

Rotherham Allotments Alliance

Board Meeting No.65

Held: Monday 28th March 2022

Meeting Location: Online on Zoom
(Minutes Donna Bushby)

Present: Directors: Brian Steele (BS) Chair, John Palmer (JP), Mick Hist, (MH), Mohammed Suleman (MS), Jack Taylor (JT), Cllr Sheppard (DS), Cllr Rachel Hughes (RH)
Allotment Support Assistant - Donna Bushby (DB).

47/03/22 (1) **Apologies:** Alice Parry (AP).

48/03/22 BS opened the meeting and introduced the new director on behalf of RMBC – Cllr Rachel Hughes. All members introduced themselves and stated their position.

49/03/22 (2) **Declaration of Interest**

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

JT declared an interest as secretary on Wood St site.

MS declared an interest as a tenant on Clifton site.

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

BS declared an interest as the spouse of Cllr Rachel Hughes.

50/03/22 (3) **Minutes of previous Board Meeting –28th February 2022.**

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

51/03/22 (4) **Matters Arising**

As per agenda.

52/03/22 (5) **Admin report – circulated to directors prior to meeting**

- a) 1 new let done. Avenue Rd now only has 1 vacancy but the plot is in a poor condition – will need some clearance work – hedges cut down etc.
- b) Resident at Lowfield Ave reported poor condition of allotments – attracting rats. Wants to know if they will be cleaned up.
- c) Greasbrough break-in - fence damaged. Reported to police – got a crime number. Awaiting quote for fence repair. Resident is still accessing site through the new fence. Awaiting quote to weld panel permanently fixed.
- d) Barnsley Rd – reported plots being targeted with chicken theft – green string being tied on gates. Advised to report to police and put on Facebook. DB wasn't advised which plots were affected.
- e) Complaints of burning / smoke nuisance on Psalters Lane. Emailed tenant in question.
- f) Avenue Rd – fire brigade cut large gate lock off – needs repairing – DB to sort.
- g) Cockerel complaint from Barnsley Rd (different resident). Emailed site secretary who was already aware of it.

53/03/22 (6) **Financial Matters**

- a) Tenant of plot 12 – Avenue Rd. Tenant requested plot to be remeasured and also raised a point in the Allotments Act regarding the collected of rent. JP met with the tenant and remeasured the plot. However, it was difficult to get an accurate measurement due to a shed on the edge of the plot and overgrown hedges. Directors discussed regarding plot sizes and it was stated that historically, all plots used to be the same size / cost until RMBC had all the plots digitally mapped which made them all different due to movement in fences etc. Needs to be decided whether or not to accept the new measurements as it could have further implications. Tenant was asked regarding the points about rent payments and they just relayed the point in the Act regarding paying rents quarterly, not annually. Db has emailed Liz at NAS for further advice on this – awaiting a response. It was discussed that any arrears should not be refunded as the tenant has had the plot for 4 years and only just highlighting the issue. Also, plots are taken as seen so any sheds etc. on the plots are the responsibility of the registered tenant if they want to remove

them to make more growing space. If any decisions are not to the tenant's satisfaction, they are welcome to terminate their tenancy.

- b) DB circulated an interim March statement to directors prior to the meeting. Funds in the bank account this morning - £73,070.28. No outstanding invoices. £11,667.32 expenditure this month due to the grass and hedge cutting invoices being paid.
- c) Rents - £44,222.74 paid to date (68.2%). £20,608.30 outstanding. £6500 cheques to clear in bank.
- d) DB attended a number of webinars on funding: National Lottery Heritage / People's Postcode Lottery / Tesco Community Foundation / Comic Relief. All are potential funders for future projects. RAA falls into most requirements: improving local community / mental health and well-being / economical & social recovery / food insecurity / improving access to green spaces. Would need to put projects together in order to submit bids. Funding ranges from £500 to £250k+ (each one varies / different categories).
- e) DB attended Quickbooks training at VAR. found out information about budgeting, tracking expenditure and year end accruals.
- f) Online banking format has been updated.

54/03/22

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

- a) Emailed Andy Lee to ask regarding update. RAA Solicitor has responded to say that the new invoicing instruction has been confirmed and has requested further information from RMBC's solicitor. Solicitor still advising regarding the suitability of the lease but this is going to be addressed. Awaiting further updates.
- b) DB has emailed York allotments to ask advice on their lease which does not include the legal transfer of the land titles. Was discussed that this may be due to the short term (7 years) of the lease.

55/03/22

(8) Society Update

- a) Clough Bank have asked for a second skip as they didn't have one last year – directors approved a second skip.
- b) Herringthorpe Valley Rd: stand-in secretary been in contact. They have now had an AGM and recruited new committee members. Will be sending and required paperwork to the RAA in due course. Constitution has been updated and improvements made to the site including CCTV signs and refurbished notice boards.
- c) Barnsley Rd – DB had a meeting with the secretary and treasurer on site. Want to change priority from paths to perimeter fencing due to gaps in existing fence. Directors agreed that this can be done, if acceptable with RMBC. DB to ask Andy Lee if the paths bid can be withdrawn and a fence bid submitted. Will need to get quotes for the fences.
- d) Wharf Rd – committee member got in touch regarding a plot which is not cultivated, tenant says they are disabled. Society would like to know how to deal with this situation with regard to getting it cultivated / removing the tenant. Have already sent the tenant letters / offered assistance but been refused. It was discussed by directors that they should again write to the tenant to offer available options – help on the plot / reduce the plot size / look at getting funding for raised beds / terminate the tenancy. Need to be inclusive, but also ensure that the rules of the allotment are followed. DB to draft a letter on the societies behalf for them to send.

56/03/22

(9) Sub-Committees

Maintenance – 14.03.22

- a) Nature Recovery Rotherham – needed board decision as to whether to support this organisation. As it is not a political group, the board voted in favour joining up. DS advised it could be linked to climate change and biodiversity efforts which the council are involved in.
- b) Volunteer Policy – JP asked regarding the policy being discussed and updated, incorporating the Rotherham Kitemark standards from VAR. JP has already started to update the policy and DB has produced a volunteer induction checklist which needs including. Who would carry out the induction would need deciding – i.e. the RAA or society representative? It was discussed regarding who is considered a volunteer – policy currently states that it only includes tenants volunteering on their own site. Society sites would therefore be doing their own inductions etc. when completing projects. It was suggested that a paragraph be inserted to differentiate between volunteers on their own site and those that may come from an outside organisation. It was agreed that the RAA would only use external volunteers for specific projects, where required. This will

include any provision for the payment of travel / lunch expenses, if applicable. JP/DB to finalise the policy changes then submit to next board meeting. It was then discussed regarding director's expenses such as mileage as BS stated he didn't want anyone to be out of pocket from travelling to sites. BS suggested that it should be in a separate policy, not in the volunteer policy. This was then debated as to the reasons why. It was agreed that it should be added to the Financial Regulations. A point was then raised regarding directors needing Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks. It was discussed whether these were actually required or not, due to them not directly working with vulnerable people. children. DB is DBS checked as part of her employment contract with RMBC. JP advised they were not required in the Community Benefit Society rules. RH stated that they didn't think they were required. It was also requested that the meeting be conducted through the Chairperson, as it was difficult to follow the meeting as a new member due to individuals speaking at the same time. DB to investigate if DBS checks are required.

57/03/22

(10) Maintenance Update

- a) **Paths – DB has** contacted Burkinshaws advising of change of site for paths to Avenue Rd – awaiting a response.
- b) **Kimberworth Park** – getting a new contractor to look at the damaged shed. Contractor quoted £280 to make good the brickwork and repoint other areas.
- c) **Pest Control** – purchased a key to fit the boxes. Need to purchase poison. Been given name of a company – Killgerm. DB is setting up an account with them. DB / MH to organise storage / distribution etc. for the poison.
- d) **Trees** – given Kimberworth Park the instruction to have conifers removed.
- e) **Signs & Plot Numbers** – proofs been sent, just need final approval before going to print.
- f) **Moor Rd** – emailed SY Police regarding costs for gate repairs. Been passed to the legal department.

58/03/22

(11) AGM

- a) Director appointment – BS/JP/DB met online with Kris who is looking to take up the treasurer's role. He would be added as a specialist director due to his background in finance. DB advised that the other applicant for a director position will be attending the AGM.
- b) JT has requested to step down as secretary but would still like to be on the board so will be going up for re-election at the AGM. BS asked if other directors would consider taking on this position.
- c) JP raised point about the section of the Business Plan which identifies working with societies and the plan to have bi-annual society meetings. Need to ensure that societies will support this and how the meetings will be conducted – Zoom / In-person and what the content will be? All societies need to be involved as there is no point if all don't become engaged. JP will lead the discussion on this during the AGM.
- d) Tenant questions – directors briefly discussed the 5 questions that have been submitted for the AGM. 2 were more related to maintenance issues. The others can be raised at the meeting. The question regarding a community page / blog will be investigated by DB.

59/03/22

(12) Director Skills Audit

Only JP and DS had submitted the audit form. Other directors asked for it to be sent again. JT reported he was having problems with it due to his current location.

60/03/22

(13) Future Actions

None raised.

61/03/22

(14) Any Other Business

- a) BS raised an issue brought to his attention by Cllr Ian Jones who had been contacted regarding a tenant application for South St allotments. DB was aware of the issue due to communications with the member of the public but had not been contacted by Cllr Jones directly. BS will speak to the society to ascertain the issue then go through the grievance procedure if necessary.

61/03/22

(15) Agenda Items for next meeting

- AGM review
- Sub-committees – appointment for new directors

62/03/22

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

Finance sub-committee meeting – Monday 11th April 2022, 2pm - Zoom.

Board meeting – Monday 25th April 2022, 2pm – Clifton Park

BS thanked everyone for their attendance both in person and online. The meeting was closed at 3.40pm.



Signed (Chair)