

Overview and Scrutiny Task Group - Allotments

Thursday, 24 June 2010

Present: Councillor Julia Berry (Chair) and Councillors Marie Gray, Alison Hansford, Harold Heaton and June Molyneaux

Also in attendance: Councillors Martin Walls (Head of Streetscene) and Dianne Scambler (Democratic and Member Services Officer)

10.A.01 WELCOME

The Chair welcomed Members to the first meeting of the Allotments Scrutiny Task Group. The aim of the first meeting was to receive an overview of Chorley's allotment provision and to determine the scope and focus of the scrutiny review.

10.A.02 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Anthony Gee.

10.A.03 DECLARATIONS OF ANY INTERESTS

No declarations of interest were received.

10.A.04 MEMBER OF THE PUBLICS REQUEST FOR SCRUTINY

The Group received for information, the two requests that had come from Members of the Public for a review of Allotments in Chorley.

RESOLVED – That the requests be noted.

10.A.05 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The Members considered a report on Allotments and Community Growing that had been submitted to the Equality Forum in April 2010. The report contained information about current provision, suitable sites for increased allocation, baseline data and the results of a recent survey that was sent out to all existing allotment holders and those people on the waiting list.

Martin Walls, Head of Streetscene also provided the Group with an overview of Allotments in Chorley and updated Members on the £40,000 budget that had been allocated for the 2010/11 financial year.

RESOLVED – That the information be noted.

10.A.06 DRAFTING OF THE SCOPING DOCUMENT

The Task Group considered points to be included within the Scoping document:

The following objectives were discussed:

To investigate, consider and evaluate:

1. Assess current provision and demand for allotments within Chorley – Increase the current provision of allotments through the standardisation of existing and future plots and fairness of allocation.
2. Examine the content of the tenancy agreements and rules governing occupation

3. Assess the current monitoring and inspection procedures of allotment sites – Improved management controls to be out into place, better enforcement procedures to be implemented.
4. Review the current charging mechanism against the cost of administration – Ensure the charges for allotments are fair and reflective of other authorities and where possible cover the management costs.
5. Encourage community growing/partnership working across the borough – Introduction of training and educating of residents on the waiting list to grow on alternative sites/shared facilities or at home.

Other points included, improved communications/publicity of Allotments and Community Growing across the Borough, site access, hard to reach groups and provision for children and young people.

RESOLVED – That the information be compiled into a draft scoping document in consultation with the Chair for consideration at the next meeting of the Group.

10.A.07 INFORMATION/WITNESSES

Members requested the following information and witnesses for a future meeting of the Group:

- Members of the public who requested a review of allotments
- Work being done on behalf of the Council to promote a healthy lifestyle in connection with community growing
- Could current allotment land meet demand if plots were standardised and equally allocated?
- Work being done in schools/partnership working
- Comparative information from another authority
- Equality and diversity issues

RESOLVED – That the requested information/witnesses be included in the scoping document.

10.A.08 SITE VISIT

It was decided to hold a site visit prior to the review so that the Group could look at the current provision that was available by the Council and private landlords in the Borough and comparative neighbouring authorities.

Arrangements were to be made for this activity to take place on 16 July 2010 and the Group would visit:

- Crosse Hall Allotment Site, Crosse Hall Lane, Chorley (Chorley Council site)
- Brown House Lane, Wheelton (Privately owned site)
- Plank Lane Allotment Site, Plank Lane, Leigh (Wigan Metropolitan Borough Council site)

RESOLVED – That Members make a note of the date in their diaries.

10.A.09 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of the Group will take place on Wednesday 11 August 2010 at 6.00pm in Committee Room 2, Town Hall.

RESOLVED – That the date of the next meeting be noted.

Chair