

## Rotherham Allotments Alliance

# Board Meeting No.41

**Meeting Date:** Monday 18<sup>th</sup> January 2021

**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

**015/01/21**      **Apologies:** N/A

**016/01/21**      **Declaration of Interest**

**016.1/01/21**      JP declared an interest as a tenant on Barnsley Rd site.

**016.2/01/21**      AD declared an interest as Secretary of Broom Valley New site.

**016.3/01/21**      MH declared an interest as a tenant of Avenue Rd site.

**016.4/01/21**      MS declared an interest as a tenant of Clifton Site.

**016.5/01/21**      JT declared an interest as Secretary of Wood St site.

**017/01/21**      **Minutes of Board Meeting 40 – 4<sup>th</sup> January 2021**

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

**018/01/21**      **Matters Arising**

None declared.

**019/01/21**      **Administrator's Report**

**019.1/01/21**      **Bee-keeping request** – Request from a tenant on Greasbrough to keep bees. This plot has been uncultivated and is currently being monitored. The board agreed that they should be given 6 months to get the plot cultivated to the correct standard and then it can be considered. Plus only if they follow the correct procedures for bee keeping.

**019.2/01/21**      1 plot has been given up on High Street and 1 plot on Greasbrough is being terminated due to long-term non-cultivation

**019.3/01/21**      **Cockerel Noise complaint – Barnsley Rd** – spoken to site secretary who are addressing the matter.

**019.4/01/21**      **Complaint about covid non-compliance at Vicarage Field** – anonymous letter received by RMBC stating that tenants were congregating in a shed. Spoke to site secretary who has spoken to tenants involved.

**019.5/01/21**      **Encroachment at Greasbrough** – been informed that the fence has been tampered with allowing residents access to the site, allegedly for fire safety. The board agreed that this is probably not correct but needs checking with Andy Lee. DB to email.

**019.6/01/21**      **Breach of Rules on Rectory Field** – DB has spoken to the tenant following them receiving the warning letter. He explained himself that he had people onsite to help him offload materials. He says the police were happy with what he told them. He has covered his birds as best as possible. He has said that his plot has a lot of standing water and thinks there is spring coming up from it. DB did ask him to follow the rules to which he agreed. The board agreed that this situation needs monitoring as the plot isn't been used as it should be. Any further non-compliance and they will be asked to leave.

**019.7/01/21**      **Avenue Rd Paths** – tenant has sent pictures of the condition of paths / entrances – says access to plots is dangerous. The board discussed other sites also needing pathway improvements and getting quotes for the work to be done. It has been difficult getting companies to do quotes. It was suggested that sites can do the work themselves if the material is supplied. It was then suggested that it is worth spending the money to get the job done correctly by a contractor. Plus tenants may not be willing or able to do the work. There

is also the quality control aspect if done by a contractor. We still have the capital to spend and the surplus from last year. To help arrange quotes, MH and JT can do site visits if required.

**019.8/01/21 Cockerel Noise Complaints from Rectory Field** – been reported again. Have contacted the tenant again.

**019.9/01/21 Tenants questioning Society on South Street** – 2 tenants have emailed in asking about the running of the site – not received receipts / tenancy agreements. No transparency on how it is run. The tenants do make good points but it is not possible to hold a site meeting at the moment to discuss. It was suggested by the board that the secretary is written to to ask regarding the issues raised – preferably arrange a Zoom meeting to discuss. It was discussed about the right to audit societies to ensure they are operating correctly, especially as the Alliance is governed by the FCA and are responsible overall. It was stated that society sites should present their financial statement at their AGM. It was suggested that the tenants that sent in the emails, are the type of people who we would want on committees etc.

**019.10/01/21 Grass Cutting Invoice** – DB has not heard back from Officers regarding not paying the invoice. It was discussed regarding the quality of work being done and the difficulty of not knowing when operatives are on site to check. DB to send the report to the Operations Manager. It was also discussed regarding the testing of the fire extinguishers which the RAA were informed of. It was then discussed regarding PAT testing of electrical equipment and who is responsible for them and also the implications to insurance. It was discussed that the society should be responsible for PAT testing their own equipment. It was suggested that a meeting with Andy Lee is set up to discuss these issues.

**020/01/21**

**Financial Matters**

**020.1/01/21** AD sent directors a statement prior to the meeting of the monthly transactions in 2020. The account balance as of the 31<sup>st</sup> December was £36,212.

**020.2/01/21** The current balance of the account is £35,788. Cheques have been received in the PO box which need to be paid in.

**020.3/01/21** Working a report to show what has been spent on each site plus administration costs.

**020.4/01/21** The pest control invoice has been paid and received a Business Stream invoice for Greasbrough site.

**020.5/01/21** Question asked regarding the preparation of the year-end financial statement for 2020. This includes the monthly transaction statement that has already done. AD to confirm that John Kirk can audit the accounts.

**020.6/01/21** Question asked regarding the online banking update. AD will hopefully be able to sort this week.

**021/01/21**

**Transfer and Transitional arrangements RMBC to RAA (including SLA)**

Solicitor update – been copied into an email exchange between solicitors asking for further information. No further action requested at present.

**022/01/21**

**Society Update**

Funding meeting is next Tuesday. Have had interest from 4 sites. DB to send a reminder to other sites to invite them. Discussed regarding contacting other committee members but it was decided it would be best just contacting the secretary. It is the secretary's responsibility to distribute information to committee members.

**023/01/21**

**Maintenance**

**Moor Road – Wath** – BS suggested visiting the site tomorrow as it is due to rain heavy. MH will accompany him. DB to contact the tenant who wanted a site visit to see if he can attend. Further action to be decided after the visit.

**024/01/21**

**AGM**

**024.1/01/21** DB has had interest from 2 people.

**024.2/01/21** Concern regarding society sites and if tenants are being informed about it. Notices should be sent to sites to be put on notice boards / gates etc. Also include direct managed sites.

**024.3/01/21** Discussed regarding it being put in the local paper – to be inserted in local notes 2 weeks before the meeting.

**024.4/01/21** Discussed a final date to have all the documentation finalized – decided on 1/3/21.

**024.5/01/21** It was highlighted that the SLA requires the RAA to produce an annual report to include performance such as number of tenants, number on waitlist and number of vacant plots which must be put on the website. Some of the maps we have aren't up to date so numbers may not be accurate.

## **025/01/21 Policy Review**

**025.1/01/21** JP has read through all the documents and highlighted areas which may require amending:

**025.1.1/01/21** Tenancy Agreement & Allotment Rules– maximum size of shed not currently specified. Maximum size decided was 2m x 3m. Also debated limiting the number of sheds allowed. Was decided that more than 1 shed will need permission from the RAA and don't cover more than 10% of the plot. A probationary period also needs adding – directors agreed a 3-month period.

**025.1.2/01/21** Volunteer Policy – no change as such but need to make sure that volunteers are following the policy to ensure covered by insurance etc. Risk assessments need to be carried out. Questioned asked regarding a risk assessment from the ASA working from home. Can't do them properly at the moment due to covid.

**025.1.3/01/21** Code of Conduct for Directors – do the requirements for attendance at meetings need strengthening? A rule was then voted and decided that directors must attend at least 75% of meetings, unless there are mitigating circumstances – illness etc.

**025.1.4/01/21** Financial Regulations – insurance details need adding once they are confirmed. A section needs adding regarding internet banking. Delegated spending power – this rule was decided in a previous meeting but it needs inserting into the final document. Questioned asked regarding the introduction – it states the RAA being operated by 'founder members' – this needs checking.

**025.1.5/01/21** Standing Orders – finance and staff handling sections need completing. The finance section can be completed and refer to the Financial Regulations. The staffing section should identify that the ASA is line-managed by the Chairperson and disciplinary proceedings should be undertaken by 3 directors, with a right to appeal. Management of information – retention policy – it was discussed that it was covered by data protection / GDPR. Financial information has to be kept for 7 years. It was discussed regarding how long to keep personal details of directors. Declarations of Interests should be re-completed every 12 months or directors such update them if their personal circumstances changed. Also a couple of typing errors need correcting. A question was raised regarding board meeting minutes and them being publicly accessible as stated in the Standing Orders. Currently they are password protected on the website. DB to remove the password access.

**025.1.6/01/21** Business Plan – this needs updating to reflect the current trading position – statistics / accurate information etc.

**025.1.7/01/21** It was agreed that JP should liaise with DB to update the documents and circulate. Dates will be added. Policies should be reviewed / update every year.

**025.1.8/01/21** JP has started to look at a policy for establishing new societies. MH has also done a flow-chart. This item will be discussed at the next meeting when more information has been put together.

## **026/01/21 Director Attendance at Meetings**

JT wrote to JC requesting his intentions and has not received a response. It was voted unanimously that he should be removed as a director. JT to write to him to inform him of this decision.

## **027/01/21 Avenue Road Society Disbandment Update**

**This item was considered at the end of the meeting and Director MH took no part and withdrew from the meeting.**

No communication has been received from tenants regarding requesting setting up a new committee. BS suggested that the situation should stay the same and the RAA remain in control for the time being due to the covid restrictions. The board were in agreement. It may be pursued if interest arises in the meantime. The rules for forming a new society need to be finalised so can be used if a society is set

back up. It was discussed regarding ensuring that all tenants have an equal opportunity to be involved with the possible formation of a society. This can be done in the form of an on-site ballot when it can be permitted.

**028/01/21 Future Actions**  
As discussed in other points.

**029/01/21 Any other business**  
AD asked regarding the continuation of the ASA contract. BS to chase up.

**030/01/21 Agenda Items for next meeting**

- 1<sup>st</sup> February 2021 –
  - Policy for new allotment societies
- 1<sup>st</sup> March 2021 –
  - CCTV – Wood Street Swinton – evaluate

**031/01/21 Date and Time of Next Meeting. (Meetings will be cancelled if not required).**  
Monday 1<sup>st</sup> February 2021.

BS thanked everyone for their attendance. The meeting was closed at 4.30pm.



Signed ..... (Chair)