

Rotherham Allotments Alliance

Board Meeting No.38

Meeting Date: Monday 7th December 2020

Meeting Location: Online: Zoom

Meeting Called By: Councillor Brian Steele

Chair: Councillor Brian Steele

Secretary: Jack Taylor (Minutes Donna Bushby)

Present: Directors: - Councillor Brian Steele, Al Dean, John Palmer, Jack Taylor, Mick Hirst, Mohammed Suleman

Apologies: N/A

187/12/20 Declaration of Interest

- 187.1/12/20** JP declared an interest as a tenant on Barnsley Rd site.
- 187.2/12/20** AD declared an interest as Secretary of Broom Valley New site.
- 187.3/12/20** MH declared an interest as a tenant of Avenue Rd site.
- 187.4/12/20** MS declared an interest as a tenant of Clifton Site.
- 187.5/12/20** JT declared an interest as Secretary of Wood St site.

188/12/20 Minutes of Board Meeting 37 – 23rd November 2020

The minutes were moved as a true record and duly signed by the Chairman (electronically).

189/12/20 Matters Arising

- 189.1/12/20** Question asked regarding the water bills. Has the issue been resolved? Not heard anything back from Tim Archer. BS did email Andy Lee to arrange a meeting. DB to email Tim Archer to chase this up as the information is required asap.
- 189.2/12/20** JP asked regarding the quotes for groundworks. No further quotes have been submitted – DB to organize these.

190/12/20 Administrator's Report

- 190.1/12/20** Queen Street North asked for a skip to clear vacated plots. Discussed regarding society responsibility of ensuring plots are left in a cultivatable condition. This is difficult to enforce for all tenants despite being in the tenancy agreement. Regular inspections do need to take place to ensure plots are kept in a good condition. Also, annual inspections with society sites. It was discussed regarding taking deposits from new tenants but this would be very difficult to manage and most tenants are existing so wouldn't be paying the deposit. Need to be decided the criteria which would warrant a skip. However, it would be unfair to let one site have a skip but not another. It was discussed that it should be budgeted that each site gets 1 skip per year, if required, and any extra would need to be funded by the society. The board voted that Queen Street North can have the skip.
- 190.2/12/20** Moor Rd flooding – tenant has had a look at the drainage ditch and found crayfish in it. Been reported to Environment Agency. RMBC flooding dept have also been to look at the site. The ditch needs clearing out and digging so it runs down to the brook. The RMBC officer is also going to look at the drainage of the nearby car wash as it doesn't appear adequate and may be adding to the problem. Also discussed that run off from the flats and the natural drainage route will be contributing.
- 190.3/12/20** Wood St have reported a number of break-ins again. Discussed regarding purchasing wildlife cameras to trial on the site. DB to organise and purchase. Also need CCTV signs as it is a legal requirement. AD has some so will pass on.

190.4/12/20 A tenant has asked regarding running some growing competitions next year. Agreed that it was a good idea but would need some thought. JP gave some background on competitions run in previous years. Look at getting sponsorship for prizes. It was suggested that we should look at what other sites do around the country and see what tenants say at the AGM.

190.5/12/20 Avian Flu – information regarding the government guidelines have been put on the website and facebook page. A tenant on a directly managed site has asked for disinfectant to be available at the gate. It was agreed that this wouldn't be possible. Tenants are responsible for their own plots. It was suggested that this information also be put on the rent letters.

190.6/12/20 Still got a number of outstanding rents for this year. It was agreed that the outstanding amount from Avenue Rd can be written off due to the tenant passing away. Some are plots that have not been cultivated. It was voted and agreed that these tenants are sent a letter with a 2-week period to pay and give them a further 2 weeks to clear their plots.

190.7/12/20 Reports of people getting into Barnsley Rd site from the land at the side which belongs to TK Lynskeys. They have confirmed that the land won't be built on for a few years. The society have requested a fence to be put up. No actual break-ins have been reported however. It was questioned regarding if the fence has to be taken down when work eventually starts on the site. It was suggested that the situation be monitored and also possibly put anti-vandal paint on the wall. This would need putting to TK Lynskeys who own the wall.

190.8/12/20 Issue with an abusive tenant on Avenue Rd with another tenant. Spoken to the secretary who is going to write to them to ask them to stop the situation. A video clip of the incident with the tenant was viewed which has aggravated the situation as it was recorded without permission. It was advised that any incidents of threats/aggressive behaviour should be reported to the police. The site has put notices on their Facebook group and onsite to remind people that abusive behaviour will not be tolerated. The RAA would support any decisions made by the society and would only overturn with good reason. All tenants have a right to appeal which would be considered. It was suggested that the tenancy agreement that advises tenants regarding their conduct is made clear on the website. DB to sort this.

190.9/12/20 Queen Street South have a proposed an idea about creating a community garden on one of their plots. Avenue Rd have also mentioned toilet provision for a tenant who has special needs. These items were brought up in the SYFAB meeting which took place prior to this meeting. It was discussed regarding the responsibility of having these types of toilets on site – who would clean/look after them? What else can be done to help these types of tenants? Is it their own responsibility? Is it fair to all tenants?

191/12/20

Financial Matters

191.1/12/20 AD sent the statement for November to directors prior to the meeting. The opening balance was £43,682. Expenditure cleared and not cleared left a closing balance of £38,212. Today's balance is £36,689.

191.2/12/20 JT asked if AD had received the authorization form from Companies House – he had not. Needs chasing up.

191.3/12/20 AD advised that the directors on the bank account have been updated. JC has been left in abeyance as need to find out if continuing to be a director. This needs confirming as he has not attended the last 6 meetings. JC has sent his details to JT, however. Directors should be following the Code of Conduct by participating in meetings or if not, submit apologies. Or, introduce a policy which allows the removal of non-active directors. JT to send JC a letter to ask his intentions.

191.4/12/20 Discussed regarding the preparation of the end of year accounts which need to be audited before the AGM. The accounts need to be audited independently. AD suggested John Kirk who was a previous director and also an accountant. They can then be sent off to the FCA. The rules of the Community Benefit Society were re-iterated in regard to having lay-auditors. JT needs to contact John Kirk to formally appoint him.

191.5/12/20 The new online banking from Co-Op Bank is imminent. AD will advise when this is operational.

191.6/12/20 AD advised of a scam text received asking for personal details, appearing to be from Co-Op Bank.

191.7/12/20 At the Officer's meeting last week, it was discussed and decided that a separate shareholders account be opened to hold the money for all shareholders. The share for new tenants should then be transferred in periodically.

192/12/20 Transfer and Transitional arrangements RMBC to RAA (including SLA)

192.1/12/20 No update received from the solicitor. DB emailed them but did not get a response. DB to contact by phone.

180.2/11/20 BS has a meeting with RMBC Scrutiny regarding the allotments on 8/12/20. DB has been asked to attend this as well to provide support if required. MS offered to attend the meeting if required.

193/12/20 Society Update

No other societies have been in touch with DB regarding the board meeting invite.

194/12/20 Maintenance

JT and DB need to finish going round the sites to measure the grass cutting. Arrange to do next week.

195/12/20 AGM

195.1/12/20 Following the Officers meeting last week, it was discussed regarding progress on holding an AGM. The current guidelines, and possible future lockdowns and also the rolling out of the vaccine, do not look favourable for holding a meeting in person. So therefore it needs to be agreed to hold the AGM via the Zoom facility online. A date of Tuesday 23rd March at 6.30pm was agreed which will allow time for preparations to be made and information sent out.

195.2/12/20 The agenda was then discussed and JP highlighted some points that have to be included as part of the rules. Some items were added to the agenda whilst the discussion took place.

195.3/12/20 The re-election of directors was discussed and agreed that existing directors will be contacted by DB to ask if they wish to stand again. This excludes the council-appointed directors. It was then discussed that JT should contact the Chief Executive and Leader of the council to ask the council's nominations for appointed directors to the board.

195.4/12/20 It was discussed regarding the voting cycle and ensuring continuity on the board. The voting system needs to be organised. BS to supply details.

196/12/20 Board Committees

196.1/12/20 Looking at to propose sub-committees. This is related to the SYFAB meeting and will be discussed in a future meeting.

197/12/20 Policy Review

197.1/12/20 It was proposed that DB circulates all relevant documents to all directors for their perusal and then discuss at a future meeting in January.

198/12/20 Future Actions

None discussed.

199/12/20 Any Other Business

199.1/12/20 BS, DB & JP attended a meeting with Peter from South Yorkshire Funding Advice Bureau (SYFAB) regarding looking at funding for the Alliance. It was very useful. Peter is going to look at which funders are most suited to our needs. He suggested that for smaller amounts, societies should pursue these and a meeting has been arranged for Tuesday 26th January 2021 to invite secretaries to give them the advice on how to obtain grants. All secretaries will be invited to this. He also suggested obtaining a loan but BS advised that this wouldn't be considered for a few years. DB added that the restrictions set by funders are strict when it comes to the dissolution of societies and the how the assets/fund are distributed. This will need looking at.

200/12/20 Agenda Items for next meeting

- BS to advise DB.

201/12/20

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

Monday 21st December 2020 2.00pm on Zoom. DB is on annual leave so JP to do the minutes.

BS thanked everyone for their attendance and their continued participation and dedication. He also suggested that the number of meetings be reduced going forward. The meeting was then closed.



Signed (Chair)