

Rotherham Allotments Alliance

Board Meeting No.55

On Meeting Date: Monday 2nd August 2021
Meeting Location: Online: Zoom
Meeting Called By: Brian Steele
Chair: Brian Steele
Secretary: Jack Taylor (Minutes Donna Bushby)

Present: Directors: Brian Steele (BS), John Palmer (JP), Jack Taylor (JT), Mick Hirst (MH), Mohammed Suleman (MH), Alice Parry (AP) and Allotment Support Assistant – Donna Bushby (DB).

223/08/21 (1) **Apologies:** Cllr Dave Sheppard and Alison Howard.

224/08/21 (2) **Declaration of Interest**

224.1/08/21 JP declared an interest as a tenant on Barnsley Rd site.

224.2/08/21 JT declared an interest as secretary on Wood St site.

224.3/08/21 MH declared an interest as a tenant of Avenue Rd site.

224.4/08/21 MS declared an interest as a tenant of Clifton site.

225/08/21 (3) **Director Application**

The board discussed the application from Alice Parry and it was voted in favour for her to join the board. Alice then joined the meeting and was introduced to directors.

226/08/21 (4) **Minutes of Board Meeting 54 – 19th July 2021**

These were moved as a true record and duly signed (electronically) by the Chairperson.

227/08/21 (5) **Matters Arising**

None advised.

228/08/21 (6) **Administrator's Report – submitted to Director's prior to meeting. Summary:**

228.1/08/21 Barnsley Rd – cockerel noise reported again. Have emailed the secretary and chair to find out which plot it is. No response was given from the local MP who had the matter reported to them by a tenant. Site has also had a break in – 75% of plots been broken into.

228.2/08/21 Greasbrough - Reported via local councillor regarding tenant who they say is breaking into other holder's sheds, defecating in allotments and has had a least one big fire late into the evening. Sending letter to tenant concerned. Also going to ask them to remove the flag.

228.3/08/21 High Street – tenant reported items gone missing from their plot. Tap been broken – arranged a repair. Tenant had a fire over weekend – sent out warning email to tenants.

228.4/08/21 Clifton – resident reported overgrown trees and wasp's nest on allotment.

228.6/08/21 Rectory Field – resident reported overgrown trees – can't have a Sky dish.

228.7/08/21 St Leonard's - Received letter regarding and overgrown tree which is hanging into resident's garden. Asking for permission to prune it. Board agreed that the resident can prune the tree.

228.8/08/21 Herringthorpe Valley Road - Cockerel noise complaint – contacted secretary to request birds get removed. Facebook comment on post regarding condition of allotments. It was discussed that DB should set a meeting up with the society to offer support. JT reported that Wood St are struggling to get committee members.

228.9/08/21 Application to fund cameras for Greasbrough has been approved – sending a cheque. It was carried for DB to purchase the cameras.

229/08/21 (7) **Financial Matters**

229.1/08/21 No update due to AH's absence.

229.2/08/21 DB reported still working through Quickbooks, will be chasing all outstanding rents and invoices are paid up to date.

230/08/21

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

BS/JT/JP/DB had a meeting prior to this one to discuss outstanding issues with the lease / site plans. JP was thanked for the preparation work he had done on this. JP will update his report with the observations and this will be sent to Andy Lee and our solicitor for their consideration.

231/08/21

(9) Society Update

231.1/08/21 Discussed regarding situation at Herringthorpe – currently have a stand-in secretary. Struggling to get committee members and rules not being followed by tenants. DB to arrange a meeting to offer support.

231.2/08/21 Some sites have held their AGMS.

231.3/08/21 Site secretary raised question as to why the Alliance wants to see minutes and also about being fully self-managed. Another secretary also raised point about rent reduction if they do their own maintenance.

231.4/08/21 A couple of secretaries have asked regarding the rent increase for next year as they want to set their rents. (JP chaired meeting at this point). It was agreed that it would need to be discussed with the treasurer and look at financial projections to see if it is required. It was stated that the Alliance have not increased rents whilst operating. Inflation etc. needs taking into consideration, in order to cover all costs. A better financial picture will be available after this year. It was decided that this would be an agenda item for the next meeting. It was suggested that this should be discussed every year, the first week in September. It was then discussed that if society sites were going to be given further discounts if they did their own maintenance. This is something that needs consideration again. It was suggested a separate meeting may be required to discuss it. It was also suggested that it may be beneficial to hold a face-to-face meeting with societies to show that we are working with them, not as RMBC did – they are very much part of the Alliance. We are here to support societies but they have to ensure that they follow the rules. (BS returned as Chair). It was discussed regarding tenants paying deposits and if this was feasible.

232/08/21

(10) Maintenance

232.1/08/21 Need some serious consideration into cleaning up plots that are overgrown. Difficult to understand why tenants have been allowed to bring on items such as scrap metal, boats, caravans etc. in the past. It was discussed regarding directors clearing up plots but then ensuring that we have tenants ready to work on them. No point in clearing if not. It is difficult because people don't want to take on badly overgrown plots. This is more difficult on direct-managed sites. It could be that it is arranged with the prospective tenant that they help with the clearance and the Alliance work with them. The equipment still hasn't been collected from RMBC and there is also the question of where to store it safely. DB is still offering free rent to new tenants who clear their own plots.

232.2/08/21 Hedge cutting survey needs completing. DB/BS to arrange a date.

232.3/08/21 Society site questioned why they would need to train someone on pest control when they already have provision from us. It was pointed out that the Alliance originally said they would pay for bait boxes and poison. With the new plan, it would cost the society for these items. Then they would expect a discount on their rent. It was discussed this making societies more responsible for the items if they had purchased them. It would need to be looked at if the RMBC contract was cancelled. It was then discussed regarding the issue of the storing of poison and if societies will store it responsibly. The RAA may need to have its own lock-up to store it. However, storing items on sites may be at risk of them getting broken into. This all relates to sites not being used as they are supposed to be and plots being locked up, giving the impression that there is something of value to steal. Going back to pest control, it was decided that 2 sites were going to have representatives trained up to see how it goes. In the long term, it would save money if all sites are trained up, even if the Alliance buys the boxes and poison.

232.4/08/21 Psalters Lane fence has now been completed. The top plot has already been tenanted.

233/08/21

(11) NAS Membership Update

Liz has confirmed that the seed scheme access for direct-managed tenants has been confirmed. We will now have to write to all direct-managed tenants to get their permission to pass details on. Will also have to contact all societies to advise them they will be reimbursed if already a member, and to sign themselves up if not already members.

- 234/08/21 (12) Rotherham Show**
DB circulated some information to directors prior to meeting on ideas of what to do. Also need to work out a rota on when directors can cover the stall. It was suggested previously about having a quiz and offering prizes. DB has contacted local supermarkets and NAS to ask if anything can be donated. It was discussed that RADAA are also having a stall, would it be beneficial to work alongside them? It was agreed for DB to contact Mike Farrell to ask if they would like to work with the Alliance.
- 235/08/21 (13) Flags**
It was suggested that we don't need a specific policy regarding flags, but as the Alliance is a non-political organisation, any tenants with flags deemed offensive / political, will be asked to remove it. It may be that we need something in brief to clear up any ambiguity on this matter if the matter arises again. It does all depend on what is considered offensive/political. This may already be covered in the policies which are available on the website. The tenant in question has been sent a letter to ask them to remove the flag that has been reported on. It will be dealt with further if not removed.
- 236/08/21 (14) Future Actions**
236.1/08/21 Establishment of sub-committees. These were approved at the AGM but not yet formed due to director numbers. It was suggested to have a finance and a maintenance committee. This will lead to a reduction in full board meetings, possibly every 6 weeks and having sub-committee meetings in between. Emergency meetings can then be added if required. It was decided that JP chair the maintenance committee and AH chair the finance committee, BS sit on both and other directors choose which committee they wanted to sit on. Meetings should be set up so they feed back to the next board meeting. The times and dates can be changed to suit the members. Needs to be manageable for DB in terms of minutes and agendas but will help to cut down the content of the board meeting. JT/MH opted to be on the maintenance committee. MS opted to be on the finance committee. AP will confirm. This will be finalised and formally agreed in the next meeting.
- 237/08/21 (15) Any Other Business**
None discussed.
- 238/08/21 (16) Agenda Items for next meeting**
- As per last meeting
 - Rent Increase
 - Sub-committees
- 239/08/21 (17) Date and Time of Next Meeting. (Meetings will be cancelled if not required).**
Monday 16th August at 2.00pm
Tuesday 31st August at 2.00pm (Bank holiday)

BS thanked everyone for their attendance. The meeting was closed at 3.50pm.



Signed (Chair)