

## Rotherham Allotments Alliance

# Board Meeting No.42

**Meeting Date:** Monday 1<sup>st</sup> February 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

**032/02/21**      **Apologies:** Emma Hoddinott

**033/02/21**      **Declaration of Interest**

**033.1/02/21**      JP declared an interest as a tenant on Barnsley Rd site.

**034.2/02/21**      AD declared an interest as Secretary of Broom Valley New site.

**033.3/02/21**      MH declared an interest as a tenant of Avenue Rd site.

**033.4/02/21**      MS declared an interest as a tenant of Clifton Site.

**033.5/02/21**      JT declared an interest as Secretary of Wood St site.

**034/02/21**      **Minutes of Board Meeting 41 – 18<sup>th</sup> January 2021**

**034.1/02/21**      JP item raised for min. 025.3.3/01/21 – following research of the rules, difficult to write the 75% decision in. Directors can't be removed if voted in. Suggest to change to 2 meetings being missed without notification / unavoidable reason then they will be contacted to find out future intentions and removal if in breach of code of conduct. This was voted in favour that the minute be amended as above. The amendment to be added to the policy review.

**034.1/02/21**      The rest of the minutes were moved as a true record and duly signed by the Chairman (electronically).

**035/02/21**      **Matters Arising**

Question was asked regarding the ASA contract. BS stated that this has been agreed to be extended for another 12 months through RMBC Green Spaces.

**036/02/21**      **Administrator's Report**

**036.1/02/21**      **Terminated tenant on Greasbrough.** Tenant was disgruntled regarding items being taken from their plot. Did explain that the plot hadn't been visited for some time so unfortunately others would deem it unoccupied. Tenant did state they were leaving the site.

**036.2/02/21**      **High Street** – report of track/path being very muddy. Tenant fell off their mobility scooter. Tenant requested hardcore but path needs to be done professionally. Clifton also made same request. Advised society to do temporary repair and Alliance to organize professional works. Site also had some fly-tipping in the top area. This has now been moved by the tenant who put it there. Also conflict between tenants regarding burning on site. A bonfire pile has been created and date set for it to be burnt. Tenant of plot 9 has asked if they can have tenancy over the bottom area of the site and maintain it as a nature area, plus cultivate where possible. Would do it for a minimal rental fee – suggested £20 per year. Directors discussed that the tenant could do this and a tenancy agreement drawn up. The fence is also being installed which will increase security. A peppercorn rent of £1 was also suggested. It was highlighted that if allotment demand was to increase massively, the RAA may need to look at removing the trees and putting the area back into cultivation. The sites does have vacant plots at present though.

**036.3/02/21**      **Grounds Maintenance** – report has been sent to Neil Archer and awaiting reply.

**036.4/02/21**      **Rectory Field** – natural spring on the site is flowing across the site and causing problems on the paths and flooding on plots. It was pointed out by JP that this spring

has occurred for many years and will dry up as the weather improves. Tenant that is mis-using plot is continuing to do so. Also been told they plan to get as many plots as possible, in different names. Covid breach has been reported to police – local police sergeant has been informed. Incidents do need to be reported at the time of occurrence. Discussed that a follow up letter to be sent. Asked if rules cover times permitted on allotments.

**036.5/02/21 South Street** – letter to secretary sent. Awaiting a reply. A point was raised regarding there is nothing in the rules regarding tenant damage to perimeter fencing. This will need adding.

**036.6/02/21 Kimberworth Park** – break-in overnight on site. Fence has been cut and the metal fasteners on the shed doors have been cut off. Some tools have been taken. Police advised that tenants report individually.

**036.7/02/21 Electrical Testing** - Email from Tim Archer regarding electrical circuit testing on buildings. Need to decide if RMBC will do it or find own contractor. JT to look at getting prices from contractors. JT asked regarding fire extinguishers – fire service no longer do servicing. Should be serviced every year and need a comprehensive test every 5 years. It would be more economical to replace any old extinguishers rather than get them serviced. Most probably need replacing any way. Dry powder is now recommended for most fires and would be adequate for what we need. Voted in favour to buy new extinguishers and replace old ones. JT to organize.

**036.8/02/21 Skip request for Avenue Road** – it was discussed that we should look at skip provision when the weather improves and the paths/roads dry out.

#### **037/02/21 Financial Matters**

**037.1/02/21** Interim Statement sent out to directors. Money at bank 1/1/21 £36,212. Estimated expenditure £2794, Receipts £12,189. Closing balance 28/1/21 £45,607. Balance to date £41,711. The water bill has been paid - £4470.

**037.2/02/21** The annual report for 2020 is three quarters completed. Can confirm that John Kirk will be auditing the accounts.

**037.3/02/21** Also looking at a report to calculate how much has been spent per site.

**037.4/02/21** Online banking is still in progress. AD to follow up. DB still doesn't have access.

**037.5/02/21** Shareholder's funds account – paperwork will be sent to directors for signatures and the account will be set up.

#### **038/02/21 Transfer and Transitional arrangements RMBC to RAA (including SLA)**

No further progress received. BS / JT / DB had a meeting with Andy Lee who was going to chase it up. Also spoke about grazing sites. Question asked regarding involving solicitors for grazing rights. It was suggested the RAA could create its own grazing license from existing tenancy agreements. We need all the details from the current tenants. There is still the issue of the damage left at Hartley Lane, White Lea Road was seen to have pigs on (12 months ago) and Woodside is vacant. Discussed regarding allowing pigs – need to see existing lease. There is no law regarding what can be on a grazing site.

#### **039/02/21 Society Update**

Meeting regarding funding held last week – was found useful. BS did speak to secretaries present in meeting about having separate households for officer positions.

#### **040/02/21 Maintenance**

**Pest Control** – current cost is £3000 inc VAT for 7 sites. The current schedule needs reviewing as those sites only have provision due to historical complaints. Discussed regarding why some of these sites have provision if they are not next to houses. BS to contact the person who does it on his site (tenants buy own boxes and they are filled once a month). Discussed regarding who buys the bait boxes – tenant or RAA? Also discussed regarding the questionnaire done which showed which sites are willing to have a person trained up to do it. It was decided that the contract would not be continued and DB to find out from sites who wants to be trained up. Should the RAA offer provision for all sites? – not all plots will need boxes - need to look at the cost implications. Some sites do all their own at present. Some sites won't pay for their own boxes – the RAA should supply them. Tenants should be made responsible for boxes to reduce the risk of them being stolen / removed. The RAA has the overall responsibility. If current provision is removed then we may get a major issue. Needs to be established how much activity

there is on the sites that are on the schedule. Also need to look at how poison will be stored on each site as it is a health and safety issue. Would be safer if someone went round the sites.

**041/02/21 AGM**

**041.1/02/21** Publicity has been sent out – posters sent to all societies, attached to direct-managed site gates, on the website and Facebook. Newspaper notice will be done early March.

**041.2/02/21** The quorum for the meeting is 3 or 1% of members. Already had 12 tenants interested, not including directors.

**041.3/02/21** Question regarding the transfer of the lease before the AGM. This is in the hands of the solicitors. It is over 12 months late overall.

**041.4/02/21** Board members perused the agenda on a screenshare – the order was discussed and re-arranged. Discussed that the annual report for the AGM is currently being compiled and will form part of the AGM.

**041.4/02/21** All paperwork to be completed 2 weeks prior and sent out to attendees 1 week prior to meeting.

**041.5/02/21** It was stated that 2 lay auditors need to be appointed at the AGM. John Kirk can be one. DB suggested someone she used to work with who may be able to do it. DB to confirm. AD suggested someone who does Yorkshire branch NAS' accounts.

**042/02/21 Policy for new allotment societies**

**042.1/02/21** JP submitted a paper which was submitted to directors prior to the meeting.

**042.2/02/21** Discussed items that were highlighted that needed clarification. Debated regarding giving all plot holders a fair chance to vote – which method is most effective? By post or in person on site / at a meeting? If tenants can't attend a meeting, they should be given a separate opportunity to vote? It was suggested that 2 directors conduct initial meetings. A mentor should then be appointed to help them during the first 12 months. It was decided that if interest in becoming a society occurs, a meeting will be held in a suitable establishment with 3 weeks' notice and a secret ballot held with a simple majority result. An even result would require a further ballot if anyone changed their mind. Nominations for committee members must then be sought and a further vote conducted to elect members – nominees to be advertised on the site gates.

**042.3/02/21** Discussed regarding eligibility of board members – must be a registered tenant. For tenants there should only be 1 vote per plot / tenancy agreement. Or if a plot holder has a number of plots, they only get 1 vote. Discussed regarding needing a degree of trust with a society – i.e. managing waitlists properly.

**042.4/02/21** Adoption of a constitution – discussed how in-depth it needs to be – add in what is expected of each role. Societies to adopt this constitution but can make amendments at an AGM.

**042.5/02/21** Discussed regarding the transfer of plots and who has the right to a plot. Had reports of people selling plots on. The actual letting of the land is the responsibility of the RAA or the society secretary. Current rules are if a tenant dies, it can be transferred to a family member. Co-workers can only take over plots if registered for 12 months and currently working the plot. Debated if co-workers should be added to tenancy agreements. The rule regarding co-workers does need to be included in the Allotment Rules / Tenancy Agreement. JP to draft an addition to the policies.

**043/02/21 Induction for new directors**

It is listed in the RAA rules so it needs to be drawn up. BS to look at it.

**044/02/21 Future Actions**

None specified.

**045/02/21 Any other business**

None brought to attention.

**046/02/21 Agenda Items for next meeting**

**046.1/02/21** As per this meeting

**046.2/02/21** 1<sup>st</sup> March 2021 –

- CCTV – Wood Street Swinton – evaluate

**046.3/02/21** Discussed regarding frequency of meetings – possibly moving board meetings to every 6 weeks. Possibly on a 3 weekly cycle, Officers have a meeting with DB to go through any issues arisen / outstanding work.

**046.4/02/21** The creation of sub-committees were then decided – finance & policies and maintenance. 1 committee meeting per fortnight and then the board meeting to follow 2 weeks later. It was decided that Finance would include AD, MS and JP. Maintenance would include BS, MH and JT. Lay members can then be brought in if required, with approval of the board.

**046.5/02/21** Will need further discussion at the AGM.

**047/02/21** **Date and Time of Next Meeting. (Meetings will be cancelled if not required).**  
Monday 15<sup>th</sup> February 2021.

BS thanked everyone for their attendance. The meeting was closed at 5.00pm.



Signed ..... (Chair)