

Management Agreement meeting at

Thornbridge Allotments on 14th January 2023 report.

Present were 11 representing 5 sites. This included Hester Blewitt and David read members of Working Party.

Meeting advised meeting had 2 aims – to update on progress with Draft management agreement and answer questions.

Meeting advised of working party's commitment to drawing up a draft agreement and consultations with BCC and legal advice from NSALG plus meeting with BDAC Exec.

Questions.

Why did agreement appear to be in form of a deed? It was not intended as a deed but an agreement between parties recognising that obligations needed to be fulfilled.

Could the role of an association and committee be clarified in the final agreement?The answer was yes.

How are volunteers regarded – unpaid volunteers or unpaid agents of BCC?
This needed to be clearly established.

What are liability issues for the management committee members? This had been raised with NSALG legal officer. **Unincorporated committees** carried risks for individual members **Incorporated committees** meant that whole committee had a responsibility. Hester Blewitt detailed the move to a cooperative when support was given by NSALG. **Responsibility was without protection.** It was evident that BCC was being vague and so there had to be a shift so legal definitions became important. **Grants** were affected by the status of a committee and the question of leases arose. BCC is reluctant to grant leases to individual committees.

There was uncertainty about the liabilities of management committees when issues were reported to landlord and there was no response or the committee were told it was for committee to resolve, this was contested. H. Blewitt gave example of a loose handrail on a wall.

What training was available? At the moment very little, Schedule 9 was referred to.

What resources were available? At the moment resources were inadequate and BCC had to provide substantially more. *An agreement was unsustainable on current resources.*

What were the results of inspections and surveys? There appeared to be none, eg. asbestos inspections did not bring improvements. People came from around the country to make these inspections!

What about water bills? Everyone present had issues with water plus and full clarification needed, again current practice could not be sustained. The onus should be on BCC not local committees.

Are there alternative forms of managing allotments? Meeting advised of various ways of managing allotments around the country. In the long term consideration would need to be given but in the meantime the draft agreement was the one to be “perfected”. We had to ensure the protection of the management committees and ensure the landlord fulfilled the obligations set out in the agreement.

How was the management of allotment financed? The rents provided the money but there was a question as to how the money was spent. It had been made clear by BCC that increased expenditure would need to be from increased rents!

What was alternative to no management agreement? Previously to 2014 there had been 4+ personnel working for allotments including an allotment officer, a finance officer, 2 “field” officers and a senior officer. With only 0.6 now the alternative would be for BCC to contract allotment management out, this was viewed with much disquiet!

Much discussion was given to the issues raised.

BDAC business – request made for volunteers both in exec and local advisors .

Overall a good meeting with serious concerns.

