

## Working Group on Management Agreement – Update 21<sup>st</sup> May 2022

### Management Agreement Working Group

Hester Blewitt - Ward End Allotments

Liz Bunting – National Society for Allotments and Gardens (by invitation)

Derek Cullen - Ward End Allotments

David Draycott - Moor green Allotments (Chair)

David Read – Ward End Allotments

Barbara Smith – Lower Tinkers Farm Allotments and BDAC (Secretary)

John Upton - Gospel Lane Allotments

John and Stephanie Wallbutton - Greenaleigh Road Allotments

Ross White - Harborne Lane Allotments

Keith Yardley - Station Road Allotments

Phil Zjalic - Wychbury Road allotments

### Context

The BDAC consultation sessions which took place in Moor Green, Bordesley Green and Court lane over March 2022 produced three overriding views from a wide range of sites and members

1. Most participants didn't like the last agreement and, in many cases, didn't understand what they were letting themselves in for in terms of responsibilities
  - a. Many sites were finding it hard to recruit or maintain volunteers to deliver on their delegated responsibilities
  - b. Everyone was nevertheless keen to get something better in place – the new agreement was seen as an opportunity
2. There are many areas where the Council, in the view of members, is clearly in default of its obligations to the Sites i.e.
  - a. absence of training for rent collection, health and safety, admin procedures etc,
  - b. no real provision for emergency and major repairs beyond the already earmarked Flo Pickering Fund- and glacially slow in delivering the actual contracts
  - c. horticultural maintenance (bill of quantities). The system for reporting issues in relation to grass cutting etc effectively lapsed on many sites
3. There are areas where the Council makes the job of site management more difficult through its inability to respond in a timely way – for example to immediate issues such as break-ins, damage to sites, possible evictions, water supply, lack of horticultural maintenance etc

4. Our expectation is that all of these issues arise not from lack of commitment by the Council but from lack of resource. However there would be ways – with good will on both sides - to tackle these issues.

### The Group

1. The Group (see membership above) emerged from the last BDAC consultation meeting at Bordesley Green on 19th March when 10 people from across a number of sites volunteered to take on the task of developing a proposal for the management agreement with the Council. In addition Barbara Smith from BDAC acts as secretary and Liz Bunting from NSALG is invited as appropriate to provide legal advice and experience from other areas of the Country . The Group has met four times since, including a meeting with the City Council on 4<sup>th</sup> May – see below.

### The Task

To develop a proposal for replacing the existing management agreement with the City Council. The Group has essentially worked on two options and one further action

- a. Significant redrafting of the agreement which give us some safeguards against slow or no response to the kinds of issue referred to above.
- b. Opening of a discussion on a move toward greater genuine self – management by individual sites, using models working very effectively in other local authority areas – see attached. Self-management would require a significantly greater proportion of plot rental income to be retained by individual sites
- c. Agreeing a process for informing and involving all sites as the negotiation progresses

Progress is set out in the table below

| Option  | Action  | Next Steps   |
|---|---|--|
| Significant redrafting of the agreement   | A version incorporating all of the proposed changes proposed at the March meetings is now drafted and shared with the City Council – with a strong health warning that this is work in progress and must be shared with all sites before any formal negotiation with the Council can be concluded | Awaiting response from Darren Share on the draft submitted. A fully worked out and accessible draft will then be prepared for circulation to and comment from all sites                                      |
| greater at individual site level using models working very effectively in other local authority areas | Brief but detailed report examining how self-management works in a number of other areas (Bristol, Coventry, Rotherham, Leicester, Luton, Guildford, York ) produced to support further work on this  | Awaiting response from Darren Share. Subject to his response the Group will produce a paper to put to BDAC and all sites outlining a proposal for debate on a self-management set-up suitable for Birmingham |
| Agreeing a process for informing and involving all sites as the negotiation progresses                | Minutes of Working Group meetings now published on BDAC website.  | Revamp BDAC website to allow input from individual sites<br>Develop timeline and action plan for effective consultation on options with all sites.   |

## Meeting with City Council

Darren Share, (head of Parks) attended, along with Joe Hayden (Parks) and Bernadette Wilson, Allotments Officer. Extract from official (BDAC) minutes

“Darren Share thanked the Working group for their work and stated that he was open to all discussions. Any future system would have to be sustainable. He would like to view the early drafts. A Birmingham Council representative was invited to attend the Working Party fortnightly meetings to aid communication. Darren Share agreed. It was agreed to share the early draft documents with Darren Share.

The end November was agreed as a target date for the completion of the process. Darren explained that this would be dependent upon whether the change needed to go to the full Cabinet for approval, this has a 12 week turn around, or whether it will just need Cabinet Member approval, this will be quicker. He will check.

It was agreed to send a copy of the Agreement, amended by the working party showing the concerns and a copy of the research done into types of Self-Management, to Darren Share to read. David, emphasised that these had yet to be shared with the site associations and were therefore presented without prejudice. Darren would need two weeks to read the documents and will provisionally attend a Working Party Meeting on the 24th May subject to prior commitments.

David Draycott, Chairman

Barbara Smith, Secretary