

Rotherham Allotments Alliance

Board Meeting No.32

Meeting Date: Monday 7th September 2020

Meeting Location: Online: Zoom, Phone

Meeting Called By: Councillor Brian Steele

Chair: Councillor Brian Steele

Secretary: Jack Taylor (Minutes Donna Bushby)

Present: Directors: - Al Dean (on phone), John Palmer, Councillor Brian Steele, Jack Taylor, Mick Hirst, John Callaghan, Mohammed Suleman.
Allotment Support Administrator – Donna Bushby

Apologies: N/A

115/09/20 Declaration of Interest
None declared.

116/09/20 Minutes of Board Meeting 31 - 3rd August 2020
The minutes were moved as a true record and duly signed by the Chairman (electronically).

117/09/20 Matters Arising
AD asked regarding the change of the registered address. JT to change address to the same as the bank/post office.

118/09/20 Administrator's Report
118.1/09/20 Report circulated to directors prior to meeting. Main points:

- 3 plot lets done on Moor Rd, 2 terminations – Lowfield Ave and St Leonard's.
- Complaints about overgrown plots by residents on Rosehill Park and Highfield Rd and noise / fires on Rosehill site. Quote for £360 for Highfield Rd clearance approved by the board. Contacted Grounds Maintenance regarding the hedge cutting at Rosehill – awaiting a reply. Discussed noise/fire complaints – nothing specific reported so will see if any more come in.
- Complaint from tenant on St Leonard's regarding overgrown plots and car park.
- Complaint from tenant on Moor Rd regarding Mare's Tail, the flooding issue and one plot not having any top soil. Tenant will do spraying if RAA supply chemicals. Board agreed that they would purchase the chemicals. DB to get proof of qualification from tenant. Discussed that the ditch at the back of the site has been blocked so water can't escape to the brook to the side of the site and possible water coming from the nearby car wash. The flap from the ditch to the brook is missing. Historically, the area has always flooded.
- Complaint regarding tyre damage by nails to a car on Clifton site. This also happened a few years ago. Discussed tenant concern regarding the running of the society. Site AGM planned for November so RAA director should possibly attend this to observe, however societies should be trusted to run correctly. Give societies an option to have RAA director attend.
- Arson attack on shed on Greasbrough site. Local Councillor has been in contact regarding this. Board discussed that the site is to be re-keyed – date to be set and tenants must sign for them and pay a £5 refundable deposit. Discussed regarding monitoring the deposits – Colony has a system to log this and DB registers on the tenant detail when keys are issued. The locks had been given to JT but TA could not find the keys. JT to price up and organize getting new keys cut. During director's visit a few weeks ago, spoke to some

tenants regarding setting a new society up. Also been made aware that a shop is being operated on the site without permission.

- Have knowledge of bad feeling from tenants regarding the RAA. Society considering disbanding as no progress made.
- High street visit to look at fence and issue of trees being cut down without permission. Discussed regarding buying some wire fence panels to secure the site. The area needs measuring to see how much is needed. MH and BS offered to help with this. Also discussed regarding the trees that needs clearing.
- Visited Vicarage Fields to check cultivation.
- Resignation of society secretary on Queen Street North due to tenants not following rules due to plot being full of sheds and possibly breeding birds of prey. Advised that the secretary should write the to the tenants. Discussed that this is against Allotment Law. The society need to have an EGM to elect a new chair.
- Winter procedure – turning water off etc. DB has asked TA for locations of taps. They haven't been turned off in last few years – November-time - only if it is at risk of freezing. Need tools from TA to be able to do this.

119/09/20 Financial Matters

119.1/09/20 Statement sent to directors prior to meeting. £41825.06 in bank as at 31.08.20. Not yet received invoices for ground maintenance. ASA costs up to date. Paid £1,197.92 and £252.00 for Colony License and training.

120/09/20 Transfer and Transitional arrangements RMBC to RAA (including SLA)

120.1/09/20 Solicitor - leases now in the hands of the solicitors and awaiting further instruction. AD to fill in paperwork received – requesting director ID and send £1000 deposit.

120.2/09/20 £100k – quotes for skips and clearance work have been rejected. Cllr Steele has contacted Andy Lee to request a meeting with Finance to discuss this as some jobs were left outstanding by RMBC which should be coming out of the capital. It is causing problems with tenants having the impression that the RAA are not doing anything.

121/09/20 Relationship with Council

121.1/09/20 – The relationship is not good at the moment and is reflecting badly on the RAA. As said in point 120.2/09/20, BS has contacted the council regarding the issues the RAA are having with the capital expenditure. It was discussed regarding if obstacles were deliberately being put in our way. One site has said it will create more work / expenditure if jobs are not done sooner. The problem now lies with Finance. Previous meetings with Andy Lee discussed that if he approved the work, then it would also be approved by Finance. It was questioned if it was the wording of the work being submitted. Stated that it doesn't help that a particular director hasn't attended many meetings. The purpose of the capital was to resolve all the problems left by RMBC so not acceptable that jobs are being rejected. This will be challenged when a meeting has been arranged. JT to draft an email to send to RMBC with the complaints the board of directors have.

121.2/09/20 – Other items still not resolved such as equipment being handed over.

121.3/09/20 – Discussed regarding the SLA which has still not been signed.

122/09/20 Maintenance

122.1/09/20 – Pest control contract ends with RMBC this month. DB has requested reports to see if the service needs reviewing and the cost of renewal. A company who had been asked to do a quote refused to do one. Discussed regarding sites doing their own. DB has priced up pest control courses. Also need to consider cost of bait boxes and poison. Discussed regarding the responsibility of tenants who have livestock – they attract the rats. Do sites need more monitoring? Does the ASA need to do more within the role? This has implications for extra cost etc. Some sites haven't had pest control provided by RMBC – why don't all sites have it? Discussed that this was down to if a site had a particular problem – especially those near to houses. Need to find out if societies want to have the training and do their own. It was voted and decided that the existing contract with RMBC should be extended for 6 months so we can look into making alternative arrangements.

122.2/09/20 – Lock replaced on High Street gate. Need to get the bolts that will secure the chain to the gate. DB has contacted TA who advised Williams Fasteners. JT to source. JC advised that he has a welder on his site if any chains need welding to locks.

123/09/20 Outstanding tenant details from societies

123.1/09/20 – DB advised that there are 3 sites who haven't submitted tenant details. DB to chase up secretaries.

123.1/09/20 – Society officer details – DB has details of all secretaries but not other officers. Discussed regarding needing these details in case the RAA has a problem to resolve. The RAA has a duty of care to ensure that all societies are running correctly so it needs society officer details. It was voted in favour of DB sending out a survey to obtain this information. The tenancy agreements that were sent to societies were then discussed regarding their content and what the RAA / society are responsible.

124/09/20 Society Audit

124.1/09/20– Spoke about communicating the difficulties we are faced with to societies so that they are aware of what is happening. Discussed that covid-19 has caused a lot of the problems and the council hadn't been operating as normal. We need to tell sites what we are trying to do – communicate positive messages. People may not want to look at the information on the website so we should give it to them. Everyone has to work together to make it work – two-way relationship. The RAA does have a responsibility to ensure that societies are operating correctly. DB to draft a newsletter to go out to societies. Need to make available a model constitution to all societies as some may not have up to date constitutions / not got one at all and the RAA should be informed of any amendments the society makes to it.

124.2/09/20- Discussed regarding if rents are being increased next year, as communicated to tenants/societies at the end of 2019 and also the rents for 2022 – this needs deciding by looking at financial projections for 2021. Officers and ASA to have a meeting to put together a budget to present to the board.

125/09/20 Any Other Business

125.1/09/20 JT informed the board that the registered address for the RAA is now BAS, Phoenix Pavilion, 18A Brunswick Road, Rotherham, S60 2RH

125.2/09/20 A female tenant from one of the sites showed interest in becoming a director. DB to send application details out to them. It was discussed regarding the number of directors the board can have and also another female director would be a benefit. There is currently one director vacancy.

126/09/20 Agenda Items for next meeting

- **Constitutions**
- **Rent increases**
- **2021/2022 budget**
- **ASA Contract**
- **£100k update**
- **Communication**

127/07/20- Date and Time of Next Meeting. (Meetings will be cancelled if not required).

Monday 28th September 2.00pm on Zoom

BS thanked everyone for their attendance and their contribution, and closed the meeting.



Signed (Chair)