

Rotherham Allotments Alliance

Board Meeting No.71

Held: Monday 12th September 2022

Meeting Location: Online - Zoom

(Minutes Donna Bushby)

Present: Directors: Brian Steele (BS) Chair, John Palmer (JP) Vice-Chair, Jack Taylor (JT), Mick Hirst (MH), Mohammed Suleman (MS), Tess Sheen (TS), Cllr Rachel Hughes (RH), ASA: Donna Bushby (DB)

138/09/22 (1) **Apologies:** Cllr Dave Sheppard (DS) and Kris Edwards (KE)

139/09/22 (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.

MS declared an interest as a tenant on Clifton site.

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

140/09/22 (3) **Minutes of previous Board Meeting –15th August 2022**

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

141/09/22 (4) **Matters Arising**

All addressed in agenda / admin report.

142/09/22 (5) **Admin report – circulated to directors prior to meeting**

a) Lowfield Avenue – resident complaint about state of allotments and a tree shading garden.

Discussed that as the tree isn't dangerous, no need to cut it back. Suggested to have a meeting on site with the resident to discuss their concerns.

b) Psalters Lane – tenant reported that their friend received aggressive behaviour from someone regarding a pile of wood -chippings left in a public area. DB trying to find out who it is and will contact all tenants to remind them of conduct.

c) Complaint from resident via RMBC regarding trees at Hartley Lane damaging fence. DB has contacted site secretary to find out more information.

143/09/22 (6) **Financial Matters**

a) DB to arrange a meeting with KE, BS and JP to discuss treasurer position.

b) Bank accounts reported as at 05.09.22 – Current - £24,632.50, Reserve: £ 38,136.43

c) Number of payments approved by BS last week. Current balance @ 12.09.22 is £22,261.69.

d) Discussed at last finance sub-committee meeting –

i. Budgets for 2023 will be prepared by DB / JP / finance committee and presented to the board at October's board meeting, for decision on rent increase.

ii. Rent increase letters will also be prepared. Need to ensure it is worded correctly. Discussed pros and cons regarding emailing invoices to tenants. Main benefit would be reduced cost of postage etc. Don't have email addresses on file for approx. 20% of tenants. DB advised that Colony can generate letters for those without emails. Bulk email systems also show if emails have been delivered, but not read. DB to send out email to all tenants to inform them of receiving invoices by email with the offer of receiving by letter if preferred. It was also suggested to put notices on gates informing tenants. DB to check that the emailing system works correctly as there was an issue with it.

iii. It was requested that the financial reports (Revenue/Expense and balance sheets) be presented at board meetings as well as the finance sub-committee meeting.

144/09/22

(7) Secretary Position

- a) JT had previously tendered stepping down as secretary of the organization in light of time being spent out of the country. Directors were asked if anyone would be interested in becoming secretary. JT then expressed that he was happy to continue, as his circumstances have changed, if the board were in agreement. The board agreed for JT to continue and it was suggested to possibly create an assistant secretary role but majority of the work is carried out by DB.
- b) Directors then discussed an application for a new board member. The tenant in question attended the forum meeting. DB to arrange a meeting with them, BS and JP to discuss. The final decision will then be made at the next board meeting.

145/09/22

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

- a) DB read out an email update from the solicitor. In short, outstanding issues include unregistered land on a few sites. This would mean that RMBC would not have the authority to lease the land to the RAA if proof of ownership not verified and could be possibly be taken out of the lease. It was stated that it was unlikely the land in question would be taken out of the lease. Was also highlighted regarding the lane at Avenue Rd whereby a resident/tenant has built a garage onto allotment land. It was explained that Andy Lee has confirmed that the authority would deal with this matter and wouldn't be the responsibility of the RAA. This would need to be reflected in the lease. Access issues from residential properties into the allotments was also mentioned as this would need addressing, especially on Avenue Rd where some boundary fences between plots and gardens have been taken down. It was asked if a completion date could be given to tenants but it was stated this would not be possible due to the ongoing issues.

146/09/22

(9) Society Update –

- a) Broom Valley Old – BS gave a brief explanation of complaints made by 2 tenants on the site regarding water / hosepipe use and disability/racial discrimination. BS and MH met with both the tenants and the committee, separately, to resolve the issue. Both the committee and the tenants were sent letters with the outcome. It was suggested that this may be an ongoing issue, but BS and MH will continue to deal with it.
- b) The discussion on the above issue brought to light the situation around water usage / conservation on all sites and tenant education. This was added as an agenda item for the next meeting.
- c) Shareholder's Forum – went very well and good to see tenants talking to each other. Issues such as cockerels and water usage were mentioned. It was identified that looking into the differing rules sites have would be beneficial, i.e. some society sites ban hosepipe use altogether.

147/09/22

(10 / 11) Sub-Committees & Maintenance

Items discussed together

- a) Moor Rd – contractor has advised work can start in October. Discussed regarding treating the Mare's Tail and it was suggested to buy weed killer to give to tenants / or a director does it. This was advised against due to the qualifications / proper equipment needed to be able to spray commercially and from an insurance point of view. It was agreed to readdress before the growing season next year as this is when it is best to treat it. the clearance work will also be done by then.
- b) Rectory Field – the 6 cleared plots have each been split into 2, with a view to further rubbish removal. DB to arrange the asbestos removal.
- c) Greasbrough – quote of £650 obtained for toilet door/window repair. DB to get 1 more.
- d) Pest Control – been working well. Some sites have had extra boxes. St Leonard's has been added and Rectory Field will be added. DB to order boxes / traps.
- e) Avenue Rd - discussed regarding work not being done on the site. It was suggested that a meeting be set up but then agreed that contacting all tenants direct is fairer, to ask them what their priority would be- water or paths. DB to contact tenants with a questionnaire.
- f) South Street – quote obtained from 3rd company for shed doors. Directors approved this work.

148/09/22

(12) Cockerels

- a) Debated regarding the law surrounding cockerels and other livestock on allotments. From research, it was stated that some councils do allow other animals in certain areas / small holdings. It was decided that the RAA would not allow ducks / geese etc. as RMBC never did due to

contravention of the law. The whole issue is down to policing and pursuing complaints. This is made more difficult as RMBC did not enforce the rules.

- b) It was agreed to write to all tenants with a reminder of the law, terms of their tenancy agreements and what is permitted on the allotments. This can be done with the letter sent out with rental invoices.

149/09/22 (13) Rotherham Show Feedback

- a) Very positive feedback from both days was reported to the board. The competition / seeds went down well. Suggestions made for next year: business cards and a professionally made display board. Directors agreed these.

150/09/22 (14) Future Actions

- a) Site risk assessments to be arranged.

151/09/22 (15) Any Other Business

- a) Disappointment was expressed for the meeting with Andy Lee, especially in relation to the ASA salary payment agreement. It was felt that this works well and also supports both the ASA and the RAA. It was suggested that this arrangement should be kept on until at least the lease is signed. There has been some recent lack of support from the authority and was brought to directors attention that the SLA states that at least 3 meetings a year with RMBC need to take place. Also still have the situation with Sandymount Rd. The RAA had stated that they would be willing to take the site on if RMBC to responsibility of its current condition and mis-use but this seemed to be dismissed. It was concluded that a letter to be sent to the council, from the board, to convey the dissatisfaction of the situation as very little support has been received recently and no consideration made to the volunteers and also day to day operations. DS is the cabinet member involved with this so needs to be involved.

152/09/22 (16) Agenda Items for Next Meeting

- Finance / budget / rents
- Water usage
- Society Forum meeting

153/09/22 (17) Date and Time of Next Meeting.

Finance sub-committee meeting – Monday 26th September 2pm - Zoom.
Board Meeting – Monday 10th October, 2pm – Clifton Park, Zoom

BS thanked everyone for their attendance. The meeting was closed at 3.40pm.



Signed (Chair)