

Rotherham Allotments Alliance

Board Meeting No.61

Held: Monday 6th December 2021

Meeting Location: Online: Zoom
(Minutes Donna Bushby)

Present: Directors: Brian Steele (BS) Chair, Mick Hirst (MH), John Palmer (JP), Jack Taylor (JT), Alice Parry (AP), Mohammed Suleman (MS), Cllr Dave Sheppard (DS).
Allotment Support Assistant - Donna Bushby (DB).

318/12/21 (1) **Apologies:** None sent.

319/12/21 (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 chair of South Street site.

320/12/21 (3) **Minutes of Board Meeting –25th October 2021.**
These were moved as a true record and duly signed (electronically) by the Chairperson.

321/12/21 (4) **Matters Arising**
None raised – covered in agenda.

322/12/21 (5) **Admin report – circulated to directors prior to meeting**

- a) **Avian Influenza** – housing measures now in place. Been publicized on Facebook/website and secretaries and direct-managed tenants have been emailed.
- b) **Re-Inspections** – letters sent to tenants who have not cultivated. A couple need double-checking and terminating if not cultivated/no-contact. Information on a couple of plots was passed on about Avenue Rd. DB has not received any notifications from the tenants.
- c) **Path Improvements** – DB has checked High St and it is satisfactory. JT has been to Broom Valley Old – remedial work has been completed to a satisfactory standard. Society accept that the work is now completed and the contractor can be paid. It was noted that the tenant who hindered the contractors on the first visit, also verbally abused them on the second visit. The works on the other sites can go ahead with the provision of proper materials being used. Need to discuss with Burkinshaws.

323/12/21 (6) **Financial Matters**

- a) **Treasurer Resignation** – AH emailed directors regarding tending her resignation as treasurer. BS asked for directors to volunteer for the post. It was discussed regarding the responsibilities and time per week required. AP was asked to consider the post and it will be discussed again at the next meeting. DB explained that the financial reporting aspect is quite simple using Quickbooks and Excel spreadsheets. AH was thanked for all her hard work and time spent in sorting out the bank account.
- b) **Water bills** – DB reported that we have not received any water bills following the change of supplier. A final demand for Greasbrough site has been received and on checking, all of the other accounts have been transferred to the new supplier, except this one. DB has chased up with Tim Archer. Without the water bills, calculating the amounts for the rents will be difficult. DB proposed to use figures from last year (with a 2% increase to cover any possible increases) and then make the adjustment on the rents for next year. Directors agreed with this action.

324/12/21 (7) **Transfer and Transitional arrangements RMBC to RAA (including SLA)**
DB has emailed the RAA solicitor for an update – awaiting a reply. Needs to be chased up and possibly a deadline put in place as it needs completing – gone on for too long. Has been delays on both sides. DS to contact Andy Lee to get progress report from RMBC.

325/12/21

(8) Society Update

Avenue Rd Bank Account – former treasurer suggested that RAA directors be put on the account so they have control over it due to funds being raised from activities on site. Currently don't know how much is in it. Former treasurer is waiting for statements to be sent from the bank. MH is still possibly named on the account. It was discussed that the money be transferred to the RAA and the account closed. The funds will then be 'ring-fenced' in our accounts. It was decided that it should be held for 18 months and tenants be contacted regarding setting up a new society and it being transferred back. A new account can then be set up for the society. If no society is set up, the money can then be spent on works on the site.

326/12/21

(9) Sub-Committees

a) Finance – minutes circulated prior to meeting

- i. Expenses for Directors / Volunteers** – discussed regarding when the volunteer policy was set up, it didn't include reimbursement of expenses due to it only including volunteers who are tenants on society sites. Expenses for directors, which is separate to volunteers, should be a separate section in Standing Orders to cover the policy for reimbursement of mileage etc. Directors need to put a claim in. However, expenses need to be kept to a minimum, i.e. car-share with each other / the ASA. This should be done only if it is safe and practical to do so. JP to amend the policy to include in Standing Orders for directors. For volunteers, DB has contacted Voluntary Action Rotherham in regard to advertising for volunteers. They expect volunteers to be reimbursed for transport and lunch if volunteering for over 5 hours. It was discussed that an amount of up to £4.50 can be reimbursed on production of a receipt for lunch. An amendment to the policy needs adding to include this. JP to action. We would not expect a massive amount of volunteers so the cost would not be that high. (Risk Assessments also need looking at for the volunteer programme – this can be discussed in the next maintenance meeting and completed accordingly.)
- ii. ASA Salary review** – BS awaiting guidance from Andy Lee – will chase up.
- iii. Budget Projections** – DB has completed this for up to 2024 and circulated to directors. It was discussed regarding surplus amount being categorised and being applied to capital projects that could not be covered by the £100k. It was suggested that we need to ensure that there are enough funds in the account to pay monthly bills. Rents for 2022 will start to be received after letters have gone out in next 2 weeks. DB to draft a budget for the capital projects. The reserve account also needs to be finalised – need to get the paperwork from AH.

b. Maintenance –

- i. Restorative Justice** – shed and works programme has all been arranged and work has started on the site.
- ii. Trees** – BS and DB did inspections on trees that had been reported. Work on Clough Bank has been agreed. DB advised that the contractor is busy so will do the job in January – date TBC. The RAA will not be repair the fence.
- iii. Clough Bank** – BS expressed concern regarding an area of this site which is massively overgrown and being dumped on. It was suggested that Restorative Justice could be used on the site. The land has been left derelict under the instruction of RMBC. It was discussed that if improvement works are being done, then societies need to look after the sites – need to work together. A meeting with site representatives would be beneficial. BS/AP/MH offered their assistance to meet with societies.

327/12/21

(10) Maintenance Update

- a) **Sandymount Rd** – meeting needs to be re-arranged with directors to view the site. will be arranged for the new year. Also need an update from RMBC regarding current position. It was agreed that we would take Sandymount on if it is passed on a good condition. BS/JT/JP have been authorised by the board to negotiate with Officers regarding this issue.
- b) **Broom Valley Old gate** – JT visited site and slider needs a minor adjustment. Will need an angle grinder to rectify. JT asked if anyone had one. It was discussed and agreed that a cordless one should be purchased which can be used on other sites if required.
- c) **High St** – enquiring regarding a prospective tenant who wants to keep pigeons. The board actioned that any historical pigeons can remain on site but new tenants would not be allowed to keep pigeons in order to promote use for cultivation only. Tenant asked about the responsibility of the fence between plots as a neighbouring tenant has removed one. Directors agreed that dividing fences are the responsibility of individual tenants and there is no specific ruling on it. Tenants need to decide between themselves regarding fences.
- d) **Grass cutting tender** – DB circulated a tender document to directors prior to the meeting. It was suggested that a section be added regarding the use of keys and removal of duplicated information. DB to amend and advertise to prospective companies/on website.
- e) **Pest Control** - It was reported that the visit to Avenue Rd was not made last month. DB to report to RMBC. DB and AP have been discussing regarding boxes etc. to give to sites. It was discussed using non-poison/humane traps which is better for the environment and more cost-effective. Question was asked regarding the training and DB is waiting for the invoice to pay for it. Those nominated should have received an email. DB to chase up.
- f) **Greasbrough site visit** – wildlife cameras are now up. Tenant reported regarding a tree which is on Wentworth Estates. Concerns about its safety. Wentworth Estates are aware of it but not taking any action. Tenants pleased they can now operate a shop. Tenant also attended a meeting with RADAA. It was discussed that the Alliance will work with RADAA where required.

328/12/21

(11) Future Actions

- a) **Invoices** – DB will be preparing invoices to be sent next week. Directors offered to help with putting the letters/envelopes together.
- b) **Christmas Leave** – DB is on annual leave for 2 weeks over Christmas. It was agreed that emails/calls will be monitored during this time for emergencies only. Normal office functions will be closed.

329/12/21

(12) Any Other Business

- a) **RMBC Meeting** - BS reported that BS/DB/DS will be attending a council meeting next week to report on progress with the allotments transfer. This will include an update on the lease transfer and the work done over the last year.
- b) **Reports** – DB will be producing the annual report for 2021 on her return from annual leave. It will include where the capital budget has been spent. The Business Plan will also need updating which the Finance Committee can look at.

330/12/21

(13) Agenda Items for next meeting

- As per this meeting
- Items for sub-committee meetings to be submitted to DB.

331/12/21

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

Finance sub-committee meeting - Monday 13th December 2021, 2pm.

Board meeting – Tuesday 4th January 2022, 2pm.

Maintenance sub-committee meeting – Monday 17th January 2022, 2pm.

BS thanked everyone for their attendance. The meeting was closed at 3.45pm.



Signed (Chair)