

Rotherham Allotments Alliance

Board Meeting No.73

Held: Monday 7th November 2022

Meeting Location: Garden Room, Clifton Park
(Minutes Donna Bushby)

Present: Directors: Brian Steele (BS) Chair, John Palmer (JP) Vice-Chair, Jack Taylor (JT), Mohammed Suleman (MS), Tess Sheen (TS), Cllr Dave Sheppard (DS), Sue Jackson (SJ)
ASA: Donna Bushby (DB)

168/11/22 **(1) Apologies:** Cllr Rachel Hughes (RH), Mick Hirst (MH)

169/11/22 **(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.

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

SJ declared an interest as tenant on Rectory Field site.

170/11/22 **(3) Minutes of previous Board Meeting –10th October 2022**

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

171/11/22 **(4) Matters Arising**

- a) An Officers meeting took place just prior to the board meeting to discuss reducing the number of board meetings and having Officer meetings instead to address any outstanding issues. Board meetings should be primarily for policy – setting and will allow DB to focus more on sourcing outside funding. DB to draft a meeting schedule for 2023 and present to the next board meeting. All directors agreed this.
- b) Other items addressed in agenda / admin report.

172/11/22 **(5) Admin report – circulated to directors prior to meeting**

- a) Reports of fire / smoke nuisance on 2 sites.
- b) Greasbrough had a tap / stand-pipe broken but a tenant has repaired it.
- c) High St – work taking place on the cemetery so the overhanging trees will be cut back. Bereavement Services Manager at RMBC has for tenants to be reminded not to use the church bins for allotment waste. It was stated it was possibly used by dog walkers as well. A tenant has cut a tree down without permission. Lock change being done 11th and 12th November.
- d) Avenue Rd cockerels – Enforcement Officer at RMBC has advised that will support the RAA. Have requested names and addresses of plots causing the problem so an Enforcement notice can be served. The board agreed for DB to send these details.
- e) Avian Influenza housing restrictions come into force today. Sites will be observed for anyone not adhering to the legislation. DB has emailed all direct-managed tenants and site secretaries and posters have also been put on direct-managed sites to inform of the changes.
- f) Psalters Lane – complaint from Enforcement regarding burning items on top plot. 30 day notices have been sent to this plot plus 2 others with a warning to cultivate or the tenancy will be terminated.

173/11/22 **(6) Financial Matters**

- a) Grass cutting invoice – the invoice for last year was only received earlier this year which was paid. We have received the bill for this year already so DB has transferred money from the reserve account to ensure there is enough to pay for any invoices and work for the rest of 2022. It was questioned regarding the cost of the invoice and it was explained that we were advised of an increase for the grass cutting this year. It was stated that the service has been provided to a better standard this year, however.

- b) Funds in current account: £8,380.61, Funds in Reserve account: £38,967.59. There are still some bills to be paid from this years revenue account. DB to monitor to if any other funds will need transferring.
- c) Rent letters have been completed and checked. The invoice emailing system is up and running. DB has sent test emails.
- d) Water bills – DB advised that up to date readings were needed as most bills are based on estimates. Readings have been sought for most sites so November bills should reflect this. DB was advised to purchase a tool to be able to lift the manhole cover but should not do the heavy one's without assistance for health and safety reasons. A risk assessment will be required.

174/11/22

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

- a) A meeting with Andy Lee and Officers has been arranged next week to discuss any outstanding issues – AL has sent a draft agenda which was read out to directors. DS was also invited and advised he would attend if he was available.
- b) 3 meetings a year are required, one of which will be the Select Committee meeting which takes place in December.
- c) An email was received from the solicitor who advised they are waiting for responses from information requests that were made in August.

175/11/22

(8) Society Update –

- a) South Street – was added to agenda again following viewing the plot that was overgrown. It was deemed that the plot was not in bad enough condition to warrant a reduction in rent. A new tenant would be able to clear it. DB to advise the society. It was discussed regarding rent reduction incentives offered and possibly giving 3 or 6 months free, not 12 months. A 3-month probationary period is included in the tenancy agreement. It was discussed that this needs to be monitored but needs to see if offering a year's free rent is less than the cost to get the plot cleared. Plus, 12 months is a better incentive for new tenants. DB has been charging the rest of the year's rent on overgrown plots, with the following year free. Societies can offer this if they can afford to subsidise the rent. The incentive for societies is that plots shouldn't be allowed to get into poor condition, so there would be no need for rent to be waived.
- b) Society Forum Meeting agenda:
 - i. DB ran through the items on the agenda. Items were delegated to directors.
- c) Clifton – planned development next to site which would compromise site security. DB spoken to Andy Lee and RMBC Planning who will advise the applicant regarding replacing the fence.
- d) Wharf Rd – following visit to site, tenant been sent final notice letter to leave the site by end of November.
- e) Herringthorpe – difficulties with the committee. New secretary has been working hard to get site back running correctly. Members have complained about pest control but no one wants to volunteer to do the course. Arranged for DB and BS to go down to the site with bait boxes / poison. It appears that tenants do not seem to be taking any responsibility for the upkeep of the site. A list of works done to the site was provided. Directors agreed that a number of these issues were the responsibility of the society. The RAA had not been informed of the work that was needed. It was suggested that a meeting should be set up with the committee and the RAA to go through the issues they have. Alternatively, the points could be raised in the society forum meeting. The society needs to be aware that they should be using their own funds for some site improvements. DB to find out if the secretary will be onsite when the boxes are taken.
- f) Discussed regarding the pest control on another site who has requested more boxes. It was highlighted that sites doing their own need to be mindful of over baiting. DB did send updated paperwork to everyone which reflects this.

176/11/22

(9) Sub-Committees

Maintenance 24th October - *Discussed in conjunction with maintenance item on agenda.*

177/11/22

(10) Maintenance

- a) Moor Rd – the contractor has done a very good job on the plot clearance so far. It was discussed that this contractor could be used for clearance jobs on other sites.

- b) Avenue Rd Water supply – the quote to put the water meter to the allotment boundary was very expensive so it was decided that this project would not be pursued of the time being. The path improvements has been re-quoted for both sides. It was discussed regarding doing the worst side first and the works would come out of the £100k capital as before. It was questioned regarding the request to have a water supply and if this came from tenants. It wouldn't make sense to do the paths then add a water supply later. It was suggested that taps could be added just to inside the gate area so the paths wouldn't be disturbed. Funding could be sought for this. A quote would need to be put together. It was agreed that the left-hand side path will be done with a view to the water supply being added if funding can be sought. Tenants should be consulted on installing a water supply due to the additional costs they would have on their rents.
- c) Moor Rd – need to find out regarding the flap on the pipe into the brook.
- d) Greasbrough: toilet door / window – being done this week. Community Payback have stated that the cistern may need changing.
- e) More risk assessments have been completed.
- f) Trees – still awaiting a response regarding the trees at Vicarage Fields and Hartley Lane.
- g) Community Payback – Rectory Field needs to be completed. DB has asked them regarding Clough Bank.
- h) Clough Bank car park – 2 quotes received – prices didn't include removing spoil. Directors approved the cheaper quote.

178/11/22 (11) Complaints Procedure / Panel

- a) Was brought to attention due to dealing with a number of complaints recently. Complaints regarding tenants on a society site are passed back to the committee. Complaints by direct-managed tenants or society-managed tenants regarding the society are dealt with by the RAA.
- b) The appeals process does involve the RAA for both direct and society managed tenants. In the first instance of a complaint, a panel should be created consisting of 1 Officer (not the Chair) and 2 other directors, preferably 1 male and 1 female to promote equality. If an appeal is submitted, this would then be passed onto the Chair and other directors who were not involved in the initial complaint. DB will send initial complaints to Officers and they will decide who will investigate it.

179/11/22 (12) Future Actions

- a) Rental invoices will be sent out in early December.
- b) The AGM is arranged for 28th March 2023. Finalised accounts to be agreed by the board at the February board meeting. MH and MS were identified as the two directors up for re-election. The posts also need to be advertised to tenants. Tenants will be sent the AGM information in the rent letters and will need to advise of their intention to attend / director nomination by 2 weeks prior to the meeting. It was discussed that Officers positions do not need to be elected at the AGM, this is made by the board.
- c) The policy review will also need be looked at in January 2023.

180/11/22 (13) Any Other Business

- a) Rectory Field Community Group plot – have requested if they can sell stock to the local community. Discussed regarding what is stated in the law regarding the sales of surplus stock. Donations could be requested instead. Crops cannot be grown purely to sell. DB to find out further information regarding how they want it to work. Need to ensure that it does not affect site security and influence other tenants into also selling produce. A proposal in writing will make it clear what they are planning to do.

181/11/22 (14) Agenda Items for Next Meeting

- Policy Review (tenancy agreement – livestock)

182/11/22 (15) Date and Time of Next Meeting.

Finance – 21st November 2022 - Zoom

Board – 5th December 2022 – Clifton Park

Maintenance – 19th December 2022 – Zoom (to be changed due to DB annual leave)

BS thanked everyone for their attendance. The meeting was closed at 4.00pm.

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)