BDAC Serving Birmingham's Allotments	**BDAC Executive Meeting** **Venue: Meadow Road Allotments** **Minutes of the Exec of 15th February 2025** **2 pm start**

Present: David Read –(DR) Chair, Hester Blewitt –(HB) Sec, Yvonne Brookes – (YB) Treas, Cheryl Butler (CB), Clive Fenn (CF), Stuart Guest (SG), Kerry McGahey (KM), Kate Martin Smith (KMS), Dave Reece - (DJR), Len Tubbs, Tony Webb (TW), Keith Yardley (KY).

Peter Astbury (PA) Observer – Chair Meadow Road Allotments

Apologies: None – all Exec members present

Agenda items for this meeting: CF had requested by email to the Secretary that two subjects be added to the February Agenda – 1 plot flooding and discounted rental, 2 the BDAC Facebook page. Agreed these will be put on March agenda.

Approval of Minutes to the Exec of 18th January 2025

The minutes were approved subject to the following amendment - The motion to amend the proposed expenses policy was seconded by David Read (DR) not Dave Reece (DRE) who wasn't present at meeting.

Matters Arising from Jan meeting: Code of Conduct, Logo availability & use (house style), BDAC Asset Register, Sutton Sites, Recruitment to the Exec, Legal representation – fuller discussion on these deferred to the next Exec meeting (March 15) to enable the Group Members to review.

Item not on Agenda: KM and KMS requested that before we go through other agenda items, the meeting should look at the way the Executive is operating and presented a 2 page tabled report covering its purpose and scope, structure and process, member engagement and participation, and reporting and evaluation. After some discussion it was agreed that the Governance Group would be expanded to include KM, KMS and DJR as well as DR, KY, CB (the other two officers can also attend) and will

- Develop Standing Orders for the Executive (KY will do a first draft), review Terms of Reference for the 6 Working Groups,
- Consider the new draft BDAC Model Rules

- Consider how BDAC gets legal advice (NAS, Liz Bunting, AN Other), and maybe recruit someone with legal experience on to the Executive. PA knows of lawyers who have plots and will investigate possibilities

The Secretary pointed out that all Working Groups had been asked some months ago to look at their Terms of Reference and see how they could make them work, or recommend amendments.

Also the Communications/Consultation/Website Working Group will develop a draft House Style for the BDAC generally and for the website and Facebook (HB & CB to do first draft),

Reports on all of above to be circulated before the next Exec.

Events Working Group: (KM,HB,DR,YB) Report from KM

KM reported that following a meeting of the group it was proposed that 3 City wide allotment competitions could be reinstated of the five that were organised up to 2022: Best Plot, Best Newcomer and Best Site.

Proposed: The end of June to be closing date for entries, judging to be completed in August, Prize-giving to take place at the BDAC half yearly meeting at Bordesley Green in November.

Two judges Robin Russell and Lawrence Weston, both with RHS connections and experience have responded to contact saying they are interested in being involved. Robin has suggested awarding trophy, but changing awards to Gold, Silver, Bronze (certificates) and revising the criteria for judging.

There was discussion about how many days/hours work may be necessary (4 days+ says RR if competitions prove popular), the costs of employing judges (from expenses only to £250 a day), paying prize money and engraving trophies.

Agreed: to go ahead with a £500 budget. Vote with 1 abstention.

To cut number of competitions from 3 to 1 or 2, if poor response or too expensive to run 3 (beyond agreed budget)

Further work needs to be done by the Working Group to finalise names of judges, prepare marketing poster for the competitions, complete a schedule of events time frame, organise prize giving certificates etc.

Management of Sites and Associations (MOSA) Working Group (Secretary, Chair, Treasurer, KMS, KM, SG, DJR) - Report from Sec HB

HB presented two training proposals from the 6th Feb Working Group meeting and one as a result of contact with Birmingham Community Matters after the WG meeting.

1. Birmingham Community Matters.

This organisation provides free advice and training to small organisations, and has offered to run workshops for our smaller unconstituted and/or unincorporated associations on constitutions – to help them develop one or review their existing one. There are around 40 smaller ones which could be interested in these, and we could run sessions in allotment premises in North and South Birmingham.

Agreed to progress this (HB to follow up. Associations can be asked to contribute to costs eg premises/refreshments.

2. Health & Safety on Allotment Sites.

Proposal: Two workshops aimed at committee members to provide basic awareness of H&S issues for Associations/committees, tenants and visitors to the site, but not to get into details of responsibilities in Management Agreement. (Report and proposal attached).Quote from Natalie Woo of New-Training, who did First Aid training for BDAC in 2023 is £250 per workshop for up to 15 participants.

Following the discussion, it was **agreed** that the BDAC should approach BCC and ask what is the Council's understanding regarding the Allotment committees' responsibility. Secretary to write to Allotments Officer ahead of 26th February meeting. Once this issue has been clarified the proposal can return to the Exec.

3. Fund Raising Training for Associations: Report and Proposal attached.

Fundraising training has been requested by associations, so Get Grants, who work with BOSF have given us a quote for a customised Bidwriting course: 1 on-line and 1 face to face course to help associations apply to fund projects specifically aligned to Allotment type requirements. Original quote was for 2 on-line & 2 face to face courses (2 topics) £3000 revised to 1 of each estimated at £2000, Once developed, material could be accessed again and re-used. Last year, the 3 BDAC officers ran 4 workshops on Finance & Decision-making by Committee, and could run more workshops but it is time-consuming given their other responsibilities; Get Grants professional staff are geared up to deliver training regularly. One suggestion (not voted on) was that associations could pay for training to cover cost of employing Get Grants, then if they subsequently applied for a grant successfully, that money could be refunded,

In discussion, it was suggested that this would only be of interest to a minority of well-organised associations. Put to vote: all except 1 (HB) against going ahead with proposal

4. Legal advice

The last Exec meeting put a hold on allowing draft policies such as GDPR and Health and Safety to be distributed to help, support and guide Allotment Committees or put on the website with a 'BDAC recommended' label: they must first be checked out from a legal perspective. So Secretary contacted Liz Bunting (Retired NAS Legal Officer) to ask if she is

able to give advice on a retainer or other basis. Formal response and costs not received in time for this Exec meeting. This is now getting urgent for policies such as GDPR (Data protection) and Health and Safety.

Plot Management Manual Report:

This document has been before the Exec previously, but there were aspects of it that needed clarification from the Allotments Officer before we promote it. KMS has written to her but not had a response yet. KMS to follow up.

Meeting with BCC:

The 3 Officers of the BDAC have been invited to a meeting/ briefing with representatives of the council allotment team on 26th February at Kings Heath Park.

The BDAC will resume the conversation which started 12 months ago with the council regarding initiatives raised by the BDAC.

1.Collection of Rents

2.Grounds Maintenance

3. Flo Pickering Criteria

Recent communication with LPG (Landscape Practice Group) who are the team overseeing the current Flo Pickering projects on 13 sites, have advised that although they previously believed the work had been agreed with the Council, it appears it is now being held up in the Bankruptcy Commissioners Office. Update to be advised.

Secretary's Report: (HB)

1.A joint funding bid has been proposed by BOSF (Birmingham Open Spaces Forum) and Social Farms and Gardens, with BDAC as third partner. The Project will employ a worker for 3 years to promote access to green spaces including allotments. Included in bid is that the employee will work for the BDAC for 1 day per week. Funding application nearly finished, meeting proposed for this coming week to finalise. Apart from HB, KM and LT at previous Exec meeting expressed interest in being involved in this project so time/date to be arranged and draft application to be circulated (Secretary HB).

2.Social Prescribing Project.

A project initiated by Jon Bloomfield & David Draycot (Authors of the Survey Report "Allotments and Well-Being"). With the support (organisational and financial) from the Birmingham and Solihull NHS Trust are developing a £85,000 project whereby twenty plots will be made available at Bordesley Green Allotment site for the use of referred "Clients" with a social prescription from an East Birmingham health centre, which will employ two part time link workers. The Exec will be updated further and report circulated (Sec HB).

3. Legal Advice and Representation:

See above request to Liz Bunting – which may be necessary due to the reduced level of support offered by NAS Legal Officer. This applies to changes to BDAC Constitution as well as policies. We are still awaiting her full response including clarity on whether she is insured to advise. PA who joined the group as an observer advised that he knows of two persons with a legal background who may be interested in the role and will investigate. Sec HB to continue liaison with Liz Bunting to clarify full remit

Finance Working Group (YB,DR,KY)

There was not enough time for a full report but it was agreed that the Working Group will make a list of known BDAC assets for an Asset Register and an estimated value and report back to Exec.

Sutton Coldfield Sites:

During this transition period of Sutton sites becoming part of The Royal Town of Sutton Coldfield, the BDAC need to have clarity from the Council as to whether the BDAC are to continue its support. Brief discussion and disagreement about this item – to be resolved next meeting.

Items deferred to next meeting through lack of time:

Code of Conduct, Sutton Sites, Recruitment to Exec, Plot Management Manual, BDAC Complaints procedure, 2025 Priorities for policy development & approvals

Any Other Business

Flooding Report: (CF)

Following a survey CF presented the concerns many sites have about flooding issues on their site, whether it be flooding from burst pipes or volume of rainfall, significant numbers of plots are unusable. What discounts are available for sites to offer tenants on such bad plots? The BDAC officers will present the findings to the Council at their meeting 26 Feb.

Hand Over of Previous Records:

A large box of records from the outgoing committee of BDAC were given to the incoming committee. KY had been charged with scanning all the files and documents to ensure an electronic copy was available for the future. This mammoth task has now been completed, and KY has passed on the contexts and the box of files nd electronic record to DR Chair of the BDAC. The BDAC wish to thank KY for his diligence, patience and determination to see the project through to the end.

Next Meeting: Saturday 15th March 2025 Bordesley Green Allotments

Decisions and Action list **(deadlines for actions mostly end of Feb or 7 days before 15th March – suggestions if not decided at meeting)**

Task	Who	When by
Arrange Meeting of Governance Working Group Consider new draft Rules for BDAC	Governanc e Working Gp	8 Mar
Prepare draft of Standing Orders for BDAC	Governanc e WG, KY	8 Mar
Review Management Agreement with BCC	Governanc e Working Gp	8 Mar
Review Terms of Reference for each Working Group	All WGs	8 Mar
Draft a House Style for BDAC for docs, website etc	Comms WG CB & HB	8 Mar
Investigate people with legal experience to provide legal advice for BDAC and/or join Exec	PA	8 Mar
Liaise with Liz Bunting re role in providing legal advice to BDAC	Sec - HB	28 Feb
BDAC Competitions for sites and plotholders. Progress decisions made on 15 Feb	Events WG - KM	8 Mar
Training proposals – Liaise with 2 outside agencies re not going ahead with proposals	Sec - HB	28 Feb
Bham Community Matters training proposal – Liaise with BCM	Sec - HB	28 Feb
Raise various matters with Council on 26 Feb meeting including 3 areas for BDAC to take over, H&S responsibilities, flood damage discounts, & report to Exec Need report from Flood Damage survey	3 BDAC Officers CF	26 Feb/8 March
Prepare Asset Register	Finance WG – Treas YB	8 Mar
Get clarification about details in Plot Management Manual from Allotments Officer	KMS	8 Mar
Get clarification about respective H&S responsibilities of BCC and Associations from Allotments Officer	Sec HB	8 Mar
Prepare Asset Register	Finance WG &Treas YB	15 Mar
Circulate reports or info about deferred items: Sutton Sites, Recruitment to Exec, Plot Management Manual, BDAC Complaints procedure, 2025 Priorities for policy development	HB	8 Mar
Meet with BOSF and Social Farms and Gardens about joint	HB, KM, LT	20 Feb/8

funding bid, then report back to Exec		Mar
Progress work on East Birmingham Social Prescribing Project and report back to Exec	HB, DR, YB	8 Mar