BDAC Executive Meeting

Venue: Northleigh Road

Draft Minutes of the Exec of 17th January Time 2pm

Present: David Read (DR Chair) Hester Blewitt (HB Minutes) Yvonne Brookes (YB), Clive Fenn (CF), Stuart Guest (SG), Mo Ibrahim (MI), Dave Reece (DRE), Len Tubbs (LT), Mo Ibrahim (MI)

Apologies: Cheryl Butler Not present: Tony Webb

Draft Minutes of previous meeting of 11th October 2025 Agreed with one objection from SG that he had not been sent a copy and had not seen them till today so could not comment. Agreed that he would send in any objections which could be incorporated into a redraft of the minutes.

Draft Minutes of Half Yearly Meeting of 15th November 2025: Noted (they will be approved in November 2026)

Declarations of conflict of interest: None

Matters arising from October meeting which are not on agenda:

1. HB sent out 'Plot Inspection process' information sheet to Exec members, 10th Oct and also asked for comments on draft Plot Management Manual prepared over a year ago: none received.
2. Discussion about how to check whether emails sent to BCC (for example) are received and opened. CF will see how this can be done on Gmail & Outlook so we can adjust settings
3. Funding from NAS if due: Treasurer to follow up
4. Open days and events being run by other organisations in 2026 – none yet notified to Secretary

Chair's report from DR

- **Update on BDAC Rules submission to FCA**
  DR sent off the submission but there were further queries; Liz Bunting is going to follow these up with the FCA for us.
- **Update on proposal for Agreement between BDAC and BCC, Letter to BCC officers and changes in Allotment Rules and Funding application for money for setting up IT system**

DR reported that we have meetings booked with Council officers Simon Needle, Val Lecky & Bernie Wilson on 19th and 26th January to go through the proposed new BDAC-BCC Management Agreement due to start from 1st April 2026 (BCC said they would not extend the old agreement a further year). Our Legal Advisor Liz Bunting has gone through and okayed the changes in the Agreement which the Exec has approved previously, and given advice on how to present ourselves ie. Positively and willing to compromise on the budget we have submitted for the work BDAC has been doing for £9,500 since 2014 with no adjustments for inflation.

- Discussion about the total amount requested £54,523 which includes insurance and rolling out a comprehensive IT system to associations – this is a one-off cost and could be in stages over more than one year, so the 'bottom line' for the new Agreement could be a lot lower.
- Discussion about what can be agreed at meetings with the Council like these: if decisions have to be made elsewhere (eg including councillors), they cannot make decisions on the spot so

requesting minutes is likely to be denied. However we can take our own notes and get confirmation of the status of anything said (which appears to be a decision). The point was made and accepted that meeting notes need to be circulated to Exec members

The 26th January meeting is about the BCC Allotment Rules changes.

On the Funding application (1st one rejected by Lottery), DR reported that Smartlyte, an IT company which is already working with BCC, is now in the process of helping BDAC to apply elsewhere. Comments on the brief for the system, from Exec members, are welcome. CF said he would help.

Agreed by vote: that the Exec supports the 3 BDAC Officers meeting with BCC reps, in whatever they can get agreed (that is beneficial) and that they will ask if the BCC officers are authorised to decide anything at these meeting.

- Update on Tennal Lane developments

Update on Tennal Lane developments

One of the items sent out to Exec members in advance of the meeting was the following:

"Report from the Chair

To: BDAC Executive Committee

Date: January 17th 2026

All 3 officers of BDAC were invited to a meeting of Tennal Lane Allotment Association in October 2025. At this meeting there were numerous complaints voiced over the actions of the Committee at Tennal Lane. These complaints were accepted as formal complaints within our complaints procedure and it was agreed an investigation would be initiated. The results of this investigation can be summarised as under:

- Contrary to their constitution the Association had refused to hold an AGM for some 5 years
- No accounts had been produced for Committee meetings
- Association funds were routinely spent without authorisation from the Committee or the tenants
- Officers used Association funds to pay for their own plot rents reimbursing the Association up to 1 year later
- They failed to fully implement the City Council late payment penalty
- They failed to advise the City Council on structural changes made on the site.
- They failed to consult the allotment department at BCC on grant applications
- Attempts had been made to nominate friends for officer positions on the committee when those friends were not qualified to stand.

Whilst some of these failures can be considered as minor, the potential for a substantial cost implication cannot be overstated. The officers therefore decided that it was in the Association Tenants' best interests to suspend the current committee and call an EGM. This has been arranged for 26th January when a new committee will be elected.

[redacted]. His actions since the EGM was called have been against the BDAC Code of Conduct, agreed by the Executive in January 2025, and will bring the BDAC into disrepute. He has written to all the tenants at Tennal Lane advising them to ignore the EGM, and contacted the National Allotment Association to complain we are exceeding our authority in dealing with Tennal Lane complaints. All this despite BCC confirming the legitimacy of our actions.

[redacted]**"**

[redacted] said he wished to respond to the allegations in this report which he refutes as follows:

- That Alan's nomination for Chair at the AGM should not have been accepted because it should have been submitted by a certain date according to the Constitution – he had previously put himself forward to be Secretary (before deadline) but had changed his mind, with encouragement from YB but the second nomination wasn't within the time limit
- [redacted] did not have an answer to the point that Michael Thawe had not been a plotholder when he was nominated for Chair [redacted] for the 4th September AGM, as his application which the Allotments Officer holds is date 10th October.
- The he has had advice from Tyler at the NAS entitling him to say that BDAC should not be calling an EGM, because he is an individual member of the NAS. [redacted] (i.e. that he wasn't contacting him on behalf of the BDAC Exec). He also didn't have an answer to the point made that Tyler should have been told what was in the Management Agreement about BDAC's role and now he has been made aware following contact with the Allotments Officer, he has changed his mind about the advice he gave to SG.
- [redacted]
- That he had not refused to have AGMs, but said he could not organise them until accounts were ready
- That Bernie Wilson the Allotments officer does know about the containers and gave permission and he has emails to that effect which could be made available aswell as evidence that funding was spent on containers. He also said that he did consult BW on grant applications and has that in writing
- That written reports of accounts were done while Alan was on the Committee – i.e. bank statements listing payments and who got paid and that he has receipts if there is any query
- That accounts were produced at all meetings, although [redacted]
- That what money was spent on was all discussed at meetings which are minuted but he hasn't been asked for minutes which can verify that Committee gave permission for spending of £100 without prior permission from Committee which didn't want to be bothered with requests to authorise small amounts; this was later reduced to £50 upper limit to spending without prior authorisation
- That the Committee was 3 officers and 3 members, and if not quorate, decisions deferred to future meeting
- [redacted]
- On the point of getting friends not qualified to stand for the Committee, he just said what's a friend and he should have been allowed to stand.
- Re minor failures, what would BDAC consider minor
- Re accounts.....?

Secretary's Report from HB

HB had prepared the monthly report on work done, but in this case it covers 3 months as we have not had an Exec meeting since October 2025. She will circulate this to Exec members after this meeting since there was now limited time left of the 17th January meeting to discuss or decide any details.

Summary of report:

- Following up on 9 enquiries for plots when contact not established through the website automated system – problems if contacts at associations have changed and we haven't been told – but some are informing us.
- 21 associations or individuals advised: this includes 4 new complaints as well as on-going ones and varies from half an hour on the phone or sending info/advice to very time consuming involvement with a single association. In recent months BDAC has called EGMs on 2 sites to get new committees elected and is providing advice and support on significant problems.
- Involvement (info, advice, support) to 5 of the 7 directly managed sites. Some of this involves spending some of our BCC money eg on locks and skips for the neglected under-occupied sites.

- Passing on useful information from 9 other organisations eg about workshops or grants to contacts in Associations but we don't know if these are always going to the right contacts if the Secretary has changed or whether info for tenants is then passed on

Report from Management of Sites and Associations Working Group (MOSA) and Policy Work

HB also distributed a two page document about all the policy work which MOSA has been doing over the past 2 years on policies and procedures for use by Associations. At the last MOSA meeting, attended by people not on the Exec who have put in work on policies, it was agreed that we would not meet until the results of that work were progressed by Exec decisions, rather than not discussed at all or postponed until legal points could be checked. There are 17 topics including Health & Safety, GDPR, Safeguarding, Keeping animals on allotment sites where we already have a lot of documents which are currently being used when requested or offered to individual associations. They could be put on the BDAC website as developed to date – others could be improved or shortened or put in a more standardised format so they are easy to download and customise, and so reach a lot more people than is currently possible. The MOSA Working Group accepts that items which refer to legislation and/or Council policies and/or Management Agreements (between BCC & individual associations, or BCC & BDAC) need to have a disclaimer, especially if they are going on the website which is open to all. Our Legal Advisor has said this is okay and it would be wise to add the following points

- That they need adapting to the individual situation and needs of the Association, not just adopted in full – in some cases, getting legal or more specific advice may be necessary;
- That they are 'living documents' i.e. they are there to be used and applied, not sit unread in a drawer
- That Committee members may well need induction and training to fully digest and implement them effectively

Proposed and agreed:

1. For section on website to have an introduction and how to make use of documents, with general disclaimer
2. To add specific disclaimer on each document (or reference eg Management handbook, Council Rules)
3. To email Associations to explain how they can make use of documents and have follow up support and advice on how to use them or customise them
4. To continue work on MOSA on developing policies, procedures and other items such as forms, guides, apps (eg for doing plot inspections), and making amendments in the light of practice and feedback from Associations.

Who to be involved: Secretary, Webmaster and anyone else on Executive or in Associations which are actively involved in developing their Associations. MOSA to coordinate

Other work

HB has been involved in various new things since October:

- Asking Compost Connection if they could produce a two page leaflet on composting with local content that we could distribute
- Asking New Training if they could deliver a workshop for Committee members on how to handle rule infringements and deal with complaints and grievances (skills for dealing with people)
- Progressing the new Allotment survey being done (voluntarily) by Jon Bloomfield as a follow -up to the first allotment survey done in 2023/24. This will go into more detail about why people have plots and the benefits from renting, he is starting with tenants under-represented in the first survey ie. People from migrant backgrounds
- Liaising with David Cragg from York Supplies who is trying to get funding for a scheme to place young volunteers on allotment sites to do work such as clearing overgrown plots

Other work includes:

- Organising and promoting the Half Yearly meeting on 15th November, including the presentations to the winners and others receiving awards for the 3 competitions in 2025 (Best Site, Best Plot, Best Newcomer)
- Preparing and distributing information and recommendations for Allotment Rule changes as part of the consultation process finishing at the Half Yearly meeting – these incorporated comments received from Associations and individuals. These were sent to BCC by the deadline they gave – 17th November.
- involvement in the much delayed Social Prescribing Project based at Bordesley Green site which is yet to start because funding has not yet been received by the health practice which is in charge of this project.
- Attending zoom meetings of the Council run "Bauhaus Bites project" which is developing an action plant to "harness the power of diversity, promote social inclusion, increase food literacy, support sustainable diets, and enhance green spaces" in East Birmingham wards including Ward End, Bordesley Green, Castle Vale, Pype Hayes, Yardley, Shard End, Sheldon, Small Heath, Sparkbook and others.

Other Exec members could be involved in any of these if they want to contribute.

Treasurer's Report

YB distributed the updated accounts with Income and Expenditure headings and reported that

?? highlights (I didn't record sorry).

She is still having to pester Santander bank about getting bank mandates set up and they have managed to lose another set of documents we already provided.

A request was made to have the updated accounts sent out in advance of the meeting.

Shows and Events Working Group

HB reported on the Working Group (which doesn't currently have a convenor, so she has been doing coordinating role in recent months). Time is getting on and we need to make decisions if anything is going to be organised this year on shows, events and competitions but this meeting doesn't have enough time today to discuss details.

Proposed and agreed:

- To re-establish the Working Group so it can function effectively
- To accept the revised remit as below and how it operates (or to consider its remit and report back to February Executive)
- To have the following members of the Working Group – YB, DRE, HB, MO, CF) which could be expanded as long as the extra people are prepared to spend the time and contribute. People could contribute to its work without being involved in meetings.
- That we have an initial face to face meeting to bring together those on the Working Group and any other people such as Robin Russell who did the judging for 2 competitions in 2025. Ideally this should be in the first week of February, AFTER our meetings with the Council Officers (19th & 26th Jan), so we have a better idea of whether we will get a better Management Agreement and more resources to help with the costs of organising anything. This meeting would consider what its primary purpose is as well as what to focus on this year so it can present recommendations to the February Executive. If we are going to organise anything this year, this needs to be communicated to the membership as soon as possible so they can decide whether to get involved early in the growing season. Agreed to meet Thursday 5th February, 10.30am at Northleigh Road pavilion

- That we should ensure that what is in the existing BCC-BDAC Management Agreement and proposals for the new Management Agreement is not forgotten in negotiations on 19th January and subsequent meetings

Remit for BDAC Events, Shows and Projects Working Group

Aims

To enable the organising of events/displays/shows/competitions and other ways of showcasing the gardening talents and achievements of people on allotment sites

To facilitate the development of projects which will demonstrate the value of allotment sites and allotments, linking them to other strategies and initiatives at national, city and local levels.

Objectives 2023-26

- To organise an event which will encourage participation from the whole range of sites and plotholders reflecting the diverse communities resident in Birmingham
- To organise competitions and engage a diverse range of plotholders in entering competitions and contributing to displays open to members of the public as well as plotholders
- To actively promote one (or more) events across the city to raise public awareness of the existence and contributions of allotment sites and plotholders.
- To liaise with other partners to develop and organise pilot projects, promotions, activities and visits which will enhance the effectiveness of all in achieving their complementary goals such as care for the environment

How Working Groups should operate

1. Composition and membership. Each group must have at least 2 Exec members but can co-opt and involve other people with relevant experience and expertise, including association committee members who can contribute ideas and advice. They can also invite people with specialist knowledge or qualifications needed by the BDAC but without allotment experience. These non-Executive members will also need to sign and observe the BDAC Code of Conduct if they are regularly involved in the work of the Group.

2. Reporting and accountability

Groups are not required to meet monthly or even regularly but each Group should have an initial face to face meeting to establish how it is going to operate. After that, Groups may choose to communicate and make decisions or recommendations through use of Zoom/Teams, group email interactions, WhatsApp etc. However, everyone in the Group should be clear what are the appropriate ways of keeping in touch, allocating work, agreeing actions and what will be reported to the Executive each month

3. **Roles on Working Groups** Each Working Group will need people in place to carry out key roles:

- Convening meetings as required (face to face, zoom)
- Facilitating communication between people in the Working Group (including people not on Executive Committee)
- Chairing meetings
- Keeping records (taking minutes, contact details etc)
- Reporting – to Executive Committee and linking with other Working Groups with overlapping aims and objectives.
- Representing the Working Group at external meetings, conferences or elsewhere.

These roles could be combined so the Group is run by 2 or 3 people rather than 5."

Any other business: None

Date, time and place of next meeting: Saturday 14th February. Location to be notified

ACTION AND DECISIONS

Item	***Action/Decision***	***Who & timescale***
Apologies: ***Declarations of conflict of interest*** *(if any)*		
Previous minutes of meeting of 13th September *for approval* ***Matters arising not on agenda***	***Agreed*** *Inspection process information. Prepare a summary suitable for plotholders*	
Chair's Report *Including:* *A Letter to BCC officers and changes in Allotment Rules – for info* *B Update on BDAC Rules submission to FCA* *C Update on proposal for Agreement between BDAC and BCC* *D Update on Lottery application*		
Secretary's Report *including* *Contacts from sites in past month/work undertaken on advice* *Progress on Association problems and complaints (verbal report)*		
Treasurer's and Finance Report *(tabled report)*		

Reports from other Working Parties ***1 Management of Sites and Associations (MOSA)*** *A Rule changes consultation – see minutes of MOSA meeting* *B Keeping animals on allotment sites and plots – policy for approval*		
2. Infrastructure *Update on Flo Pickering funded work now in progress*		
3. ***Shows and Events*** *A Report on Big MACs green weekender 20th and 21st September* *B Best site, Best plot, Best newcomer – update*		
Half- yearly meeting Saturday 15th November ***-*** *Deciding agenda, promotion and publicity, guest invites, refreshments, displays and promotions (eg consultation on Rule Changes)*		
Any other business		