloud facility is to be set up so that all RAA directors have access to documents – covered by data protection. DB to supply details. Questioned if it would work with Apple – said yes.

016.3/01/20 - TA – communication between RMBC and RAA – need contact details – DB to send email details for distribution to RMBC staff if any enquiries come in

016.4/01/20 - BS – email addresses – need to pay if using more than 1 - decided that we should have 4/5 email addresses set up – DB to advise cost / set up

4.1 BS – website – difficulties getting access to domain. Cllr Hoddinott has sent DB details to get that sorted – needs to be live as soon as possible so people can see contact details/policies etc.

4.2 BS – need to look at policies again to ensure they are correct and no information missing and also cover legislation. TA brought out some books that contained statutory information relating to Allotments and has used these for guidance/definitions for many years. ISBN numbers of the books obtained to see if copies can be acquired

4.3 TA - Transfer and Transitional issues – RMBC to RAA – *(to be added as an agenda item for future Meetings)*.

4.71 RMBC reports occupancy on a quarterly basis – Q1 / Q2 / Q3 / Q4 then produces a mean figure, so means figures as follows: 16/17 – 76%, 17/18 – 71%, 18/19 – 76%. Figures show that occupancy is currently better than last year. Quarterly figures follow peaks and troughs naturally depending on plot lets and managing the waitlists.

4.72 BS asked if everyone pays full rent at once. TA advised that some tenants do pay in instalments depending on their socio-economic position. RMBC will be responsible for collecting any arrears up until 31.03.2020, after which RAA will be responsible. Payment methods also discussed.

4.73 The lease agreements are on track to change at the end of March

4.74 The SLA has been completed but has been sent to various people for comment. The final version needs a discussion between Andy and RAA.

- 4.75 Working on sites that have current issues regarding boundaries/residents etc.
- Moor Road – boundary issue – requested copy of deed to establish liability of damage caused to a boundary wall. In a split-level boundary, the land that is higher is usually the owner which in this case is the resident. The damage has been caused by a tree. Need to identify who’s wall / tree and the cost for the authority to remedy. Will inform findings.
  - Avenue Road – site survey – boundaries need to be defined as the boundary between a property and land has been removed – surveyor to mark the boundary line back in.
  - Clifton – resident reported that their cellar is being flooded with water – don’t know where it is coming from. Needs investigating / resolving.
  - Broom Valley Old – asbestos on site. MF had a conversation with a tenant regarding who is going to remove it – advised RMBC. If RAA is responsible – who would be used? In-house or private contractor? Identified that a meeting is required between JT / BS / DB to go over contacts for work that needs completing. TA went onto say that RMBC have a waste transfer license to remove rubbish from sites but would RAA use a private contractor if cheaper?
- 4.76 Cllr Allen from Avenue Road reported concerns from tenants about needing new locks – wanted a re-lock. Tenants agreed they would fund. Locks and keys have been ordered – waiting to be collected. Chains would need welding on – perfect opportunity for RAA to be introduced to tenants.
- 4.77 MF asked about Hartley Lane and the commercial grazing – has sufficient time been given to be able to remove any property?
- 4.78 Water rental transfer – nothing has been done about this yet. Water not been turned off due to weather. Billing arrangement needs to change. AD advised that Yorkshire Water is now managed by Business Stream.
- 4.79 JT asked about the lists of keys – DB advised that she has a copy sent from RMBC. TA advised regarding key management, use a number of brands. Ensure that keys with numbers are never sent out so that people cannot work out what the keys are for – keys must be copied without the numbers.
- 4.80 JT asked about grazing sites – do we have a list of people / charges? Need to clarify who is responsible for these. Currently not listed on Colony. TA advised RMBC to continue to manage? but RAA to get the income. Need to look at license for Hartley Lane / White Lea Road / Wood Side – all classed as surplus. Legal costs for new tenants – RMBC pay half / tenants pay half. Classed as statutory land so can’t sell. Can use as a capacity buffer in case more allotment plots are needed. Not had to touch the sites recently. Needs clarifying who is going to look after them.
- 4.81 MF asked about newly formed societies – want to know which plots they can let. Discussion between attendees regarding as they have not yet signed legal agreements, this information cannot be passed on for data protection etc. They need to have signed an agreement to say they are a society. This will be the RAA’s responsibility then the societies can have all the information. TA advised Vicarage Fields wanted tenant information – advised that they can’t be given public information to do a plot let. It would have to go through the RAA / Colony.
- 4.82 JP asked if new societies can be formed before the leases are transferred over. It was discussed and agreed that they can. It is of RAA benefit to form as many societies as possible.

## 5. - Financial Matters

**5.1 Financial Statement** – no change since last meeting. DB to send receipts for purchases to AD for reimbursement.

**5.2 Insurance costs** – MF/DB still looking into quote. Need to fill in details regarding number of plots / people and also determine the standard and non-standard buildings values (including Society sites). TA to email the building values. AD commented that his site had just renewed their insurance – 68 members including public liability / fire / cash in transit is £268. RMBC still liable for insurance until leases are transferred. Need to decide whether to insure just DM managed sites or Society sites as well.

**5.3 Charitable status** – JT said that the application to HMRC was being sent off. Needed some business documents signing by directors. To be sent by 13/2/20. JT also advised that he is on holiday 10/2 to 29/3.

**5.4 Financial Regulations** – AD advised that the address on the Financial Regulations draft document needs changing to the Co Op Head Office address – supplied. JP requested that the items in red on the document are discussed and finalized. Also asked about accounting software – it was agreed that Quickbooks would be purchased and used. DB to sort. DB asked if online banking had been set up to make doing the accounts easier. AD to look into. MS asked regarding the £100 set up costs and £25 petty cash – it was agreed that the ASA would provide AD with receipts and purchase requisitions for approval.

## **6. – Business Plan**

**6.1** Not looked into specifically but JP observed that there was no financial information in the plan – no projections for future years. BS proposed that MF / JP / AD meet to do another formal business plan to present to the board which includes financial information. To be reviewed every 6 months. First plan to be completed by 1/4/20.

## **7. – Website**

**7.1** BS wants it up and running in next couple of days. Contact details will need updating pending new email addresses etc. Need to contact all secretaries to say that website is up and running. Chairman / DB have final say about content to go live.

## **8. – £100K grant**

**8.1** BS asked if some can be held back as a contingency for any future works that need doing, e.g. asbestos removal / been told that one plot is full of concrete, just in case any other issues occur. AD advised grants can be applied for however the rules of the SLA are very strict. JP commented that in regard to the SLA, would RMBC require stricter management from the RAA?

**8.2** MF commented regarding sending out a questionnaire to all tenants to see what they would like to happen. Is was discussed that this may open a big can of worms. JP commented that it is worth spending some money to get the unlettable plots into a lettable condition so that income can be obtained and therefore have money to spend on further improvements. MF commented regarding having incentives for sites to become Societies – such as RAA paying for clean up of sites (JP said to pay for plots to be rotivated) and continuing the 10% off rents, help with health and safety and assisting with the quick lease of plots.

## **9. – New leases to existing societies and new societies**

**9.1** As discussed in points 4.81 / 4.82 / 8.2

**9.2** BS is visiting Vicarage Fields on Saturday 25<sup>th</sup> January. Will need to take a copy of a lease. JP to change registered address and update lease time to 9 months (March 2020 to December 2020). Rents will need to be calculated – TA advised RMBC use a spreadsheet to calculate the cultivated area which rents are paid on – to send to BS/DB

**9.3** It was discussed that sites must not be told that they would be OK to stay as they are – need to be encouraged into forming a society. MF stated that some sites had been told this.

**9.4** Other sites need looking at – Avenue Road and Barnsley Road/Wet Moor Lane. All existing Societies also need contacting before the end of March.

**9.5** Offer the incentives to newly formed Societies – 10% off rents – give bigger time scale to pay – 6 months? Offer 2020 rents based on current lets – not the whole site. DB to get lettings information from sites for JP.

## **10. – Formation of new societies and or site representatives where a society cannot be formed**

See item 9

## **11. AGM**

**11.1** Date / time set - Tuesday 21<sup>st</sup> April at 7.00pm. BS has booked the Town Hall.

**11.2** Discussion about member participation (at least 1% need to turn up – approx. 10 people) and also the election / re-election of directors in line with the Coop Benefit Society rules.

**12. - Agenda items for the next meetings.**

**3<sup>rd</sup> February 2020**

- **Progress report from DB (to be sent to BS beforehand)**
- **Transfer and Transitional arrangements RMBC to RAA (including SLA)**
- **Financial Matters**
  - Treasurers financial statement and report.
  - Insurance quotations. (Treasurer and Assistant)
  - HMRC – charitable status (Secretary)
  - Financial Regulations (JP)
- **New leases to existing Societies and new Societies**
- **Website**
- **100K grant from RMBC**
- **AGM**
  - Tuesday 21<sup>st</sup> April at 7.00pm in the Town Hall, Rotherham (Chair)
  - Agenda items.
  - Election of Directors and Auditors. (See rules Co-op and Community Benefit Act 2014 – Rules of RAA – All Founder Directors have to stand for election at first AGM).

**13. Date and Time of Next Meetings. (Meetings will be cancelled if not required).**

All in the Garden Room, Clifton Park at 2.00pm

**Monday 3<sup>rd</sup> February 2020**

**Monday 17<sup>th</sup> February 2020**

**Monday 2<sup>nd</sup> March 2020**

**Monday 16<sup>th</sup> March 2020**

**Monday 30<sup>th</sup> March 2020**



Signed ..... (Chair)