BDAC Executive Meeting

Venue: Bordesley Green Allotments

Minutes of the Exec of 15th March 2025

Present: David Read –(DR) Chair, Hester Blewitt –(HB) Secretary, Yvonne Brookes – (YB) Treasurer, Keith Yardley (KY - minutes), Clive Fenn (CF), Stuart Guest (SG), Dave Reece (DJR), Len Tubbs (LT), Tony Webb (TW).

Apologies: Cheryl Butler (CB), Kerry McGahey (KM), Kate Martin Smith (KMS).

Minutes of the Executive of 15th February 2025. **Agreed**

Matters Arising from Jan meeting: None.

Chair's Report:

DR commented on the **26th February meeting** with BCC Officers (Simon Needle, Val Lecky, Bernie Wilson) – document as circulated and drew attention to:

- The BCC/BDAC Agreement 2014 ran for 5 years and was then extended a further 5 years and then another one year to expire at 31st March this year. It was noted that it is 'not fit for purpose' as it is significantly out of date but time is pressing. As such it was agreed we notify BCC that BDAC agrees to the current contract being extended for a further 12 months with an additional clause stipulating that every endeavour will be made to reach agreement on a new Management Agreement by March 31st 2026. Proposed: LT, seconded by YB. Agreed.
  Action: Governance Working Group to draft new agreement and send to BCC
- Grounds maintenance is acknowledged as 'not happening' and any work done is in a haphazard manner. The current site scheduled worklist has been received and is in the process of being loaded to our web site and posted to the Exec. We are awaiting BCC clarification of which sites perform their own maintenance which will be verified with local associations. YB will also ask for copies of site maps and scheduled work.
  Action: We send out schedules to site Secretaries and ask them to verify what is being done of scheduled work and what actually needs doing.
- Rent collection: BCC officers were given a schedule of rent collection tasks, and they approved the principle of BDAC collecting the annual rent; currently it can be a 3-4 month task by BCC officer
  Action: Governance group to continue negotiating with BCC on taking over rent collection, considering the whole process, responsibilities, commissions and schedule.

- Flo Pickering Fund: BCC is happy to widen the criteria. DR tabled list that had been circulated to Exec for comment last year. It was noted that any Flo Pickering fund money would need to be for the creation/installation of the item agreed, not its ongoing maintenance, the cost of which would be borne by the local association. All agreed to continue discussions with BCC. BCC will retain responsibility for dealing with asbestos issues.
  Action: All to consider and give comments to Infrastructure W.G. via HB before our next Exec meeting in April. HB to contact sites.
  Action: BDAC need to consider full internal process i.e. selection criteria, resource allocation and responsibilities, any specific deadlines needed.
- Training: BCC confirmed that they have no training schedules or resource to undertake it. As such they are looking the BDAC to continue with our efforts.
- Health and Safety: BCC officers very vague about their responsibilities, concerned about cost of current Chris Knott insurance.
  Action: BDAC to obtain insurance quotes to cover the same items as our current policy eg Shield Insurance (Finance WG).
- Allotment Rule Book: BCC confirmed it is also 'not fit for purpose'. BCC approves BDAC redrafting it following their work undertaken over the last two years providing they do not conflict with legal tenancies. BCC will only enforce their own rules such as eviction following non-cultivation.
- Leased sites from third parties: BCC and the respective third parties are currently in legal negotiations which are happening on separate time schedules per site.
- Flooding – there is no official policy at present. Local association can agree to reduce the annual cost from their own budget and can also take out flood-prone sections of plots (so charge for reduced sized plot)
- Water-Plus. BCC confirmed that BCC remains the contractee. There is no requirement for local associations to take on the legal responsibility for the contract.
  Action: BW is to confirm to BDAC their contractual responsibility and HB will then send that statement to Water-Plus that BCC has accepted contractual responsibilities
  Action: HB to inform Site Secretaries not to complete the forms from Water-Plus (giving own name/address).

Digital Neighbourhood Network Scheme

This funding scheme can provide organisations with grants to pay for information technology (IT) training and devices – of use to BDAC and association volunteers. The fund manager complimented BDACs own web pages. It was **agreed** to continue this involvement further.

Secretary's Report:

During the last month

- Correspondence and advice: there have been contacts with 16 associations and support for 4 direct sites.
  Action: HB to circulate activity list monthly.

- **Social Prescribing Project –** NHS is injecting £85,000 to the project initiated by Jon Bloomfield and David Draycott. Focused on East Birmingham and involving a large medical practice with 2 link workers, it will refer clients to Bordesley Green allotments to garden on 14 plots which were previously off-limits for letting by the Association. The Active Well Being Society will probably line-manage staff. BDAC & Bordesley Green Allotment Association on Steering Group, it has set an ambitious target to begin on 1st April.
  Action: HB to ensure we continue getting project documents
  Action: BDAC to identify criteria and target range of people who will benefit from gardening.
  Action: BDAC involvement to be legally reviewed.
- **Joint BOSF, SFG and BDAC partnership 'Growing Birmingham'**:

  We are generally in agreement with its aims and objectives. KY stated his significant objection to any agreement being in a 'partnership' form due to possible legal implications exposing BDAC to unknown and indefinite risks.
  Action: HB to continue discussions aiming to firm up the project proposals including Project Initiation Document (PID), Risk register and Issue logs, Project plans and projected business plan/budget. Partnership Agreement also needs checking by our Legal Advisor.

Treasurer's Report:

- YB circulated and added to the tabled financial statement (attached).
- Honorarium payment to CB has been made
- No funds have been received from NAS this year as their regional contact.
  Action: KY to forward contact details to YB who will make request
- Having previously circulated estimates of the work and costings the meeting agreed to pay Liz Bunting (the previous NAS Legal Officer) for legal advice over the next 12 months. Proposed by KY, Seconded by DjR. Agreed
  Action: HB to contact Liz Bunting to finalise arrangements.

Working Group Reports:

Governance: the latest version of the Co-op Model rules to be adopted by BDAC was circulated identifying the plot holders as share-holding members not the associations – most Birmingham associations are not incorporated so cannot legally hold a share in the BDAC.

Following significant discussions, the meeting **agreed** to put to the AGM in May that:

- Plot holders having one or more BCC tenancy agreement(s) become shareholders with one vote, irrespective of the number, size or location of their plot(s). i.e. one vote per person NOT per plot.
- Associations are affiliated to BDAC and non-voting - Affiliate Members
- Proxy voting is not allowed whereas postal voting and electronic voting is allowed.
- The front page and headings be changed to show BDAC, rather than NAS/Model etc
- Several sections refer to 14 day time limits – change these to 28 days

- The remaining suggested changes will be considered after the FCA has approved this version to avoid additional delays over proposed changes to the Model Rules which may be mandatory for Co-ops.

SG was concerned that BDAC and respective local Association rules could be confused. It was stated that local site associations can create and enforce their own rules providing they do not conflict with BDAC or BCC rules.

Action: HB will obtain list of sites and tenancy agreements from BCC (already promised)
It is acknowledged that BDAC will need to provide regular communications to site secretaries for member/plot holders to be knowledgeable on voting matters.

Action: once BDAC Exec has seen the amended version it will be reviewed legally.

MOSA: HB tabled proposal (attached) involving Birmingham Community Matters (meeting after last MOSA meeting). BCM can provide free training to assist small groups/associations with developing constitutions. Proposal to run 2 workshops for smaller allotment associations within next few months, with BDAC input. **Agreed** – MOSA to handle this.

Shows and Events:

- There was an offer to judge the Best Newcomer competition which included restrictive conditions. The meeting declined the offer. DJR volunteered to judge this competition with YB.
- Sutton Coldfield transfer: HB confirmed that 5 sites now fully transferred to Sutton Coldfield Town and 5 remain with BCC in the process of transferring. It was **agreed** that while the remaining 5 associations are still paying rent to BCC, they will be able to participate in all activities and support from BDAC. A list of sites was circulated: the ones still with BCC are: Four Oaks Common, Falcon Lodge, The Hill, Newhall, White Farm Rd (Boulevard, Donegal Rd, Sunnydene/Sheffield Rd, Forge Farm, Walmley Ash – already moved)

Communications/Consultation/Website:

- CF and HB have been working on a joint database which is up to date and avoids duplication
- CF and HB have been investigating options for a house style for BDAC to promote consistency for internal and external documentation, the website etc.
  Action: CF/HB will circulate samples for Exec members to review and return comments before the next Exec meeting.

  Action: all to send comments to CF before our next executive.

Any other Business

Bordesley Green site has been given a defibrillator. As it is for use by all including members of the public and it will be located on the fence outside the main gate.

Next Meeting: Saturday 12th April 2025 Bordesley Green

Decisions and Action list: March 2025 Executive

Task	Who	When by
Write to BCC re extension to BCC/BDAC agreement	Governance WG	ASAP before 31st March
Send out Maintenance Schedules to site Secretaries and ask them to verify what is being done of scheduled work and what actually needs doing.	Infrastructure WG HB	ASAP
Continue negotiating with BCC on taking over rent collection, considering the whole process, responsibilities, commissions and schedule.	Governance WG	On-going
Consider Flo Pickering criteria & processes and give comments to Infrastructure W.G. which needs to consider full internal process i.e. selection criteria, resource allocation and responsibilities, any specific deadlines needed.	All – to HB	Before next exec.
Obtain insurance quotes to provide a choice of suppliers	Finance WG YB	ASAP
Redraft the Allotments Rule Book	MOSA	ASAP
Inform associations they can charge reduce rents on flood-affected plots (by reducing plot size)	HB	
Contact Water-Plus once we have received BCC confirmation that BCC retains legal responsibilities for their contract Contact site secretaries regarding Water-Plus situation & forms	HB	ASAP
DR to monitor progress of negotiations between BCC and leased sites and obtain copies when agreed	Governance Working Group	ongoing
Continue involvement with Digital NNS re grants for training	HB	ongoing
Provide monthly activity list	HB	ongoing
Continue BDAC input to Social Prescribing Project Steering Group – monitor documentation, provide criteria for referrals, legal review of documentation if needed	HB	ongoing
Continue preparing funding bid in partnership with BOSF/SFG, get legal advice on Partnership agreement	HB	
Forward NAS contact details to YB to claim payment from NAS	KY/YB	20/3/25
Secure Liz Bunting as our legal advisor; finalise arrangements	HB	ASAP
Revise latest version of BDAC Rules, get legal comments & circulate to Exec	Governance WG	5April
Obtain list of sites and tenancy agreements from BCC	Governance WG	ASAP
Progress workshops for smaller associations on constitutions, with Birmingham Community Matters, report back to Exec	MOSA	5 April
Send sample docs to Exec members to comment on house style options – for next Exec.	Communications WG - CF/HB ALL	5 April
Prepare suggestions and responsibilities for our AGM in May	ALL	April meeting