

Meeting:	Cabinet	Date:	10th December 2014
Subject:	Allotment Strategy		
Report Of:	Cabinet Member for Environment		
Wards Affected:	All		
Key Decision:	No	Budget/Policy Framework:	Yes/No
Contact Officer:	Meyrick Brentnall, Environmental Planning Manager		
	Email:	meyrick.brentnall@gloucester.gov.uk	Tel: 396829
Appendices:	1) Amended Allotment Strategy		
	2) Report of Representations		

1.0 Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To adopt an Allotment Strategy for Gloucester City detailing how the City Council intends to manage its allotment holding over coming years.

2.0 Recommendations

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

The Allotment Strategy as attached at Appendix 1 is adopted for purpose of managing allotments in Gloucester City.

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 (Sainbridge). 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 Having said this a number of years ago it was recognized that allotments holders were not receiving the service that they should, as such 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 have been taken on board and importantly an allotment officer was appointed. There is still some work to do however, especially with regard to self management. The strategy provides a context for this, and also suggests a number of other actions.

- 3.4 The 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 go into the detail of how each site should be managed. For this purpose more detailed proposals will be rolled out over the coming months, these will be in the format of a series 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 The draft strategy was subject to consultation and a modest number of representations have been received. All allotment holders were notified of the draft and as well as being given information of where to find the draft on the web they were offered a paper copy if needed. The strategy was also discussed at the Environment and Ecology Forum and associations were offered talks by officers to explain the proposals put forward.
- 3.6 All comments have been summarized as part of the Report of Representations attached at appendix 2. Where appropriate the strategy has been amended and this made clear in the report and highlighted in red in the amended strategy (Appendix 1).
- 3.7 Comments varied but there was a clear concern at the proposal for differential charging with regard to water use. Most respondents considered the best way to ensure wise use of water was to restrict the use of sprinklers. This has been taken on board and the strategy amended accordingly. The other main concern was the capacity of associations to take on self management. Although a theme of the document, there were real worries about the ability of Associations to take on this role and what would happen if personalities changed and the capacity to continue was compromised.
- 3.8 While it is not intended to significantly change the emphasis with regard to self management, it is proposed to address respondents concerns and make it clear that the City Council will step in if Associations take on board additional responsibilities and then find they do not have the capacity to deliver.
- 3.9 Other changes are minor and can be seen in the amended strategy

4.0 Alternative Options Considered

- 4.1 The authority does not have to produce a strategy. It could carry on with the Status quo.
- 4.2 Self management could be imposed upon allotment associations – It is likely that this would result in friction between the associations and the city council. Some would inevitably refuse to take it up.

5.0 Reasons for Recommendations

- 5.1 The strategy is a high level document that will allow the City Council and Allotment Associations/holders more certainty around the service. It will put in place context for self management if Associations wish to go down that route and assist forward planning by putting in a train a series of allotment site management plans. .

6.0 Future Work and Conclusions

- 6.1 If adopted the next phase will be to work with allotment associations to deliver site management plans. These will provide the detail on how a site should be managed and provide a context for funding bids and spending priorities.

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.

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

8.0 Legal Implications

- 8.1 Unless associations want to take total control over allotments then there are no legal implications.

(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 are no negative impacts with regard to community safety

Sustainability

- 11.2 The strategy should ensure allotments are more sustainable

Staffing & Trade Union

- 11.3 There service can be managed within existing resources and still maintain the post of a part time allotment officer.

Background Documents: Task and Finish Report 2007