BDAC Executive Meeting Saturday 9th August 2025
Venue: Meadow Road
Minutes

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

Guest speaker: Robin Russell

Apologies: None **Declarations of conflict of interest:** None

Previous minutes of meeting of 12th July: Agreed

Chair's Report Including:

1. **Update on submission of new BDAC Rules to FCA and Agreement between BDAC & BCC**

The new BDAC Rules (Constitution) was sent off to the Financial Conduct Authority about 10 days ago, along with payment of £950; it should take 3-4 weeks to receive a response and we should get a company number if accepted with no changes required. If there are queries, we need to consider these (at September Exec).

2. **Proposed new Management Agreement between BCC and BDAC – sent out with agenda.**

DR presented the revised Management Agreement (with revisions suggested by Liz Bunting) relating to payments by Birmingham City Council to the BDAC for consultation and advisory services, which would normally be for 5 years (starting April 2026).and accompanying annual budget of £53,100 instead of the current £9,500 a year, with a breakdown into 10 headings and sub-budgets and explanation of these. Examples – Show prizes £2k based on 2023 cost of prizes for BDAC Annual Show; Management fee for the 7 Directly managed sites - £6k, based on 10% rent commission for the number of plots on these sites and Schedule 7 payments. Discussion about

- There being insufficient detail in the budget to use this in submission to BCC, given the huge jump in what we want to claim.
- whether everything is included e.g. CF noted there was no budget for the BDAC website and Gmail account
- whether all Exec members are prepared to record/monitor our volunteer hours so we can justify the estimates for the value of time spent on meetings and management e.g. like BOSF volunteers already do.

Agreed: The Chairperson will revise figures to include missing items and give more information to support the claim in greater detail about how they have been calculated. Circulate the updated document to Exec members within the next 7 days for comments/amendments before the September Exec meeting where the document can be ratified and sent to BCC Officers and relevant councillors such as John Cotton, Majid Mahmood or whoever is the councillor now responsible for allotment management

3. **Contact with Get Grants after application to join BOSF**

DR reported that BDAC has now joined and been accepted as a BOSF member, after we were told BDAC fulfils the eligibility criteria. This means that BDAC can now approach Get Grants for free assistance with

funding applications, as can individual Allotment Associations (about 13 out of the total) who are already BOSF members. The intention would be to apply for a grant for 'capacity building' for BDAC including the WebExcel proposal (details circulated to Exec members) for an IT-based allotment management system costing £15k (15 months @£1000 pm)

Secretary's Report

Contacts from sites in past month/work undertaken on advice, complaints.

HB referred to the updated monthly report (circulated to Exec members) giving figures for advice and information, numbers of complaints and appeals received/acted on etc. The meeting discussed some of the issues, current and longstanding, to do with the plot cultivation – inspection - warning procedure and how poorly this is working in some cases – problems for committees and tenants who are being evicted. BDAC's role in trying to resolve conflicts is difficult when procedures are not properly understood or implemented by committees and tenants are unaware or wish to challenge these procedures when they are on the receiving end. Various suggestions made such as placing more emphasis on direct face-to-face communication between committee and tenants (not just emails and letters) and on getting tenants to sign their agreement to all rules. Recent experience of appeals by a number of tenants being evicted highlights the need for more clarity and changes in Allotment Rules on both sides, and better briefing or training for committees responsible for initiating eviction procedures.

The BDAC could look at producing a single sheet, that will explain the process of Plot Inspection and the procedure and the consequences to both sides, which could be put on a notice board or handed out to plot holders as and when, with the Allotment rules when taking on a plot, at meetings, rent collection, AGMs, when buying stuff from their shops etc.

On another topic, the monthly total of 2 queries about renting a plot seems to show that the 5 click BDAC website-based enquiry system is working well to link enquirers and sites without the need for additional intervention.

Updates on Social Prescribing Project and Growing Birmingham Partnership project

HB reported that (1) the Social Prescribing Project (which involves Bordesley Green site in providing gardening opportunities for people referred from an East Birmingham health centre consortium) is now about to get started as the NHS funder has agreed a new budget and has received the first £40K to cover the first year's expenditure so it will start in the autumn instead of April.

(2) Version 11 of the proposed partnership work involving BOSF, BDAC and Social Farms and Gardens called 'Growing Birmingham' is now being looked at by Get Grants with a view to it being sent off to probably the Esmee Fairburn Trust for funding.

Tenancy agreement and Allotment Rules – Progressing the consultation.

HB reported that Liz Bunting has been advising about a new Tenancy Agreement which includes basic items like reference to the original 1922 Allotment legislation (and conduct on site, plus a Schedule of headings covering anything from Paths and Hedges to Bonfires and Barbecues).

With BCC wanting to make changes to their Rules, this is an opportunity for us to come up with changes associations want and items which are in the model NAS template. YB on behalf of the Rules Working group attached to the MOSA Working Group (YB, DR, SG & Karin Rochelle (non-Exec member) will be looking at Facebook and other responses from 23 individuals or associations after 15th August.

Ideas are being to the BDAC and HB has discussed some of these with our legal advisor on Zoom meetings, as well as problems with existing Rules, so she (HB) has prepared an unfinished document incorporating:

- Elements of existing BCC Rules
- What BCC wants to change or add
- Clauses in the NAS model Tenancy Agreement and Schedule (Rules), recently published.
- Ideas from BDAC members (individuals and associations)

Agreed: to send this document to the Rules Working Group as it is, for them to continue collating responses and come up with proposals. Val Lecky suggested 50% as an acceptable consultation rate for associations. This could include anything from a single response on 1 item to a full assessment of every section/topic.

Treasurer's and Finance Report including

Monthly report

YB presented the tabled Income and expenditure statement for the year to date, explaining various figures such as £2059 income under Direct Sites heading and expenditure of £15,541 for insurance which is the payment for 25/26 period. Anticipated income from BCC for insurance repayment and BDAC management fee has still not arrived. Expenditure of £1650 shown for legal fees (Liz Bunting) – budget for the year is £5,000. These costs are eating in the reserves which built up during the lockdown period when there was little activity.

Note on assets: BDAC owns a container and 2 marquees. These are recorded at cost rather than depreciation. For information only.

We can apply for money from the NAS to increase income: this is based on the total number of tenants involved in sites/associations who are NAS organisational members and pay £3.50 per tenant to the NAS. NAS can supply this information if we make this claim. Alternative is to claim for specific expenses such as banners and publicity (which includes promoting NAS)

Changing Bank mandate

YB reported yet another hiccup with Santander bank. There has been a further delay to getting bank mandate changed so that on-line bank transfers can be done, rather than cheques. All forms filled in and taken to a Santander branch which were scanned and sent through to head office – now lost in the system. YB will be submitting a complaint. Suggestion to change banks e.g. to Lloyds or other – can't be done yet, because we have another Santander account with Events money in it which is frozen till issue of deceased signatories is sorted.

BDAC audit

YB said that the audited accounts are ready to present to the November Half yearly meeting. The company doing them is going to be a significant cost to BDAC compared to previous charges, but the Meeting agreed that this is necessary for at least a year or two and we may need to keep paying for professional auditors in future if our income rises significantly, rather than go back to non-professional lay auditors. Suggestion of advertising for a chartered accountant amongst BDAC membership – this could be done at a later date.

Working Group items:

1. Management of Sites and Associations (MOSA)

Report from 31st July meeting (Minutes circulated to Exec members)

Targeting associations with limited BDAC contact (tabled report). HB reported that MOSA had looked at a list of associations and their level of involvement with BDAC :– little or no contact; 45 with limited contact or where we know there are issues or problems, and 26 others that have quite a lot of contact or seem to be managing without having to refer to BDAC. YB will coordinate targeting of the of said allotment list with the support of David Draycott and Caroline Hutton with the aim of reporting back to the Exec in September

Training proposals

MOSA discussed June/July workshops delivered mainly by Birmingham Community Matters and agreed we would carry on working with BCM, but discuss how to make content more relevant to allotment context which is different from many other types of community groups: 4 topics first run as workshops in 2024 could be run again i.e.

1 The role of committees and running effective meetings (similar to 2024 workshop)
2 The role of the Allotment Association Secretary
3 The role of the Allotment Association Chairperson, chairing and making decisions.
4 Finance – Managing the money, including rents and grants – the role of Treasurer.

MOSA recommended that Topic 5 Governance and incorporation may better be done in-house specific to each association and Topic 6 Managing infrastructure – land, buildings, fencing, drives, security etc may best be done through developing Site Manager role and organising links between sites where this is working and those where they need advice and guidance.

4 documents to do with Complaints (BDAC procedure; policy for associations and how to complain for tenants; and procedure -Dealing with persistent offenders - not discussed/agreed through lack of time will be brought forward to September Exec meeting.

3. Communication, Website and Marketing

Report about use of website and Facebook and House style for BDAC – not discussed.

Promoting association events and National Allotments Week 11th to 17th August

CB said that site events can easily be advertised by associations posting on Facebook if they want but it's more complicated and time consuming for him to add them to BDAC website so he's not offering to do that as an on-going thing. On the National Allotments Week, we had forwarded information only last week, so too late to follow that through.

4. Infrastructure

DR reported that the City Architect Anthony Downes has recently said that the contractor is now saying they will start work in September 2025. A map with the 14 sites was distributed at the meeting (Hall Hayes site highlighted on this map, but next-door Brambles's site is not – however, the 2 are one of 14 listed getting work done on fences/drives or both). DR has already asked AD if Francis Road can be the first on the list because further delays are disrupting their site plans for a site project.

AD wants to know what order the work should be done, bearing in mind the contractor does not want to move heavy equipment from one side of the city to another. Comments to DR so he can provide a possible schedule by next Wednesday 13th August.

Note: Same contractor doing both drives and fencing – drives first then fencing. Pool Lane site needs to be contacted about ensuring rubbish up against perimeter is cleared and removed ready for new fencing.

SG asked about next round of Flo Pickering-funded work, when would associations be able to bid? CF confirmed he has put the new criteria on-line but not activated it yet. Currently, we don't know what money will be available after the delayed 14 sites work is finished, and figures won't be available from BCC because Oracle computer is not working. We will need photos when we decide to open applications**.**

5. Shows and Events (Officers, CB):

BDAC competitions

Guest Robin Russell, the RHS Judge who did the Best Site/Plot competition on 2nd and 3rd of August on 17 sites across Birmingham attended the meeting and proposed that we keep all the results of these competitions embargoed similar to the Best Newcomer results, until the Half Yearly meeting in November when the trophies and certificates can be presented.

It was **agreed** that everyone who competed in the competitions will be informed they will receive a certificate/grading, but not which level nor who won overall. The winners will be told a week before the half yearly meeting and will be asked to attend personally or nominate someone to pick up certificate/trophy on their behalf.

We should have on display as many photos as possible.

We thank MI for his support of Robin Russell throughout the two days of judging.

Further discussions on benefits of having competitions.

"It's your neighbourhood" criteria were used for Best Site. It has sections on community involvement and the environment as well as gardening achievement. Also criteria for Best plot were changed from those used in 2022 – widening them beyond quality of a limited range of crops. This year has seen significant increase in overall numbers compared to 2022 when the competitions were last run and more sites which haven't participated before.

Finally, we have had very positive responses from participants on the process

Big MACs green weekender. BDAC has had bookings confirmed for this event at Midlands Arts Centre, Cannon Hill Park, on 20th and 21st September, stall on 20th and workshop on 21st. CB has ideas for a workshop aimed at children – seed planting, composting/wormery and needs a budget for materials - agreed and YB will liaise. CB will also organise a rota for 20th to run the stall, get BDAC boards from CB and find out about parking charges. Leaflets on BDAC

& how to get a plot – HB already agreed last meeting to prepare these in time for event. D Reece will provide seeds, YB and SG will donate compost; we still need to keep record of costs of running workshops piggybacking on other organisations' events, so we have information to use in future.

Decisions and Action list August to 13th September (next Exec)

	Who	When by
Consider any queries from FCA about BDAC New Rules/Constitution – if needed	All Exec	13th Sept
Revise figures to include missing items and provide more detailed calculations for Proposed new management agreement BDAC budget Comments/amendments Ratify budget	Chairperson Exec members Exec members	16th Aug 6th Sept 13th Sept
BDAC produce a single sheet to explain process of plot inspection & procedure and consequences of procedures for both sides	?	?
Send unfinished document on new draft Tenancy Agreement with Rules Schedule to Allotment Rules Working Group	Secretary	Within 7 days
Circulate Sec's list/figures on Associations with limited BDAC contact to target Birmingham Open Spaces Forum Coordinate targeting of list and report back to next Exec	Sec Treasurer	Within 7 days 13 Sept
Consider 4 documents to do with Complaints (BDAC procedure; policy for associations and how to complain for tenants; and procedure - Dealing with persistent offenders	Exec members	13th Sept Exec
Send comments to Chairperson on Flo Pickering funded work schedule	Exec members	13th Aug
Inform participants in 3 BDAC competitions that they will receive a certificate, but level & winners to be announced at Half Yearly meeting on 22nd Sept; winners to be told a week before	Secretary	ASAP
Organise rota of BDAC Exec members to run a stall on both days of the MAC Big Green weekender 20/21st September, find out about parking, get boards and liaise re budget for activity session on Sunday Find/update BDAC leaflet. Provide seeds Donate compost	CB Treasurer Sec DReece Treasurer/SG	ASAP Sept 13 Sep 20 Sep 20

Certified as true copy of the Minutes

Signed

David Read (Chairperson) Hester Blewitt (Secretary)