

# Rotherham Allotments Alliance

## Board Meeting Minutes

Meeting Name:	Board Meeting - 83		
Minute Taker:	Jamie Calvert		
Date:	16 October 2023	Time:	13:00
Location:	Clifton Garden House		

### Attendees:

Directors: Brian Steele Chair (BS), John Palmer (JP), Mick Hirst (MH), Sue Jackson (SJ), Jack Taylor (JT), Cllr Dave Sheppard (DS)  
Support Officer: Jamie Calvert (JC)

### Apologies:

Mohammed Suleman (MS)

### 1) Apologies

Mohammed Suleman (MS)

### 2) Declarations of Interest

JP declared an interest as a tenant on the Barnsley Rd site.

JT declared an interest as secretary on the Wood St site.

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

SJ declared an interest as a tenant of the Rectory Fields site.

### 3) Minutes from the previous meeting

Board meeting 82 minutes were moved as a true record by JT and duly signed (electronically) by the Chairperson.

### 4) Matters arising

(DS) provided an update on freedom of information (FOI) requests. He suggested that we are not within the scope of organisations covered by FOI requirements. (DS) recommended clarifying this with the RMBC legal team if a request is submitted to the RAA on a case-by-case basis. **ACTION:** (JC) Write to the FOI commission to check our status and update the board.

It was also noted that there is a clear distinction between FOI requests and Data Subject Access Request (DSAR). RAA must respond to a DSAR in compliance with GDPR guidance.

### 5) Admin Report

(JC) provided an overview of the admin report sent to directors on 11/10/2023.

- a. The status of decommissioned and un-lettable plots was queried. **ACTION:** (JC) to provide an update on un-lettable plots at the next board meeting. A review of those plots marked decommissioned will take place as part of the colony update.
- b. The question of when we can begin offering work to the probation service was raised and on which sites. Also, do they still hold the key for the Rectory Field cabin? **ACTION:** (JC) to contact the probation service and begin coordination of works.
- c. The ongoing issue of grazing land management and rent collection was discussed, with the three sites still being out of RAA management. **ACTION:** (JC) to locate the original email query and follow up, including (DS) in the email recipients. Email to be sent to Andy Lee (RMBC).

- d. (JC) clarified the status of the HMRC query, and informed directors that the requested accounts have been submitted by recorded mail. HMRC advised that the wait time is a minimum of 8 weeks, so it may be the new year before the next update to the board.
- e. The response of the RMBC enforcement team, regarding cockerels on RAA sites was discussed. It was agreed by the board that tenants with cockerels should be given 8 weeks' notice to remove them with the termination of tenancy for those that do not comply.

## 6) Financial Matters

The treasurer reported the balances of the RAA bank accounts; current account £43,894.96, Deposit account £24,378.22.

- a. The treasurer (SJ) gave an update on income and expenses since the previous board meeting, highlighting large expenses with an explanation.
- b. It was explained that there are some large expenses still to be processed from the account such as ASO salary and NAS membership. **ACTION:** The financial projection to the end of the year is to be discussed at the next finance committee meeting and reported back to the next board meeting.
- c. (JC) provided a brief update on the water charges as an incorrect sum was debited from the current account. This is due to be reimbursed by the water provider.

## 7) Maintenance

- a. It was raised as an issue that we do not currently maintain a list of all rat control boxes. **ACTION:** (JC) to provide a list of plots on pest-controlled sites to (MH), who will return with numbers and locations to (JC) for input on Colony.
- b. It was noted that the Herringthorpe site has seen an increase in bait consumption due to increased pest activity. **ACTION:** (MH) to increase bait use of existing poison stocks.
- c. It was noted that the current poison stock must be used or disposed of by February 2024 to remain compliant with pest control legislation. **ACTION:** (MH) to create a strategy for the removal and replacement of old stock. (JC) to coordinate with society secretaries and DM tenants where applicable.
- d. A discussion was had about the grass and hedge cutting contract with RMBC not reaching RAA's expected standards. It was agreed that future contracts for site maintenance should include a requirement for monthly updates on work completed by the contractor to allow issues to be resolved in a timely manner.

## 8) Transfer and transitional arrangements RMBC to RAA (including SLA)

The solicitor allocated to RAA has been changed by the firm at no cost to RAA, due to staff changes.

**ACTION:** (JC) to arrange a meeting between RAA directors and RMBC representatives, including Andy Lee, for a discussion of the transfer process and outstanding issues.

## 9) Society update

- a. Broom Valley Old site has requested support due to committee changes and ongoing grievances. **ACTION:** (JC) to arrange a meeting between the society committee and RAA directors. This meeting will be to agree on a support and review plan over a period of six months.
- b. Funds held by RAA on behalf of the Avenue Road site after the society dissolution were discussed. It was agreed that the funds should be allocated towards work on the Avenue Road site. **ACTION:** RAA finance committee to update and make a recommendation to the board for allocation of funds.
- c. Broom Valley New site has an outstanding query relating to damage to a fence by the grass-cutting contractor (RMBC). **ACTION:** (JC) to request compensation from RMBC via Niel Archer.
- d. Broom Valley New site is still to confirm to RAA any additional funding secured for improvements to the site access road and car park. Once confirmed, this will be brought to the board to agree on RAA support and/or contribution available. (MH) offered to assist the society with risk assessment.

## 10) Tenant and shareholder forums

- a. Tenants discussed the development of an asbestos policy. There was a question raised about the responsibility of RMBC as the landowner. (SJ) reported to the board that the policies available on the RMBC website did not directly apply to allotments and were housing or building specific. **ACTION:** (JC) to contact RMBC and request any applicable asbestos policy.
- b. (JP) reported to the board a summary of allotment asbestos policies from other authorities. **ACTION:** It was agreed that some elements could be used to create a structure for the RAA policy and that (JP) will present a draft to the board once completed.
- c. It was queried whether the RAA burning/fires policy should be updated, and clarity provided on current guidance.
- d. A discussion was held about cockerels on sites and who is responsible/liable for any penalty action. It was made clear that the law prohibits cockerels on allotments and that the RAA and societies cannot implement rules to avoid this.
- e. **ACTION:** The board voted in favour of a motion to extend the policy of no livestock on plots until after two years of tenancy, at the next AGM.

## 11) Any other business

- a. The suggestion of charging a bond/deposit to new plot holders was discussed. Consideration was given to whether it would be sufficient to act as a deterrent to leaving waste on vacated plots. The question was raised of how it would impact on potential tenants with limited finances. **ACTION:** Check with NAS if they are aware of any authorities or societies implementing a similar policy and if they can share policy and process. (JC)
- b. It was resolved that after application, Richard Watson has indicated their willingness to act as a director of the RAA board. The board voted in favour of their appointment as a director of the RAA board with immediate effect.

## 12) Agenda items for the next meeting

None agreed.

## 13) Date of Next Meeting

Board Meeting 84 – 13/11/2023 - 13:00 - Garden Room, Clifton Park

BS thanked everyone for their attendance. The meeting was closed at 3:30pm.

Signed



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Brian Steele (Chair)

Date

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