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Rotherham Allotment Alliance Ltd

Annual Report 2023

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Introduction

As the Chairperson of Rotherham Allotments Alliance Ltd, I would like to extend a warm welcome to this year's Annual General Meeting. I appreciate your time and attention in reading this annual report, which outlines the operational activity of the Alliance in 2023.

I want to express my gratitude to all the hard-working directors who have dedicated their time and efforts to the alliance over the last twelve months. Their contributions have been invaluable.

I would also like to extend my thanks to Jamie for his support to me and the other board directors since his appointment.

The increasing cost of living is still affecting both members and the RAA. However, the alliance is financially stable and continues to budget carefully for a secure future. Moving forward, we face a new set of challenges in the next twelve months. Climate change is having a significant impact on gardening, with unpredictable rainfall and unseasonable temperatures. Legislative changes are also affecting the availability of pesticides and growing styles are changing to suit diverse lifestyles. We are entering an exciting era of allotment gardening, where we must collaborate to overcome the new challenges and benefit from the opportunities that come with them.

Thank you for your continued support.

Brian Steele

Chairperson - Rotherham Allotment Alliance Ltd



Site Statistics

All Sites	Total Plots	Let Plots	Unlettable Plots	Vacant Plots	Decommissioned Plots	Waiting List	Occupied (ex decom)
Grand Total	1343	1259	37	32	15	85	95%

Direct Managed	Total Plots	Let Plots	Unlettable Plots	Vacant Plots	Decommissioned Plots	Waiting List	Occupied (ex decom)
Avenue Road Allotments	73	69	2	1	1	11	96%
Greasbrough Allotments	89	85	1	3		10	96%
High Street Allotments	43	33	1	4	5	8	87%
Highfield Road Allotments	5	4		1		1	80%
Lowfield Avenue Allotments	14	9	5			4	64%
Moor Road Allotments	22	17	3	1	1	19	81%
Psalters Lane Allotments	9	7		2		1	78%
Rectory Field Allotments	64	52	5	5	2	14	84%
Rosehill Park Allotments	28	26		2		9	93%
St Leonards Road Allotments	14	14				8	100%
Grand Total	361	316	17	19	9	85	88%

Society Managed	Total Plots	Let Plots	Unlettable Plots	Vacant Plots	Decommissioned Plots	Waiting List	Occupied (ex decom)
Barnsley Road Allotments	58	54		3	1		95%
Broom Valley New Allotments	72	72					100%
Broom Valley Old Allotments	73	72		1			99%
Clifton Allotments	134	125	3	4	2		95%
Clough Bank Allotments	66	48	14	3	1		74%
Hartley Lane Allotments	148	148					100%
Herringthorpe Valley Road Allotments	105	105					100%
Kimberworth Park Allotments	32	32					100%
Queen Street North Allotments	32	32					100%
Queen Street South Allotments	48	48					100%
South Street Allotments	32	30	1		1		97%
Vicarage Field Allotments	53	49	2	2			92%
Wet Moor Lane Allotments	37	36			1		100%
Wharf Road Allotments	20	20					100%
Wood Street Allotments	72	72					100%
Grand Total	982	943	20	13	6		96%

*Society Site data is based on the static data provided to the RAA throughout the year.



Principal Achievements and Challenges

Principle achievements

Society / tenant forum meetings

The introduction of forum meetings has allowed tenants and societies to engage more with the RAA and discuss issues and ideas. It is hoped that the attendance of these meetings will improve with time.

Society forums	May	09 attended
	October	11 attended
Tenant forums	September	15 attended

Rotherham show

Attendance at the show was well-received by the public again this year. The competitions and free seed packets were popular with those who visited the stall. The show was promoted to both direct-managed and society tenants to encourage participation in the horticulture show.

New director appointment/roles

Sue Jackson was appointed to the role of treasurer. The appointment of Richard Watson filled the director vacancy. Richard is the treasurer of the Clifton Garden Allotment Society and has a wealth of experience and skills to benefit the RAA.

There is a vacancy for one Director on the board to be nominated by RMBC.

Principal challenges

Allotment support officer resignation

The Allotment Support Officer, Donna, resigned from the alliance in March of 2023 but continued to offer intermittent support to the board of Directors until a new officer was appointed. This support was greatly appreciated as well as the hard work of Directors covering the work required to

Society engagement

There are some societies that have not been actively involved with the RAA, while others have taken a more proactive approach. Although the society forums have been successful, there is still a need to improve relations between societies and the RAA. Due to limited sharing of data and reporting, the effectiveness of managing waiting lists across all sites is reduced. Society members may possess a wealth of information that has yet to be fully accessed for the benefit of all allotment tenants.

Tenant engagement

The previous ASO made significant progress in building a social media presence and other digital communication with tenants. This is a cost-effective and reliable method of engaging with those tenants who chose to access social media, email and the website. However, attendance at the AGM and shareholder forum was relatively low in relation to the total number of tenants. In summary, the flow of communication was from the RAA and to the tenants, suggesting a missed opportunity for useful tenant feedback and contributions.

Signing of the lease

The head lease could still not be finalised due to several outstanding issues raised by the solicitor. The majority of these have been resolved and it is hoped that the lease can be signed in 2024.



Summary of Works Completed



4 Sites had improvement work procured/completed to improve boundary security.

This includes fence and gate installation or repair.



Water drainage works were completed on **Moor Road Allotments**.

This will reduce water logging on site and allow unlettable plots to be tenanted.



4 Sites had urgent tree work completed.

Tree removal/reduction was necessary for the safety of tenants and site neighbours.



Shed doors were replaced at **South Street Allotments**.



14 skips were provided across sites, removing approximately 112m³ of waste from allotments.

Responsible waste management helped to reduce skip use compared to 2022.



Monthly rodent control across sites.

Operated by trained RAA directors and appointed volunteers.



Directors & Attendance

Directors Brian Steele Chair
 John Palmer Vice Chair
 Jack Taylor Secretary
 Sue Jackson Treasurer
 Mick Hirst
 Mohammed Sulleman
 Richard Watson

For RMBC Councillor Dave Sheppard
 Vacancy

Director attendance at Board Meetings:

	Brian Steele	John Palmer	Jack Taylor	Mohammed Sulleman	Mick Hirst	Cllr Dave Sheppard	Tess Sheen	Cllr Rachel Hughes	Sue Jackson	Richard Watson
06/02/2023	1	1	1	1	1	1	1		1	
13/02/2023	1	1	1	1	1		1			
20/03/2023	1	1	1		1	1				
17/04/2023	1	1	1		1	1	1		1	
22/05/2023	1	1	1	1	1	1				
12/06/2023	1	1			1	1	1		1	
17/07/2023	1	1	1	1	1	1				
21/08/2023	1	1	1			1			1	
04/09/2023	1	1	1	1	1				1	
16/10/2023	1	1	1		1	1			1	
13/11/2023	1	1			1	1			1	1
11/12/2023	1	1			1				1	1
Total Attendance	12	12	9	5	11	9	4	0	8	2
% Attendance	100%	100%	75%	42%	92%	75%	67%	0%	67%	100%



Policy Review and Amendments

Financial Regulations

- A.2. amended the wording to reflect current processes e.g. Quickbooks, cashless
- A.3. clarified the retention timescale.
- A.3. specified Voluntary Action Rotherham as an accountant.
- A.5.f removal of the requirement for biannual internal auditing.
- C. clarification of wording to align with RAA preference for electronic finance and banking.
- D. remove requirement for a separate purchase order register since the QuickBooks integration.
- D. amendments and clarification to authorisation limits:
 - ASO delegated spending authority is to increase to £300 net.
 - The £500 approval limit is to increase to £1,500 net.
 - Orders over £1,500 net require approval of the board or relevant subcommittee.
- E. updated to reflect use of Quickbooks, clarified cheque payment requirements.
- F. wording update to amend “will be maintained” to “will be permitted”, regarding petty cash
- I. addition of “buildings” to asset register in preparation of contract completion.
- K.1. clarified the retention timescale.
- K.2. removed section referring to duplicate records, no longer relevant
- L. reworded to remove reference to policy introduction.
- M. integrated section as previously approved.

Document reformatted to align section numbering and introduce contents.

Data Policy

New policy document introduced to meet GDPR requirements.
This policy replaces the confidentiality policy.

Waiting List Policy

New policy document to clarify the existing waiting list process.

Business Plan

The business plan for 2024 has been developed.



Future Plans

The Rotherham Allotment Alliance is committed to enhancing the allotment experience for our community members. As we look ahead, we have identified several key priorities to address:

Plot Clearance of Unused Plots

Clearing unused plots will not only improve the overall appearance but also create opportunities for new gardeners. Significant work has already been completed to return unused plots to a cultivatable state. However, there are still 37 plots across sites listed as unlettable. Plots being vacated with historic waste left behind will require clearance to enable new tenants the best opportunity to succeed.

Path Repairs and Improvement

Well-maintained pathways are essential for safe and convenient access to allotments. Due to increasing vehicle use on sites, some paths have been significantly degraded. We will prioritize repairing existing paths where a health and safety risk is present. Enhancing will be considered where the benefit is improved access, durability, or cost-effectiveness of maintaining the site.

Site Security

Ensuring the security of our allotment sites is paramount. We will explore measures such as improved fencing, locks, and temporary CCTV surveillance to safeguard our sites. Priority will be given to sites experiencing security issues where standard precautions are unsuccessful.

Health and Safety, Including Developing an Asbestos Policy

The well-being of our allotment users is crucial. We will develop health and safety guidelines relating to Asbestos in a new policy.

Tenant Survey with a Focus on Encouraging Diversity

We value the diverse backgrounds and perspectives of our allotment tenants. Through a survey, we will actively seek feedback and ideas to promote inclusivity and celebrate our community's richness.

Engaging More Actively with Societies

Collaborating with societies fosters knowledge sharing and camaraderie. We will actively engage with societies through the continuation of the forums and the introduction of dedicated web pages.

Engaging Better to Support New Tenants

We will develop a new strategy, guided by tenant feedback, to support new tenants in the first steps of their allotment journey. This will encompass improvements to the existing new tenant documentation and website. The RAA will explore options for knowledge-sharing events.



Finance Report

The Alliance has continued to use the services of the Voluntary Action Rotherham Community Accountant. This has enabled for the accounts to be reviewed professionally and help to identify where any improvements could be made in the financial practices.

The following summary pages are extracted from the annual accounts:

Rotherham Allotments Alliance Limited
Statement of Financial Activities
(Incorporating an Income & Expenditure Account)
for the year ended 31 December 2023

	2023	2022
	Total	Total
	£	£
Income:		
Rent	67,471	63,686
Water charges	3,664	2,447
Grant income	2 -	1,086
Capital re-imburement	25	480
Membership	3	3
Bank interest	145	36
Total income	<u>71,308</u>	<u>67,738</u>
Expenditure		
Staff wages	3 17,256	17,425
Staff expenses	338	669
Repairs and maintenance	26,798	38,080
Security, keys, locks and gates	857	2,251
Pest control	1,279	2,458
Water	3,130	3,936
Directors expenses	-	60
Memberships and subscriptions	1,805	1,792
Insurance	932	352
IT and Communications	808	1,448
Admin expenses	476	1,182
Printing, postage & stationery	778	660
Marketing	-	159
Sundry purchases	60	235
Legal & professional fees	550	4,838
Depreciation	744	1,297
Total expenditure	<u>55,809</u>	<u>76,842</u>
Net income/expenditure	15,499	(9,104)
Total funds brought forward	36,453	45,557
Total funds carried forward	<u>51,952</u>	<u>36,453</u>



Rotherham Allotments Alliance Limited
Balance Sheet
as at 31 December 2023

	Notes	2023 £	2022 £
Fixed Assets			
Tangible fixed assets	4	5,181	5,923
Current Assets			
Debtors	5	1,390	1,382
Cash		<u>71,825</u>	<u>31,950</u>
		73,215	33,331
Current Liabilities			
Creditors	6	(26,444)	(2,801)
Net assets			
		<u>51,952</u>	<u>36,453</u>
Represented by:			
General Funds		<u>51,952</u>	<u>36,453</u>
Total funds		<u>51,952</u>	<u>36,453</u>

Full financial details are available to view in the annual accounts.

There is an underspend of funds in 2023 due to the absence of an allotment support officer. These funds have been ringfenced for allocation in addition to the 2024 budget projection.



Rotherham Allotments Alliance Ltd Budget Overview

Expenses summary	2024		2025		2026	
Payroll	£	25,330.00	£	26,571.50	£	27,875.08
Finance Costs	£	-	£	-	£	-
Repair and Maintenance	£	35,667.50	£	37,450.88	£	39,323.42
Office / General Expenditures	£	5,012.50	£	5,289.75	£	5,584.03
Other Misc. Service Costs	£	657.50	£	690.38	£	724.89
Advertising / Promotional	£	210.00	£	220.50	£	231.53
Memberships	£	2,500.00	£	2,625.00	£	2,756.25
Insurance	£	3,150.00	£	3,307.50	£	3,472.88
Utilities	£	3,500.00	£	3,700.00	£	3,900.00
Total Expenses	£	76,027.50	£	79,855.50	£	83,868.06

Income	2024		2025		2026	
Societies	£	47,505.00	£	49,880.25	£	52,374.26
Direct Managed	£	24,315.00	£	25,530.75	£	26,807.29
Grazing	£	1,638.00	£	1,719.90	£	1,805.90
Water	£	4,500.00	£	3,500.00	£	3,700.00
Total Income	£	77,958.00	£	80,630.90	£	84,687.45

Total Income	2024		2025		2026	
Net Income/(Expenditure)	£	1,930.50	£	775.40	£	819.38



Summary

The last twelve months have been a difficult period for the Alliance with the changeover of ASO taking longer than anticipated, which put great pressure on the Directors to maintain day-to-day operations, especially concerning directly managed sites. This had a knock-on effect, in that the Board had intended to undertake more of a strategic role, look at funding opportunities and develop an agenda for future improvement work and development across all sites. Having now filled the ASO position it is hoped that the Board can now progress this work during the forthcoming years. With strategic use of the revenue from rents, applied skills and knowledge from Board members and advice from governing bodies, the Alliance will be able to offer continued improvement of the allotment provision in the Rotherham area.

Health and Safety, the clearing of remaining unlettable plots and removing historic waste will be a continuing priority, sourcing outside funding where required for specific projects. The education and encouragement of good gardening practices will be focused on, with regular inspections ensuring that tenants are working their plots effectively.

The strengthening of the relationship between the RAA, societies and tenants will continue with the bi-annual society forum and shareholder meetings and information and advice will be shared where appropriate.

Cost-reducing measures including emailing invoices, have been successful and will be monitored for effectiveness.

Waste removal is still one of the biggest issues on the sites and will continue in 2024.

Ground maintenance quality of work on sites has raised concerns and will need to be carefully monitored.

Demand for plots has still been high and waitlists for direct-managed sites have been managed accordingly.

The ASO remains to be a point of contact for all current and future tenants and will be responsible for promoting the sustainability of the allotment provision for future generations.

2023 saw unexpected challenges due to the resignation of the Allotment Support Officer. Directors volunteered to cover core tasks in the time taken to recruit a new ASO. This allowed continued service but in the absence of an ASO, some projects and goals were inevitably delayed. The appointment of a new ASO, brings a different skill set and renewed energy, supporting the RAA's future growth and development.