

Management Working Party Meeting 29th March 2022

Meeting started 16.00 hrs Meeting on Zoom

Attendees: Clive Birch, David Draycott, Phil Zjalic, Hester Blewitt, Amy Rowe, Liz Bunting, Colin Bedford, Barbara Smith, Jon Upton

Purpose of the Meeting: To ask legal questions about the options we have. Self-Management, re-negotiation, hand management back to the city.

There are a wide variety of ways that Allotments are managed across the country:-

Northampton are managed by a commercial company but are not happy with the management.

Coventry lease sites from Coventry City. 40 sites with approx. 5 directly leased from Coventry district Council as an unincorporated association.

Wolverhampton have a Management Agreement but it is not as comprehensive as the current BCC Agreement. With less duties required from Associations.

Hester Blewitt stated that she was in favour of Self-Management . She felt that if all sites went Self-Managed then we would have enough surplus income to employ someone. She also said that it is important that Agreements are passed on to new Officers and that they are aware of the obligations. The Association members need to understand the Agreement before they sign. Colin stated with the number of sites within Birmingham he thought there should be approximately £6000 left over that might employ someone for one and a half days.

Clive informed the meeting that he had told BCC officers about the options that the Working Party will be discussing and concerns about staffing.

David Draycott asked about 'Incorporating'. Liz stated that there are several ways to incorporate an Association. The NAS advises formation of a Co-operative, because they have used this method for over 90 years, understand it well, and believe it is the best way for Allotment Associations to become Incorporated. New legislation in 2014 regulating cooperatives. Having a Co-operative means that decisions have to be made by a Committee making it harder for one individual to take control. She offered to send out documents, to the group, about the different options of incorporation.

David Draycott asked if there could be a situation whereby some sites went Self- Managed but others stayed under the Council. Colin explained that some Councils adopted a gradual move towards Self-Management. They would let Associations have more responsibility and after a time once they have proved themselves capable then allowed them to fully manage their sites. Short term lease at first until Associations have proved to be able to manage the site well. He explained that Associations need to be able to look and think about the "Long term"

Sites need to have at least 25 plots to be viable under self-management. In Rugby the smaller sites amalgamated in order to be viable.

For Self-Management all plot holders need to be enthusiastic about managing the site for it to succeed.

For Self-Management you have to lease the land, make a risk analysis. The Association should be Incorporated, if not, they will need Trustees and have Trustee Insurance. Associations will need Public Liability Insurance cover of 5 or 10 million pounds and Employers Liability Insurance.

Jon commented that under self-management we could control new plot holders and evictions. He felt the present system was taking too long.

The money that Councils will retain under a lease agreement varies and needs to be negotiated. Some authorities ask for a 'peppercorn rent' others base it on the area of the site.

Potential costs in running the site that need to be considered and to be covered by rental income:

1. The value of Horticultural land is approx. £8 per plot -the cost of the lease.
2. The Water costs approx. £4 to £5 per plot
3. Insurance
4. Maintenance budget.

For any other developments and expenditure use fundraising. Do not use fundraising to supplement the above costs. Awards for All is a useful way of getting funds.

Colin stated that Birmingham Sites had good facilities compared to sites in different parts of the West Midlands Area.

It was suggested that the Working Party should only go to the Council once we feel fully briefed.

Meeting ended 17. 20 hrs