

Rotherham Allotments Alliance

Finance Committee Meeting No.8

On Meeting Date: Monday 26th September 2022

Meeting Location: Online: Zoom

Chair: John Palmer

(Minutes Donna Bushby)

Present: Directors: John Palmer (JP), Brian Steele (BS), Mohammed Suleman (MS), Cllr Dave Sheppard (DS) and Allotment Support Assistant – Donna Bushby (DB).

F060/09/22 **(1) Apologies:** Kris Edwards. *For the purpose of the minutes, an email was received from Kris during the meeting who has had to resign due to work commitments. It was suggested that the Treasurer position be put on the next board meeting agenda.*

F061/09/22 **(2) Minutes from Previous Meeting**
Moved as a true record by BS and duly signed (electronically by the Chairperson).

F062/09/22 **(3) Matters Arising**
a) None identified not covered by agenda.

F063/09/22 **(4) Financial Report**
a) The following documents were circulated to the board prior to the meeting:
i. Balance sheet
ii. Budget V Actuals spend to date
iii. Financial activities for 2022
iv. Overview of current financial position
v. Proposed budget for 2023
b) It was discussed regarding a possible surplus for 2022, taking into consideration remaining costs for the rest of the year. It was agreed that projects need to be looked at and completed using 2022's budget to reduce any surplus amount. The funds in the reserve account can then be spent on other projects. Any surplus that is showing at the end of the year, will need to be applied to identified projects, to explain what it will be spent on. Projects such as new lock sets could be considered. Also need to look at ensuring that we have an adequate supply of equipment, i.e. chains and bolts. It was suggested that the priorities still need to be health and safety projects, however.
c) Directors agreed to spend approx. £250 on the water supply viability survey on Avenue Rd.
d) Majority of the £100k capital from RMBC has been allocated to specific jobs. Capital funds from the RAA is what is being held in the reserve account to be spent on projects.
e) It was discussed regarding the justification of rent increases due to increases in costs and inflation, showing that funds are being spent, not just held as a surplus. The aim is to ensure that all the budget for 2022 is spent on projects that need completing.

F064/09/22 **(5) Budgets**
a) Copy of proposed budget for 2023 prepared by DB sent to directors prior to meeting. This was prepared with the view to increasing rents by 5% plus the increase in the ASA salary and based on lets as at July 22.
b) Discussed regarding ensuring costs match up to what is expected, i.e. increases in grass / hedge cutting.
c) It was suggested that plot clearance be increased but this would have to come from other areas of the budget. The amount was based on 4 plots being cleared. Currently, there has been no labour costs due to the use of Community Payback so only costs needing covering are skips. The individual areas budgeted for do allow for small projects, as there is an amount set for repairs.
d) Concern was expressed for the budgeted amount for income. DB explained this was based on current lets in July 22. If some tenants leave, it is unlikely that income will be lost as demand is still high and all sites have waitlists so plots will be easily re-tenanted. There is still a small

number of overgrown plots which could be tenanted when cleared. It was reported that 4 of the plots cleared at Rectory Field have now been tenanted and there are 2 left that still need some clearance.

- e) It was discussed that the budget set for 2023 does justify the proposed rent increase as it will allow for more improvements to be made. It is difficult to get an accurate financial picture for the forthcoming year as some costs are unforeseen, i.e. major repairs. It was agreed that the proposed budget be put to the next board meeting for final approval.
- f) Rents for 2024 were then discussed and a decision needs to be made as to what rates should be communicated to tenants in the letter sent out with invoices. It was discussed regarding current inflation rates which is at approx. 10%. It was argued that some costs won't go up by this so this amount of increase is not justified. However, would need to be cautious to ensure costs are covered. Rents did not get increased in 20/21 but 2% was charged for 22. Tenants could be asked regarding what rent levels should be but reduction in rents may not protect the running and improvement of the allotments as expenditure would have to be reduced. Some costs such as payroll and administration costs would still need to be paid regardless. It was agreed that 5%, the same as next year, should be put to the next board meeting for a final decision. The reasoning behind the increases will be explained to tenants in the rent letter.

F065/09/22 (6) Maintenance Projects

- a) Some of these were already identified in the financial update and budget discussions.
- b) Greasbrough toilet – got one quote of £650. Not been able to obtain further quotes so this can be accepted with a note to the auditor if required.
- c) Asbestos removal – still awaiting quote for this. Still awaiting council Purchase Order for the asbestos shed removal at Greasbrough.
- d) Other projects are what were included in the original 'wish-lists' which need to be looked at again and completed. The list was put on screen for directors to view. It was suggested that it is added to the next board meeting as it is sooner than the next maintenance meeting. Some projects would not be able to be completed due to cost and feasibility. Some are being completed by Community Payback so still ongoing. It was requested, for direct-managed sites, notice boards are purchased. These could be either free-standing or put on the gate. This would need looking into further for the best option. DB and BS will do this.

F066/09/22 (7) Any Other Business

- a) It was brought to the directors' attention that when societies obtain funding, there should be some criteria to be able to scrutinise this. It was discussed that the issue with possibly doing this is that some societies are reluctant to share information with the RAA. This was the reason why the forum meetings were introduced so that communication can be better between societies and the RAA. There are currently no rules in place which requests this sort of information, unless it directly affects terms of the lease agreement. Most funding streams will have their own scrutiny criteria. If there are concerns about the way societies are run, a formal complaint should be made if required. It would need some thought and putting on the agenda for a future meeting. The next forum meeting was discussed and the passing on of information could be added to the agenda. No specific societies were named during this discussion.

F067/09/22 (8) Agenda Items for next meeting
TBC

F068/09/22 (9) Date of Next meeting
Board Meeting: Monday 10th October
Finance Meeting: Monday 21st November

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



Signed (Chair)