

Rotherham Allotments Alliance

Annual General Meeting Minutes

Meeting Name:	Annual General Meeting 2024		
Minute Taker:	Jamie Calvert		
Date:	26 March 2024	Time:	18:30
Location:	Unity Centre, St Leonards Road		

Attendees:

Directors: Brian Steele Chair (BS), John Palmer (JP), Mick Hirst (MH), Jack Taylor (JT), Mohammed Suleman (MS) and Richard Watson (RW).
Support Officer: Jamie Calvert (JC)
9 Shareholders

Apologies:

Sue Jackson (SJ) and Cllr Dave Sheppard (DS)

001/01/24 Apologies

- a. Apologies were received from Sue Jackson (SJ) and Cllr Dave Sheppard (DS)

002/01/24 Chairperson's address

- a. The chair formally thanked all Directors for their efforts during 2023. Specific mention was given to thank the efforts of those supporting site pest control. Special thanks were given for the commitment and support of society committee members. The chair noted the appointment of a new Allotment Support Officer during 2023 and thanked him for his dedication to the role.

003/01/24 Minutes from the previous meeting

- a. The AGM 2023 minutes were moved as a true record by (MH) and duly signed (electronically) by the Chairperson.

004/01/24 Matters arising

- a. There were no matters arising.

005/01/24 Board members – election and appointment of Directors

- a. John Palmer (JP) stands for re-election. As there were no further nominations, the meeting approved the reappointment.
- b. Jack Taylor (JT) stands for re-election. As there were no further nominations, the meeting approved the reappointment.
- c. The appointment of Richard Watson (RW) requires ratification. The meeting approved the appointment.

006/01/24 Annual Report

- a. The annual report had been circulated electronically to those registered as attending before the meeting. Physical copies were made available for review in the meeting. The following points were summarised by the Chair (BS) and considered:
 - i. Site Statistics – A summary of the site statistics was presented with an explanation of the vacancies and tenancy turnover events such as no-cultivation evictions and annual tenancy renewal.

- ii. Principal achievements and challenges – It was noted that the most significant challenge presented in 2023 was the absence of an Allotment Support Officer and that the post is now filled. It was acknowledged that this has resulted in anticipated works and projects being delayed and that the 2023 budget underspend has been ringfenced to address issues carried over to 2024.
It was also noted that instability amongst some societies had presented additional challenges requiring RAA support.
It was noted that the RAA lease from the RMBC has not been finalised and that is a frustration to both parties as it was anticipated that this would be resolved in 2023. Despite these challenges, it was acknowledged that achievements have still been possible due to improved engagement and efforts of the Directors, Societies and all Shareholders.
- iii. Summary of works completed – an explanation of works completed was given with additional detail offered to highlight the scale of the achievements. It was noted that these works have received positive feedback from members.
- iv. Directors and attendance – A summary of changes to the board over 2023 was given, highlighting the current vacancy. An explanation was given for the change in meeting frequency in 2023 due to the absence of an Allotment Support Officer. It was noted that additional operational meetings were held by the board officers to enable continued service during this time.
- v. Policy review and amendments – A brief overview of the proposed changes to the finance regulations was given by (JP). Both the Waiting List Policy and Data Policy were introduced as new policies. Attendees were invited to ask questions. A question was raised regarding plot transfer to a co-worker. It was noted that this procedure is not affected by the waiting list policy and surrendered plots will continue to be offered for transfer to a co-worker of one year or more before being made vacant.
It was noted that an Asbestos Management policy is being developed and that further consultation is required with RMBC before it can be finalised.
- vi. Future Plans – It was noted that plot clearance remains a priority to enable maximum cultivation across sites.
It was also noted that path maintenance is a priority and that addressing the increasing demand for maintenance is an agenda point for the maintenance subcommittee. Options being considered are a balance between reinforcing paths for light vehicle use and prohibiting access to vehicles. This will require careful consideration and be based on shareholder support.
Site security was highlighted as an ongoing issue and it was noted that a number of preventative measures are being considered for implementation such as reduced height internal boundaries, camera use and improved best practice guidance.

007/01/24 2023 Accounts

- a. A summary of the accounts overview was provided by (JP). This included reference to the 2023 budget underspend and an explanation of the allocation of these ringfenced funds to the alliances priorities.
It was noted that costs have been reduced or avoided thanks to the transition to internal pest control and resolving a dispute with HMRC.
The meeting approved the annual accounts as prepared by Voluntary Action Rotherham.

008/01/24 Policies and rules

- a. The following policy amendments/introductions, detailed in the annual report, were considered:
 - i. Financial Regulations – amendments
 - ii. Waiting List Policy – new policy
 - iii. Data Policy – new policy (replaces confidentiality policy)
 The meeting approved the adoption of the listed amendments/introductions.

009/01/24 Motion 1

- a. The following motion was considered:

This annual general meeting agrees for the RAA to continue to disapply the requirement to appoint a qualified auditor. An independent examination of accounts will be completed by appointed Lay Auditors.

The motion was duly carried.

010/01/24 Motion 2

- a. The following motion was considered:

This annual general meeting agrees to continue the subscriptions of NAS membership for every shareholder (registered tenant) to be funded from the revenue account and this will be reviewed at every AGM. To ensure membership of NAS, all shareholders must be registered with the RAA.

The motion was duly carried.

011/01/24 Shareholders questions

- a. Q1. When will the repair take place to the lower entry road of Vicarage Field Allotments?

The ASO and Society Secretary continue to work together to find a cost-effective solution after receiving quotations outside of budget tolerance.

Q2. What will be done about the damage done by vehicles to the paths at Greasbrough Allotments?

Advice is to report instances of damage to the ASO as soon as possible after the event. The issue of damaged paths will be discussed at the board level and guidance will be issued to tenants.

Q3. Is there an update on the repair and improvement to the Broom Valley New Allotments road and car parking area?

The maintenance board has approved works to repair the damaged road. The car park improvements will be considered once funding arrangements have been arranged.

Q4. Is there an update on the path upgrade at South Street allotments?

The maintenance board has approved works pending risk assessment.

Q5. Some plots appear to have been uncultivated for several years. How will this be resolved?

Annual inspections will be carried out across all sites. Plots found to be unsatisfactory will be offered guidance on how to improve and served a termination notice if no improvement is made in line with the terms set out in the tenancy agreement.

Q6. Is the RAA Lease with RMBC completed?

No. This point is unfortunately an ongoing frustration for all parties but it is essential that the lease is correct before signing.

Q7. Can the community payback service be used more on sites?

We aim to continue our working relationship with the probation service. However, the service requirements mean that it is not suitable or cost-effective for all works.

Q8. Could the existing grass and hedge cutting contractors offer other services such as plot clearance?

The current contract is fulfilled by RMBC and they do not offer the additional services required. However, the alliance have worked with other contractors for this work and are looking to build strong working relationships with reliable local contractors.

Q9. Grass cuts were missed or to a low standard in 2023, will this be improved on in 2024?

Yes. The absence of an ASO in 2023 meant that feedback was not collated in a timely manner and so opportunities to improve the service were missed. 2024 will see monthly reviews of the service received.

Q10. When will allotment rents decrease?

It is unlikely that future rents will be able to decrease however it is noted that the rent increase for 2024 was kept below inflation. The operating costs of the RAA and contractors continues to increase. This will be monitored and considered in the 2025 rent review.

BS thanked everyone for their attendance. The meeting was closed at 7:50pm.

Signed _____ Date _____
Brian Steele (Chair)

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