

FOR PUBLICATION

BRIEFING PAPER ON PROGRESS WITH ALLOTMENT STRATEGY 2012-2016

MEETING: ENTERPRISE AND WELLBEING SCRUTINY
COMMITTEE

DATE: 5 FEBRUARY 2015

REPORT BY: SUSTAINABILITY OFFICER

1. Introduction

Since its adoption in 2012 the Allotment Strategy and respective Action Plan has been managed by the Council's Sustainability Officer, Peter Corke. However, as a result of the restructuring of Environmental Services in 2013 the direct management of allotment sites is undertaken by the Green Spaces Officer, Andy Pashley. The administration of rental agreements and legal aspects attaining to the Tenancy Agreement continues to be undertaken by Kier (Facilities Management) and Governance respectively.

The main reason for developing an Allotment Strategy, in partnership with the Chesterfield Allotment Network (CAN), was to provide strategic guidelines for the provision and management of allotments in Chesterfield by the Council. The strategy placing emphasis on the importance of allotments as a leisure and recreational facility and for the benefits to communities, health and well-being and wildlife, as well as in producing low cost locally produced food in a sustainable way.

The strategy directly supports the achievement of the Council's Corporate Plan objectives:

***A clean, green, and attractive Borough, where
our open spaces and built heritage are valued.***

Is linked directly to the following Corporate Programmes, service plans and documents:

- Sustainable Community Strategy
- Asset Management Plan
- Equality, Diversity and Fairness Strategy
- Parks and Open Spaces Strategy
- Greenprint Document
- Replacement Chesterfield Borough Local Plan (2006)

The Aims of the strategy are delivered via an Action Plan containing 5 objectives, monitored by the Sustainability Officer, with progress on each as follows.

2. Progress on Action Plan

Objective 1: To cultivate the improved management of our allotment sites.

	ACTION	TARGET	PROGRESS
1.1	Provide an improved set of rules and suggested constitution to allotment societies.	New set of rules and constitution provided to all allotment associations.	Target achieved September 2012.
1.2	Identify and audit vacant statutory allotment sites and survey/photograph currently occupied sites.	Status of vacant statutory sites and clear record of current provision.	Inspections completed June 2014 with additional follow-up inspections of sites where asbestos was identified scheduled for March 2015.
1.3	Review allotment tenancy agreements.	New tenancy agreement.	Target achieved November 2013.
1.4	Assess rents.	Improved rental structure for allotment sites and clarity on charging.	Target achieved June 2013. New and improved rent structure now implemented.
1.5	Infrastructure improvements.	Undertake infrastructure improvements to ensure disabled have access.	Following inspections in June 2014 the access to all sites was deemed adequate.
1.6	Review the Council's arrangements for the management of allotments.	Clarity on the different departmental responsibilities of allotments in the borough.	Please see Introduction, paragraph 1.

Objective 2: To promote allotments as a benefit for the whole community.

2.1	Provide an improved mechanism for vacant allotments to be acquired by the public.	Central data base/website to publicise allotment sites and vacant plots.	Enquiries are presently directed to individual Allotment Association secretaries via Green Spaces Team.
2.2	Produce guide for tenants in partnership with Chesterfield Allotment Network.	Guide for allotment holders.	Action not completed but due for review, subject to availability of resources, May 2015.

Objective 3: To highlight the role that allotments play in developing a more sustainable environment, encouraging biodiversity and conservation.

3.1	Seek to improve the biodiversity of allotment sites through habitat improvements.	Create wildlife areas where appropriate.	This is an ongoing action that has had real success with the creation of ponds, wildflower areas and bird habitats on allotment sites. Development of a communal orchard on one site that will incorporate a large hibernation mound for bumblebees. Currently considering 'Learn to Grow' initiative at Hasland Park allotments to link with local permaculture initiative – land, food and health!
3.2	Engage with allotment associations to map species diversity on allotment sites.	Map wildlife habitats on and adjacent to all allotment sites.	All allotment sites took part in the 1914-1918 Commemorative Meadow project in Summer 2014. Allotment sites are offered small grants, via Greenprint Sustainability budget, to create or enhance wildlife areas on the sites. Presently, Goldwell No.1 and Rufford Close (see Photo's 1& 2, below) and Avenue Road, supported this scheme.

Objective 4: To develop a health agenda for allotments, focusing on benefits, in terms of improving health in the borough.

4.1	Promote the health benefits of allotment gardening.	Produce guide in partnership with health colleagues on the many health benefits of allotment gardening.	Target not achieved due to budgetary but under review.
4.2	Develop local produce network through and with allotment societies.	Promote sales of allotment produce at monthly Farmers' Market.	Target to be developed alongside 4.1, above, when funding becomes available.

Objective 5: To review existing provision of allotments in Chesterfield and to seek to identify area of potential future allotment provision.

5.1	Assess current allotment provision.	Explore opportunities to provide additional allotments as per current deficiency in some wards.	Ongoing and to become targeted action in revised Green Spaces Strategy.
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3. Conclusion

The Allotment Strategy has aided the delivery of a more unified approach to managing allotments in the borough. The continued involvement of the Chesterfield Allotment Network through bi-annual meetings helps to maintain good relationships and improvements on all of the sites. This is especially true with the changes made recently to the Tenancy Agreement and annual rents.



Photo 1: Rufford Close Allotments – Bees, Wildflowers and Biodiversity, July 2014.



Photo 2: Avenue Road – ‘Lest We Forget’ 1914-1918 Commemorative Meadow.
July 2014.