

Rotherham Allotments Alliance

Board Meeting No.72

Held: Monday 10th October 2022

Meeting Location: Garden Room, Clifton Park
(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 Dave Sheppard (DS), Sue Jackson (SJ)
ASA: Donna Bushby (DB)

BS started the meeting by asking everyone to introduce themselves to SJ as they are a new director.

154/10/22 **(1) Apologies:** Cllr Rachel Hughes (RH)

155/10/22 **(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.

SJ declared an interest as tenant on Rectory Field site.

156/10/22 **(3) Minutes of previous Board Meeting –12th September 2022**

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

157/10/22 **(4) Matters Arising**

All addressed in agenda / admin report.

158/10/22 **(5) Admin report – circulated to directors prior to meeting**

- a) Avenue Rd – tenant been emailing regarding the removal of cockerels and questioning an Officers decision on not allowing a self-managing society to be formed. Also been asking questions regarding the pest control on the site. DB reported only one cockerel could be heard on a recent visit, with a muted crow. It was discussed that Environmental Health should support the RAA on the matter and issue fines where applicable. It was then put to the board to ratify the Officers decision on a self-managing society not being formed. The board voted unanimously in favour of not allowing a society to be formed (MH/TS did not vote due to declaration of interest.). It was discussed regarding the pest control and agreed that this practice is being done as per the legislation required. DB advised that the legislation has changed and there is a new training course (doesn't apply to training certificates issued prior to 31.08.22). DB is doing this course. It was advised that the new information be sent to those already qualified so they can update themselves. DB has asked tenants if they want a snap trap, rather than bait. It has been suggested by a tenant that there were more rats following the cockerels being removed. It was agreed that this is unlikely.
- b) Hartley Lane trees – BS and DB visiting the residential property to view the trees.
- c) Fire / smoke nuisance reports from Rectory Fields, Vicarage Fields and South Street. DB contacted all tenants / societies involved.
- d) Email received regarding a tree scheme which could be beneficial to an unused area at Wood St. JT to liaise with resident. It was discussed that the area may need some clearance. It was suggested to speak to Rebecca Dickinson, Tree Officer, at RMBC. DB to make contact. It was discussed regarding the terms of the lease for permission to plant trees.
- e) GDPR training – DB learned that the current CCTV signs on the gates are not GDPR-compliant. It was suggested all directors (not councillors) and DB do the training as it would be useful. It was agreed for 8 directors to do it. DB to arrange and also to look into extra gate signs.
- f) BS thanked MH and DB for visiting sites and completing / administrating the risk assessments.

158/10/22

(6) Financial Matters

- a) The treasurer, Kris, submitted his resignation due to work commitments. Currently, BS is the main contact for the bank accounts but DB does all the transactions. It was asked for directors to put themselves forward, if they are interested – speak to DB. Or, if they know someone who would be suitable. The treasurer does not necessarily need to attend all board meetings, as long as they submit financial reports.
- b) DB reported current financial status:
 - i. Current account - £15,088.39
 - ii. Reserve account - £43,148.57
 - iii. Some payments to approve – BS to do.
 - iv. Updated Budget V Actuals report and proposed 2023 budget sent to directors prior to meeting. Works done on Rectory Field will be taken from the revenue account as a surplus for this year was identified.
- c) It was then decided to discuss the finance sub-committee meeting item as it is related.
- d) Minutes from the Finance sub-committee meeting on 23.09.22 were circulated to directors prior to the meeting. It was discussed regarding the proposed 2023 budget and showing that all the budget for 2022 had been accounted for. A 5% increase on rents for 2023 and notice of a 5% increase on 2024 rents was proposed by the sub-committee. It was suggested that there is a possibility that rents may be slightly higher than budgeted due to plots being put back into cultivation. The small surplus on the proposed budget reflects amounts budgeted for in certain areas. It was highlighted that the finances have been managed well this year and extra works have been able to be completed. Other projects have been looked at and are currently in-hand. It was voted in favour for the recommendations to be carried out.
- e) It was discussed regarding SJ being a new director and allocating a sub-committee position. It was suggested that SJ join the finance sub-committee which she duly accepted.
- f) Drafts of the letters to send to tenants and site secretaries were circulated to directors prior to the meeting. It was suggested regarding the inclusion of what animals are permitted on the sites, and a deadline given to tenants to remove any non-permitted animals. This was voted in favour. JP will look at the wording. Letters will be checked again before being sent out.
- g) The finance committee were thanked for their work on this matter.

159/10/22

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

- a) No update has been received. DB to contact solicitor.

160/10/22

(8) Society Update –

- a) South Street – request for an overgrown plot to be removed from their invoice due to it being difficult to clear. Had been suggested to them to allow someone on their waitlist to do it, in lieu of paying rent. Asked why it has only just been raised and it was advised that the society had planned to clear it themselves but this hasn't been possible. Debated regarding what best course of action is. It was suggested that it be discussed again at the next meeting and BS to do a site visit.
- b) Wood St – date for grab wagon – DB will book this in.
- c) Broom Valley Old – tenants contacted DB again following a letter received which concluded that the works on their allotment was their own responsibility. DB has consulted with Rotherham Sight & Sound, RNIB and the National Allotment Society on this matter who agree that all reasonable adjustments have been made. BS and DB having a meeting with the committee to draft a final written confirmation of responsibilities to be sent to the tenants.
- d) It was discussed regarding the risk assessments which generally cover public areas, but the RAA also has a responsibility to highlight any unsafe buildings etc. on a tenant's individual plot. This will be taken into consideration when done in future.
- e) Wharf Rd – still having issue with a long-term uncultivated plot. Tenant been contacted a number of times and advised they need to cultivate. It was suggested that the tenant be sent a letter to warn them to cultivate by the end of the year, or the tenancy will not be renewed.
- f) Clough Bank – following a site visit, a tenant approached the RAA regarding the overgrown land that has not been used for a number of years. Tenant would like to clear the area (14 plots) and cultivate it themselves. Discussed regarding possible issues with one tenant taking on that amount of plots – would also need to be offered to waitlist. The RAA would be responsible for funding skips etc. Could also be done by Community Payback. Needs to be discussed with the committee. DB has emailed the secretary.

g) Forum Meeting – date confirmed as 15th November, 6.30pm at the Unity Centre.

161/10/22 (9) Sub-Committees

Item discussed in conjunction with finance.

162/10/22 (10) Maintenance

- a) BS reported he was very pleased with the work that has been done on Rectory Fields. The car park has been measured up and will hopefully be done in the near future. DB to order the weed cover and hardcore and speak to Community Payback to arrange the work.
- b) Lowfield Avenue will be looked at.
- c) Moor Rd – quotes received to turn new ditch into a French drain and install new drainage to existing ditch from path. Tenants will be responsible for keeping the ditch clear at the back of their plots. Discussed regarding who is responsible for the flap on the pipe at the end of the site, draining into the dyke. The drain works quote was accepted, pending investigation into the flap on the pipe. Clearance works were delayed due to the weather but due to start this week.
- d) Greasbrough quote – still awaiting another quote.
- e) Vicarage Fields – quotes received to either cut back or remove the tree which is hanging into a resident's garden. It was pointed out that there is a clause in the RMBC lease that states they need to be informed if any tree work is being done. It was suggested that RMBC should still be responsible for trees as the lease has not been signed. It was argued that the RAA would be responsible as they are operating the allotments. Work on trees has already been carried out. It was carried that the expenditure is approved if required. DB to contact Andy Lee to confirm.

163/10/22 (11) RAA / Director Confidentiality

- a) It was brought to BS attention that information regarding a director had been leaked to a third party. Directors were reminded that the only information released from board meetings are the minutes. Everything else is in the strictest confidence. This also applies when speaking to tenants onsite as information can be used against the RAA. This can lead to more complaints. Tenants should be referred to board meetings for details on decision made etc.

164/10/22 (12) Future Actions

- a) High Street locks to be changed.

165/10/22 (13) Any Other Business

- a) Risk assessments – discussed regarding these being done on society sites. Agreed that the form to be sent to all secretaries and the offer of assistance given if required and can be discussed at the forum in November.
- b) DB advised annual leave for 24.10.22 – 31.10.22. Monitoring of the phone and emails arranged with directors.
- c) DB to arrange another bunch of keys.
- d) BS thanked DS for liaising with Andy lee on the outstanding issues.
- e) A point was raised regarding the negative publicity recently received and it would be beneficial to publicise all the positive works on the sites. A press release should be devised to help celebrate all the hard work that has been done and show people what is being done.
- f) Hi vis vests have been ordered for site visits. When visiting sites, it was advised to go accompanied and not alone.

166/10/22 (14) Agenda Items for Next Meeting

- TBC

167/10/22 (15) Date and Time of Next Meeting.

Maintenance – 24th October 2022 - Zoom

Board – 7th November 2022 – Clifton Park

Finance – 21st November 2022 - Zoom

BS thanked everyone for their attendance. The meeting was closed at 3.30pm.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "B. Seal". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping initial "B".

Signed (Chair)