

Rotherham Allotments Alliance

Board Meeting No.68

Held: Monday 20th June 2022

Meeting Location: Clifton Park / Online on Zoom

(Minutes Donna Bushby)

Present: Directors: Brian Steele (BS) Chair, Mick Hirst (MH), Jack Taylor (JT), Tess Sheen (TS), Cllr Dave Sheppard (DS), Mohammed Suleman (MS) and Allotment Support Assistant - Donna Bushby (DB).

On Zoom: John Palmer (JP),

93/06/22 (1) **Apologies:** Cllr Rachel Hughes and Kris Edwards.

94/06/22 (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.

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

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

MS declared an interest as a tenant on Clifton site.

95/06/22 (3) **Minutes of previous Board Meeting –23rd May 2022**

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

96/06/22 (4) **Matters Arising**

All addressed in agenda / admin report.

97/06/22 (5) **Admin report – circulated to directors prior to meeting**

- a) Clifton visit made to site regarding allegation of cannabis growing – no evidence found of this. Also had a break-in.
- b) Reports of theft / lock damage at High St, Rectory Field and Avenue Rd.
- c) Fire complaints at Rectory Field and High St.
- d) Letter been sent to resident next to Rectory Field site regarding position of fence and access gate to allotments. No response received as yet.
- e) Report of fly-tipping and arson at Psalters Lane. Contacted tenant who it is possibly linked to. Have arranged for local PCSO to visit site with SmartWater to protect tenant's belongings from theft. This was 25th June but postponed to 2nd July.
- f) Newsletter has been emailed to all direct-managed tenants we have an email for and all secretaries.
- g) Cockerel noise and smoke complaint received via RMBC for Vicarage Fields. Spoke to secretary. DB and MH visited the site but did not witness any cockerel noise on the visit.
- h) Moor Rd – bank details been requested by South Yorkshire Police so getting reimbursed for the gate damage.
- i) Broom Valley Old reported a break-in. Want the top perimeter looking at as may need to be made more secure.
- j) *Addition not circulated* – Greasbrough – plot 45 – getting a new tenant but has got a number of tyres on plus an asbestos garage which is dilapidated and unuseable. Directors approved for quote to be obtained to remove the tyres and the garage. It was agreed that the new tenant should be responsible for any other rubbish on the site.
- k) *Addition not circulated* – Fence repaired at High St – pail been bent by tree so fixed back into place. JT has also weed-killed the rest of the cleared plots at Rectory Field. Any remaining will be the responsibility of the new tenant.

98/06/22

(6) Financial Matters

- a) Bank Balance: as @ 20.06.22 - Current account balance: £30,182.62, Reserve Account: £43,113.23. Surplus money has been transferred into Reserve account and a spreadsheet is being kept to monitor the expenditure from this account.
- b) Budget comparison was explained. 57% of this year's expenditure budget has been spent. This includes the £4000 solicitor bill which we will be reimbursed for.
- c) Rent Payments – 1 tenant left to pay. DB was thanked by directors for the work on this.
- d) FCA 2021 Accounts – finalising the submission and will be sent before the end of June.
- e) Match funding for Avenue Rd skips been approved. Need to organise a date.
- f) Treasurer has commented that they are struggling to make meetings. It was discussed to find out what would be most convenient for them and other directors. A Zoom meeting to be set up with BS, JP and DB with KS to find out what his preferences are.

99/06/22

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

- a) Solicitor was contacted with a question regarding adding a schedule of buildings to the lease which was brought up in the finance meeting. No response as yet.
- b) It was discussed regarding the cost liability should land contamination occur on sites.
- c) Andy Lee not responded regarding request for meeting. DB to request again.
- d) It was discussed regarding the insurance response regarding trusted person's liability. DB to look further into the policy documents to ensure we will be fully covered.

100/06/22

(8) Society Update

- a) Broom Valley New – BS / MH / DB visited the site before the board meeting to discuss some security issues. Been identified that access is being gained over the council-owned garages which are at the front of the site. DB to contact Housing to look at what the solution could be. Would need permission to attach anything to the garages. Site has CCTV but the suspects have hoodies on so can't identify them local PCSO's could be contacted. Also been made aware of a section of chain-link fence next to a residential property which is leaving the site vulnerable. Directors agreed to get a price to rectify this. It was discussed regarding leaving valuable items on sites and it is recommended that anything of value is not left in sheds etc. The hedges at the bottom of the site were also not cut. DB to contact Grounds Maintenance to investigate this. Also asked for reimbursement for the cost of replacement locks to the building onsite. Directors agreed the expenditure but it was stressed that approval should be first sought before the job gets completed. This would be added to the agenda of the society forum meeting.
- b) Vicarage Fields – water pipes work has been done – awaiting invoice.
- c) Barnsley Rd - can use the Ward funds previously sought to purchase a container. Access to bank account / names changed needs to be completed. Site is getting a donation towards works on the site. Possibly need to look at other contractors to do works as Burkinshaws still can't give a date.
- d) It was then discussed regarding when societies are doing work funded by the RAA, risk assessments should be done before the work takes place as it would come under the volunteer policy and would cover the RAA for insurance purposes. This should become part of the agreement in the RAA funding being approved. It will be added to the society forum meeting agenda.
- e) Society Forum Meeting: discussed regarding the content of the society forum meeting and what items will be discussed. The following were proposed, but not all necessarily need to be discussed in the first meeting:
 - i. Constitutions, Trustees, and the dissolution of societies
 - ii. NAS membership
 - iii. Hardship Policy for society-managed tenants
 - iv. Preferred Communication methods with societies
 - v. Freedom of Information Act
 - vi. Information passed between committee members / to tenants
- f) It was discussed that it would be stressed to societies that the RAA does not want to tell societies how to run sites but the RAA has a duty of care to take control if societies are having problems.

101/06/22

(9) Sub-Committees

Finance meeting took place 6th June (copy of minutes circulated prior to meeting):

- a) Hardship Policy – JP drafted a policy, which was circulated prior to the meeting, to identify the procedure when tenant's may have difficulty in paying their rent in one payment. It was agreed that a £5 admin charge be added to anyone who wanted to pay in instalments. Directors agreed the proposed policy.
- b) Rental Payment deadline – it was discussed regarding changing the payment deadline to February, rather than March, as this leaves the termination process too late into the growing season. The deadline at the end of February would allow for plots to be terminated by the end of March and will allow for plots to be re-tenanted quicker. Directors approved this motion and will be worded appropriately on the next rental invoices.

102/06/22 (10) Maintenance Update

- a) Discussed regarding addressing the amount of rubbish accumulated on sites and the best way to get it removed. It was stated that a lot of waste is historical and has been there a number of years. It may be that one site a year is concentrated on to have a waste-removal project. The responsibility of tenants / committees also needs to be re-iterated and zero tolerance so that future dumping is avoided. The Alliance is still in its infancy so is still dealing with the historical problems. To assist with this, plots will be monitored when let and photographs taken of the current condition. Tenants currently have 3 months to make improvements when the plot is taken on.
- b) Rectory Field – Community Payback have moved some more rubbish into the skip. A grab-wagon has been booked to remove the rest of the rubbish into the skip/wagon and the skip removed.
- c) Pest Control – reports from sites that the poison bags are not being touched. It was decided that the bags should be cut open at the corner to entice the rates. The bait can be bought loose so it would not affect the legality of using it/ Future poison bought will be loose, not in bags.
- d) Greasbrough – awaiting details of a quote for the replacement of the door and window - £480.00.
- e) Trees – got price for St Leonard's - £500, Broom Valley Court – £250. Needs approval. DB to also get a quote from a contractor that has been recommended by Broom Valley New secretary.
- f) Burkinshaws – still waiting for dates when they can do the paths
- g) Avenue Rd – overhanging bushes – tenant will cut back once nesting season is over.

103/06/22 (11) Direct Emails / Access to Information

- a) It was suggested that individual email addresses be created for directors so that if a director leaves, access to emails / allotment business can be stopped. DB to look into this. These wouldn't be required for councillor's emails as they are protected through RMBC's system.

104/06/22 (12) Future Actions

- a) Plot inspections need doing. Same people to do them this year to create consistency DB / BS will set up.
- b) Rotherham Show – 3rd / 4th September. Need to consider what will be done. Discussed same as last year with the giveaways / competition. DB to source seeds / prizes etc. JT to look at compiling a new quiz – one for adults, one for children. DB to also look at some branded T-shirts for directors standing on the stall. Directors to advise DB on their availability on the days of the show. JP offered his apologies as he wont be able to attend.

105/06/22 (13) Any Other Business

- a) DB will be on annual leave for the next meeting. JP to take minutes. Requested that anyone who contacts us state their site and plot number as this helps to follow up any queries. JP to take the laptop and BS to have the phone. DB will also advise her working hours during the school holidays.
- b) JT to pass on the spare locks and keys to BS whilst he is unavailable.

106/06/22 (14) Agenda Items for Next Meeting

- Maintenance – 04.07.22 – Waste removal project.
- Board – 18/7/22 – TBC

107/06/22 (15) Date and Time of Next Meeting. (Meetings will be cancelled if not required).

Finance sub-committee meeting – Monday 6th June 2022, 2pm - Zoom.
Board meeting – Monday 18th July 2022, 2pm – Clifton Park / Zoom

BS thanked everyone for their attendance both in person and online. The meeting was closed at 4.00pm.



Signed (Chair)