

Overview and Scrutiny Task Group - Allotments

Wednesday, 11 August 2010

Present: Councillor Harold Heaton (Chair) and Councillors Anthony Gee, Marie Gray and June Molyneaux

Also in attendance: Councillors Martin Walls (Head of Streetscene), Andy Brown (Greenspace Co-ordinator), Alan Bothamley (Streetscene Co-ordinator (Gronds Maintenance)) and Dianne Scambler (Democratic and Member Services Officer)

10.A.10 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Julia Berry (Chair) and Alison Hansford.

10.A.11 APPOINTMENT OF CHAIR FOR THE MEETING

It was proposed by Councillor Anthony Gee, seconded by Councillor June Molyneaux and was subsequently **RESOLVED for Councillor Harold Heaton to take the Chair for this meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Task Group – Allotments.**

10.A.12 DECLARATIONS OF ANY INTERESTS

No declarations were declared.

10.A.13 MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

RESOLVED - The minutes of the meeting of the Allotments Task Group held on 24 June 2010 were held as a correct record for signing by the Chair.

10.A.14 SCOPING OF THE ALLOTMENTS TASK GROUP

The Task Group considered a suggested scoping document for the Allotments Scrutiny Task Group, drawn up from proposals put forward at the first meeting.

It was proposed to include an additional objective to the review to encourage future self management of the allotments, as follows:

Objective 6

To consider the potential for forming Committees and User Groups within individual allotment sites to give tenants greater control and allow them to cover some of the functions currently carried out by Officers.

AGREED – 1. That the scoping document for the review be approved for submission to the next Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

2. That the proposed witnesses be invited to the next meeting of the Group.

10.A.15 OUTCOME OF THE ALLOTMENTS SITE VISIT

On 16 July 2010, the Group visited a number of different allotment sites and made several observations. A brief overview of the Members findings was circulated at the meeting and after discussion the following conclusions were made:

- Allotment sites looked more aesthetically pleasing when a perimeter fencing was provided around the whole of the allotment site, rather than individual plots.
- A maximum size of shed needed to be stipulated along with an accepted type of material.
- The consideration of a communal storage facility on new sites.
- All plots on the sites to be the same standard size.
- Higher standards to be enforced, with more robust management procedures to support this.
- A condition to be implemented about when the Allotment is vacated so as to avoid fly tipping costs.
- The new rules would be implemented immediately for the new sites with the established sites being brought into line as tenancies changed hands.

10.A.16 INFORMATION FOR CONSIDERATION

The Group considered various documentation that was presently used in the administration of the allotments and looked at the charging details.

Members felt that there was a need to develop a criteria for the monitoring and management of the waiting lists. Presently the onus was on the Council to write each year to the people on the waiting list, this was considered to be a costly and often fruitless exercise.

There was general agreement for a tougher inspection and enforcement procedure to be brought into place, and that standards on the sites needed to be improved.

Consideration was given to a pricing review of the allotment rentals. Presently a half price discount is given to senior citizens, given the overall price for the year, the Group felt that this amount was too generous. All tenants also received a water but when they took on the tenancy in the first year. The price of this water was in no way covered by the rental charge and actually meant that at present the Council were in receipt of a negative equity for a senior citizen rental in the first year.

AGREED

- 1. That a new Tenancy Agreement be drafted by officers and brought back to the Group for consideration.**
- 2. That consideration be given to the implementation of a set procedure/arrangements to improve the management of the waiting lists.**
- 3. That consideration be given to a pricing review of allotment rentals.**
- 4. Look at ways of promoting community management.**

Chair