

FAREHAM

BOROUGH COUNCIL

Report to Streetscene Policy Development and Review Panel

Date **8 September 2016**

Report of: **Director of Operations**

Subject: **ALLOTMENT REVIEW**

SUMMARY

The purpose of this report is to familiarise members on the provision of allotments within the borough of Fareham.

RECOMMENDATION

Members are asked to note the contents of the report.

INTRODUCTION

1. The purpose of this report is to familiarise members on the provision of allotments within the Borough of Fareham, their management arrangements and the future renewal of lease agreements with the Allotment Associations

BACKGROUND

2. The provision of Allotments is a statutory service and as such, this Council has a legal obligation to provide sufficient land for this purpose to reasonably meet local demand.
3. Currently there are ten Council owned sites within the Borough covering an area of 19.2 hectares. There are two allotment sites in Portchester, four sites covering central Fareham and Stubbington area and five sites in the Western Wards. This equates to 1030 plots of varying size. A plan can be found in Appendix A.

BENEFITS OF ALLOTMENTS

4. Allotment gardening is a leisure pursuit that provides wide-ranging benefits to individuals, local communities and the environment. It can have a positive impact on the quality of people's lives and wellbeing.
5. In addition to the advantages of producing good quality, locally grown and low cost fresh food, gardeners can also gain the benefits of healthy exercise that is active, socially inclusive and reflects the ideals of sustainability and well-being. Allotments are available to all sections of the community, including the old, young, disabled and people from ethnic communities
6. Allotments are a unique and valuable aspect of the local area contributing to the quality of the urban built environment and the range of local leisure provision. They also contribute to Environmental Sustainable Strategy, provide opportunities for wildlife and can contribute to the retention of traditional skills. Gardening is the single biggest leisure activity undertaken by the public and this is reflected in the uptake of plots available in the Borough.

MANAGEMENT OF ALLOTMENTS

7. The Allotment sites are currently leased to three Allotment Associations whom voluntarily provide day to day site supervision, administration, allocations of plots, and collection of rental fees. They also carry out minor repairs and the general maintenance of buildings.
8. Each site has an appointed Site Manager who provides an important liaison point between the Council and the tenants. Their responsibilities include providing a communication link with tenants, meeting prospective tenants, showing them available plots and notifying the Horticultural Development Officer of any site problems.
9. Each plot holder (tenant) of an Allotment Association who has an allotment plot has a tenancy agreement which outlines the conditions on tenancy to ensure the plots are kept to a standard and in line with the various allotments acts and local conventions.
10. A good working relationship is held with the Associations who work closely with the Council's Horticultural Development Officer, who has specialist knowledge of allotment provision and manages the provision of the service along with infrastructural works,

boundaries and water supply.

FINANCIAL INFORMATION

11. The revenue budget for 2016/17 is £22,600 and is detailed in the table below. Almost half of the budget relates to employee and internal recharges whilst the remainder relates to water charges, tree management, pest control and minor works to the individual sites.

Employee related expenditure	8,600
Premises related expenditure	7,300
Transport related expenditure	100
Supplies and Services	4,300
Internal recharges	2,300
Total expenditure	22,600

12. In addition to the above the three Allotment Associations are responsible for the collection of plot rentals from allotment tenants. The current rent is £2.80 per rod per annum. This money is kept by the Associations and is used for the general upkeep and maintenance of the allotment sites. The rent is reviewed every two years and increased by RPI. The annual rent collected across all allotments is in the region of £17,000.

CURRENT SUPPLY AND DEMAND

13. At the Executive meeting on 6 September 2010, a report highlighted that the Council's allotment provision was at that time not meeting demand. There was a shortage of allotments and based on this fact, two locations were identified as possible allotment sites for the future. These were to be located at Coldeast and Stubbington.
14. Six years on, the situation has changed and we are now in a position where waiting lists have reduced to approximately a third of what it was and is now at manageable levels in all but the Stubbington area.
15. Waiting lists have reduced for a number of reasons but it is evident that interest in allotment gardening is very much influenced by current trends, media interest and television programmes.
16. Historically, plots were normally 10 rods (250m²) or possibly larger but smaller 5 rods (125m²) have become the norm.
17. There has also been a change in the demographics of those people expressing a wish to take up plots, where generally there is a desire for something more manageable with traditional allotment gardeners moving more towards to the 'Hobbyist gardener' style.
18. The response to this by Associations has been to reduce the size of plots which are more suited to the time limitations people are now faced with and are more realistically manageable. This in turn increases the number of plots available and thus helps to reduce the waiting lists.
19. Although the average size is still 5 rods (125m²) there are also an increasing number of 2.5 rod (63m²) plots emerging.

NEW PROVISION OF ALLOTMENTS

20. As mentioned in paragraph 13 above, it was accepted back in 2010 that there was a shortfall in provision and at that time consideration was given to finding suitable sites that would satisfy the demand.
21. Two locations were identified, one being at Coldeast and the other in Stubbington. Due to falling demand and other commitments taking priority in the western wards, it was decided that the potential site identified at Coldeast would not proceed.
22. However, various officers within the Council are still working on finalising land in Stubbington to hopefully eliminate the waiting list for Stroud Green Allotments.

RENEWAL OF LEASE AGREEMENTS WITH THE ALLOTMENT ASSOCIATIONS

23. As mentioned above, the Allotments are run by three Allotment Associations who have lease agreements that have run for the last fifteen years. The leases were due to be renewed in April 2016.
24. Initial discussions have taken place with the Council's Solicitors to draw up a new lease that is more transparent and in line with the current day modern standards.
25. A survey of all allotments to establish the state of repair of the infrastructure, including grounds, fencing, buildings and water supply shall be carried out as part of this process.
26. A full consultation exercise will be carried out with all three allotment associations during the autumn as part of the lease renewal process and is expected to be in place by 1st April 2017.

ALLOTMENT STRATEGY

27. An allotment strategy was adopted by the Council in 2010 with the overall objective of the strategy to increase the ability and opportunity for people to cultivate allotment plots in Fareham. It does not relate to the sites owned by HCC in the Borough, which can be found adjacent Titchfield Community Centre and on Segensworth Road.
28. The strategy seeks through its targets and initiatives, to optimise the use of allotment sites for existing and potential plot holders identify needs and meet demand.
29. The document initially provided a framework for a period of five years to develop and manage allotments in partnership with the Allotment Associations and provides a focus on the following objectives:-
 - (a) To ensure the existing provision of Allotments meets current trends for demand;
 - (b) To maintain and improve the infrastructure, facilities and quality of allotment sites, ensuring sites are welcoming, safe and accessible;
 - (c) To continue to work in partnership with the Allotment Associations to ensure good administrative and management processes;
 - (d) To highlight the role that allotments play in developing a more sustainable

environment, encouraging biodiversity and conservation;

- (e) To promote allotments as a benefit for the wider community, realising the opportunity they offer for education, health and wellbeing and social inclusion initiatives; and
- (f) To ensure adequate resources are available to support the long term service provision.

30. The strategy will need to be reconsidered and its relevance evaluated and updated accordingly following the outcome new lease arrangements.

CONCLUSION

31. The report has provided information that outlines the current situation in relation to the provision and management of allotments in Fareham. It is hoped that this has been particularly useful to those members who have recently been elected.

Background Papers:

Report to the Executive – 6 September 2010 – Allotment Strategy

Reference Papers:

Enquiries:

For further information on this report please contact Sue Woodbridge. (Ext 4546)

Details of Allotment site locations and plot numbers



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Table showing breakdown of plot sites on each allotment

No	Allotment Name	No. of 5 rod plots (or less)	No. of 7 -10 rod plots	Total no. of plots	No on waiting list
1	The Gillies	130 (6 vacant)	2	132	6
2	Salterns Lane	25	6	31	13
3	Stroud Green	15	34	49	77
4	Wickham Road	165 (5 vacant)	8	173	9
5	Red Barn	61		61	0
6	Roman Grove	80	26	106	14
7	Sarisbury Green	35	57	92	0
8	Hunts Pond Road	189 (3 vacant)	63	252	0
9	Lodge Road	26	3	29	4
11	Warsash Road	62	31	93	2
	TOTALS	788	230	1030	125

N.B. No. 10 Posbrook Road is no longer leased by the Council