BDAC Executive Meeting

Venue: Bordesley Green
Minutes of the Exec of 12th July 2025

Present: David Read, Hester Blewitt, Yvonne Brookes, Len Tubbs, Stuart Guest, Cheryl Butler, Mohammed Ibrahim, Tony Webb

Apologies: Clive Fenn, Dave Reece

Previous minutes of meeting of 14th June approved

Chair's Report

DR reported on the (zoom) officers meeting last week with our legal advisor Liz Bunting where we discussed:

1 The Tenancy Agreement and Council Rules
2 The submission of the new Constitution/Rules of the BDAC to the Financial Conduct Authority
3 The Agreement between the BDAC and BCC

1. Liz has advised that the Tenancy Agreement should include the Rules that tenants have to follow and we have now got the latest (2025) version of the NAS Template (to be circulated to Exec members) which has a number of headings that can be included in a revised version of the agreement used in Birmingham if we want to use them and they are relevant. There needs to be ONE document, which can make reference to schedules with more details.

Discussion about current situation where new tenants sign a one-page tenancy agreement where they agree to keep to the Rules but often they are not aware of what these are: if not explained clearly and/or there are problems of understanding, this creates problems later when committees are trying to enforce Rules which aren't popular or accepted by everyone. While you are still bound by Rules even if you haven't read or understood them, we agreed that:

- Allotment Rules need to be clear and more accessible eg translations available (or advice on how to get documents translated via translation apps, for example),
- We need Rules to cover things like accepting the state of the plot when you take it on
- We need more enforcement powers at site levels if Rules aren't kept

When we told the BCC officers that we needed time to consult, they suggested 50% responses from Associations as a target – this is realistic given we had that % from Site Secretaries for the Allotment Survey done 2023/24. Responses are coming in on the BDAC website and the BDAC working group on the Rules will be collating these during July/August. The Secretary's document with a draft Agreement and starter list of 25 Rules has been circulated to Exec members and Liz Bunting will be assisting us in preparing the next version of this. In the meantime, we need to encourage Associations not just to look at the BCC proposals for Rule changes, but to look at the whole picture from the point of view of plotholder/future plotholders and Associations/committees and come up with sensible and enforceable rules which are in line with our expectations of what allotments are for.

Timetable and target: September Exec meeting for new Agreement with Rules to be approved for recommending to our members and BCC.

2. Liz has suggested submitting the BDAC Constitution/Rules as agreed at the AGM without the NAS endorsement, and paying the £950, and wait to see if they require any changes.

   Agreed we go ahead with this.

3. DR has looked at the old BDAC/BCC Agreement and made some revisions, including the most significant which is a budget of £54,000 rather than the current £9,500 we get to cover all our costs. The budget includes, for

example, the cost of computer programmes (to be developed) to run the BDAC and functions which the BDAC could take on in terms of site management. He will circulate this to Exec members for fuller discussion at August meeting

Secretary's Report

1. BDAC email 'postbag' and other contacts from sites in past month/work undertaken. Table and report distributed. In past month, we have handled:
    a. 11 plot enquiries where the 'automated' system via our website wasn't used or didn't result in a link up between a site/association and an enquirer, sometimes where site secretary not responsive.
    b. 4 notifications of changes in association officers – this doesn't happen as much as it should
    c. 4 queries or problems to do with BCC handling of some issue
    d. 12 pieces of work involving advice, complaints and mediation at site level – varying from a phone call to full-scale investigation and follow up
    e. Support and involvement in managing 5 of the 7 directly managed sites – eg dealing with key/lock problems (and collecting deposits for keys), organising a skip, issuing Letters of Concern
    f. Liaison with 15 associations regarding the recently organised workshops delivered by Birmingham Community Matters. Some of these were people who booked and then withdrew or didn't turn up
    g. Work involving meetings with partners such as Birmingham Open Spaces Forum
    h. Circulation of information from other agencies such as National Vegetable Society, MACs Big Green Weekend, Aston Villa Foundation
    i. Dealing with 5 appeals re Notices of Re-entry from plotholders and 2 contacts about Rule changes

Altogether we have had contact with around 37 of Birmingham's associations in the past month (i.e over a third), and it is hard to keep up with workload and respond in a reasonable timescale.

2. Growing Birmingham Partnership project. 11th version of the proposal to secure £250,000 worth of funding for a project involving BDAC, BSOF and Social Farms and Gardens now circulated. This will be going to Get Grants for their input before it is sent to off to the chosen funding body. It includes a significant sum to pay for a one day a week staffing resource for BDAC and other costs we will incur as a result of this bid if it is successful.
   Discussion with BOSF staff produced the suggestion that if BDAC becomes a member of BOSF, BDAC could then access Get Grants to get free help and support to do a bid of its own to the Lottery to pay for capacity building for the BDAC including staff, IT etc. At the moment around 12+ allotment associations are already BOSF members and can get this help, but BDAC is also eligible to become a BOSF member (criteria met) **Agreed we apply to join BOSF** and then look at options for applying for Lottery funding, which appears to be able to offer fairly substantial grants even to unincorporated organisations.

Treasurer's and Finance Report

Spreadsheets of income and expenditure distributed. Big item of outgoings in past month was the £15,541 insurance bill, and we now have to wait for this to be paid by BCC along with the £9,500 fee. Like associations waiting for their 10% of rental income to be returned plus the devolved budgets, this has all been held up with the BCC Bankruptcy Commissioners. Question about whether we can sue BCC for failing to pay in time: yes in theory, not realistic in practice.

Questions about items on spreadsheets: Direct sites – key deposits and other items could be separated out in future. Birmingham Airport grant listed is one for Birches Green site, so not an income for BDAC.

Bordesley Green facilities used by BDAC: Suggested we reinstate payments to the Association for using their meeting space (item for next Exec meeting).

The Treasurer also reported on the follow-up to the inspections and involvement of Animal Welfare team (BCC) and RSPC on a particular site where many plotholders keep chickens in unsatisfactory conditions. Allotments Officer has sent out letters to 40 plotholders – Notices of Re-entry, other warnings and instructions. But the checking up on whether these have been followed has not taken place because the support initially offered by the Council to accompany BDAC officers on a revisit has been withdrawn. The support was from another department i.e. trained people with on-body cameras in case of intimidation or other threats from plotholders who've had warnings. Simon

Needle, Senior Officer, is now supposed to be dealing with this. Agreed to contact him to find out what's happening.

It is becoming increasingly difficult to get two signatures on a cheque to pay for things. **Agreed**: officers will request the bank to amend the current mandate to allow on-line banking with a single signature and the use of a debit card. Signatories to remain as current i.e. Treasurer and Secretary

Working Group items:

1. **Governance (**Officers **-** Chair, Sec, Treasurer, DR, CB): covered in Chair's report

2. **Management of Sites and Associations** (MOSA) (Officers, SG, DR) Report on Constitution training for small associations with BCM 21st June & 5th July. HB reported that the workshops took place on 21st June at Meadow Rd B17 and 5th July at Court Lane B23 and were attended by a limited number of individuals (15) and associations (8). Useful that BCM could deliver these and give advice which they will follow up. In future we need to make it more relevant to Allotment Associations which have significant differences from other types of Community Groups and accept that in-house support may be more appropriate if committees are having problems.

3. **Communication, Website and Marketing** (Officers & Webmaster CF)
   No report this time (Clive absent)

3. **Infrastructure** (Officers, LT) including Flo Pickering items
   DR reported that the Bankruptcy Commissioners have now signed off the expenditure on the 14 allotment sites for Flo Pickering funded work and contractors would be starting on site in a fortnight according to Anthony Downes from City Architects. At least one association has found alternative funding to do urgent work on its drive, on the basis that they could get Flo Pickering funds spent on another part of their drive when they finally came to do the work. **Agreed** to get the schedule of dates to pass on to site committees/officers and be ready to advise them if necessary.
   Report on Website about the Flo Pickering work needs to be done to counter impression given by local press that the work has only just been agreed.

5. **Shows and Events** (Officers, CB):
   Best Newcomer (Flo Pickering trophy) competition

   YB reported on the judging process which she and DR carried out over 3 days in the past couple of weeks on 17 entries (2 withdrew before judging). High standard generally and very positive experience ss they got a great welcome everywhere but they were also able to see some of the problems on some sites. Scheduling was done and kept up to date using WhatsApp contact with the entrants. They have decided 1st to 4th places and may suggest releasing more funds for money prizes. Certificates for people reaching agreed points for Gold, Silver etc standards, can be done later – presentation at Half Yearly meeting. Agreed that the process has helped to raise BDAC profile and involved people In a wider range of associations than in previous years when this competition was run (2020, 2021, 2022)

   Best Plot (Cliff Jones trophy) and Best Site (Thorpe Trophy) competition

   HB reported that, after the extended deadline for these competitions closed on 1st July, there were 15 entries for the Best Plot competition and 7 for the Best Site competition (*correction; after meeting a recount including 2nd entries on sites gave a total of 19 entries for Best Plot).* A significant number of entries came from sites which had not entered these competitions the last years they were organised (2020,2021, 2022). 5 of the Best Site entrants are new and a couple of these have entered not because they think they have any chance of winning but so they get some tips for entering the Most Improved Site next year. Judging will be done in early August and the entry information will be passed on to Robin Russell, the main judge, in the next few days.

6. **Recruitment/Co-option to the Executive –** postponed to next meeting

7. **Any other business**

Big MACs green weekender. BDAC has received an invitation to have a stall at this event on 20th and 21st September, at Midlands Arts Centre, Cannon Hill Park. We are told that Saturday will be a more informative day with an emphasis on climate change, sustainable ways of living (especially sustainable fashion to coincide with our Sari exhibition), and nature. Sunday will be a family fun day with theatre performances and workshops for people of all ages to take part in. Limited number of stalls, no charge. After discussion it was **Agreed** that BDAC would apply to have a stall on both days so we can promote BDAC and allotments and engage people generally. There is a BDAC leaflet which could be used/updated, display boards. Rota needed for running the stall. **CB to bring proposals to next Exec meeting for what we could include.**

Decisions and Action list

Task	Who	When by
Encourage associations to make suggestions on Allotment Rules via website, emails to BDAC, have meetings/consult plotholders Collate responses from associations about Rule changes Send out proposals and suggestions for Rule changes	All Exec Rule changes working group Sec	By end of August
Meet (zoom) Legal Advisor to come up with draft Tenancy Agreement with Rules to put to Exec and BDAC membership	Officers	Sept Exec
Send final version of BDAC Constitution/Rules to FCA with £950 fee, without NAS sponsorship	Chairperson	Within 7 days
Send revised version of BDAC/BCC Management Agreement and implementation budget to Exec members – to discuss at August Exec	Chairperson	Within 7 days
BDAC apply to become a member of Birmingham Open Spaces Forum	Sec	Within 7 days
Financial: Separate Directly managed sites costs/income into a separate heading Propose payment to Bordesley Green Assoc for use of facilities Ask Santander Bank to change the mandate to single signature and issue a debit card.	Treasurer Treasurer	For Aug Exec ASAP
Site with 40 warning letters: Chase up Simon Needle to get support for revisit to site	YB/Treasurer	ASAP
Liaise with Birmingham Community Matters as follow up to workshops to contribute to advice and guidance being given to participants	Secretary	ASAP
Get the schedule of dates from City Architects to pass on to site committees/officers and be ready to advise them if problems with specs	Chair	ASAP
Write article for website on Flo Pickering work to counter press 'misinformation)	?	ASAP
Organise certificates for Best Newcomer entrants	Treasurer/DReece	November
Liaise with Robin Russell & other judge about Best Plot & Best Site competitions to arrange schedule of judging in early August	Secretary	Within 7 days
Apply to have a stall on both days of the MAC Big Green weekender 20/21st September Find/update BDAC leaflet. Come up with proposals for next Exec meeting for what we could include, and arrange rota for being on the stall if booked for both days.	Sec Sec CB	19th July Sept 9th Aug

Certified as true copy of the Minutes

Signed David Read (Chairperson) Hester Blewitt (Secretary)