

Rotherham Allotments Alliance

Meeting with Society Representatives

Meeting Date: Tuesday 17th September 2019 at 4.00pm

Meeting Location: Garden House, Clifton Park, Rotherham.

Meeting Called By: Councillor Brian Steele

Chair: Councillor Brian Steele

Secretary: (meeting notes) John Palmer

Note – In some instances I have added additional information to clarify some of the points raised/discussed.

Present:

Directors: - Al Dean, Mike Farrell, John Palmer, Councillor Brian Steele.

RMBC Officer – Tim Archer.

Society Representatives 17 – Sites currently society managed = Broom New (2), Broom Old (1), Clifton (3), Valley Road (2), Queen St North (1), Queen St South (2). Sandymount Road (Fitzwilliam Estates site) (1). Societies formed on currently directly managed sites = Avenue Road (2), Barnsley Road/Wet Moor Lane (1), Vicarage Fields (2).

1. Chair opened the meeting welcoming and thanking representatives for their attendance, Directors present introduced themselves.
2. Chair outlined the background to the formation of RAA:-
 - RAA being a ‘Community Benefit Society’ and as such each individual plot holder will become a shareholder (a nominal sum of £1.00 will be deducted from first rental payments to cover this cost). It would therefore be necessary for societies to supply RAA with all plot holder details, name/address/email/text/etc. The method of doing this will be advised at a later time. Where plots were in joint names – each named tenant would become a ‘shareholder’ in the case of community group tenancies further consideration would be required.
 - The current Board of Directors (Founder Directors) has been selected from those responding to the original request by RMBC for interested persons at the end of 2019. The Board, as decreed in the RAA ‘Code of Conduct’ lodged as part ‘Community Benefit Society’ membership is as follows:-
 - i. ***The composition of the Board shall be as follows:***
 - (a) *Up to 7 Directors elected by and from the Society’s Members;*
 - (b) *Up to 2 Directors as representative[s] appointed/nominated by Rotherham Borough Council (or anybody that succeeds to its function);*
 - (c) *Up to 2 Directors, who must be Members, appointed to the Board by co-option. Co-opted Directors are to be selected by the Board of Directors for their particular skills and/or experience.*
 - Being a ‘Community Benefit Society’ enables the RAA charitable status and gives the opportunity to apply for grant aid funding to assist in future allotment site provision and improvements to existing facilities. Societies and plot holders will have an input in the type of projects required.
 - It is intended that early in 2020 the RAA would call its first AGM allowing all ‘shareholders’ the opportunity to debate a future action plan, policy issues and allow election/re-election of board members.

3. The work being undertaken to allow management of all allotment sites currently carried out by RMBC to be transferred to the RAA on the 1st January 2020:-
- ‘Heads of Terms’ had now been agreed for the lease between the RAA and RMBC.
 - Lease between RAA and societies currently being considered. This lease would have to mirror clauses included in the ‘Head Lease’ and determine RAA and Society responsibility for on-site maintenance of buildings (external/internal), gates, fences, roadways etc. There being a need for consistency and societies taking full responsibility for all maintenance is an option being considered.
4. He explained major areas that were currently being considered/addressed:-
- An Administrator would be employed (25 hours per week), from December 2019 to become familiar with current RMBC procedures and assist in the transition period, before completing all administrative duties on behalf of RAA. The post will be dedicated to RAA via a SLA with RMBC.
 - The financial year of the RAA would be January to December, to aid efficient plot management. This would necessitate a nine month invoice in 2020 to cover April to December. Future years would then be full 12 months January to December.
 - RMBC had agreed a 100k capital amount for the RAA to fulfil improvement work on sites over a two year period, provisionally agreed April 2020 to 2022. Projects/bids having to be submitted to RMBC for approval and release of the finance. Societies and plot holders will have an input in the type of projects required.
 - A business plan had been undertaken, financial projections are currently being worked on, RAA sole revenue income will be from allotment site rentals.
 - RAA is committed to the formation of societies to manage all currently directly managed sites. Director Mike Farrell is leading this project, to date three sites had commenced formation to a constituted society.
 - A web-site is currently under construction www.rotherhamallotments.org
 - RAA would be utilizing the ‘Colony’ computer programme, specifically designed for allotment management, currently used by RMBC for all directly managed sites. Decisions still have to be taken on access to this information, each society could have access for its own site however this would incur additional costs for access and training. Colony is used to raise rental accounts and can be used to for rental collection in tandem with the web-site. This option is still to be decided.
 - A future consideration is NAS membership for each ‘shareholder’. This would cost £3.00 per plot holder. Whether this cost can be met from current rental income or will require an increase is still to be determined, as is ‘shareholder’ views on this matter and further debate will be required.
 - Insurance provision is still to be resolved, RAA will require Public Liability cover of ‘not less than Five Million Pounds’ and as lessee will be responsible for ‘insuring liabilities to a level to mitigate any associated risk’.
 - It was recognized that there was a need for a future meeting with new society representatives to discuss and agree transfer of their sites from current directly managed status to society managed and how to manage this transition.
 - The need to communicate and update societies on future progress was acknowledged and this would be completed by email and web-site. Board meeting minutes and other information being made available as soon as practical.



Signed by **Chair**