

## Rotherham Allotments Alliance

# Board Meeting No.59

**Held:** Monday 11<sup>th</sup> October 2021

**Meeting Location:** Online: Zoom

(Minutes John Palmer)

**Present:** Directors: Brian Steele (BS) Chair, Mick Hirst (MH), John Palmer (JP), Jack Taylor (JT), Alice Parry (AP), Mohammed Suleman (MS), Alison Howard (AH), Donna Bushby (DB).

**287/10/21** (1) **Apologies:** Cllr Dave Sheppard.

**288/10/21** (2) **Declaration of Interest**

MH declared an interest as a tenant of Avenue Rd site.

JP declared an interest as a tenant on Barnsley Rd site.

JT declared an interest as secretary on Wood St site.

AP declared an interest as interim committee member of South Street site.

MS declared an interest as a tenant on Clifton site.

AH declared an interest as interim committee member of South Street site.

**289/10/21** (3) **Minutes of Board Meeting - 27<sup>th</sup> September 2021.**

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

**290/10/21** (4) **Matters Arising**

1. Question asked regarding the water rates. It was decided to carry on with RMBC's supplier as these would probably be the cheapest due to the bulk contract.
2. Fallen tree branch at Greasbrough. Tenant reported again concerns of safety. Was reported to Wentworth Estates but no response received. DB to follow up with Wentworth Estates. MH visit the site to take a look at it but it is Wentworth Estate's responsibility.
3. MH has DB's keys, the chargers and 1 camera from High St. DB needs the keys back for the hedge survey. To drop off to BS. Camera had been reported missing by a tenant.

**291/10/21** (5) **Current position relating to Allotment Support Assistant**

DB is now back at work. BS/JP conducted a back-to-work meeting. Was decided that JT would keep the Alliance phone and get it repaired. A second phone will be obtained for DB to keep in contact with directors only. This number will not be given to tenants. DB and JT will communicate to ensure that all queries / messages are answered.

**292/10/21** (6) **Financial Matters**

1. AH expressed concern regarding the bank account for the disbanded society at Avenue Rd. Any rent payments need to be transferred into the RAA's account. The ex-treasurer still has all the account paperwork. The account needs to be frozen and closed and the funds transferred to the RAA as the society is no longer functioning and it is unlikely another society will be formed. It was asked if the money should be spent on that particular site. It was discussed that any non-rent related funds should be given back to the original source, i.e. Ward funds and any rent-related funds to be given to the RAA. Any monies should be held for 12 months to see if a society is re-established in this time. After which, it remains in the RAA funds.
2. AH expressed her apologies for not being able to attend the previous meeting.
3. AH and DB need to catch up on outstanding items – TBA. DB ran through what has been done: outstanding rent letters sent, the previous outstanding invoices have been paid and the current outstanding payments / invoices. A financial statement should be created every month and presented to the board. DB has done August and September statements.
4. DB advised that the reconciliation of Quickbooks has been completed.
5. Payment for £799 received from RMBC to reimburse for the laptop.
6. Next financial item to look at is the income / budget for 2022. Possibly need a separate meeting. The sub-committees are currently on hold so it will be added to a board meeting

agenda. An Officers meeting will take place alternate weeks so DB can report any outstanding issues to be resolved.

293/10/21

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

Meeting with Andy Lee regarding the solicitors. The RAA's solicitor has changed staff member again which is causing more delays. AL under impression that we don't need 30 separate leases, as advised by our solicitor. AL been asked to chase up to get solicitors to meet to resolve.

294/10/21

**(8) Society Update**

1. **Queen Street North** – Been in touch with the new secretary and got details of new officers / committee members. Need to ensure that the new committee follows the society rules.
2. **Broom Valley New** – chopped some trees down. Asked if RAA can help to get removed. Advised they are responsible – could use on fires or have a bonfire in November.
3. **Kimberworth Park** – tenant has asked how many people can be on a committee. Discussed that the committee need to ensure they are running correctly. AH advised that a minimum of 5 are required for quorum which is the 3 officers and 2 other members. It was suggested that if the site is struggling to get committee members, it could possibly partner up with another site. Getting committee members can be difficult. If committees cannot be properly formed, then it should be reverted to a direct-managed site. This is what the RAA wants to avoid and it also puts the rents up for the tenants. The RAA will get involved with societies if a complaint has been made about it.

**294/10/21a Directly Managed Sites**

- a. **Avenue Rd – Plot 12** – tenant says size of plot is incorrect. Plot needs remeasuring. **Plot 7** – Registered tenant needs to confirm change of tenancy to co-worker. **Plot 74** – incorrect address. Plot is not cultivated so will be terminated. **Plot 112** – advised they have paid the invoice. Possible that the payment has been made to the society bank account. DB to chase with the society ex-treasurer.
- b. **Rectory Field – Plot 9** – brambles growing into resident's garden – MH to take a look at it tomorrow. **Plot 62** – got a tenant who wants to take it on but wants it strimming first. It was discussed regarding using Restorative Justice on this site. A toilet can be hired. Directors offers of doing the work is appreciated but really should be doing emergency work only. MH to speak to Restorative Justice to ask if they can move to this site. **Plot 3 & 4** - tenant advised when they would be paying their outstanding invoice.
- c. **Moor Rd** – plan of action for Moor Rd. Dye testing showed it wasn't the flats. Suggestion that if the soakaway overflows, it could contribute but there has been no heavy rain to check this. It was discussed regarding getting the work done, however, there is no guarantee the work will resolve the problem. It was voted and agreed to get the work done. Funds will come out of the 2020 surplus.
- d. **High St** – tenant reported use of air rifles onsite. Emailed all tenants to advise they can't be used. Another tenant reported that they had hurt their ankle on the new path and can't push the pushchair on it.
- e. **St Leonard's Plot 14** – Rotherfed who are supporting the community group have asked if it needs to be registered as the group in order to be insured. Discussed that it may be the group's responsibility to get public liability insurance. Legally, only the registered tenant is covered by the current RMBC insurance so it would need to be changed to the community group and a list of members kept. Also, if the plot is only registered in one name, that person has overall control of the plot. It was suggested that a clause regarding charity / community groups be added to the tenancy agreement. **Plot 7** – shed key required - this has now been resolved.
- f. **Lowfield Avenue** – response received from Cllr Elliott regarding the fence. It was agreed that the Alliance would not change their decision on this matter.
- g. **Greasbrough – Plot 15** – plot was vacant and other tenants removing items. The plot is now re-tenanted.

295/10/21

**(9) Maintenance**

- a) **Broom Valley Old** – MH/AP had a meeting onsite with the society. The standard of work was below what was expected. The material put down isn't fit for purpose. Material was dumped on someone's plot and some plants were damaged. Material/rubble was also

left in the access road which does not belong to the allotments. The path created for access for the partially-sighted tenants is not safe for them. The work at High Street was slightly better but the same material was used. The rubble has been disturbed by a vehicle and exposing soil underneath. Burkinshaws were informed of further work being put on hold. Need to look at what Burkinshaws were asked to do and what they had quoted to do. DB advised the quotes advised *"To regrade existing footpath, To supply, lay and consolidate crushed materials, To supply of Banksman at all times"*. The quote for Broom Valley Old was done direct with a committee member, as was South Street. DB did High Street, Barnsley Rd and Avenue Rd and had requested that hardcore be used and was also advised by Bernard that a membrane would be put down. It was recommended that a meeting with Burkinshaws, the RAA and only 2 committee members be arranged onsite to go through the issues. Need to ensure that the problems are rectified to a satisfactory standard.

- b) DB has prepared a report of plots that need re-inspecting following cultivation feedback sent to tenants. DB to arrange with BS.
- c) Hedge cutting survey taking place with RMBC on Thursday 14<sup>th</sup> October.

**296/10/21**

**(10) NAS Membership Update**

1. It was discussed and decided that this will be organised once all tenants have been contacted to seek permission to pass on their details. It makes sense to send the permission form with the rent letters which are due in late November / early December.
2. Societies who have paid their membership for this year and submitted it to the RAA will be refunded.
3. It was brought to the board's attention regarding the rent letters, last year, tenants were advised about the AGM. It was suggested that a date for the 2022 be organised so this can also be communicated in the rent letter. A venue is the difficulty at the moment due to covid rules. DB to source a venue. Proposed dates were a Tuesday/Wednesday evening mid-March.

**297/10/21**

**(11) Grazing Licences**

JP circulated a draft grazing tenancy agreement to directors prior to meeting. RSPCA advice on maximum number of horses/ponies is one per acre and they have to be sheltered from adverse weather conditions. The size of Woodside would allow 3 maximum. JP contacted Andy Lee to enquire about the information required from Estates regarding current grazing tenancies. As we have not got the information, are we in a position to be able to rent them? Andy Lee has not received any update. It was asked if other animals could be placed on the site but it depends on the demand. Need to have the information before we can move forward with these sites.

**298/10/21**

**(12) Sandymount Rd / Mawsons Field Adoption**

Officers had a meeting with Andy Lee regarding the council's proposal for the sale of Mawson's field in Wath for housing as part of the local plan. Due to the legalities involved with the sale of statutory allotment land, RMBC have had a meeting with NAS who have proposed that the Alliance adopt Sandymount allotments which is currently leased to RMBC from Wentworth Estates. This land would be given to RMBC from Wentworth Estates, at possibly no cost, and its use changed to statutory allotment land. Sandymount was removed from the Alliance's portfolio last year due it to not being RMBC land and its condition. From looking at photos of the site, it appears that currently the site may be being used for non-allotment purposes. Money from the sale of the land has to be invested back into allotments and is estimated to be in the region of £1m-£1.5m. The Alliance would benefit from this, however, there is still some unused statutory allotment land run by the council which would also be a benefactor. Following discussion, the Board agreed in principle to accepting Sandymount Road allotments, Wath, as an RAA administered statutory allotment site as part of the proposed development of Mawsons Field allotment site and adjoining agricultural land for housing purposes on the understanding that RMBC agree to resolve the currently allotment tenancy issues at Sandymount Road and ensure that a fully constituted allotment society will continue future day to day management of the site. It was discussed that there are other areas of unused statutory allotment land nearby that are in a better condition than Sandymount Road and would be easier to revert back into allotment plots. It may be beneficial to offer this option. Getting Sandymount into a satisfactory condition would be a major job and the Alliance would want all the problems resolving first. Question was

asked regarding if the council would use the money from the sale of the land to resolve the issues. It was stated that probably not as the land is not currently statutory allotment land.

**299/10/21 (13) Greasbrough Tenants Shop**

A Tenant has asked if a shop can be established onsite. This had been requested previously and the RAA approved this on the condition that a proper committee was set up for the benefit of all tenants. It would be a society purely to run the shop, not the site. It was discussed regarding the use of the buildings on the site and charging a peppercorn rent. Requested use of a green lock-up but the Alliance does not have access to this currently. However, it was agreed that permission to use the lock-up will be granted on the condition that audited accounts are presented to the RAA every year. DB to write to tenant with director's proposal.

**300/10/21 (14) Future Actions**

**301/10/21 (15) Any Other Business**

It was suggested to organize a Christmas meal with directors and the Allotment Support Assistant. JT to organize.

**302/10/21 (16) Agenda Items for next meeting**

- 2022 budget

**303/10/21 (17) Date and Time of Next Meeting. (Meetings will be cancelled if not required).**

Officer's meeting Monday 18<sup>th</sup> October 2.00pm

Board meeting Monday 25<sup>th</sup> October at 2.00pm

BS thanked everyone for their attendance. The meeting was closed at 3.55pm.



Signed ..... (Chair)