



Cabinet

Meeting: Wednesday, 30th July 2014 at 6.00 pm in Civic Suite, North Warehouse, The Docks, Gloucester, GL1 2EP

Membership:	Cllrs. James (Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Culture) (Chair), Dallimore (Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Communities and Neighbourhoods), Norman (Cabinet Member for Performance and Resources), Organ (Cabinet Member for Housing, Health and Leisure) and Porter (Cabinet Member for Environment)
Contact:	Parvati Diyar Democratic Services Officer 01452 396192 parvati.diyar@gloucester.gov.uk

AGENDA

1.	APOLOGIES To receive any apologies for absence.
2.	DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST To receive from Members, declarations of the existence of any disclosable pecuniary, or non-pecuniary, interests and the nature of those interests in relation to any agenda item. Please see Agenda Notes.
3.	MINUTES (Pages 5 - 10) To approve as a correct record the minutes of the meeting held on 25 June 2014.
4.	PUBLIC QUESTION TIME (15 MINUTES) The opportunity is given to members of the public to put questions to Cabinet Members or Committee Chairs provided that a question does not relate to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Matters which are the subject of current or pending legal proceedings, or • Matters relating to employees or former employees of the Council or comments in respect of individual Council Officers
5.	PETITIONS AND DEPUTATIONS (15 MINUTES) To receive any petitions or deputations provided that no such petition is in relation to:

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Matters relating to individual Council Officers, or • Matters relating to current or pending legal proceedings
6.	<p>ALLOTMENT STRATEGY (Pages 11 - 48)</p> <p>To consider a report of the Cabinet Member for Environment recommending the adoption of a draft Allotment Strategy for Gloucester City.</p>
7.	<p>GLOUCESTER CEMETERIES & CREMATORIUM RULES AND REGULATIONS 2014 (Pages 49 - 74)</p> <p>To consider a report of the Cabinet Member for Environment seeking approval for a new set of Rules and Regulations for the future management of the Cemeteries and Crematorium in Gloucester.</p>
8.	<p>2013-14 FINANCIAL OUTTURN REPORT (Pages 75 - 84)</p> <p>To consider a report of the Cabinet Member for Performance and Resources outlining the Financial Outturn position for the financial year 2013/14.</p>
9.	<p>COMPLAINTS POLICY (Pages 85 - 108)</p> <p>To note a report of the Cabinet Member for Communities and Neighbourhoods seeking approval for a Corporate Complaints Policy.</p>

M. Shields

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Martin Shields
Corporate Director of Services and Neighbourhoods

Date of Publication: Tuesday, 22 July 2014

NOTES

Disclosable Pecuniary Interests

The duties to register, disclose and not to participate in respect of any matter in which a member has a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest are set out in Chapter 7 of the Localism Act 2011.

Disclosable pecuniary interests are defined in the Relevant Authorities (Disclosable Pecuniary Interests) Regulations 2012 as follows –

<u>Interest</u>	<u>Prescribed description</u>
Employment, office, trade, profession or vocation	Any employment, office, trade, profession or vocation carried on for profit or gain.
Sponsorship	Any payment or provision of any other financial benefit (other than from the Council) made or provided within the previous 12 months (up to and including the date of notification of the interest) in respect of any expenses incurred by you carrying out duties as a member, or towards your election expenses. This includes any payment or financial benefit from a trade union within the meaning of the Trade Union and Labour Relations (Consolidation) Act 1992.
Contracts	Any contract which is made between you, your spouse or civil partner or person with whom you are living as a spouse or civil partner (or a body in which you or they have a beneficial interest) and the Council (a) under which goods or services are to be provided or works are to be executed; and (b) which has not been fully discharged
Land	Any beneficial interest in land which is within the Council's area. For this purpose "land" includes an easement, servitude, interest or right in or over land which does not carry with it a right for you, your spouse, civil partner or person with whom you are living as a spouse or civil partner (alone or jointly with another) to occupy the land or to receive income.
Licences	Any licence (alone or jointly with others) to occupy land in the Council's area for a month or longer.
Corporate tenancies	Any tenancy where (to your knowledge) – (a) the landlord is the Council; and (b) the tenant is a body in which you, your spouse or civil partner or a person you are living with as a spouse or civil partner has a beneficial interest
Securities	Any beneficial interest in securities of a body where – (a) that body (to your knowledge) has a place of business or land in the Council's area and (b) either – i. The total nominal value of the securities exceeds £25,000 or one hundredth of the total issued share capital of that body; or ii. If the share capital of that body is of more than one class, the total nominal value of the shares of any one class in which you, your spouse or civil partner or person with

whom you are living as a spouse or civil partner has a beneficial interest exceeds one hundredth of the total issued share capital of that class.

For this purpose, “securities” means shares, debentures, debenture stock, loan stock, bonds, units of a collective investment scheme within the meaning of the Financial Services and Markets Act 2000 and other securities of any description, other than money deposited with a building society.

NOTE: the requirements in respect of the registration and disclosure of Disclosable Pecuniary Interests and withdrawing from participating in respect of any matter where you have a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest apply to your interests and those of your spouse or civil partner or person with whom you are living as a spouse or civil partner where you are aware of their interest.

Access to Information

Agendas and reports can be viewed on the Gloucester City Council website: www.gloucester.gov.uk and are available to view five working days prior to the meeting date.

For further details and enquiries about this meeting please contact Parvati Diyar, 01452 396192, parvati.diyar@gloucester.gov.uk.

For general enquiries about Gloucester City Council’s meetings please contact Democratic Services, 01452 396126, democratic.services@gloucester.gov.uk.

If you, or someone you know cannot understand English and need help with this information, or if you would like a large print, Braille, or audio version of this information please call 01452 396396.

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Any recording must take place in such a way as to ensure that the view of Councillors, Officers, the Public and Press is not obstructed. The use of flash photography and/or additional lighting will not be allowed unless this has been discussed and agreed in advance of the meeting.

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- You should proceed calmly; do not run and do not use the lifts;
- Do not stop to collect personal belongings;
- Once you are outside, please do not wait immediately next to the building; gather at the assembly point in the car park and await further instructions;
- Do not re-enter the building until told by a member of staff or the fire brigade that it is safe to do so.



CABINET

MEETING : Wednesday, 25th June 2014

PRESENT : Cllrs. James (Chair), Dallimore (Vice Chair), Norman, Organ and Porter

Others in Attendance

Peter Gillett, Corporate Director of Resources

Martin Shields, Corporate Director of Services & Neighbourhoods

Parvati Diyar, Democratic Services Officer

1. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The Leader of the Council declared a personal interest in item 7 in respect of his employment with a letting agency.

Councillors Organ and Porter declared a personal interest in item 7 as landlords within the City.

2. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 2 April 2014 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

3. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME (15 MINUTES)

There were no public questions.

4. PETITIONS AND DEPUTATIONS (15 MINUTES)

There were no petitions or deputations.

5. TREATMENT OF UNATTRACTIVE FACADES (CITY CENTRE INVESTMENT FUND)

Cabinet considered a report of the Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Culture concerning the progress of the scheme as part of the City Centre Investment Fund allocation and the proposals to improve the attractiveness of a number of City Centre 1960s and 1970s facades using a variety of innovative techniques.

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The Leader of the Council highlighted the importance of ensuring that a number of facades within the City Centre are improved. Cabinet were informed that the images within the report were indicative and a programme of works would not be undertaken until the final decision had been agreed in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Culture.

The Cabinet Member for Performance and Resources commented that he supported the report and believed that assurance should be sought to ensure the correct type of cladding is used which would be fit for purpose.

Cabinet Members welcomed the scheme which would improve a number of unattractive facades within the City Centre.

RESOLVED -

- (1) That the cladding proposals for Kings Walk car park and the Bridge over Eastgate Street be approved.
- (2) That treatment of Longsmith Street car park as a green wall as detailed in the report be approved
- (3) That the treatment of the upper floors of B&M and Paddy Power with a trompe l'oeil canvas or a cladding system be approved
- (4) That more deliverable public art options at Wilkinsons, Northgate Street be investigated subject to co-operation of the owner;
- (5) That the estimated costs of each of the proposals be noted; and
- (6) That authority be delegated to Officers in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Culture to determine:
 - (a) the final design of the cladding for Kings Walk Car Park and the Bridge over Eastgate Street, following targeted consultation on the detailed proposal;
 - (b) the final design of the trompe l'oeil canvas or cladding system to the upper floors of B & M and Paddy Power, following targeted consultation on the detailed proposal;
 - (c) the level of funding and, in consultation with other stakeholders, the final design of any façade treatment for Wilkinsons, Northgate Street.

6. GLOUCESTERSHIRE ECONOMIC GROWTH JOINT COMMITTEE - ESTABLISHMENT OF JOINT COMMITTEE AND APPROVAL OF TERMS OF REFERENCE

Cabinet considered a report of the Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Culture concerning the establishment of a Gloucestershire Economic Growth Joint Committee, approval of the draft Terms of Reference for the Joint Committee and to

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make Council aware of the progress being made towards a Strategic Economic Partnership.

The Leader of the Council highlighted the importance of co-operating with neighbouring Councils, whilst also pursuing the City's own priorities. The City Council's Economic Development Team would continue to play an important role ensuring that Gloucester achieved the maximum benefit from the new arrangements.

The City Council would become a member of the Gloucestershire Economic Growth Joint Committee (GEGJC) and the Leader would be appointed as the Council representative and the Deputy Leader would be appointed as a substitute.

It was proposed that a new Joint Scrutiny Committee would be created by the County Council. Councillor McLellan had been nominated to attend this Committee. Councillor Haigh would act as a substitute member.

RESOLVED:

- (a) The Council becomes a member of the Gloucestershire Economic Growth Joint Committee (GEGJC) in accordance with Sections 101 and 102 of the Local Government Act 1972 and under Section 9EB of the Local Government Act 2000 and pursuant to the Local Authorities (Arrangement for the Discharge of Functions) (England) Regulations 2012;
- (b) authority be delegated to the Corporate Director of Resources, in consultation with the Leader, to finalise and complete the Inter Authority Agreement (including the Constitution) and any other necessary documentation on terms to be approved by the Head of Legal and Policy Development and to take all necessary steps to create the GEGJC;
- (c) the above recommendations shall not be effective until equivalent resolutions have been passed by all the Gloucestershire Councils named in this report;
- (d) the delegation to the GEGJC of this Council's functions as described in Appendix 1 and subject to the protocols proposed, be authorized upon the establishment of the GEGJC;
- (e) the appointment of Gloucestershire County Council as Administering Authority be approved; and
- (f) the Leader be appointed to be the Council's representative on the GEGJC and that the Deputy Leader be appointed as his substitute.

7. HOUSING CONDITIONS IN THE PRIVATE RENTED SECTOR

Cabinet considered a report of the Cabinet Member for Housing, Health and Leisure which outlined the current condition of the private rented housing sector and proposed future actions to achieve improvement.

It was proposed to create capacity for a proactive neighbourhood approach which would require the Private Sector Housing Team to work in a less reactive way. It

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was intended that this approach would help to identify poorly managed and maintained properties in the private sector.

Cabinet were informed that the report had been submitted to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee at its meeting on 23 June 2014. It was agreed that a Task and Finish Group would be established to look into proposed actions to improve housing conditions in the private rented sector. The Task and Finish Group would report back to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee with their findings.

In response to a question from the Cabinet Member for Performance and Resources, the Cabinet Member for Housing, Health and Leisure advised that the Private Sector Housing Team had identified areas of concern relating to the conditions in HMO's and these would be inspected to ensure they comply with housing standards.

Cabinet Members welcomed the proactive approach which would be undertaken to enable continuous improvements to be made which would have a positive impact for the health and wellbeing of tenants and for the Council.

RESOLVED:

- a) that the current condition of private sector housing is noted and that the direction towards a more proactive approach to inspection and intervention be supported.

8. TREASURY MANAGEMENT UPDATE - QUARTER 4 REPORT 2013/14

Cabinet considered a report of the Corporate Director of Resources which provided an update on treasury management activities for Quarter 4 (1 December 2013 to 31 March 2014).

Cabinet were informed that the report would be considered by the Audit and Governance Committee at its meeting on 26 June 2014. Members of the Committee would be undertaking a Treasury Management training event prior to the meeting.

The report highlighted the positive outcome relating to borrowing and lending. The Council had not borrowed in advance in all of 2013/14.

It was noted that the reports presented to the Audit and Governance Committee for the first three quarters contained some errors in prudential indicator limits which had now been corrected.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

9. SAFEGUARDING UPDATE

Cabinet considered a report of the Cabinet Member for Communities and Neighbourhoods which provided an annual update on how the organisation managed its safeguarding responsibilities and acknowledged the action plan produced as a result of the annual completion of the annual Section 11 audit.

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Cabinet were informed that a Safeguarding update had been created in May 2013. The City Council has a duty of care to work with each local authority and ensure arrangements are in place to promote and safeguard the welfare of children in need within their area.

It was noted that a forthcoming Peer Review of all the district councils would be led by Andrew North at Cheltenham Borough Council.

A robust discussion took place regarding the need to report safeguarding of adults. The Corporate Director of Services and Neighbourhoods advised that the City Council was a partner on the Safeguarding Board of Adults and any concerns that have not been met should be directed to this body.

Cabinet recognised the need to ensure that all City Council staff and Members were required to undertake training to ensure they had a good level of understanding of their safeguarding responsibilities. It was noted that some members of staff would require different levels of training.

RESOLVED:

- (a) that all City Council staff and members complete the e-learning package for safeguarding children; and
- (b) agree the proposals set out in the Future Work section (6.0) of the report.

10. EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

RESOLVED that the press and public be excluded from the meeting during the following item of business on the grounds that it is likely, in view of the nature of business to be transacted or the nature of the proceedings, that if members of the press and public are present during consideration of these items there will be disclosure to them of exempt information as defined in Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 as amended.

Minute	Description of Exempt Information
11 and 12)	Paragraph 3: information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the Authority holding that information).
)	

11. RETAIL-LED REGENERATION AT KINGS' QUARTER

Cabinet considered an exempt report of the Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Culture concerning the revised proposals on the Kings' Quarter land acquisitions and the construction of a new bus station leading to the variation of the Stanhope (Gloucester) Limited Development Agreement.

RESOLVED that the exempt recommendations to Council, as detailed in the report, be approved.

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12. PROPERTY SEARCHES LITIGATION - APPS CLAIMANTS AND PROPOSED SETTLEMENT

Cabinet considered an exempt report of the Cabinet Member for Performance and Resources dated 25 June 2014.

RESOLVED that the exempt recommendations contained in the report be noted.

Cabinet expressed their thanks to the Corporate Director of Resources and wished him well in his new role at Bristol City Council.

Time of commencement: 18:00 hours

Time of conclusion: 19:10 hours

Chair

Gloucester City Council

Meeting:	Overview and Scrutiny Committee	Date:	21st July 2014
	Cabinet		30th July 2014
Subject:	Allotment Strategy		
Report Of:	Cabinet Member for Environment		
Wards Affected:	All		
Key Decision:	No	Budget/Policy Framework:	No
Contact Officer:	Meyrick Brentnall, Environmental Planning Manager		
	Email:		Tel: 396829
	meyrick.brentnall@gloucester.gov.uk		
Appendices:	1) Allotment Strategy		
	2) Task and Finish Report 2007		

1.0 Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To adopt for the purposes of consultation a draft Allotment Strategy for Gloucester City detailing how the City Council intends to manage its allotment holding over coming years.

2.0 Recommendations

- 2.1 **Overview and Scrutiny Committee** is asked, subject to any recommendations it wishes to make to Cabinet, to note the contents of the report.

- 2.2 **Cabinet** is asked to **RESOLVE** that:

- (a) The Allotment Strategy attached at Appendix 1 be adopted as a draft for the purpose of public consultation.
- (b) The outcome of the public consultation on the draft Allotment Strategy be reported back to Cabinet in due course.

3.0 Background and Key Issues

- 3.1 The City Council owns, and is ultimately responsible for, 12 allotment sites varying in size from 2 plots (Hempsted) to 146 (Saintbridge). The City Council has a statutory responsibility to provide allotments to meet demand, and given the numerous benefits that allotments bring, has been supportive of them over the years.
- 3.2 A number of years ago it was recognised that allotment holders were not receiving the service that they should and a Task and Finish Group was set up to look into the issue. This reported in 2007 and put forward a number of recommendations.

- 3.3 Many of these recommendations were taken on board and importantly, an allotment officer was appointed. There is still some work to do, however, especially with regard self management. The draft strategy provides a context for this, and also suggests a number of other actions.
- 3.4 The draft strategy is a high level document and covers issues such as how new sites can come forward and charging strategies to be pursued. It does not contain the detail of how each site should be managed. For this purpose more detailed proposals will be rolled out over the coming months in the format of a series of site plans, produced in partnership with the relevant association (if there is one). This will cover the specifics for that particular site such as security, water use etc.
- 3.5 Self management gives allotment holders more control as to how their allotments are run and is generally promoted throughout the document. When more self management is adopted it is generally done through associations. Importantly, the draft Strategy does not seek to impose self management on associations, and is clear that if self management is to happen, then it has to be with the support of allotment holders generally and not just the associations (not all allotment holders will be members of an association).
- 3.6 The strategy does address the issue of pricing structure and makes a commitment to retain elements of the current system. Allotment holders will be asked for their views as part of the consultation process.

4.0 Alternative Options Considered

- 4.1 The authority does not have to produce a strategy. It could carry on as it is but this could mean that allotment associations who did want to take a more proactive stance would remain frustrated.
- 4.2 Self management could be imposed upon allotment associations or other groups of allotment holders – it is likely that this would result in friction between the associations/groups and the City Council. Some would inevitably refuse to take it up.

5.0 Reasons for Recommendations

- 5.1 Across local government there generally is a move towards devolving decisions down to the most appropriate level. Across the country self management by allotment associations is on the increase. The strategy will provide a framework to allow this to happen and will support other developments that should make allotments more sustainable and ensure their continued success.

6.0 Future Work and Conclusions

- 6.1 If the draft strategy is adopted, it will be consulted upon for at least 6 weeks primarily with allotment holders and their associations. Following any representations, a further report will be taken to Cabinet to consider those recommendations and any revisions to the document to be adopted as the Allotment Strategy for Gloucester City Council. When the formal Strategy has been agreed, work with associations on site plans and increased responsibility, for those that wish to take it.

7.0 Financial Implications

- 7.1 There are no immediate financial implications of this report other than the maintenance of the status quo. However, if a significant number of Allotment Associations opt out of City Council Control then this may change especially if they go for total self management as income will inevitably drop. This in reality will not happen for a number of years though will be explored further in any subsequent report.

(Financial Services have been consulted in the preparation this report.)

8.0 Legal Implications

- 8.1 Under Section 23 of the Smallholdings and Allotments Act 1908, a district council is under a general duty to provide a sufficient number of allotments, where it is of the opinion that there is a demand for allotments in its area, and to let them to persons resident there and desiring to take the same. Where the population is 10,000 or higher, the council's obligation is limited to the provision of allotment gardens not exceeding one-eighth of an acre.

(Legal Services have been consulted in the preparation this report.)

9.0 Risk & Opportunity Management Implications

- 9.1 Only low risk has been identified as result of this report..

10.0 People Impact Assessment (PIA):

- 10.1 Allotments are available to all and do attract a broad cross section of the community. The screening stage did not identify any potential or actual negative impact, therefore a full PIA was not required.

11.0 Other Corporate Implications

Community Safety

- 11.1 There may be some positive impacts with regard to community safety. If through the production of allotment plans security can be improved at sites

Sustainability

- 11.2 The strategy should ensure allotments are more sustainable

Staffing & Trade Union

- 11.3 In the short to medium term there will be little impact on staffing. However, long term if a large number of allotment associations do go for full self management, then there may be an impact on viability of the current allotment officer post.

Background Documents: Task and Finish Report 2007

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The Allotment Strategy



**A DISCUSSION DOCUMENT
(DRAFT)**

Gloucester
City Council
Transforming Your City

Allotment Strategy

Introduction

Allotments have a long and honourable history. Their popularity has come and gone depending on need and fashion. In the last few years they have enjoyed what appears to be a sustained revival as people realise the benefits of home grown food, as well as the feel good factor of open air activity.

Certainly allotments fulfil many of the objectives of the healthy living agenda and, as such, the City Council is keen to support them, and engender an environment where they can thrive and add to the well being of the city.

Allotments are also social outlets and provide a vehicle for people from a wide range of backgrounds and cultures to come together in pursuit of a common goal - that of growing fruit, vegetables and flowers.

Allotments are open un-developed spaces in what are often dense urban areas. They provide open space, a valuable green lung and a refuge for a surprising amount of wildlife.

Understanding that the allotment service was not as good as it could be, the City Council set up an Allotment Task and Finish Group. Reporting in 2007, the Group recognized the importance of allotments and made a number of recommendations. Many of these recommendations have been implemented and significant progress has been achieved over the past few years. Much of this has been in partnership with Allotment Associations and other volunteer organisations without which so much progress would not have been possible. The purpose of this document is to build on this

work and ensure any relevant outstanding tasks are implemented.

What is an allotment?

There are two types of allotment provision: Allotments and Allotment Gardens.

An 'allotment' is a parcel of land not more than 5 acres in extent, cultivated as a garden or farm. An 'allotment garden' is a parcel of land not exceeding 40 poles, (1,012m²), cultivated by the occupier for the provision of vegetables and fruit crops for himself and his family. By definitions outlined in the Allotment Act of 1922, an allotment garden is wholly or mainly cultivated by the occupier for the production of fruit or vegetables for consumption by himself and his family. The definition gives allotment authorities some flexibility to determine what is grown, but care should be taken when relaxing restrictions so that the character of the site is maintained.

All allotment sites provided by Gloucester City Council are allotment gardens.

Allotment provision is a statutory function and whilst an authority *may* provide allotments, there is a statutory obligation for Gloucester City to provide allotment gardens sufficient to meet the demand.

There are statutory and non-statutory allotments. The former were acquired or appropriated by the City Council for use as allotments. These cannot be sold or used for other purposes without the consent of the Secretary of State. Non-statutory allotments are on land allocated for other uses but leased or rented for use as allotments (not necessarily in City Council ownership).

Purpose of this strategy

As the population in Gloucester grows, as gardens get smaller and as concerns about food and its provenance increase, then we expect demand for allotments to grow. The purpose of the strategy is to; ensure that allotments space is used as efficiently as possible, to provide a structure for the provision of new allotments and to ensure that the service is as good as it can be within quite strict financial constraints.

The last point is particularly important given the pressure on local authority budgets. The general tenor of this document therefore, will be trying to do more with less.

Self management is a means of achieving this and for many allotment communities outside of Gloucester this is how allotments are run.

This document therefore will actively encourage associations and other groupings to consider more self management as a means of improving the way in which allotments are run within Gloucester City.

This document is a high level strategy essentially providing the general overview of where we, as an organisation should be going with regard to allotments. Detailed issues about each site and what needs to be done will be dealt with through separate site plans. These will be drawn up with the relevant association or whatever group comes forward representing the site.

The strategy takes forward the work undertaken by the Task and Finish Group in 2007 indeed many of the recommendations of

the Group are included in the action plan at the end of the document.

There are also links to the Public Open Space Strategy which promotes the use of some areas of open space as allotments and a context for negotiating new allotments as part of development

Current provision

In Gloucester, there are 12 allotment sites providing 846 allotments varying in size from 12m² up to 370m². The most common being the old 5 perch (half 10 perch) or 126m².

The following table is a brief resume of each of the separate sites detailing how many there are, their status etc.

Location	Size - Ha	Current No of Plots	Vacant	Waiting List	Statutory/ Non-statutory	Ward
Cotteswold Road	0.10	6	0	11	Non-statutory	Matson & Robinswood
Deans Way	0.15	6	0	10	Non-statutory	Kingsholm & Wotton
Estcourt Close	3.99	195	4	26	Statutory	Longlevens
Estcourt Park	1.68	84	4	13	Statutory	Longlevens
Hawthorn	1.21	61	8	55	Statutory	Moreland
Hempsted	0.05	2	0	10	Non-statutory	Westgate
Innsworth	0.23	131	8	4	Statutory	Longlevens
Robert Raikes	0.83	62	1	69	Statutory	Tuffley
Saintbridge	4.19	224	27	72	Statutory	Barnwood
Tredworth Fields	0.62	36	16	45	Statutory	Moreland
White City	0.63	29	10	36	Statutory	Matson & Robinswood
Willow Way		10	1	1	Non Statutory	Barnwood
New site Podsmead						Podsmead
New site – Kingsway				196		Quedgeley Fieldcourt
Totals	15.68	846	83	519		

Demand

As previously mentioned, there appears to be a revival in demand for allotments, as evidenced by the length of the waiting lists for all of the sites. These have been growing over the past few years and currently stand at 519. While the new facility at Kingsway should make inroads, there is still a very real need for more allotments.

Presently when people ask for an allotment they are added to the list for the nearest site,

unless special circumstances dictate otherwise. Plots are then allocated on a first come, first served basis.

In trying to provide for that demand, we need to make the most efficient use of the available plots and, where possible, identify new sites.

There are a number of ways of doing this:

Subdividing plots: There are still a lot of 10 perch (253m²) and even larger plots. As a matter of course, unless there is no waiting list

and a new plot holder requires a large plot, then each large plot will be subdivided, typically into two.

Allotment Squatting: For all sorts of reasons, at some point in their lives, people will have to give up their allotment. This can be straightforward, with the authority being informed and the allotment being allocated to another individual. Sometimes, however, it is not straightforward and months can pass before the allotment is re-allocated. This is a difficult area as there may be very legitimate reasons why an individual cannot tend their plot. It may be, for example, that they have an illness and once better they may well be able to tend their allotment again. This is not always the case and sometimes holders 'sit' on their allotment when really they have little intention of using it productively again. In these instances we need to be sympathetic but firm, especially when there are long waiting lists. Self managed allotments tend to police this issue better.

New allotments: As part of large scale developments the City Council, as planning authority, will look to negotiate new allotment sites. This is all the more important given the size of gardens in new developments. Kingsway was the first such provision for a number of years and, when complete, will provide 22 half plots (126m²), over 50 quarter-sized plots (64m²) plus a number of raised beds for those with mobility impairment. The forthcoming City Plan (the Spatial Planning document for Gloucester) will include policies encouraging new provision in large development sites.

Re-use of other open space: The Public Open Space Strategy identifies a number of open spaces within the City that do not really function as amenity land. There may be an

opportunity to use some of these in a more productive manner and convert them to allotments or some other growing space.

Finally, there are areas within the City that are have poor provision, in particular Hucclecote, Quedgeley and Hempsted. These tend to be on the periphery of the City and the City Council will work with Parish Councils, community groups and others to increase provision either within or, potentially, outside the administrative boundary of Gloucester to increase provision.

Under-utilized sites and disposals

Allotments are currently popular and there are waiting lists for all sites. However, this may not always be the case. While we should not dispose of allotments due to a short drop in demand, if over a long period of time, allotments do remain vacant, then the authority should not shy away from finding alternative uses. There may indeed be small areas on larger sites that are unpopular, even though as a whole, the site is well cultivated. Any change from allotments needs to be thought through very carefully as inevitably it will be permanent. If money is raised as part of this process then it should be ring fenced to be used on allotments elsewhere. If it is part of a larger site that is lost, then a proportion of any money raised should be spent on that particular site. There may of course be covenants and other restrictions on some sites preventing alternative uses.

Self-management and processes towards it

There are many different models of allotment management and these will vary across the country. In some areas the Local Authority is very much the lead partner. In others they have

very little involvement other than as a planning authority, i.e. protecting sites from development. Between these two extremes there are many combinations.

In Gloucester City, the lead role leans towards the local authority and while there are certain benefits to this, it can be frustrating for Allotment Associations who perhaps want to have a little more control in how their allotments are run.

There are also potential financial benefits to the Associations from community-based control as funders are always happier supporting local groups rather than local authorities.

The City Council therefore, will be supportive of any requests by Allotment Associations either individually or collectively to pursue greater self management. At one extreme this could mean total control being invested in the association, allowing them to set a charge, collect rents and do the things that the City Council does (or would like to do) now. At the other extreme, the City Council would still maintain overall responsibility and control, but certain aspects of allotment management, such as allocating plots, could be carried out by the association.

The process by which associations would move towards more self management is contained at appendix 1 towards the end of this document. Also included is a 'pick and mix' list of the sort of tasks/responsibilities that could be passed over from the City to an Association.

It is assumed that associations will want a level of self management somewhere between the two extremes and we will actively engage with associations and other stakeholders to help

them achieve what they think is best for their particular site.

What must be clear, however, is that before any significant control of any site can be handed over to an Association then some sort of mandate must be gained, not just from association members, but from allotment holders on the site as a whole.

The City will assist any allotment association in this process to allow an appropriate vote to take place. More modest transfers of authority will not need vote.

Tenancy agreement/finances

There are a number of charging methods used by local authorities and allotment associations across the UK and they all have their supporters and detractors. At one level it would seem fair to charge by the square metre but the administration cost for a large plot is exactly the same as a small one. Alternatively if there are charge thresholds then someone will always sit the wrong side of the threshold and feel hard done by.

Following a review of its fees, the Council planned to follow the lead of some other authorities and to charge by threshold. Plots were to be designated as being small (<99m²), medium (100-149m²) or large (>150m²) with a corresponding charge. While there are some administrative benefits to this system, when it was announced, a number of representations were received supporting the status quo i.e. charging by the metre square.

At the same time it was planned to remove age related concessions, though those in receipt of Housing and/or Council Tax support could claim a 50% reduction. The loss of age related

concessions again was subject to a number of representations.

Following discussions it was decided to maintain the current system at least for the year 2014 – 2015. Following on from then it is proposed to continue charging by the square metre.

Concessions will include those in receipt of Housing Benefit and/or Council Tax Support, it is also proposed to continue with the age related benefit, however, this will be standardised for male and females at 65. Those females currently receiving age related benefit will continue to do so. New female allotment holders and those who are not 60 as of December 31 2014 will not.

From then on the price will increase by inflation on an annual basis. This is standard practice and the indices used throughout the Council will be utilized.

As mentioned later in this strategy we will investigate the possibility of charging a different rate for water used at each site. A site which is a heavy user of water will not be subsidized by one that is a light user.

We will also look into changing the 'allotment year'. Currently this starts in January, if it began in November it would be more in line with the seasonal requirements associated with the service.

Sustainability

Allotments are inherently sustainable. They provide a means of local food production that is inevitably less intensively produced than commercially produced fruit, vegetables and flowers. Allotments also contribute to community well being, healthy active lifestyles

and many other uncosted benefits to society as a whole.

They are also open spaces in their own right providing relief from urban form and attract a surprising diversity of wildlife.

Of course sustainability is a relative concept and some allotments will be more sustainable than others. While we would not wish to get into too much detail as what is and is not acceptable practice, there are issues around water consumption and being a good neighbour that do need addressing.

Water use

Water is a precious resource and while often there is far too much we have had a number of summers where there has been too little. Plants need water to grow and for some fruit and veg irrigation is often essential. However, water from standpipes costs money and this has to come out of allotment rents. There is a financial as well sustainability argument as to why we should all be careful with water use.

If self management becomes more widespread this is something that associations may wish to address themselves – however, in the interim, the City Council will investigate how to reduce piped water use on allotment sites. As a starting point we will look into charging each site for the water it uses - a site therefore with high water usage may have to pay more than one with low usage. We will also investigate restrictions on the use of unattended sprinklers for example.

Green waste

Good soil-husbandry depends on organic matter. Compost is a simple means of providing this. All allotment holders will be encouraged to compost all their green waste, although it is accepted that some waste may be diseased and, along with pernicious weeds cannot be composted in a normal heap. Burning (though only occasional burning of dry, diseased waste) is an option but is generally unsociable and in some instances removal from site may be the only alternative. To assist we will look into the feasibility of community composting, perhaps in association with the Council's waste contractor where larger, hotter heaps can be constructed. We will also continue the occasional deliveries of soil conditioner organised with help from the Council's waste contractor dependant on demand and cost.

Occasional skips for one-off clearances when asked for by Associations will be favourably looked upon.

Other issues

What can and cannot be grown

The initial allotment acts required a plot to be cleared at the end of each season. Technically, growing rhubarb was not allowed as it was a permanent perennial. Yet perennials are a sustainable and often a low maintenance means of extracting productivity from an allotment.

While the City Council is largely responsible for allotments, it will not be too involved in what can and cannot be grown on an allotment. Whilst not wishing to be too prescriptive, we will look to update our guide, detailing what is appropriate to grow on an allotment. This and the guidelines on sheds/structures and the role of animals (bees and chickens) may be

something that Allotment Associations decide they want to control. We will support this.

Selling of produce

Allotment legislation requires that an allotment garden is 'wholly or mainly cultivated by the occupier for the production of fruit or vegetables for consumption by himself and his family'. Selling on a commercial basis is therefore considered unacceptable; however, small scale sales of excess produce, for example, through associations, would be appropriate.

Vandalism and theft

For some allotment holders this can be a real problem. To have carefully tended produce pointlessly trashed or stolen is heart breaking and may even cause some holders to give up. We will encourage individuals to report all incidents of theft and vandalism and will do what we can within the tight financial constraints to make allotments as secure as possible, without making them look like a fortress. We will work with allotment holders and associations to make them more secure and, where appropriate, seek external funding and make the most of opportunistic works to improve security.

We also need to work with local communities, the police and other stakeholders to try and address the problem at source. Certainly we will be aiming to bring our Asset Based Community Development (ABCD) expertise to play in engaging with local people.

The role of our grounds maintenance contractor

The role of Amey will vary from site to site. Their detailed role therefore will be covered in the Site Plans. However, they tend to look after the large paths and open spaces within allotments and the boundary fences. As with previous issues, associations may wish to have more control over this aspect of maintenance.

Education

While we do give new plot holders a welcome pack to help them, too many still give up after the first season. Often it is just that they needed more information/training about what to grow and how to grow it.

We will work therefore with providers such as The Conservation Volunteers (TCV) to set up training projects/workshops where new plot holders can learn about good husbandry and issues such as wise water use, etc.

Gloucester City Council policies

The City Council already has a number of policies that are generally supportive of allotments and their continued use. The most relevant are:

Sustainable Development Strategy for Gloucester 2000: This broadly supports the non commercial sale of allotment produce

Local Plan Second Stage Deposit 2002 contains two policies relevant to allotments:

Policy A1 New housing and allotments: This proposes a standard of 0.2 acres per 1000 residents. Off-site provision may be acceptable (page 131).

Policy A.2 Protection of Allotments: Broadly planning permission involving loss of allotments will not be permitted unless the requirements

around unmet demand, replacement provision and enhancement of asset are met (Page 132).

Open Space Strategy 2014: This requires the preparation and publication of an Allotment strategy. The potential for new allotment sites on Public Open Space and the negotiation of new allotments as part of new development.

Conclusions

Local Government is going through an era of unprecedented reform. Local communities are increasingly taking control of their neighbourhoods and it is the expectation that the decision making process and funding will be moved further down to users.

Allotments are no different, and Gloucester City Council will pursue an allotment structure where more control sits with associations and plot holders than is the case now.

Where there is a desire therefore, from associations and plot holders for a more active role then we will do our best to facilitate their needs.

As mentioned at the beginning of this strategy allotments have a long and honourable history. Gloucester City Council wishes to build on this and ensure that allotments are as fit for purpose in the 21st century as they were when first appeared in the 19th.

Delivery Plan

The following delivery plan will seek to ensure that the proposals set out in the strategy are implemented. The actions are based on the recommendations made by the Task and Finish group in 2007, supplemented by other more recent developments.

With limited funding some of the proposals will take time. Actions have been given a timeframe of short, medium and long term, corresponding to approximately less than 1 year, 1 to 5 years and more than 5 years, respectively.

Task	Funding	How	Comment	Timescale
Pursue self management where there is support from the association	Officer time. Association resource.	Work with Associations and other groups to facilitate a higher degree of self management.	Any significant degree of self management will have to be with consent of allotment holders.	Short to long.
Role of the allotment officer to be clarified and put in place.	Rental income.	Current income can continue to fund a part time officer.	Situation to be reviewed if significant number of associations opt for self management.	Short to long.
Planning Policy is incorporated into the new City Plan protecting allotments and requiring new ones as part of large scale development.	Part of City Plan process. Officer time.	Incorporate allotment policies into City Plan.	City Plan is currently on hold pending work on the Joint Core Strategy. Stage 3 to be published Winter 2014/15.	Short.
Increase provision of raised allotment beds.	External.	Through section 106 on new developments and through bidding process.	Kingsway will provide some raised allotments. Success will need to be monitored before further funding sought.	Medium to long.
Address areas of poor provision through alternative uses for council and privately owned land.	Officer time.	Work with parish councils and other bodies to identify potential allotment sites. Negotiate provision on large development sites (see above).	POS strategy contains proposals for finding alternative uses (inc allotments) for POS. Private land can become allotments with willing land owner.	Short to long.

Increase provision through subdivision and stricter requirements on abandoned allotments.	Officer time. Association resource.	Continue policy of large plot subdivision. With associations pursue firm action on uncultivated plots. Ensure plots are held by City residents of within half a mile of City boundary.	It is assumed that, if Allotment Associations pursue a more active role, they will want to manage their areas in a rigorous manner to ensure that allotments tenancies are not abused.	Short to long.
Encourage more sustainable use of water.	Officer time. Association resource.	Unattended sprinklers to be banned. All buildings to be fitted with a water butt. Water charges to be linked to site.	It is expected that water provision will increasingly be an issue. The modest measures suggested will be reviewed. More stringent controls may be introduced.	Short to long.
Allow a more proactive policy on what can and cannot be grown/done on an allotment.	Officer time. Association resource.	Adopt policy that allows certain produce to be grown such as top fruit. Allow Associations to rule on issues such as bee hives and chickens.	Top fruit can be a low maintenance means of having a productive Allotment. Associations can deal with the more local issues of bees, etc if they wish.	Short.
Increases security across sites.	External funding.	Submit funding and use other opportunities to better fencing and other security measures.	Some sites such as Saintbridge are large and difficult to fence. However, all opportunities need to be explored such as section 106 agreements and external funding.	Medium to long.
Keep allotment holders updated as to current developments.	Officer time.	Publish an annual newsletter updating allotment holders. Host a web page. Hold an	Simple, short and low cost publication along with a web page.	Short to medium.

		annual meeting of Allotment Associations.		
Change the allotment year to run from November	Officer time	Work with Associations and Civica to change billing timetable	This will allow a full winter to sort out problems of re-letting	Short to medium

Appendix 1. Moving towards Self Management

Process involved in moving towards self management followed by 'Pick and Mix' of services and functions currently undertaken, either in whole or in part by the City Council that could be carried out by an Association.

- City Council to talk to allotment association about the possibility of more self management. Where none exists City will talk to individual plot holders to gauge their interest.
- Associations who express an interest discuss at committee level what they would like to do.
- Associations discuss with City Council as to whether their aspirations need formal vote or can be carried out with informal agreement.
- Associations enter dialogue with their members.
- If can be carried out without vote then implement changes, if not carry on process
- If still interested Associations to hold EGM/ AGM to formally discuss matters with their members.
- Associations to submit business case (on 1-2 sides of A4) detailing what they would like to do, their capacity as an Association/group, and how they intend to do it. Associations to be properly constituted
- If business case broadly in line with Allotment Strategy and legislation then City to instigate vote. If possible honest broker employed to answer questions (this may be a FAQs compiled with help from The National Allotment Society or other honest broker.
- City Council writes to plot holders and initiates vote, again with assistance (if appropriate) from an honest broker. Simple majority vote on yes or no motion. Only one vote per year per association
- Depending on vote, begin handing over powers to associations.
- Depending on level of engagement City Council to negotiate with associations on the nature of the relationship. This may or may not need some sort of legal agreement.
- Handover responsibility.

The following is a list of functions/services that Associations can, if they wish take over. It is not exhaustive and is not a hierarchy. Some of these functions can be carried out without recourse to the above process.

- Sharing of information (will need consent of plot holders).
- Become principle key holder
- Plot Checking
- Site management (monitoring)
- Site management (implementation)
- Drawing up of site management plans
- Site upgrading and security
- Drawing up of additional allotment rules and guidelines
- Enforcement of allotment rules
- Formal leasehold arrangement
- Billing /invoicing, chasing bad debts.

Gloucester City Council Allotment Review

Report of the Allotment Task & Finish Group October 2007

1. Introduction

At its meeting on 18 January 2007 Council resolved to set up a Task and Finish Group to review the Council's allotments.

The Task and Finish Group has comprised:

- Councillor Gillespie (Chair)
- Councillor Tracey
- Councillor Witts

The group has been assisted by its Lead Officer, Frances Mangan, Streetcare Manager and supported by Beverly Barber, Senior Democratic Services Officer . At its first meeting the terms of reference for the Task and Finish Group were agreed as follows:

1. To address the strategic issues relating to allotments in the City, in particular future management of allotments, demand and provision of sites in the City.
2. To examine the operational issues relating to allotments in the City, including maintenance, conditions of use and levels of investment.

The Allotments Task and Finish Group has undertaken numerous meetings since its first meeting on 11 April 2007. Its activities have included the following:

- site visit of all the City Council's allotments (9 May 2007)
- attendance at the Annual Allotments Consultation Meeting (25 June 2007)
- open discussion with Allotment representatives on Allotment Policy and Tenancy Conditions (9 July 2007)
- discussion with the Assistant Director (Finance and Asset Management) (6 August 2007)
- site visit to Cheltenham Borough Council's allotments (30 August 2007)

The Task & Finish Group would also like to acknowledge input from the following people who assisted with the review.

- Enterprise (Accord), Carol Dovey, Denise Bullock
- City Council, Nigel Kennedy, Assistant Director (Finance and Asset Management)
- Cheltenham Borough Council Allotments Officer , Fiona Warin
- Allotment representatives
- Planning, Chris Hargraves
- Policy Design & Conservation, Jane Cox

This report sets out the findings of the Task & Finish Group along with their recommendation on the future management of Gloucester City Council's Allotments.

2. Background

2.1 Why have allotments?

Allotments provide a useful additional recreational resource for some residents, and are especially helpful to residents whose houses have small gardens or no gardens at all; particularly if the allotments are utilised as a source of good quality, cheap food. In this respect allotments have a role to play in helping to:

- tackle poverty in the city
- contribute toward sustainability
- encourage healthy eating and healthier life styles
- provide an excellent means of exercise
- encouraging social cohesion and celebrating diversity
- benefit to wildlife habitats

2.2 What is an allotment?

There are two types of allotment provision, Allotments and Allotment Gardens.

- An '**allotment**' is a parcel of land not more than 5 acres in extent, cultivated as a garden or farm.
- An '**allotment garden**' is a parcel of land not exceeding 40 poles, (1,012 square metres), cultivated by the occupier for the provision of vegetables and fruit crops for himself and his family. By definitions outlined in the Allotment Act of 1922, an allotment garden is wholly or mainly cultivated by the occupier for the production of fruit or vegetables for consumption by himself and his family. The definition gives allotment authorities some flexibility to determine what is grown, but care should be taken when relaxing restrictions so that the character of the site is maintained.

All of the allotment sites provided by Gloucester City Council are allotment gardens.

2.3 Is there a legal requirement for the council to provide allotments?

Allotment provision is a statutory function and whilst an authority *may* provide allotments, **there is a statutory obligation** except in the case of inner London boroughs **to provide allotment gardens sufficient to meet the demand** (Cross, The Recreational Services 8th Edition).

2.4 What is the difference between a Statutory and Temporary Allotment Gardens?

The Allotments Act of 1925 stipulated that land purchased or appropriated by a local authority for the purpose of creating allotments would be known as 'statutory' allotment sites and must not be disposed of or used for other purposes without central government consent. 'Temporary' allotment sites are those where a local authority allowed land that has a different long term usage or purpose, to be used, on a temporary basis, as allotment land. There is no time limit as to how long a site can remain a temporary allotment site. They do not automatically change to statutory allotment sites after 30 or 50 years. Temporary sites only change to statutory sites when the local authority decides that that area is not needed for any purpose other than allotments and officially gives the site statutory designation.

2.5 Is there any guidance on what is "sufficient to meet the demand"?

Central Government guidance to local authorities on the provision and protection of sport, recreational facilities and open space is contained within Planning Policy Guidance (PPG) Note 17 'Sport, Open Space and Recreation' (2002).

PPG17 recognises allotments, community gardens and city farms in its typology of open spaces and sets out that Local Authorities should undertake robust assessments of the needs of their local community for open space.

A separate 'companion guide' to PPG17 recognises that the need for allotments, community gardens and urban farms is likely to rise with the growth of interest in organic farming and as a result of rising housing densities and the consequential reduction in the size of many gardens. It recommends a demand-led approach to the assessment of need for allotments and suggests that a population-based standard of provision is likely to be appropriate in most instances, coupled with an accessibility standard or distance threshold.

Planning Policy Statement 3 'Housing' reflects the Government's desire to ensure the availability of, and adequate protection for, good quality open spaces within urban areas, including allotments emphasising that housing density policies should have regard to the current and future level and capacity of infrastructure, services and facilities, in particular green and open space.

In terms of local policy, the adopted 1983 City of Gloucester Local Plan includes Core Policy L.1, which states that the Council will ensure the provision of an adequate level of public open space in the City through the retention of existing areas, and the inclusion of public open space within new areas of development. More specifically, in relation to allotments Core Policy

L.5 states that 'the City Council will seek to meet the demand for allotments subject to the availability of suitable land'.

In June 2001, Gloucester City Council produced the First Stage Deposit of its new Local Plan and a further Revised Deposit Draft Local Plan was then published in August 2002. The revised deposit draft plan includes two policies on allotments, one requiring the provision of an allotment site in new housing schemes of more than 30 dwellings (to a standard of 0.2 hectares per 1,000 population) the other seeking to protect existing allotments unless certain criteria can be met including; the loss of the allotment would not result in unmet demand within a reasonable walking distance, replacement provision is made in a convenient, accessible location, or other allotments in the locality would be enhanced by the development or by compensatory measures secured by a planning obligation.

The policies of the revised draft Local Plan relating to allotment provision are being carried forward into the emerging Local Development Framework (LDF) - the replacement to the Local Plan.

There are no formal national standard for the provision of allotments. Each local authority is duty-bound by legislation to provide enough allotments to meet the demand by their residents.

However, in 1969, the Thorpe Report (government commissioned report on allotment provision) recommended a minimum standard of ½ acre (0.2 hectares) per 1,000 population.

3. Gloucester City Council Allotments

3.1 Current capacity and demand for allotments in Gloucester.

There are 11 allotment sites providing a total of 587 allotment plots, currently a combination of allotments of 253 square metres and 126 square metres, in the city.

The sizes of each allotment site vary considerably with Saintbridge having 146 plots and Hempsted with just 2. The table in Appendix 1 shows the list of sites along with the number of plots per site. (The number of plots per site is variable depending on the number of plots in each size)

There is a further new allotment site, 1 hectare (2.47acres) planned for Kingsway which is due to come on stream in the near future for which there is already a waiting list. This will provide in the region of 79 allotments of 126sq mtrs or 39 allotments of 253 sq mtrs. This will be a statutory allotment site.

Of the 11 allotment sites in the city sites 8 are "statutory" and 3 are "temporary" allotment sites. The status of each site is listed in Appendix 1.

Using the recommended minimum standard of ½ acre (0.2 hectares) per 1,000 population and including the new Kingsway allotments this will provide 15.68 hectares of allotments resulting in 0.14 hectares per 1000 population. Compared with the recommended standard there is a shortfall of 6.58 hectares.

In September 2007 there were 587 available allotment plots (a combination of 253 square metres and 126 square metres). Of which 504 are let leaving 83 plots vacant. At the same time there is a waiting list of 149 plus a further 20 on the waiting list for the new Kingsway allotments.

Whilst there are some allotments that are not currently being used to capacity there is now a waiting list that exceeds the number of plots available. Therefore there is an under rather than an over provision of allotments. With the more proactive approach now being taken to letting the allotments it is anticipated that all allotments will be let within the next 18 months, once the plots in a poor condition have been made usable.

Recommendation:

- ***That the minimum standard of 0.2 hectares per 1,000 population included in the draft local plan continue to be used as a standard for allotment provision in the city.***
- ***That whilst there is more demand than supply the City Council should continue to seek to protect the current allotment provision and acquire new allotment sites as part of new developments using the section 106 process.***

3.2 Who uses allotments?

In October 2007 the allotment records show there are 504 allotments let of which 247 (approx 49%) of total users were on concessions thus being retirement age or over.

To date records have not been kept of the age, sex, race and disability profile of allotment users. However, from observation it is known that residents from diverse ethnic backgrounds use allotments. This provides an opportunity to share different methods of cultivation and to learn from each other.

In 2007 the Cabinet Member for Environment extended the concessionary rate to include people in receipt of disability benefit. There are no allotments specifically designed to encourage use by people with disabilities.

Recommendation:

- ***That raised bed allotments be permitted on the allotment sites on condition they are temporary by nature and can revert back to a standard allotment.***
- ***That the benefit of allotments be actively promoted to encourage younger people to take up allotments and a healthier lifestyle.***

3.3 How far do people travel to allotments?

The 11 city council allotment sites are concentrated in certain areas of Gloucester, meaning that there are no allotment sites in Abbey, Elmbridge, grange, Hucclecote, Podsmead, Quedgeley Severndale, Quedgeley Fieldcourt . The lack of provision in Quedgeley will be addressed by the new provision due in Kingsway. In an allotment survey carried out by Gloucester City Council in 1999, 49% of allotment holders travelled to their sites on foot or cycle with the remainder travelling by car.

The current uneven distribution of sites across the city means that there will continue to be a significant number of allotment holders travelling by car. As and when the opportunity arises the Task & Finish Group would like to see the majority of allotment holders travelling on foot or by bike and a more even distribution of allotments across the city. A travelling distance of 1 mile is considered reasonable for walking to an allotment. With the inclusion of the new Kingsway allotments the majority of residents are within 1 mile of an allotment see appendix 2. Areas falling outside a mile are Hucclecote , part of Quedgeley and it should be noted that the Westgate Ward is serviced by Hempsted allotments which is a very small site and there will be an increase of housing in this area over the next few years.

Recommendation

- ***That a travelling distance of 1mile to an allotment site for any resident be adopted as a standard when planning for future allotment provision.***
- ***That priority be given to identifying allotment provision to service areas of the city that are not currently within a mile of an allotment site, or a reasonably sized site : Hucclecote, part of Quedgeley and Westgate.***

3.4 How are the allotments managed?

The city council is responsible for the overall management of the allotments including the development of the strategy, policies and standards relating to allotments in the city.

Enterprise undertakes the administration of the allotments on behalf of the council along with basic maintenance.

The Task and Finish Group has learnt that whilst the City Council has responsibility for strategy and policy there is no specific staff time allocated for this purpose and it would appear that over recent years allotments have been

a very low priority. In fact, up until the commencement of the new Streetcare Contract they were to all intent and purposes forgotten about.

The lack of profile for the allotments has manifested in their being no communication with allotment holders, low levels of maintenance, a large number of un-let and uncultivated allotments. Yet nationally there has been an increase in demand for allotments. Another consequence is that the conditions relating to allotments have not been reviewed for a considerable number of years. Lastly, but not least, the City Council has had a poor understanding of the performance of the allotments.

Since the commencement of the new Streetcare contract and the introduction of the new Streetcare Team and the setting up of the Task & Finish group steps have been taken to redress this situation by the Cabinet Member for Environment, officers and Enterprise.

At the allotment holders meeting in June 2007 the view of participants was sought on whether or not there was an appetite from the allotment holders to move to community management of the allotments. The consensus at the meeting was that, at this point in time, community management was not an option, as most of the sites do not have an association in place. Furthermore they would only consider community management if and when the allotments are put in good order with adequate security and water facilities.

In the visit undertaken by the Task and Finish Group to Cheltenham it was observed that Cheltenham Borough Council has a full time allotment officer who undertakes the following roles:

- Administration of the letting of the allotments
- Manages maintenance and site inspections
- Organising and co-ordination of maintenance work including development of an allotment warden scheme.
- Production of an annual allotment newsletter
- Promoting and allotments including raising awareness of the benefits of allotments.
- Advice to new allotment holders on start up
- Maintaining and analysing of allotment data
- Liaison with and support for the allotment association.
- Identifying and applying for funding for allotments.

The Task & Finish Group considered there are a number of benefits of having one person in sole charge of allotments as this improves the communication with allotment holders and allows for a better link between policy, strategy and operation of the allotments. To that end the Task and Finish Group would like to see the introduction of an allotment officer explored in more detail. A part time allotment officer, say for 3 days a week, would cost in the region of £17,000 per annum including on costs. A full time allotment officer would cost in the region of £28,000

Recommendation

- ***That the Cabinet note the improvements that have been made to the City's allotments over the last six months***
- ***That the cabinet ask officers to explore in detail the benefits and disadvantages of creating an allotment officer post and funding for this position.. This post would work directly to the council with maintenance only being retained within the Streetcare Contract.***
- ***That the possibility of community management be revisited as and when the allotment infrastructure has been improved and an allotment association(s) has been developed.***

3.5 How can the existing use of allotment be maximised?

In September 2007 there were 587 available allotment plots. Of which 504 are let leaving 83 plots vacant. At the same time there is a waiting list of 149 plus a further 20 on the waiting list for the new Kingsway allotments.

Enterprise is currently preparing plots and is actively working through the waiting list. It can be seen that, with the size of the waiting list, in the very near future all workable plots will be let leaving a residual waiting list in the region of 66. If this is the case there will be no surplus demand. However this may take some 18 months to achieve as the process includes the re-measuring and remarking out of allotments that have not been in use for a while.

There are a number of ways allotment provision can be increased without having to acquire new sites.

The first of these is to review the size of the allotments. A standard size allotment is 253 square metres. An allotment of this size should be able to provide sufficient vegetables (with the exception of potatoes) to feed a family of four for a year.

In reality a plot of this size is, in this day and age with modern day pressures, too large for many people to cultivate effectively. This is why in recent years when plots have become vacant it has become practice to re-let them as two 126 square metre plots, which are more manageable.

In Cheltenham they have begun to set aside some plots half this size again which are proving popular with some individuals who have limited time.

What has been identified since Enterprise took over the administration of the allotments is that there are a number of people with more than one allotment and some with multiple allotments. There is currently no clear policy governing the number of allotments one person can have.

At the allotment holders' meeting in June it was proposed that a policy be introduced limiting any one person to a maximum 253 square metres (or equivalent plot).

This proposal caused concern should such a policy be introduced immediately. It may be more acceptable for the above policy to be introduced

over a period of time, i.e. as and when plots become vacant, except where it can be proven that a plot holder is growing crops on the allotment for personal commercial gain, which is prohibited.

There is no existing policy on the letting of allotments to organised groups. Schools could be encouraged to use allotments as an educational tool introducing young people to healthy living lifestyles, likewise youth groups. Also in other districts the health service use council allotments as part of their physio and occupational therapy programmes. These are just two examples but there are others.

The Task & Finish Group also discussed whether or not non-residents can be allotment holders. The majority of allotment holders are residents of Gloucester but there are some who work in Gloucester but live elsewhere and there are some who live close to the city boundary but not within the city. The view of the group was that priority should be given to residents including people living within half a mile of the city boundary where there is no allotment provision.

Recommendation:

- ***That a maximum of 253 square metres allotment plot (or equivalent) per person be introduced as and when allotment holders terminate their agreements.***
- ***That firm action is taken if any allotment holder is found to be using their allotment for personal commercial gain.***
- ***That officers' consult with allotment holders on the introduction of a new minimum allotment size that can be effectively cultivated.***
- ***That community and group lettings be encouraged where they raise awareness and encourage people to adopt healthier and more sustainable lifestyles.***
- ***That allotment holders must either live or work in the city or live within a half mile of the City boundary with priority being given to city residents.***

3.6 Process of renting an allotment within Gloucester City?

If a resident wishes to rent an allotment they need to contact the Council's Contact Centre through Enviro or by telephoning 396396 and then

- They will be put through to Enterprise who will take their details and find out if they have a preference for any site
- The person will then be put on the waiting list. They will be informed what number they are on the list
- When they get to the top of the waiting list they will be contacted and a viewing of the plot will be arranged
- If they are happy with the plot being offered they will be sent a tenancy agreement to complete and an invoice.

- Once the tenancy agreement has been signed and the invoice paid they can start working their allotment.

3.7 What can allotment plots be used for?

The allotment tenancy agreement sets out the conditions setting out what can and what cannot be grown on an allotment as well as other rules relating to the use of the allotment plot and site.

The Task & Finish Group has reviewed the existing conditions in consultation with allotment holders and has reached the conclusion that they need amending and updating. The particular changes the Task & Finish Group would like to see are set out below subject to final consultation with allotment holders :

Recommendation

- ***Sheds, greenhouses or polytunnels to be permitted on site on condition***
 - ***No one structure is more than 6ftx8ft x8ft high***
 - ***No more than 25% of a plot being used for structures***
 - ***The structure must be sound and safe but must not be of a permanent nature***
 - ***The position of the structure on the plot must not cause overshadowing of neighbouring plots.***
 - ***Any shed or greenhouse must include a rain water collection system feeding a water butt on the plot.***
 - ***Written approval is required in advance***
- ***Trees, fruit trees and hedges will not be permitted on site excepting where they are already in situ.***
- ***The growing of fruit bushes, strawberry plants, asparagus and rhubarb to be permitted***
- ***Allotment plots can be used for the growing of crops or flowers or a combination of both.***
- ***The keeping of livestock or fowl will not be permitted***
- ***Bonfires will continue to not be permitted***

3.8 What is the maintenance regime for allotments in the City?

The Task & Finish Group visited all the allotment sites as part of this review and was concerned about the low level of maintenance and the overall state of most of the allotment sites. This is a consequence of there being minimum maintenance and investment in allotments over the years.

The Task and Finish Group learned that there is no planned maintenance or investment programme for the allotments.

Prior to the Streetcare Partnering Contract the previous contractor was required to undertake grass cutting to the access paths and cutting of hedges. On top of this the city council instructed them annually, usually, in the

summer, to flail the uncultivated plots. The only other works undertaken was any essential health and safety works –this has been minimal.

Enterprise as part of the Streetcare Partnering Contract Enterprise is required to continue with the same level of maintenance.

Enterprise is also working with council, over the next two years to re-measure and mark out each of the allotment sites. The aim of this being to:

- Clearly delineate each plot as there has been encroachment over the years
- To bring uncultivated areas, where possible, back into use thereby increasing the number of plots available.

The target is to have this completed by December 2009.

This was welcomed and supported by the allotment holders at the June allotment holders meeting.

At the same meeting allotment representatives expressed a willingness to work with the council and Enterprise to make sure this exercise is successful. However, it will not be possible to harness this support without the council allocating staff time (an allotment officer) for this purpose.

At the visit to Cheltenham the Task & Finish Group were impressed with the Allotment Warden scheme that Cheltenham (and a number of other authorities across the country have introduced). In essence, this works as follows

Each allotment site has a warden or 2-3 wardens on larger sites. The warden is an allotment holder and agrees to

- Show new allotment holders around
- Undertakes quality inspections to ensure allotment holders are not encroaching on footpaths
- Regularly walks the site to identify if any of the plots are not being cultivated
- Checks to make sure allotment holders are adhering to the conditions of use
- Keeps notice boards up to date
- Nominates allotment holders for annual allotment awards

They act as a liaison person between the site and the council allotment officer. In Cheltenham they have a formal meeting with the allotment officer and representatives from the allotment association 4 times a year at which they discuss ongoing issues, consider each wardens quarterly report and receive a quality report for each site.

Each of the wardens receives a small remuneration for this work (75p per plot per year).

The feeling in Cheltenham was that since the introduction of the warden scheme the management of the sites has improved by working with wardens

and it has enabled the Council to be more proactive in ensuring plot holders cultivate their plots.

The allotment officer was seen in Cheltenham as being pivotal to the success of the scheme.

The conclusion of the Task & Finish group is that if an investment is made in the allotments to bring them up to standard and steps are taken to improve communication and involvement of allotment holders through the introduction of a warden scheme, along the lines set out above, then the level of ongoing maintenance would be minimal.

Recommendation

- ***That an allotment warden scheme similar to that developed in Cheltenham be explored***

3.9 What improvement need to be made to the allotments ?

In May this year the Task & Finish Group accompanied by the Cabinet Member for Environment and the Streetcare Manager visited the majority of allotment sites in the City to see them first hand.

The feeling of the Task & Finish group were echoed by the allotment holders at the meeting in June at which there was a very strong view that there was a need for investment in the allotments.

The Task & Finish Group was particularly struck by the difference good security can make to a site. Robert Raikes, which has good security, has the highest occupancy rate and is well cared for. Other sites such as Innsworth and Saintbridge and White City have very poor security and this impacts on the overall feel of the site.

Again in their visit to Cheltenham the Task & Finish Group noted the benefit of good security.

The highest priorities for improvements identified by the identified by the Task & Finish Group and the allotment holders are:

- **Security:**
The majority of the allotment sites have very poor perimeter fencing that makes them very vulnerable to vandalism. This is seen as the highest priority
- **Water**
The second highest priority is the provision of water on all sites.
- **The reduction in the number of uncultivated allotments**
- **Lockable notice boards on each site**

The Task & Finish group has asked officers to undertake a survey of each site and identify the cost of improving security, providing water at standpipes across the sites to avoid the necessity to use hoses and to provide a notice and information board at each site.

This work is underway and costs will be available shortly.

The Task & Finish Group is aware that the level of investment could be significant and there is currently no provision for these improvements.

As part of the review the group considered how the identified improvements could be funded. One suggestion was that an allotment site be disposed of to raise the capital required. This is how some other local authorities have funded improvements. This has happened where there has been surplus allotment provision. This is not the case in Gloucester.

The Task & Finish Group also recognises that it may not be possible to identify funding from the council's capital programme to fund the improvements over a 1 to 2 year period, though this would be ideal. If this is not possible they would support a 5 year rolling programme of improvements through the council's capital programme.

Recommendation

- ***That the cabinet support the introduction of an improvement and investment programme for the allotments and ask officers to prepare a capital proposal for consideration.***

3.9 Sustainability

Allotments are seen as being environmentally friendly and sustainable but they could be more sustainable.

One of the major costs incurred is the cost of water and if there is improved water provision at each site this could well result in an increased use of water as it is more accessible. Whilst supporting the need for improved water provision the Task & Finish Group would also like to see a hose pipe and sprinkler ban introduced and allotment holders encouraged to harvest water through the use of water butts.

Allotments also generate a considerable amount of green waste. Some of which is compostable on site but not all. The Task & Finish group would like to see individual allotment holders encouraged to compost on site. Where possible the Council should provide compost in bays at allotment sites along with bays for recycled material being brought to the sites for reuse on the allotments, such as manure from the Countryside Park, wood chippings from the arboriculture works undertaken by Enterprise. At the same time, to prevent the need for bonfires, an annual skip or similar should be provided by Enterprise to remove larger green non compostable material from each site in autumn would be welcomed.

Recommendation

- ***A hose pipe and sprinkler ban is introduced as and when water facilities are improved at each site***
- ***An annual autumn skip or similar be provided for each site to remove larger non compostable green waste .***

3.10 External sources of funding

There are various sources of external funding that could be attracted to invest in allotments. In most instances grant aid and external funding is not available for infrastructure works. Instead it tends to be available for education and awareness programmes, increasing community engagement and encouraging more sustainable means of cultivating plots.

To date funding raised from external for allotments has been negligible as there is no one to identify the funding source, make applications or to support a advise allotment associations with their applications.

3.11 What is the annual rental cost of an allotment ?

The fees and charges for allotments in Gloucester are comparable with other neighbouring authorities.

This year the cost of a 126 square metre plot is £15.86p (£1.32p per month) charged at the full rate and for a concession it is £9.24 (0.77p per month). The view of most of the allotment holders at the meeting in June was that this is good value for money.

Cheltenham Borough Council would consider increasing the charges as they implement improvements to their allotments. The view of the Task & Finish Group is that there is potential to increase charges for allotments but only if the security and facilities are improved.

In 2005/06 the previous contractor reported an income of £5,000 from allotment charges. Enterprise is estimating an income of £11,800 in 2007/08. The explanation for the difference is that in 2007/08 correct charges have been levied and Enterprise has undertaken a rigorous audit and has implemented systems to ensure all the charges are being collected. This is welcomed.

At the June 2007 allotment holders' meeting it was proposed that allotment charges

- Increase in 2008 by 5% and by a further 5% in 2009 in line with the council overall policy for fees and charges.
- That in future charges be levied on a cost per square metre basis to reflect variations to allotment plot sizes.

- That the concession rate be 50% of the full price this would be a reduction in real terms for those on a concession.

Since the meeting a further question has been raised about what is the purpose of the concessionary rate.

The proposed fees and charges for 2008 and 2009 are set out below based on the concessionary rate at 50%.

	2007/2008	Prop 2008	Prop 2009
	Charge £	Charge £	Charge £
126sq m			
OAP's / disabled	£9.24	(£9.99)£8.32	£10.48)£8.74
Ordinary	£15.86	£16.65	£17.48
253 sq m			
OAP's/disabled	£18.27	(£19.98)£16.64	(£20.97)£17.48
Ordinary	£31.71	£33.30	£34.96
Per sq metre			
OAP's/ disabled		(£0.079)£0.066	(0.82)£0.069
Ordinary		£0.132	£0.138

The proposed charges based on a 50% concession and the same level of lettings as per Sept 2007 would generate an income for 2008 (full year equiv) of £10,7365 and 2009 of £11,016 which in real terms would be below the 2007/08 estimate income for the year. The alternative is to set the concessionary rate at 60%, which is shown in brackets in the above table.

A further recommendation made at the allotment holders meeting, supported by all those present, was that the letting year be changed to coincide with the growing year. Thus the new year will run from 1st January to 31st December each year with invoices being sent to allotment holders in the October preceding the start of the year.

It is proposed that this new arrangement be fully implemented by January 2009 with 2008 being a transition year. This will mean there will be a 9 month year for 2008 running from April to December 2008 for which plot holders will be charged for a 9 month period then they will be required to make full year payment for 2009 by December 2008.

Recommendation:

- ***That the proposals taken to the June 2007 allotment holders meeting and set out above be endorsed by the Cabinet***
- ***That until such time as investment is made to the allotments infra structure the annual increase in charges should be in line with Council's overall policy. However, if and when, there are***

improvements to the allotments it may then be pertinent for the Cabinet to undertake a review of allotment charges.

3.12 What do the allotments cost to run?

In the past the cost of operating the allotments was included in the grounds maintenance contract cost and was not separately identified .

The key areas of expenditure are

- The administration of the letting of allotments
- Water rates
- Core maintenance costs (Based on the existing maintenance regime)

Within the new Streetcare Partnering Contract the outgoing expenditure is met by Enterprise and they also retain the income generated.

The City Council Streetcare Team does not have any specific staff or resources allotted to allotments.

The water rates for the calendar year 2006 were £3,513 but Enterprise has informed the council that there has been a significant increase in 2007/08. Enterprise are investigating the increase to ascertain the reason and whether or not the bills received need to be challenged.

An estimate for core maintenance, work that does not include the costs of any improvements, is in the region of £5,000 to £6,000 depending on the level of work.

Enterprise has allocated 3 days a week staff time plus on cost and overheads to the administration of the allotments.

Thus on the above basis the current net cost to the council after taking income into account is in the region of £9,000 to £11,000 per year but this could go up if the water rates increase significantly. At the higher figure this equates to a cost per head of population of 0.098p a year

Recommendation:

- ***That officers work with Enterprise to confirm the annual cost of operating the allotments***
- ***That the Streetcare Partnering Board receives an annual breakdown of the income and expenditure for allotments along with usage figures.***

3.13 Who is responsible for insuring allotments?

The City Council is responsible for keeping safe common areas within each allotment site and un let allotments and this is covered by the City Council's public liability insurance. This does not extend to individual allotments. The

individual allotment holder is responsible for his or her insurance covering theft, vandalism and public liability.

There is insurance available that allotment associations can take out on behalf of their members. One allotment association in the city is currently exploring this in more detail.

3.14 Marketing and promotion of allotments in the City

There has been no marketing of allotments over the years. Nor has there been any promotion of the benefits of allotments.

At the June 2007 Allotment Holders Meeting it was suggested that more use be made of the Council web site to promote allotments and that an annual news letter would greatly improve communication with allotment holders as well as being a very useful vehicle for promoting a more sustainable approach to the cultivation of allotments. This has worked very well for Cheltenham.

The Task & Finish Group would like to see increased marketing and promotion particularly encouraging low income groups, young people, schools and community groups to get more involved. However they recognise that this cannot be delivered within existing resources and would strongly recommend that if funding is identified for an allotment officer that this be a key part of their role.

3.15 Consultation with allotment holders and allotment associations.

In June this year an allotment holders meeting was arranged which was the first of its kind. It was well attended and welcomed by the allotment holders and it opened up an important means of communication between the Council and the allotment holders. It provided the opportunity for the Council to consult on the proposed fees and charges and other changes and to gain the views of the allotment holders. The meeting was very positive.

When officers organised the allotment holders meeting an invitation went to every allotment holder, as officers were unaware of any allotment association in existence with whom they could consult.

The disadvantages of there being no formal groups representing each allotment site is that holders attending meetings can only represent themselves and there is no easy way to obtain a broad range of views or know whether or not an individual is representing the views of the majority of allotment holders.

It also makes it difficult if either the Council or Enterprise want to work with allotment holders to help improve the site as there is no formal link.

Further benefits of an allotment association is the possibility of bulk purchasing of seeds etc at discounted rates, taking out insurance cover for allotment holders and generally sharing knowledge and information and lastly but not least access to other external funding.

Estcourt Close and Estcourt Park appear to have the most established allotment associations in the City and there are embryonic associations at Tredworth, Robert Raikes and Innsworth.

Recommendation

- ***That an Allotment Forum be established that meets twice a year and that the Cabinet Member for Environment and one member from each of the other parties plus representatives from each of the allotment sites be invited to attend.***
- ***That the Council work with allotment holders to seek to create an allotment association, or similar for each site which may or may not become part of an umbrella allotment association for the City.***
- ***That the next meeting with allotment holders be arranged for the end of January 2008 at which the outcome of this review will be reported.***

4. CONCLUSION

The Task and Finish group has identified that the allotments have been moored in a backwater. They have operated with a low level of maintenance, no promotion or liaison with allotment holders, policies not being reviewed regularly to make sure they are still relevant and in the last contract there was effectively no monitoring. This has resulted in a significant number of uncultivated allotments, encroachment onto paths and other plots, charges not being properly levied and the Council having a poor understanding of what is happening on the allotments.

Since April this year with the commencement of the new Streetcare Partnering Contract Enterprise have reviewed the administration of the allotments. They now have a good record of all the allotment holders who are being levied the correct charge for their plot(s). This means they are now in a position to start letting the uncultivated plots. Enterprise is now providing the council with information on a regular basis. However there is still some work to do before an accurate cost of running the allotment can be confirmed.

At the same time even though there has been no promotion there is a keen interest in allotments with the waiting list currently being more than the plots available. Using the Thorpe Standard of 0.2 hectares per 1000 population there is currently a deficit of 6.58 hectares in the city. However, the majority of residents will be within 1 mile of an allotment site once the Kingsway allotment gardens are provided

The allotment users see improved security and getting uncultivated plots back into use as the highest priorities.

Allotments have a key role to play in the City Council's healthy lifestyle and sustainability agendas. The Task and Finish Group feel there should be greater promotion to of allotments to young people and families to encourage them to use allotments especially as more recent residential developments tend to have smaller garden areas.

Lastly the Task and Finish Group have identified the top priorities being

- Improving security and bringing uncultivated plots back into use
- The creation of an allotment officer post responsible for administering and managing the allotments to include promotion, supporting the allotment associations, education and awareness and development of a warden scheme.

and are seeking cabinet approval for the recommendations as set out in the body of the report .

Lastly but not least I would like to thank my colleagues Chis Witts and Pam Tracey for the time and energy they have put into this review and to the officer who have supported us and everyone else who has contributed. It has been a lot of work but at the same time we have learnt a lot and it has been enjoyable even getting soaked to the skin on the allotment site visit..

Chair of the Allotment Task & Finish Group

Cllr Geraldine Gillespie

Background information

- The draft Allotment Strategy, For the City of Gloucester April 2002
- Allotment tenancy agreement
- Notes of the Allotments Holders meeting 25th June 2007
- Notes of the allotment Task & Finish Group meetings
- Allotment law

Gloucester City Council

Meeting:	Cabinet	Date:	30 July 2014
Subject:	Gloucester Cemeteries and Crematorium Rules and Regulations 2014		
Report Of:	Cabinet Member for Environment		
Wards Affected:	All		
Key Decision:	None	Budget/Policy Framework:	No
Contact Officer:	Julienne Reeves, Manager and Registrar		
	Email:	Julienne.Reeves@gloucester.gov.uk	Tel: 396893
Appendices:	1. Draft Rules and Regulations in respect of the Cemeteries in Gloucester 2. Draft Rules and Regulations in respect of the Crematorium in Gloucester		

FOR GENERAL RELEASE

1.0 Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To seek approval for a new set of Rules and Regulations for the future management of the Cemeteries and Crematorium in Gloucester.

2.0 Recommendations

- 2.1. Cabinet is asked to **RESOLVE** that

- (1) The new Rules and Regulations in respect of the Cemeteries in Gloucester as detailed in Appendix 1 are agreed and adopted for implementation from 11th August 2014.
- (2) The new Rules and Regulations in respect of the Crematorium in Gloucester as detailed in Appendix 2 are agreed and adopted for implementation from 11th August 2014.

3.0 Background and Key Issues

- 3.1 There is no statutory requirement for a local authority to provide burial space, however the public often assume that burial provision is a basic local authority function. Gloucester City Council currently provides for body burials and the interment of cremated remains. The day to day management of the Cemeteries and Crematorium is currently the responsibility of the Cemeteries and Crematorium Manager and Registrar within Neighbourhoods and Services Directorate.

- 3.2 Some form of rules and regulations for the management of Gloucester City Council Cemeteries and Crematorium has existed since the cemeteries were established. It is good practice to review policies from time to time. As a result of the latest review new rules and regulations have been written.
- 3.3. The cemeteries are areas of public open space, and as such there should always be balance between the rights of the bereaved families to enjoy an area which is intended for quiet contemplation and reflection, and the responsibility to behave in accordance with the rules and regulations governing the management of the cemeteries.
- 3.4 There are legal requirements and obligations that as a local authority we have to observe and adhere to in order to run a cemetery. The new Rules and Regulations come in two documents, one for users of the Cemetery (attached as Appendix 1) and a second one for users of the Crematorium (attached as Appendix 2). As well as covering 'local' rules these documents also include the requirements of the Local Government Act 1972 and the Local Authorities Cemeteries order 1977.
- 3.5 The Rules and Regulations for the Cemetery and Crematorium were previously in one document which caused confusion as to what related to what. So as to simplify the information handed to the Cemetery and Crematorium users the Rules and Regulations have now been split into two separate documents. In addition every effort has been made to avoid restricting the rights and choices of the individual, therefore it is proposed now to be more flexible with regards to memorials and displays. This is so as to reflect the current practice as well as to balance individual rights / information against the need to regulate for safe and tidy grounds.
- 3.6 The new Rules and Regulations will be shared with all Funeral Directors and Stonemasons that work at Gloucester Cemeteries and Crematorium whilst a 'plain English' extract of the Rules and Regulations will be issued to all new grave owners.

4.0 Alternative Options Considered

- 4.1 One option would be to have no conditions. This would however leave the City Council cemeteries without any controls which could result in over sized memorials and dangerous articles being left on graves and at memorials. This would also present a major maintenance issue and a health and safety issue for staff and the general public. The appearance of the cemetery would also suffer and it could become unsightly with the grounds becoming difficult to maintain.
- 4.2 Another option would be to continue to use the existing conditions, however these are now difficult to enforce. Due to changes over the years in options available for memorials it is good practice to review the Rules and Regulations so that they reflect these changes.

5.0 Reasons for Recommendations

- 5.1 The Rules and Regulations have been updated from the existing Rules and Regulations to reflect the current environment at the Cemetery and Crematorium and they set out clearly what is allowed. The Rules and Regulations will apply throughout the Cemetery and Crematorium.

5.2 The new Rules and Regulations will ensure a consistent standard is adopted for graves and memorials throughout the Cemetery and Crematorium.

6.0 Future Work and Conclusions

6.1 In order to be able to regulate the appearance of the Cemetery and Crematorium, Rules and Regulations are required to set a clear standard. Any Rules and Regulations must be enforceable and must reflect the current day needs and environment. It is therefore recommended that the revised Rules and Regulations attached in Appendix 1 and 2 are approved and adopted for implementation from 11th August 2014.

7.0 Financial Implications

7.1 There are no costs for the City Council.

(Financial Services have been consulted in the preparation of this report.)

8.0 Legal Implications

8.1 Local authority managed Cemeteries are subject to standards and conditions commonly grouped together as 'Rules and Regulations'. These are provided in order to inform cemetery users about aspects of the management of the cemeteries and the reasonable requirements that are applicable to all those who visit or work in the cemeteries. Clearly defined Rules and Regulations are essential in order that cemeteries can be operated in an efficient and effective manner, always with due consideration for the needs of the bereaved.

8.2 There are quite a few statutes and statutory instruments that affect the management of cemeteries and crematoria, the main ones being the Local Government Act 1972 and the Local Authorities' Cemeteries Order, referred to in the main body of the report.

(Legal Services have been consulted in the preparation of this report.)

9.0 Risk & Opportunity Management Implications

9.1 With out a set of clear Rules and Regulations for the Cemetery and Crematorium there would not be a clear standard for graves and memorials permitted on site and the Council could be exposed to legal challenge.

10.0 People Impact Assessment (PIA):

10.1 The PIA Screening Stage was completed and did not identify any potential or actual negative impact; therefore a full PIA was not required.

11.0 Other Corporate Implications

Community Safety

11.1 None

Sustainability

11.2 None

Staffing & Trade Union

11.3 None

Background Documents: Local Government Act 1972
Local Authorities Cemeteries Order 1977
Previous rules and regulations

RULES AND REGULATIONS

**In respect of the
CEMETERIES IN GLOUCESTER
1st August 2014**



GLOUCESTER CITY COUNCIL

Rules and Regulations for the Cemeteries in Gloucester

General

The Rules and Regulations are made by the Council for the proper management of its Cemeteries in Gloucester but shall not affect the Council's rights and duties under the general law relating to Cemeteries.

The Council reserves the right to amend the Rules and Regulations in the light of changing circumstances or changes in the law.

The law relating to Cemeteries is primarily contained in various Statutes and associated Orders which may be amended or be repealed from time to time. The extracts from the Local Authorities Cemeteries Order 1977 which are contained in Schedule 2 to this document are not meant to be an exhaustive or definitive statement of the law. The selected extracts highlight certain provisions which users of the Council's Cemeteries may find helpful.

Introduction

The Cemeteries and Crematorium Service operates from Coney Hill Cemetery and provides a service for cremation and burial as well as the management and maintenance of the Old and Coney Hill Cemeteries. The service is also responsible for the safe keeping and updating of Burial and Cremation registers and plans. The Old Cemetery located in Tredworth Road dates back to 1857. The chapel in the grounds is a listed building.

The Coney Hill Cemetery dates from 1939 and has been extended with the creation of the Millennium Section in 2001, with separate sections for the Muslim and Chinese communities, Roman Catholics and members of the Church of England as well as a children's plot and a General (Non-denominational) ground. We have also created a Woodland Burial site for 'green burials'.

Gloucester City Council welcomes all visitors to our Cemeteries and Crematorium, and asks that visitors respect the peace, dignity and reverence of these facilities. We thank you in advance for your consideration.

Although Rules and regulations are a requirement for the management of our Cemeteries and Gardens, every effort has been made to avoid restricting the rights and choices of the individual, therefore these Regulations are a balance between individual rights/information and the need to regulate for safe and tidy grounds.

CITY OF GLOUCESTER

RULES AND REGULATIONS

IN RESPECT OF THE

CEMETERIES IN GLOUCESTER

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Order 1977

CITY OF GLOUCESTER CEMETERIES Rules and Regulations

In these Rules and Regulations unless the context otherwise requires, the words:

- “Cemetery”** means any of the Gloucester City Council Cemeteries known respectively as the Old Cemetery and Coney Hill Cemetery. and any additional cemeteries provided since the Council resolved to adopt the Rules and Regulations.
- “Council”** means Gloucester City Council.
- “Interment”** means the act or ceremony of burial.
- “Manager and Registrar”** means the Manager and Registrar of Cemeteries or their authorised representative.
- “Purchased Grave”** means a grave space in respect of which an exclusive right of burial has been granted.

1. Arrangements for an interment shall be made in advance with the Manager and Registrar. Two clear days notice must be given in the case of an interment in an earthen grave or previously constructed bricked grave and ten working days in a bricked grave requiring construction. Such notice excludes Saturday, Christmas Day, Good Friday and any other day set apart as a Bank Holiday or special Public Holiday.
2. All vaulted graves will be excavated and constructed by the cemeteries graves maintenance contractor or a sub-contractor acceptable to both the contractor and the Manager and Registrar.
3. The Notice of interment must be confirmed on a printed form which can be obtained from the Cemeteries office.
4. All fees and charges for interments must be paid prior to the funeral.
5. Interments will not take place after 3.30p.m. Monday – Thursday or after 2.30p.m. on Fridays unless permission has been obtained from the Manager and Registrar.
6. Interments are not normally permitted on Saturday, Sunday, Good Friday, Christmas Day, Bank Holiday or special Public Holiday.
7. Interments will not take place on Saturdays, except in the case of emergencies or at the discretion of the Manager and Registrar.
8. The Manager and Registrar should be notified as soon as possible if a large number of persons are expected to attend a funeral. A large number would be in excess of 100.
9. The appropriate certificate of disposal issued by a Registrar of Births and Deaths or the Coroner’s Order for Burial must be given to the Manager and Registrar either at the same time as giving notice of the proposed interment or when the funeral enters the Cemetery.

10. A certificate issued by the appropriate Cremation Authority will be required for the disposal of cremated remains.
11. Any Funeral corteges entering the Cemetery shall be directed to the grave by a member of the cemetery team.
12. The time appointed for a funeral to take place is the point at which the funeral cortege is to arrive at the entrance gate of the Cemetery. It is essential that strict punctuality should be observed. If a funeral is late the service will take place as soon as possible thereafter at the discretion of the Manager and Registrar.
13. The sites of all graves will be determined by the Manager and Registrar. All graves and vaults shall be excavated and opened by the Council's contractor and no grave or vault will be excavated beyond a depth of 2.89 metres (9 foot 9 inches).
14. The body of a deceased person will not be accepted for interment unless it is enclosed in a coffin or container. Coffins, normally made of wood, shall be used in all graves, and must bear a name plate establishing the identity of the body contained therein. Coffins made of any material other than wood must have the prior written approval of the Manager and Registrar.
15. A purchaser or owner for the time being of the Exclusive Right of Burial in a grave shall not dispose of such right without the consent of the Manager and Registrar, and every transfer of such right shall be prepared by the Manager and Registrar at the expense of the applicant, to ensure that the record of grave ownership can be verified with the burial records held by the Burial Authority.
16. Growing shrubs, plants or flowers must not be taken out of the Cemetery without the consent of the Manager and Registrar. The Council reserves the right to prune, cut down or remove any shrubs, plants, flowers or wreaths which have become unsightly or overgrown.
17. All dead flowers and wreaths, garden refuse or litter must be removed to the nearest waste basket by the grave owner or person having responsibility for the grave, or in their default, by the Manager and Registrar.
18. Any article placed upon a grave may not be taken from the Cemetery without the permission of the Manager and Registrar.
19. Memorials are not permitted on common graves but may be erected on Purchased Graves subject to the permission of the Manager and Registrar and compliance with these Rules and Regulations.
20. Prior notice must be given to the Manager and Registrar before removing a memorial or carrying out any work in connection therewith.
21. The Council may remove memorials from purchased graves when the period of the Exclusive Right of Burial granted by the Council has expired.
22. Drawings and specifications of all memorials or alterations thereto, and any inscription thereon, shall be submitted in duplicate on the prescribed form which can be obtained from the Manager and Registrar. On approval a permit will be issued. No work shall be carried out without the written approval of the Manager and Registrar.

23. Vases may be placed upon common graves but may be removed at the discretion of the Manager / Registrar.
24. Grave spaces will be turfed by the Council's contractor at ground level in October/November after an interment, provided sufficient time has elapsed for the grave to settle. This would normally be at least 5-6 months later.
25. All graves shall be flush with the ground after the period of settlement has taken place, grave mounds are not allowed.
26. Memorials, blocks and vases of quarried material shall have the number of the grave space cut into the base of the headstone, in a position approved by the Manager and Registrar. Trade inscriptions other than the supplier's name and district are not permitted.
27. Memorials, blocks any vases and bases associated with them must be of best natural quarried material and all dowels shall be of galvanised iron. Memorials may not be of metal, concrete or synthetic material. Memorials must be fixed in the Cemetery in accordance with the current Code of Practice from NAMM (National Association of Memorial Masons). Only approved wooden memorials will be allowed into the Cemetery.
28. Headstones shall not exceed 3 feet in height above ground level, 2 feet 6 inches in width and 5 inches in thickness.
29. Stone bases for the erection of headstones shall not exceed 2 feet 6 inches in length, 1 foot 6 inches in width and 5 inches in thickness.
30. All memorials without bases are to be fixed into a hardstone or precast foundation slab not less than 3 feet by 1 foot 6 inches in size and not less than 3 inches below ground level. All memorials with bases to be fixed on a Hardstone or precast foundation slab of the same dimensions. Only a ground anchor-fixing system is to be used.
31. Plants /flowers /shrubs/bulbs may be planted in a border 3 foot in width and 2 feet in depth which may be provided on the graveside of and adjoining the place in which any such headstone would normally be erected. TREES, of any description, ARE NOT ALLOWED. Any planting that is not maintained will be removed by the Cemetery staff and replaced with turf.
32. Vases must not be larger than 12 inches by 10 inches. A memorial tablet must not exceed 18 inches by 12 inches by 4 inches.
33. Memorials will be admitted into the Cemetery during normal working hours providing arrangements have been made for the payment of the prescribed fees. Twenty-four hours prior notice must be given to the Manager and Registrar before fixing any memorial.
34. Ornaments of any description including solar lights must be placed within the planting boundary 3ft x 2ft and are left entirely at the grave owner's risk.
35. Any planting exceeding 3ft x 2ft will be removed by the Council.
36. Kerb sets/Cover slabs and chippings are permitted. No chippings shall be placed on the grave without being enclosed within a kerb set. These must be installed by one of the Council's Registered Monumental Masons and must be of natural quarried material. No

homemade kerb sets, plastic/wooden fencing or metal memorials will be allowed. Any of these items placed on the graves will be removed by the Council.

37. Hewing or dressing of memorials will not be permitted within the Cemetery and all materials shall be conveyed in such a manner as will avoid annoyance to persons or damage to the grounds and walks. Monumental Masons must remove all surplus earth, refuse and materials after the fixing a memorial to a place directed by the Manager and Registrar to, leave everything in a clean and tidy condition.
38. All memorials shall be kept in repair by the owner and if not, may be repaired or removed by the Council at its discretion and, where possible, at the expense of the owner.
39. The Council will exercise proper care during maintenance operations, but will not accept responsibility for any damage that these operations may cause except in the case of their negligence.
40. The permission of the Manager and Registrar must be obtained before photographing or videoing a funeral procession or graveside proceedings in the Cemetery. No photography/videoing for commercial purposes may be carried out in the Cemetery.

PLEASE NOTE

On occasions a family grave may be covered by a board in order that soil from a newly excavated grave can be collected. This will be removed as soon as is practicable after the burial has taken place. Any flowers on the grave will be carefully placed to one side and replaced after the service.

41. Vehicles shall only use the main drives of the Crematorium grounds, must not exceed 10 mph and must park where indicated by the Manager and Registrar who shall have power to exclude from the Crematorium grounds any vehicle which they consider unsuitable.
42. All Visitors must keep to the drives and paths provided except when visiting a grave and must not touch or remove any shrubs, plants and flowers.
43. Any child who in the opinion of the Manager and Registrar is under the age of 12 years will not be admitted into a Cemetery unless under proper control and accompanied by an adult.
44. All members of the public with dogs entering the cemetery must keep their dog on a lead at all times, and be responsible for clearing up any excrement.
45. All visitors must conduct themselves in a quiet and orderly manner within the Cemetery grounds.
46. Members of the public are not allowed to canvass or solicit orders in the Cemetery.
47. Employees of the Council are not allowed to receive a gratuity.
48. Musical instruments or sound reproducing equipment shall not be used in the Cemetery without the permission of the Manager and Registrar.

49. A Register of Burials shall be kept at the Manager and Registrar's office where searches may be made and certified extracts obtained on payment of the prescribed fees.
50. Any rules and regulations previously in force in respect of the Cemetery are hereby superseded at the date these Rules and Regulations came into force.
51. The Council may from time to time make alterations to these Rules and Regulations and from time to time they may be superseded by new rules and regulations to reflect practices at the time and changes in the law. Any Right or Interment in a grave will be subject to these Rules and Regulations and any others that may replace them.

Regulations for Muslim Burials

52. Interments will take place in the area set aside for members of the Muslim Community at Coney Hill Cemetery.
53. A minimum of 24 hours notice must be given to the Manager and Registrar when making arrangements for an interment. Special arrangements may be made for Saturday and Sunday burials.
54. All enquiries and arrangements for interments, etc., to be made to the Manager and Registrar, Cemeteries Office, Coney Hill Cemetery, Gloucester, during the times of public business.
55. All Graves will be dug to hold one interment and grave spaces shall be of an area of 2.743 metres (9 feet) by 1.219 metres (4 feet).
56. Representatives of the deceased may, at their own risk, backfill the grave after an interment upon completion of a form of indemnity.

Schedule 1

CEMETERY OPENING TIMES

1. The Coney Hill and Tredworth Road Cemeteries will be open to visitors:

Weekdays 8.00am to 6.00pm (*or sunset, whichever is the earlier*)
Sundays 9.00am to 6.00pm (*or sunset, whichever is the earlier*)
Good Friday and Easter Monday
Christmas Day 9.00am to 6.00pm (*or sunset, whichever is the earlier*)

The Old Cemetery will be open to visitors:

Weekdays 8.00am to 6.00pm (*or sunset, whichever is the earlier*)
Sundays 9.00am to 6.00pm (*or sunset, whichever is the earlier*)
Good Friday and Easter Monday
Christmas Day 9.00am to 6.00pm (*or sunset, whichever is the earlier*)

2. The Manager and Registrar's office at Coney Hill Cemetery will normally be open for public business from 9.00am to 4.30pm Monday to Friday, except on the public holidays listed below.

Saturdays and Sundays of each week)
New Year's Day)
Good Friday and Easter Monday)
May Day
Spring Bank
August Bank) CLOSED
Christmas Day)
Boxing Day)

24 hour radar and pedestrian access. Vehicular access 8.00am to 6.00pm (or sunset, whichever is the earlier) and any other times that may be determined from time to time by the Council.

Schedule 2

AMENDED EXTRACTS FROM THE LOCAL AUTHORITIES' CEMETERIES ORDER 1977

For the purpose of these Rules and Regulations the following extracts from the Local Authorities' Cemeteries Order 1977 are reproduced, excepting references to Article 19 and the definitions of "Burial Authority" and "Cemetery", which are specific to Gloucester.

- "Burial"** includes:
- the interment of cremated human remains;
 - the interment of the bodies of stillborn children or of the cremated remains thereof; and
 - burial in a vault.
- "burial authority"** means the Gloucester City Council
- "cemetery"** means any one of the cemeteries which belong to or have been provided by the said Council, and known respectively as the Old Cemetery and Coney Hill Cemetery and any additional cemeteries provided since the Council resolved to adopt these Rules and Regulations
- "tombstone"** includes kerbs
- "walled grave"** means a grave the sides of which are lined with walls

Article 3 – General powers of Management

Subject to the provisions of this order, a Burial Authority may do all such things as they consider necessary, and from time to time improve it, and shall keep the Cemetery in good order and repair, together with all buildings, walls and fences thereon and other buildings provided for use therewith.

Article 4 – Layout, repair and access

A Burial Authority may enclose, lay out and embellish a Cemetery in such manner as they think fit, and from time to time improve it, and shall keep the Cemetery in good order and repair, together with all buildings, walls and fences thereon and other buildings provided for use therewith.

Article 5 – Consecration, and setting apart for particular denominations

A Burial Authority may at the request of a particular denomination or religious body prohibit the interring or scattering of cremated human remains in or over a part of the Cemetery set apart for their use.

(Any person who contravenes this Article shall, by virtue of Article 19 of this Order, be liable on summary conviction to a fine.)

Article 10 – Grant of burial rights

No body shall be buried, or cremated human remains interred or scattered, in or over any grave, walled grave or vault in which an exclusive right of burial for the time being subsists except by or with the consent in writing of the owner of the right.

(Any person who contravenes this Article shall, by virtue of Article 19 of this Order be liable on summary conviction to a fine.)

Article 14 – Cost of removal of unauthorised memorials

If a Burial Authority removes from a Cemetery any tombstone or other memorial placed therein otherwise than in the exercise of a right granted by, or otherwise with the approval of, the Burial Authority or any predecessor of theirs, the Burial Authority may recover the cost thereby incurred by them:

from the person to whose order the tombstone or memorial was placed;
within two years from the placing of the tombstone or memorial, from the personal representative of such person

as a simple contract debt in any court of competent jurisdiction.

Article 18 – Offences in Cemeteries

No person shall:

wilfully create any disturbance in a Cemetery;
commit any nuisance in a Cemetery;
wilfully interfere with any burial taking place in a Cemetery;
wilfully interfere with any grave, or vault, any tombstone or other memorial, or any flowers or plants on any such matter; or
play at any game or sport in a Cemetery.

(Any person who contravenes this Article shall, by virtue of Article 19 of this Order, be liable on summary conviction to a fine.)

No person, not being an officer or servant of the Burial Authority or another person so authorised by or on behalf of the Burial Authority shall enter or remain in a Cemetery at any hour when it is closed to the public.

Schedule 2, Part 1 – Exercise of Rights

1. No Burial shall take place, no cremated human remains shall be scattered and no Tombstone or other memorial shall be placed in a Cemetery, and no additional inscription shall be made on a Tombstone or other memorial, without the permission of the officer appointed for that purpose by the Burial Authority.
2. No body shall be buried in a grave in such a manner that any part of the coffin is less than 0.9144 metres (three feet) below the level of any ground adjoining the grave: provided that the Burial Authority may, where they consider the soil to be of suitable character, permit a coffin made of perishable materials to be placed not less than 0.6096 metres (two feet) below the level of any ground adjoining the grave.
3. No body shall be buried in a grave unless the coffin is effectively separated from any coffin interred in the grave on a previous occasion by means of a layer of earth not less than 152.4 millimetres (six inches) thick.

4. When any grave is re-opened for the purpose of making another burial therein, no person shall disturb any human remains interred therein or remove therefrom any soil which is offensive.
5. Every Walled Grave or vault shall be properly constructed of suitable materials.
6. Within 24 hours of any burial in a Walled Grave or vault, the coffin shall be:

embedded in concrete, and covered with a layer of concrete not less than 152.4 millimetres (six inches) thick; or
enclosed in a separate cell or compartment of brick slate, stone flagging or precast concrete slabs of a 1:2:4 mix, in any case not less than 50.8 millimetres (two inches) thick, in such a manner as to prevent, as far as may be practicable, the escape of any noxious gas from the interior of the cell or compartment.
7. Any person to whose order a body is buried in a grave in respect of which an exclusive right of burial has been granted shall, as soon as conveniently may be after the subsidence of the earth has been completed, cause the surface of the grave to be covered with any Tombstone or other memorial in respect of which a right has been granted by the Burial Authority or any predecessor of theirs, or with fresh turf, or, where the Burial Authority permits, with such, flowering or other plants, or in such other manner, as may be permitted. (Any person who contravenes this Article shall, by virtue of Article 19 of this Order, be liable on summary conviction to a fine.)

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RULES AND REGULATIONS

**In respect of the
CREMATORIUM IN GLOUCESTER
1st August 2014**



GLOUCESTER CITY COUNCIL

Rules and Regulations for the Crematorium in Gloucester

General

The Rules and Regulations are made by the Council for the proper management of its Crematorium in Gloucester but shall not affect the Council's rights and duties under the general law relating to Crematoria.

The Council reserves the right to amend the Rules and Regulations in the light of changing circumstances or changes in the law.

Introduction

The Cemeteries and Crematorium Service operates from Coney Hill Cemetery and provides a service for cremation and burial as well as the management and maintenance of the Old and Coney Hill Cemeteries. The service is also responsible for the safe keeping and updating of Burial and Cremation registers and plans. The Old Cemetery located in Tredworth Road dates back to 1857. The chapel in the grounds is a listed building.

The Coney Hill Cemetery dates from 1939 and has been extended with the creation of the Millennium Section in 2001, with separate sections for the Muslim and Chinese communities, Roman Catholics and members of the Church of England as well as a children's plot and General (Non-denominational) ground. We have also created a Woodland Burial site for 'green burials'.

Gloucester City Council welcomes all visitors to our Cemeteries and Crematorium, and asks that visitors respect the peace, dignity and reverence of these facilities. We thank you in advance for your consideration.

Although Rules and regulations are a requirement for the management of our Cemeteries and Gardens, every effort has been made to avoid restricting the rights and choices of the individual, therefore these Regulations are a balance between individual rights/information and the need to regulate for safe and tidy grounds.

CITY OF GLOUCESTER

RULES AND REGULATIONS

IN RESPECT OF THE

CREMATORIUM IN GLOUCESTER

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CITY OF GLOUCESTER CREMATORIUM

Rules and Regulations

In these Rules and Regulations unless the context otherwise requires, the words:

“The Council”	means the Gloucester City Council
“Crematorium”	means the Chapel and other buildings at Coney Hill, Gloucester
“Crematorium grounds”	means the Garden of Remembrance, and other grounds of the Crematorium.
“Interment”	means the act or ceremony of burial
“The Manager and Registrar”	means the Manager and Registrar at the Crematorium or their authorised representative.

1. All cremations and arrangements shall be conducted strictly in accordance with the current Statutory Requirements for Cremation and the Code of Cremation Practice of the Federation of British Cremation Authorities.
2. Arrangements for cremations shall be made with the Manager and Registrar at least 48 hours before the proposed time of cremation.
3. Details of the arrangements for cremation must be confirmed on a printed form which can be obtained from the Manager and Registrar.
4. All fees and charges for cremations must be paid prior to the funeral
5. The statutory forms for each cremation shall be lodged with the Medical Referee at the Cremation Office not later than 12 noon on the last working day before the day of the proposed cremation.
6. Any Funeral corteges entering the Crematorium and Crematorium grounds shall be directed to the chapel by a member of the Cemeteries and Crematorium team.
7. Funeral Directors shall at all times observe these Rules and Regulations and they are responsible for the provision of sufficient bearers to convey the coffin reverently from the hearse to the catafalque.
8. The duration of a service or ceremony in the Chapel shall not exceed 20 minutes unless a longer period has been previously agreed with the Manager and Registrar.
9. The Manager and Registrar must be notified in advance if a congregation is expected to be in excess of 100 persons.
10. If a funeral is late the service shall take place as soon as possible thereafter at the direction of the Manager and Registrar.
11. If a cremation service is to be conducted by a Minister other than the one on the rota for the day, the relatives may make their own arrangements and the name and address of the Minister engaged to perform the service should be given to the Manager and Registrar.

12. The body of a deceased person will not be accepted for cremation unless it is enclosed in a coffin or container that has been approved in advance by the Manager and Registrar. The coffin or container must bear a name plate establishing the identity of the body contained therein.
13. The maximum size allowed for a coffin or container is:
 - Length: 86 inches (206cm)
 - Width: 33 inches (71cm)
 - Depth: 25 inches (56cm)
14. Any member of the public shall not be allowed to enter the committal room without the permission of the Manager and Registrar. In cases where the representatives of the deceased wish to see the coffin or container placed in the cremator, the Manager and Registrar will normally permit two representatives to enter for this purpose provided sufficient notice has been given.
15. The coffin or container must be made of easily combustible wood or other material approved by the Manager and Registrar. Resinous or badly seasoned wood must not be used. The coffin or container must not be painted or varnished. No metal furniture or fittings should be used on the coffin or container, or in its manufacture except as necessary for safe construction and then only metal of a high ferrous content should be used. Hardwood plugs should be used wherever possible. There must be no cross pieces on the bottom of the coffin or container. Sawdust, charcoal and cotton wool must on no account be used. Suitable sealing material may be used, but no rubber, pitch or similar substance will be permitted.
16. If the materials of the coffin or container are in any way unsuitable the Manager and Registrar is authorised to refuse to allow the cremation to go ahead. In no case will the Council permit a coffin to be opened for any purpose after it has been placed in charge of the Manager and Registrar i.e. upon entering the Crematorium grounds.
17. After the cremation the cremated remains shall be given into the charge of the person who applied for cremation or their representative if they so desire. A suitable and secure container shall be used for all cremated remains leaving the Crematorium and a receipt will be required. Alternatively, the cremated remains may be dispersed in the Gardens of Remembrance by the Manager and Registrar.
18. The cremated remains may be retained at the Crematorium but after a period of two weeks a prescribed fee per week will be charged for the deposit of cremated remains pending ultimate disposal. If this fee is not paid the Council reserve the right of disposing of the cremated remains after a further period of six weeks.
19. All flowers brought to the Crematorium or Crematorium grounds shall be placed where directed by the Manager and Registrar and shall not be removed without their permission.
20. All floral tributes placed in the Gardens of Remembrance will be removed seven days after the cremation if not previously claimed by relatives. Relatives removing floral tributes should advise the Crematorium office before doing so.
21. The Council accepts no liability for any loss or damage to floral tributes or other memorials.

- 22 Cellophane or similar wrappings should be avoided.
- 23 Privately owned flower vases, containers or memorials are not permitted in the Room of Remembrance.
- 24 The permission of the Manager and Registrar is required before photographing or videoing in the Crematorium or Crematorium grounds.
- 25 At times when the Crematorium is not in use for cremations or funeral services, the public may be admitted at the discretion of the Manager and Registrar.
- 26 Vehicles shall only use the main drives of the Crematorium grounds, must not exceed 10 mph and must park where indicated by the Manager and Registrar who shall have power to exclude from the Crematorium grounds any vehicle which they consider unsuitable.
- 27 Any child who in the opinion of the Manager and Registrar is under the age of 12 years will not be admitted into the Crematorium or Crematorium grounds unless under proper control and accompanied by an adult.
- 28 All members of the public with dogs entering the Cemeteries must keep their dog on a lead at all times and be responsible for clearing up any excrement.
- 29 Members of the public are not allowed to solicit orders in the Crematorium or Crematorium grounds.
- 30 Musical instruments or sound reproducing equipment shall not be used in the Crematorium or Crematorium grounds without the permission of the Manager and Registrar.
- 31 Employees of the Council are not allowed to receive any gratuity.
- 32 All visitors must conduct themselves in a quiet orderly manner.
- 33 Cremations shall normally take place between the hours of 9.30a.m. and 3.30p.m., or at such other times as may be approved by the Manager and Registrar from time to time.
- 34 Cremations are not allowed to take place on any Saturday, Sunday, Good Friday, Christmas Day, and any other day set apart as a Bank Holiday or special Public Holiday

Schedule 1

CREMATORIUM OPENING & OPERATING TIMES

1. The Manager and Registrar's office at Coney Hill Crematorium will normally be open for public business from 9.00am to 4.30pm Monday to Friday, except on the public holidays listed below.

Saturdays and Sundays of each week)
New Year's Day)
Good Friday and Easter Monday)
May Day
Spring Bank
August Bank) CLOSED
Christmas Day)
Boxing Day)

24 hour radar and pedestrian access. Vehicular access 8.00am to 6.00pm (or sunset, whichever is the earlier) and any other times that may be determined from time to time by the Council.

2. Cremations shall normally take place between the hours of 9.30a.m. and 3.30p.m., or at such other times as may be approved by the Manager and Registrar from time to time.
3. Cremations are not allowed to take place on any Saturday, Sunday, Good Friday, Christmas Day, and any other day set apart as a Bank Holiday or special Public Holidays.

Gloucester City Council

Meeting:	Overview and Scrutiny Cabinet	Date:	21 July 2014 30 July 2014
Subject:	2013-14 Financial Outturn Report		
Report Of:	Cabinet Member for Performance and Resources		
Wards Affected:	All		
Key Decision:	No	Budget/Policy Framework:	No
Contact Officer:	Andrew Cummings – Management Accountant		
	Andrew.cummings@gloucester.gov.uk	Tel:	396231
Appendices:	Appendix 1 – Capital Monitoring		

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 This report is to inform members of the final Council position against agreed budgets for the 2013/14 financial year. It also highlights some key performance indicators.
- 1.2 It is best practice for members to approve any transfers of Council funds into earmarked reserves.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 **Overview and Scrutiny Committee** is asked, subject to any recommendations it wishes to make to Cabinet, to note the contents of the report.
- 2.2 **Cabinet** is asked to **RESOLVE** that:
 - (1) The year end position for 13/14 is an overspend against budgets of £297k be noted.
 - (2) The balance on the General Fund therefore reduces to £1.869m be noted.
 - (3) The implementation of the majority of the savings in 2013/14 following previous financial year's savings targets is an excellent achievement. This forms part of the £7.5m of savings that the Council has achieved in the last four years.

2.2 Cabinet is asked to **RESOLVE**:

- (1) A transfer into an earmarked reserve of £17,000 representing the unspent portion of the £19,000 added by Cabinet to the City Centre Historic Area Grant Fund in June 2013.

3. Background

- 3.1 This report is intended to give Members a clear and concise view of the 2013/14 outturn of the Council and accompany this with explanations for any variances. The financial position for each directorate is presented in a summary table showing the budget for the year as well as final position against budget for the end of the 2013/14 financial year.

- 3.2 Service expenditure includes only those items which impact on the Council's bottom line position and not charges which are removed as part of statutory accounting adjustments at the end of the financial year. It therefore contains a true view of the Council's position against the general fund for revenue expenditure.
- 3.3 The Council recognised in the 2013/14 budget setting cycle that significant savings would need to be made during the financial year. A savings target of £1.943m was agreed of which the majority was achieved in year. This forms part of the £7.5m of savings that the Council has achieved in the last four years.
- 3.4 Whilst there has been some slippage in implementation of the savings during 2013/14, compensated by additional savings elsewhere, the full-year impact of the changes will be fully achieved 2014/15.

4. Council Summary

	2013/14 Budget £000	Year End Outturn £000	Outturn Variance £000
Chief Exec and Regen	2,051	1,638	(413)
Services	8,125	8,481	356
Resources	(10,176)	(9,822)	354
GCC	0	297	297

- 4.1 The year end outturn for the Council is a deficit of £297k, 1.8% of the net revenue budget for the year of £16.659m. This position will result in a reduction of the Council's General Fund balance from £2.116m to £1.869m. This is still above the £1.6m appropriate level to be retained each year.

5. Chief Executive and Regeneration

	2013/14 Budget £000	Year End Outturn £000	Outturn Variance £000
Chief Exec, Regeneration and Economic Development	720	716	(4)
Development Services	683	696	13
Parking Services	(684)	(1,162)	(478)
Legal and Democratic Services	1,122	1,085	(37)
Marketing Gloucester	210	303	93
Total	2,051	1,638	(413)

- 5.1 Off Street Parking has overachieved against budget for the year. Income levels exceeded target but there were also significant savings in both premises costs and payments to the third party contractor. In total the costs in this area were approximately £300k less than budgeted.
- 5.2 The service area of Chief Executive, Regeneration and Economic Development was broadly in line with budget. There were a number of variances within this wider area and this included the costs arising from the departure of the Chief Executive as part of the Senior Management restructuring process. The savings from that process are expected to generate in excess of £100k per annum in future years.
- 5.3 Legal and Democratic Services cost £37k less than budgeted during the year. This is largely a result of additional income earned through carrying out work for which a fee is charged.
- 5.4 The Council works closely with Marketing Gloucester to promote the city and put on events.
- 5.5 The Directorate of Chief Executive and Regeneration spent under its budget by £413k. The majority of which comes from the Parking Services budget area.

6. Services and Neighbourhoods

	2013/14 Budget £000	Year End Outturn £000	Outturn Variance £000
Director (includes Rugby World Cup)	276	137	(139)
Public Protection	(396)	(581)	(185)
Neighbourhood Services	5,744	6,127	383
Housing Services	967	889	(78)
Commercial Services	878	1,144	266
Contact Centre and Customer Services	656	765	109
Total	8,125	8,481	356

- 6.1 The Amey contract for Neighbourhood Services achieved its budgeted savings of £450k. The saving was achieved part way through the year meaning that the full year impact of the savings was not realised in 2013/14. There is therefore overspend against budgets for this contract of £200k in 2013/14. The full saving of £450k will be realised in 2014/15.

- 6.2 Agreement has been reached with Amey about amounts to be paid to the Council as a result of incorrect invoicing in prior years. This has been agreed at £388k owing to the Council as well as an ongoing £100k annual budget saving.
- 6.3 The income target for Bulky Waste collections was not met this year with a shortfall of approximately £95k against a target of £140k. The level of target was revised in the 2014/15 budget and the target should now be achievable.
- 6.4 The same situation was recorded with regard to Green Garden Waste income. This was £50k below budgeted levels.
- 6.5 As anticipated, the events programme at the Guildhall, within Commercial Services, did not achieve the budgeted level of surplus. The original budget for 2013/14 budgeted the Guildhall to achieve a surplus of £288k for events and room and lettings. The final position was a surplus of £51k. Although still a net contributor to the Council budget Guildhall events were therefore short of their required surplus by £237k. This area is currently undergoing a service review which will look for ways to improve that position in future years.
- 6.6 The Contact Centre has expanded in the year as a result of a review of the service and this has resulted in a small overspend on employee costs of £56k.
- 6.7 A budget of £175k (half of the overall budget) was allocated to the Rugby World Cup in 2013/14. The majority of this was unspent and will be available to be spent in 2014/15 and 2015/16.
- 6.8 There a number of variances within the directorate with the net position being an overspend of £356k. The directorate had significant savings targets within 13/14 so this represents a strong position.

7. Resources

	2013/14 Budget £000	Year End Outturn £000	Outturn Variance £000
Audit	161	137	(24)
Business Improvement	1,846	1,784	(62)
BT & T	1,111	1,197	86
Director	107	98	(9)
HR and OD	299	277	(22)
Finance and Corporate Expenditure	(13,700)	(13,315)	385
Resources	(10,176)	(9,822)	354

- 7.0 Two significant cost and funding streams are clarified at the end of the financial year. Revenues & Benefits financial performance (Housing Benefits) does not become clear until towards the end of the year, and where a 1% swing on performance causes a disproportionate impact on the Council's bottom line e.g. 1% is approximately £400k. The costs of providing Housing Benefits, recorded against the Finance function, was higher than anticipated during the year. This service is largely, but not entirely, funded

by Central Government through subsidy. Also, in 2013/14 the Council was, for the first time, able to retain some of its business rates income business rates received This was a result of the Business Rates Retention Scheme which replaces Central Government Support through the Revenue Support Grant with limited powers to retain rates. The combined net effect of these two funding changes was a positive variance, representing additional income for the Council, of approximately £90k.

- 7.1 Another area of corporate overspend pressure is the reduction in investment interest earned by the council given the current low interest rates paid by the market on investments. The current Treasury management strategy seeks to mitigate this pressure by redeeming investments when they have matured and repaying external borrowing. This will create a saving for the Council as the repaid borrowing would have incurred higher interest costs than the income the Council would have received had the matured sums been reinvested.
- 7.2 The Council has received permission from the Department for Communities and Local Government to charge some restructuring costs to capital funding sources. This relieves the pressure on budgets by £55k in the area of corporate expenditure.
- 7.3 As part of year-end accounting process the Council has reviewed the level of provision it makes for debtors who may not pay cash owed to the Council. As part of this review it was necessary to increase the level of provision by £150k in order to meet the standards required by accounting regulations. This is a budgetary pressure in 2013/14 but puts the Council on a more secure financial footing for future years.
- 7.5 Financial Services has incurred additional costs of the interim staff who have been helping to deliver the Financial Services Improvement Plan during the restructuring of the department. There were as a result some savings due to vacancies in permanent staff positions. The department has now undergone a restructuring exercise and this overspend will not recur in 2014/15.
- 7.6 Within Business Transformation and Technology the cost of software and hardware supplies exceeded budgets by £132k. Savings were found elsewhere to partially compensate and the net position is an overspend of £86k.
- 7.7 The directorate has overspent against budgets by £354k for the year.

8. Capital Programme

- 8.1 The Capital Programme budget for the year, including Housing Expenditure, was £12.274m with subsequent approvals of £3.5m leading to a revised budget of 15.82m. Expenditure for the financial year was £10.332m. The areas of major capital expenditure are £6m on Housing (both General Fund and HRA), £633k Kings Quarter project, £690k Disabled Facilities Grants, and other projects including HKP reception upgrade, flood works, and projects in line with S106 agreements.
- 8.2 Capital projects that do not spend their allocated budgets during 2013/14 are likely to continue into 2014/15. The long term nature of capital projects mean that spending often spans different financial years.
- 8.3 Full details of the capital expenditure to the end of March can be found in **Appendix 1**.

9. Collection of Council Tax and Business Rates

9.1 The percentage of current year debt collected to the end of March 2014 is shown below together with the comparable figures for March 2013.

	Percentage collected up to 31 st March	
	2013	2014
Council Tax	97.3	96.9
Business Rates	98.0	97.9

9.2 Collection of Council Tax and Business Rates has remained in line with the previous year. This is no small achievement given the current economic climate and credit goes to the Civic Revenues & Benefits team for their hard work in the debt collection area.

9.3 The write-offs of Council Tax and Business Rates compiled during 2013/14 are for 3982 cases and amount to £268k for Council Tax and £36k for Business Rates, £304k in total.

9.4 A detailed schedule of all write-off accounts is held by the Revenues and Benefits Services. It should be noted that debts that are written off will be reinstated should further information come to light which increases their chances of collection. Write-offs relate to all preceptors (County, and Police), not just Gloucester City.

10. Supplier Payments

10.1 The Council is committed to paying invoices within terms. At the end of Quarter 4, the actual achievement was 95% within 30 days, up from 92% in 2012/13. The details on our prompt payment (30 days performance) are:

Quarter	%	Cum %
1 st Quarter	94	94
2 nd Quarter	94	94
3 rd Quarter	95	94
4 th Quarter	95	95

10.2 Total invoices paid in year were 12,541 (13,324 in 2012/13), 11,857 were paid within 30 days (12,272 in 2012/13).

11. Financial Implications

11.1 Contained in the report

(Financial Services have been consulted in the preparation this report.)

12. Legal Implications

12.1 There are no legal implications from this report

(Legal Services have been consulted in the preparation this report.)

13.0 Risk & Opportunity Management Implications

13.1 There are no specific risks or opportunities as a result of this report

14. People Impact Assessment (PIA):

14.1 A PIA screening assessment has been undertaken and the impact is neutral. A full PIA is not required.

15. Other Corporate Implications

Community Safety

15.1 None

Sustainability

15.2 None

Staffing & Trade Union

15.3 None

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Scheme	Budget 2013/14	Actual Spend to date
Regeneration		
Housing Market Partnership Grant	210,150	0
Commuted Funds- Social Housing	300,000	300,000
Museum Phase 2 Hlf	950,000	22,821
Car Parks	200,000	4,657
Tic Relocation	130,000	3,748
Christmas Lights	75,000	0
Business Grants	100,000	56,900
Targeted Historic Grants	200,000	12,538
Lighting	140,000	322
Recladding unsightly buildings	150,000	0
Heritage Trails	10,000	6,312
Interpretation & Signage	40,000	0
Banner Holders	10,000	0
Gates Streets	100,000	0
Toilets	100,000	0
St Michaels Tower	100,000	1,970
Kings Square	20,000	0
Westgate Mosaics	30,000	0
Contingency	60,000	0
Shop Gloucester	30,000	30,000
Cathedral Precinct Lighting	12,680	0
Eastgate Viewing Chamber	18,750	9,023
Townscape	1,197,490	5,300
Horsbere Brook Planting	100,000	0
Armscroft Garden Flood Alleviation	155,000	107,140
Enhanced Lighting Scheme	26,400	2,809
Alney Island Works	160,000	12,541
Kings Square Car Park Works	0	9,533
Electrical Investigatory Works	175,000	56,703
75/81 Eastgate	350,000	202,744
Kings Square	100,000	633,268
City Museum Works	30,000	1,470
Guildhall Works	87,800	62,113
Coneyhill Emergency Works	0	-1,588
Repairs Eastgate Rooftop Carpark	150,000	49,131
G11 Emergency Repairs	120,000	33,899
Kings Square Emergency Paving	12,000	4,077
Hkp Accommodation Review	207,000	162,608
Docks Office Works	0	889
Renovation Robinswood	162,000	90,772
Swrda Asset Transfer	181,500	307,881
Herbert Reception	230,000	164,142
Enhancements to Council Buildings	445,800	176,307
Hca Grant Money	137,770	55,287
Blackfriars Priory	37,850	20,363
3Rd Floor North Warehouse	0	-14,313
Robinswood Sita	9,680	9,256
Glos Airport - Asset Review	25,200	28,296
Cpo 134 Reservoir Road	80,000	465
Regeneration Total	7,167,070	2,629,382

Scheme	Budget 2013/14	Actual Spend to date
Services And Neighbourhoods		
Depot	57,530	14,751
Refurbish Play Areas	60,000	58,721
Flood Works	197,130	143,514
Plock Court Surface Water	2,810	975
Saddlers Road	0	-947
Flood Defence Grants	9,870	0
Crem Works	38,645	39,784
Memorial Garden	6,360	6,107
Paygrove Lane	13,420	13,407
Glevum Way Play Area	2,640	0
S106 Schemes	458,270	74,569
Oxstall Tennis Court Refurb	0	3,884
Perennial Planting Enterprise	9,180	8,753
Blackbridge Athletics Track	0	2,944
Oxstalls All Weather Pitch	0	9,092
Oxstalls Soft Play Area	0	4,003
Hillfield Sensory Garden	41,370	15,298
Westgate Car Park Planting	7,020	7,023
Active Space At Abbeydale	28,020	27,968
Tree Planting Forestry Commission	8,610	7,639
GL1 Pool Air Handling System	100,000	7,680
Digitalisation of Guildhall Cinema	37,000	32,696
Flats Bins	9,660	0
City Centre Cctv	365,000	0
Purchase of Street Washer	9,970	9,970
Retaining Wall Alney Terrace	47,000	0
Refund for previous works at Hempsted Meadows	0	-5,750
All Mains Buildings Voltage Optimisation	74,000	19,012
Services And Neighbourhoods Total	1,583,505	501,095
Resources		
IT Projects	283,680	417,700
Planning Policy Consultations	8,500	0
Resources Total	292,180	417,700
Total General Fund Excluding Housing	9,042,755	3,548,177
Housing General Fund		
DFG	684,000	689,903
Decent Homes Grants	5,760	9,452
Decent Homes Loans	60,000	4,708
Safe At Home Grants	60,000	19,736
Warm And Well	30,000	10,561
Total Housing General Fund	839,760	734,360
Total General Fund	9,882,515	4,282,537
Housing HRA	5,940,000	5,882,600
	0	166,892
Total Capital Programme	15,822,515	10,332,030

Gloucester City Council

Meeting:	Cabinet Audit & Governance Committee Council	Date:	30 July 2014 8 September 2014 25 September 2014
Subject:	Complaints Policy		
Report Of:	Cabinet Member for Communities & Neighbourhoods		
Wards Affected:	All Wards		
Key Decision:	No	Budget/Policy Framework:	No
Contact Officer:	Wendy Jones, Contact Centre & Customer Services Manager		
	Email: wendy.jones@gloucester.gov.uk	Tel:	396101
Appendices:	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. One Stop Shop Complaints Policy 2. How to handle Complaints/Feedback (internal) 3. Complaints Process document 4. Complaint/Feedback Form 		

FOR GENERAL RELEASE

1.0 Purpose of Report

1.1 To review and approve the Corporate Complaints Policy.

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 **Cabinet** is asked to **RESOLVE** that the report be noted.

2.2 **Audit & Governance Committee** is asked to **RECOMMEND TO COUNCIL** that the Complaints Policy at Appendix 1 be approved, subject to any amendments it wishes to put forward.

2.3 **Council** is asked to **RESOLVE** that, subject to any amendments, the Complaints Policy at Appendix 1, be approved.

3.0 Background and Key Issues

3.1 The Complaints Process was rewritten and approved by Cabinet in November 2010.

3.2 A new complaints form and a process document were produced and made available to customers in our receptions. A copy of the process is available for download from the web site along with an on-line complaints form.

3.3 The complaints process document and complaints form were redesigned in 2013 to bring a fresh look and feel to the documents.

3.4 The implementation of our Policy Management system “NetConsent” and the introduction of a pro forma to deliver the policy to members and staff identified that the Council had not formally adopted a corporate complaints policy although a process for dealing with complaints had been approved and was being followed.

3.5 Following consultation with a number of Service Managers, a Complaints Policy has been written and approved by SMT.

4.0 Alternative Options Considered

4.1 There were no alternatives considered for this report.

5.0 Reasons for Recommendations

5.1 A Corporate Complaints policy contributes to and forms part of the Council’s governance framework. An effective complaints policy can help improve service delivery and the Council’s reputation.

6.0 Future Work and Conclusions

6.1 Once approved the Complaints Policy and associated documents will be placed on the Council’s NetConsent system so that it can be disseminated to all staff.

6.2 Separate drop in training courses and attendance at team meetings will be arranged to explain the policy and associated documents and to answer any questions.

6.3 The policy will be reviewed every 3 years.

7.0 Financial Implications

7.1 There are no financial implications within this report.

(Financial Services have been consulted in the preparation this report.)

8.0 Legal Implications

8.1 There are no Legal implications within this report.

(Legal Services have been consulted in the preparation of this report.)

9.0 Risk & Opportunity Management Implications

9.1 If members and staff are not aware of our complaints policy and process this could have an adverse effect on the reputation of the authority.

10.0 People Impact Assessment (PIA):

10.1 The PIA Screening Stage was completed and did not identify any potential or negative impacts, therefore a full PIA was not required.

11.0 Other Corporate Implications

11.1 Community Safety

None identified.

11.2 Sustainability

None identified

11.3 Staffing & Trade Union

None identified

Back Ground Documents - None

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Complaints Policy

Applicable To	All Staff, Customers
Effective Date	May 2014
Current Policy Date	New Policy
Next Review Date	May 2017
Review Cycle	3 Years
Policy Owner Who is responsible? Name & Role	Wendy Jones Contact Centre & Customer Services Manager
Accountable Person Who is accountable? Name & Role	Martin Shields Corporate Director of Services & Neighbourhoods

Policy Introduction:

This policy covers formal Complaints to Gloucester City Council. It sets out the different stages of the complaints process, required timescales and who should be involved in handling the complaint.

The purpose of the policy is to clarify how customers can make a complaint and defines the standards they can expect. The policy seeks to create a positive approach to complaints where they are valued as a means of continuously reviewing and improving the services we offer.

What is a complaint?

A Complaint is *“An expression of dissatisfaction by a customer about the Council’s actions or lack of action and the standard of service received”*

This is where the responsibility for the action or the service provided rests with the Council or person or body acting on behalf of the Council.

The following are not covered by the Corporate Complaints policy as there are other separate points of resolution for them:

- An initial request for a service e.g. reporting non collection of waste, reporting graffiti or other street problems etc or initial reports of faults or defects unless they concern work that the council has carried out. We must have had the chance to provide the service or put something right which we can only do if we have received a request or been informed of a problem.
- A complaint against a Councillor where there is evidence that the Councillor has not followed the Council’s Code of Conduct (Part 5 of the Council Constitution). These complaints should be reported through to the Monitoring Officer for investigation and response.
- Where there is an appeals procedure within the Council or where there is a right of appeal to an independent tribunal. At Gloucester City Council this includes:
 - Benefit or Planning appeals
 - Penalty Charge Notice (PCN) appeals

How can complaints be made?

The Council encourages customers who have concerns to first speak to a member of staff in the relevant service area. If the problem can be solved on the spot then there is no need for the issue to go through the formal complaints process. However, if the complaint cannot be dealt with immediately or the customer wishes to have a formal response, we must make it easy for them to do so. We accept complaints:

- Via our website
- By telephone
- On the Council's complaints form
- By email
- By letter
- In person
- By fax

When can a complaint be made?

The Council will normally only accept complaints made within twelve months of the incident or circumstances that led to the complaint being made.

If a customer wishes to escalate a complaint to the next stage in the process, they should respond within one month of receipt of the Council's response outlining the reasons why they are not satisfied and what outcome they would like to see.

If there are exceptional circumstances provided by the complainant for the delay in submitting the complaint (e.g. illness, changes in personal circumstances etc), the relevant Director has discretion to consider accepting a late complaint providing the circumstances are evidenced.

Anonymous Complaints

We will not accept anonymous complaints.

Response timescales

Each Council service has a duty to deal with complaints. Complaints should be acknowledged verbally or in writing within 1 working day by the person receiving the complaint. The table below sets out agreed timescales and responsibility for each stage of a complaint:

Stage	Timescale	Response agreed by
Stage 1	10 working days	Service Manager (or designated representative)
Stage 2	10 working days	Senior Manager/Director
Local Government Ombudsman	25 calendar days (internal deadline)	Director

We will always try to keep to our published timescales for dealing with complaints but sometimes investigations take longer because the complaint is complex. In these cases it may be necessary to extend the timescales set out in this policy. If this is the case the complainant will be informed of the reasons why timescales cannot be met and also when they should receive a full response. Notification should be sent to the complainant at the first opportunity.

Where a complaint relates to an insurance claim, the insurance team will be notified immediately and the response dealt with through separate process.

Complaints made directly to the local government ombudsman

Complaints should not, in most circumstances, be made direct to the Local Government Ombudsman (LGO). Those complaints made direct to the LGO are known as 'premature complaints' and customers who make them are likely to be asked by the Ombudsman to follow our complaints procedure first. In a few instances the LGO has indicated they will deal directly with cases they deem to be exceptionally serious or urgent. We will be informed of these immediately and such complaints should be dealt with as appropriate to the individual circumstances of the case.

Complaints against contractors or **Partner organisations**

We review complaints against the Council's contractors and any organisation contracted to work for the Council. Complaints about the Council's contractors are handled under the Council's complaints procedure and can be made directly to the Council.

Complaints about funded voluntary and community organisations should be dealt with by the organisations unless the complaint concerns serious fraud, financial or governance malpractice.

Organisations funded by the council will be expected to have a complaints procedure in place that can be monitored by the council.

Customer rights

Customers have the right:

- To be treated with courtesy and respect at all times
- To have a friend or other representative help them with their complaint (a letter of authority may be required)
- To confidentiality (if an investigation cannot proceed without the complainant being identified, the complainant will be given the option whether or not to continue)
- To be kept informed of the progress of their complaint(s)
- To receive an apology if a complaint is upheld
- To be informed of action taken including any changes to Council policy or procedures arising from a complaint

Behaviour of complainants

In a minority of cases, complainants pursue their cases in a way that can impede the investigation of their complaint or have significant resource implications for the Council. We do not expect Council staff to spend time dealing with unreasonable complainants, nor do we expect staff to tolerate threatening or abusive behaviour by complainants and we will take action to protect staff from such behaviour. The Council has a separate policy for dealing with 'unreasonable behaviour'.

Related Policies and Procedures:

- Complaints Process (customer facing)
- Complaints form
- Complaints procedure (staff)
- Unreasonable Behaviour Policy

Revision History		
Version	Made By	Effective Date
1.0	Wendy Jones Customer Services Manager	
1.1		
1.2		

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How to Handle Complaints/Feedback

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Introduction

The purpose of this document is to explain your responsibility for handling complaints and feedback and the internal processes you need to follow.

Gloucester City Council actively encourages all customer feedback about its services, including complaints and wants to hear from customers or their representatives about their experiences whether good or bad. This will help us to shape and improve the services we deliver.

To do this we must:

- listen carefully to people;
- take their views seriously and act on them where we can.

We need to:

- find out when things have gone well and customers are happy;
- improve our services by making the most of bright ideas or comments about our services;
- find out when things go wrong and put them right;
- learn from our mistakes and make sure they don't happen again.

All complaints, compliments and comments need to be recorded on our corporate complaints system so we can monitor how we are doing.

Definition of a Complaint

A Complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction by a customer about:-

- The Council's actions or lack of action
- The standard of service received

This is where the responsibility for the action, or the service provided, rests with the council or a person or body acting on behalf of the Council.

The following will **not** be treated as Complaints in their first instance :-

- Initial Requests for Service e.g. my bin has not been emptied, reporting graffiti, reporting overhanging vegetation.
- Initial report of faults or defects unless they concern work that the council has carried out.

We will not exclude these requests but will deal with them as normal work requests.

A repeat request (i.e. where the original request was not actioned/completed) should be treated as a complaint.

Officer Role

Any member of staff, person or body acting on behalf of the Council receiving a Complaint/Feedback needs to report this:-

- Via the web using our online "Report it" form
- By emailing the details to heretohelp@gloucester.gov.uk
- By telephoning Customer Services on ext 5319 (*This is an internal number only please do not release to customers. Customers should ring 396396*).
- Completing/arranging for customer to complete a comment form and sending through to Customer services.

The customer should be asked how they would like to receive their response e.g. letter, email, telephone or visit.

Note: Customers may ask for a different service or officer with no previous involvement with their case to investigate their complaint. This request will need to be included within the complaint so Customer Services can arrange and send to the correct officer.

Key Roles and Responsibilities

The Head of Paid Service is accountable to the Council for the Complaints system but the Customer Services Manager is responsible for monitoring the complaints process and analysing complaints for reporting purposes. Each Service Manager is responsible for ensuring the complaints process is adhered to in their service.

Customer Services will be responsible for the day-to-day administration of complaints system e.g. sending initial requests, chasing responses, producing monthly reports and monitoring complaint responses.

Each Service Manager is responsible for making sure that timescales for Stage 1 & 2 Complaints are adhered to and a response is given to the customer within the relevant timescale. The Service Manager is also responsible for ensuring that details of the response are posted into the complaints system and all mandatory fields completed. The Service Manager may delegate this process to a member of their team but ultimate responsibility for complaints lies with the Service Managers.

If you receive a complaint about your own service you should be aiming to deal with the complaint within 1 working day. Where this is not possible:-

- We must aim to complete the investigation and respond to the customer within 10 working days using the customers preferred response channel. (This will be monitored by the Customer Service Manager and monthly reports sent to the Corporate Director for Services & Neighbourhoods).
- Where a Complaint deadline is extended beyond the initial response date the customer must be informed and the information recorded on the complaints system as an event.

Where a complaint is received directly by Customer Services they will acknowledge receipt of the complaint and advise the customer which service/officer will be dealing with the complaint.

Where a complaint is received directly by the service they will enter the complaint onto the Corporate Complaint system and acknowledge receipt.

If you need access to the complaints system ask your manager to arrange access via the Civica Service Desk.

Managers are responsible for ensuring that all staff are trained on the Complaints/Feedback process.

Partner Complaints

The Council is responsible for ensuring that partner organisations either have their own complaints policy in place or that they agree to follow the Council's process. We should have clear accountability for complaints handling for each partner and complaints should be monitored to ensure they are resolved correctly.

If a complaint relates to more than one problem and across different organisations the Service Manager will need to ensure either a joint response is issued or ensure that a response is issued by each party.

Organisations funded by the council will be expected to have a complaints procedure in place that can be monitored by the council. There should be a strong commitment from all our partners to learn from complaints with a system in place to disseminate learning.

Confidentiality and Anonymity

Services will treat all customer information as confidential. Names and addresses will not be published or disclosed outside of the Council. We will not accept anonymous complaints.

Equalities

Information about the Complaint's Policy will be available in large print, appropriate languages and audio tape if requested. Help will be provided to any customer requiring assistance in completing the form.

Complaint Handling Procedure

Stage 1

On receipt of a complaint, the Customer Services officer will enter it onto the complaints system, send an acknowledgement to the customer and confirm which service or individual will be dealing with the complaint. They will also notify the service/officer/partner concerned. The service, officer or partner will receive notification of a stage 1 complaint via an email.

Officers can use the email link to provide information back to the system or can access the system directly and process the complaint from there.

If officers, other than Customer Services, receive a complaint, they should email all details of the complaint to heretohelp@gloucester.gov.uk for Customer Services to enter it onto the complaints system.

If a response to the complaint has not been issued to the customer and logged into the complaints system a reminder will be sent to the Service Manager prior to producing the monthly reports to remind them that the complaint is still outstanding.

When closing the matter the officer will need to update the system with the action taken and where a written response has been sent they need to attach a copy of the response. Finished complaints require completion of **4 mandatory fields** which describe how the complaint was resolved.

- 1. Date Answered:** Full date should be entered e.g. 06/08/2013.
- 2. How Resolved:** Whether Justified (e.g. found to be our fault) complaint is valid from our viewpoint. Example – City Council employee or partner employee was rude to the customer, caller complaining about the time they had to queue to talk to us.
Unjustified (e.g. customer found to be at fault) on investigation customer is proved to be incorrect. Example – customer advises officer was rude to them but on listening to the call the officer was not rude.
Misunderstanding (e.g. Customer misunderstood instructions or policy). Once explained customer satisfied.
Example – Customer waited in all day for officer to visit but customer had the wrong day.
No Action (e.g. complaint wrongly assigned to GCC but not us). Example customer reports refuse crew were rude to them but we were not in the area so was not our crew.

For each of the options above “how the complaint was resolved” you will need to select from a drop down list (e.g. whether it was a call made, email sent or the customer was visited etc).

- 3. Action Taken:** you will need to select from a drop down list (e.g. Was coaching/training required, system or process amendment, policy to be reviewed or no action as not Gloucester City Council).

4. Details of Action Taken: A text box to write a brief description of the action taken.

Where a service needs to extend the deadline for a response to be provided due to the complexity of a complaint, the customer should be contacted and Focus updated stating the date by when the complaint will be responded to.

Responses to customers should not be delayed unnecessarily because of outstanding procedures (e.g. disciplinary hearing awaited). We should respond to the customer and if appropriate apologise to them explaining the action we are taking.

Where a member sends in a complaint on behalf of a customer or is copied in on a customer complaint email the officer responding to the complaint must ensure that the member is updated with the action taken.

The response to a stage 1 complaint needs to include what they need to do if they are unhappy with the response received. (See example paragraphs for letters and emails in Appendix 1).

Once a response has been given and the matter status set to "Finished" stage 1 is complete.

Stage 2

On receipt of a Stage 2 complaint, the Customer Services Officer receiving the complaint will determine if the Complainant has reported the complaint before and received a response.

Customer Services will establish if this is a second level complaint and, if it is, will enter on the system as a stage 2 complaint. They will send an acknowledgement to the customer confirming who the complaint has been referred and advise the customer the anticipated response date.

If a Stage 2 complaint is received by an officer, other than Customer Services, details of that complaint should be emailed to: heretohelp@gloucester.gov.uk and a Customer Services officer will enter it onto the system.

The Complaint will then be sent to the next tier of Management to that which dealt with the previous complaint.

The relevant Manager/Director will:-

- Review the complaint and discuss with Service Managers and where necessary Legal and the Chief Executive to formulate a response.
- The response will notify the Customer of Stage three and give details of the Local Ombudsman if they wish to take this further.
- All correspondence must be recorded on the complaints system at the time of action pending queries in the future from the Ombudsman.

The response to a stage 2 complaint needs to include information referring customers to the Local Government Ombudsman if they are not satisfied with the response received. See example letters and emails attached.

Once a response has been given and the complaints system status updated to "Finished" stage 2 is complete.

Stage 3

If the customer is not satisfied with the responses received for stages 1 & 2 they can refer their complaint to the Local Government Ombudsman, P.O. Box 4771, Coventry CV4 0EH. The Ombudsman will review the complaint and responses received and may write to the Council for additional information. All Ombudsman complaints are administered through Democratic Services. If the Ombudsman feels that the complaint is justified or the handling of the process is at fault, the complaint will be forwarded to the Monitoring Officer for consideration/further action.

Unreasonable Behaviour/Vexatious Complaints

Where a complaint is considered to be unreasonable or vexatious the Service Manager should report this through to their Manager/Director for guidance. Corporate Directors may authorise action to be taken to restrict contact with the customer. Action may be taken under our Unreasonable Behaviour Policy which could include providing a single point of contact for a customer or contact via a specific channel.

Reviews

If a complaint is justified, managers should, as a matter of routine, consider whether there is a need for a change in procedures or whether there are lessons to be learnt which may have wider implications for the City Council.

Freedom of Information (FOI)

The Freedom of Information Act 2000 gives the customer the right to request information from any public authority. It promotes openness and accountability among public sector organisations, so that everyone can understand how authorities make decisions, carry out their duties and spend public money. For full details please read our Corporate Freedom of Information Policy.

When the customer has received a response to a Freedom of Information request where they are not satisfied with the way they have been treated or the information provided they can complain or appeal. Complaints or appeals should be sent in writing to the Freedom of Information Officer. These will be reviewed by the Head of Legal and Policy Development and a response provided to the customer.

Where the customer is still not satisfied with the response received from the Head of Legal and Policy Development the customer can write to the Information Commissioners Office, Wycliffe House, Water Lane, Wilmslow, Cheshire, SK9 5AF.

Reporting

Monthly reports will be produced to Service Managers detailing any complaints that have been assigned to their service that are still outstanding. A week later a report will be produced for the Corporate Director of Services & Neighbourhoods detailing the number of complaints raised for the month, the number resolved within 10 days and the number still outstanding.

The Corporate Director for Services & Neighbourhoods will review the report and contact the necessary manager to discuss any issues identified on the report.

Appendix 1

Letter or email footer following Stage 1 complaint.

If you are not satisfied with the response to this complaint you can request a more senior manager investigate under Stage 2 of our Complaints Policy. Please complete the complaints form on our web site at <https://forms.gloucester.gov.uk/contactusforms/ComplaintForm.aspx>, email heretohelp@gloucester.gov.uk or ring 01452 396396 to speak to a Customer Service Officer.

Letter or email footer following Stage 2 complaint.

If you are not satisfied with the response to this Stage 2 complaint you can contact the Local Government Ombudsman, an independent body, who will review your complaint and may consider acting on your behalf. They can be contacted by email advice@lgo.org.uk, via telephone on 0300 061 0614 or 0845 602 1983, via text "call back" on 0762 480 4299 or by writing to the Local Government Ombudsman, PO Box 4771, Coventry CV4 0EH.

Have your say

Give us feedback on our services

We encourage you to tell us how we are doing, whether good or bad, so we can review what we do, change the way we work and deliver excellent customer service. If you have a complaint or comment about the services we are delivering or wish to compliment us please complete this form.

What to expect from us

We aim to give the best possible service at all times, but sometimes we make mistakes and do not get it right. We will investigate any problems and, where possible, review our processes to help improve your experience.

Please contact us in any of these ways:

Website

www.gloucester.gov.uk

Use the “Make a comment or complaint” link on our home page.

Email

heretohelp@gloucester.gov.uk

Telephone

Call our Customer Services team on 01452 396396.

Write a letter or complete this form

Send to:

Here to Help,
Customer Services,
Gloucester City Council,
Herbert Warehouse, The Docks,
Gloucester, GL1 2EQ

Visit

Gloucester City Council Offices at Herbert Warehouse, The Docks, Gloucester, GL1 2EQ.

For any feedback we receive we will ensure everyone is treated fairly and equally. We will be consistent in the way we handle and respond to customers.

Your feedback will be taken into consideration when planning and reviewing our services.

If you are not satisfied with our response, please contact us again and we will take your complaint to a senior manager or director to review.

If you are still not satisfied, you can then refer the matter to:

The Local Government Ombudsman
PO Box 4771, Coventry CV4 0EH

advice@lgo.org.uk

Telephone numbers:
0300 061 0614 or 0845 602 1983

About you

Name

Address

Phone

Mobile

Email

Preferred method of contact. We can respond more quickly if you include a telephone number or email address

Would you like a response?

Yes

No

Your feedback

Date event or action happened:

Please tick:

Complaint

Compliment

Comment

Please describe what happened:

If you feel you have experienced unfair treatment please explain why:

Empty text box for explaining unfair treatment.

Suggestions for improvement:

Empty text box for suggestions for improvement.

Equality Information

This information will help us supply statistical information to the government. It will enable us to improve services and identify gaps in service delivery. With and help us know our customers. You only have to complete the questions you are happy to answer.

Gender

Female

Male

Was this the gender you were born with? Yes

No

Age

Under 16

16 – 24

25 – 34

35 – 44

45 – 54

55 – 64

65 – 74

75+

Ethnicity

White

Black or Black British

Asian or Asian British

British

African

Bangladeshi

Irish

Caribbean

Indian

Other White Background

Other Black Background

Pakistani

Other Asian Background

If other, please specify:

Mixed and other ethnicity

White & Asian

White & Black African

White & Black Caribbean

Other mixed background

If other, please specify:

Disability

Do you consider yourself to have a disability that needs to be taken into consideration in order to ensure that you have equal and fair access to services?

Yes

No

Religion or Belief System

Buddist

Christian

Hindu

Jewish

Muslim

Sikh

None

Other

Decline to identify

If other, please specify:

Sexual Orientation

Bisexual

Gay Man

Gay Woman/Lesbian

Heterosexual/Straight

Decline to identify

If other, please specify:

If you, or someone you know, cannot understand English and need help with this information, or if you would like a large print, Braille or an audio version please call

01452 396396

If there is anything you would like to discuss with us, please ring

01452 396396

Customer Services,
Herbert Warehouse,
Gloucester Docks,

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T: 01452 396396
E: heretohelp@gloucester.gov.uk
W: www.gloucester.gov.uk

Persistent/Vexatious Complaints

We want to treat complaints positively and, where possible, leave customers feeling satisfied with their experience of making a complaint to us.

A complaint can be regarded as vexatious where it has been considered and found to be unjustified, but when the person making the complaint is:

- not prepared to accept the conclusion and persists in making the same, or a substantially similar, complaint.

Continuing to respond to such complaints can take up a significant amount of resources in time and money and can thereby detract from the service that can be provided to others. If a manager considers that a complaint has become vexatious the manager can ask their director for support in dealing with the complaint.

The manager, in consultation with their director and with advice from their legal team, may decide not to pursue the complaint any further. The person making the complaint will be notified of this decision.

At Gloucester City Council, we pride ourselves on the way we treat you and how efficiently we help you with any of the city council's services.

We want you to feel confident that your issues will be dealt with promptly, patiently and courteously.

Help us to improve and maintain our standards. We want to be the best council for you, so we value your feedback.

Confidentiality and Anonymity

Gloucester City Council is fully committed to compliance with the requirements of the Data Protection Act 1998.

The council will therefore aim to ensure that all employees, elected members, contractors, agents, consultants, or partners of the council who have access to any personal data held by or on behalf of the council, are fully aware of and abide by their duties and responsibilities under the Act. We will treat all customer information as confidential.

Names and addresses will not be published or disclosed outside the council or our partners.

We will not accept anonymous complaints.

If you, or someone you know, cannot understand English and need help with this information, or if you would like a large print, Braille or an audio version please call

01452 396396

For any feedback we receive we will ensure everyone is treated fairly and equally.

We will be consistent in the way we handle and respond to customer complaints.

Customer Services,
Herbert Warehouse,
Gloucester Docks,
GL1 2EQ

T: 01452 396396
E: heretohelp@gloucester.gov.uk
W: www.gloucester.gov.uk

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How we handle your complaints

The Process

Gloucester
City Council

Here to help

We aim to give the best possible service at all times, but sometimes we make mistakes and do not get it right. We will investigate any problems and, where possible, review our processes to help improve your experience.

Definition of a Complaint

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction by a customer about:

- The council's actions or lack of action
- The standard of service received

This is where the responsibility for the action, or the service provided, rests with the council or person or body acting on behalf of the council.

The following will not be treated as complaints in their first instance:

- Initial requests for service e.g. my bin has not been emptied, reporting graffiti, reporting overhanging vegetation.
- Initial report of faults or defects unless they concern work that the council has carried out.

We will not exclude these requests but will deal with them as normal work requests.

If the original request was not actioned/completed a repeat request will follow the complaints procedure.

Feedback can be given in many ways:

Website

www.gloucester.gov.uk
Use the "Make a comment or complaint" link on our home page.

Email

heretohelp@gloucester.gov.uk

Telephone

Ring our Customer Services team on 01452 396396.

Letter/Complaint Form

Send to:
Here to Help, Customer Services,
Gloucester City Council,
Herbert Warehouse, The Docks,
Gloucester, GL1 2EQ.

Visit

Gloucester City Council Offices at
Herbert Warehouse, The Docks,
Gloucester, GL1 2EQ.

The following complaints will be dealt with under separate policies:

Parking

The issue of a Penalty Charge Notice (PCN) is dealt with within the Traffic Management Act 2004.

Following the decriminalisation of parking in the city there are legal procedures that need to be followed when challenging a PCN. To complain against a PCN you will need to put your request in writing as instructed on the reverse of the PCN.

The Freedom of Information Act 2000

This gives you the right to request information from any public authority.

If you have received our response to a Freedom of Information request but you are not happy with the way you have been treated or the information provided, you can complain or appeal.

Complaints or appeals should be sent in writing to the Freedom of Information Officer. These will be reviewed by the Freedom of Information Officer with the Head of Legal Services and a response provided to you within 20 days.

If you are still unhappy with the response received from the Head of Legal Services, you can write to:

The Information Commissioners Office,
Wycliffe House, Water Lane, Wilmslow,
Cheshire, SK9 5AF.

Fraud and Corruption

The city council operates a mechanism for confidential reporting for fraud and corruption. Please see our anti-fraud and corruption policy.

(Part 5 – Codes and Protocols of the Gloucester City Council Constitution).

Some services have separate processes for appeals

Benefits

If you are not satisfied with a response from our benefits service regarding a claim you have made, you can appeal against the decision.

You can call our Benefits Service on 396483, email: benefits@gloucester.gov.uk or visit us stating you wish to appeal. We can arrange for an independent tribunal to hear your case.

Planning

Planning appeals are made to the Planning Inspectorate and reports can be made by visiting:
www.gloucester.gov.uk/planning

How the process works

Stage ONE Acknowledgement & Action

Report your complaint using one of the methods previously mentioned. We will acknowledge your complaint verbally or in writing within one working day advising who will be dealing with the complaint.

If you require your complaint to be reviewed by someone not previously involved with your case please specify at the time of reporting and we can arrange this for you.

We will aim to investigate your complaint as soon as possible and you should receive a response to your complaint within 10 working days.

However, sometimes a complaint may be complex and may involve other council partners. In this instance you will be contacted to advise of the delay and will be informed of the amended response date and the proposed action being taken.

Once a response has been given this stage is complete. We may contact you to obtain feedback about the way the complaint was handled. This information will be used to review the process and help us make improvements and provide important monitoring data.

Stage TWO Appeal

If you are not satisfied with the response received you can ask for a more senior manager or director to look at it. We will acknowledge your appeal verbally or in writing within one working day advising which manager/director will be reviewing the complaint.

The manager will respond within 10 working days but will advise you if more time is required and give you an estimated response date.

Once a response has been given this stage is complete.

Stage THREE Ombudsman

If you are still not satisfied with the response you can contact the Local Government Ombudsman.

This service is independent of the council and free of charge. Their contact details are:

The Local Government
Ombudsman
PO Box 4771, Coventry CV4 0EH.
advice@lgo.org.uk
Telephone:
0300 061 0614 or 0845 602 1983