

Report of	Meeting	Date
Director of People and Places (Introduced by the Executive Member for Places, Councillor Eric Bell)	Executive Cabinet	17/02/11

EXECUTIVE'S RESPONSE TO RECOMMENDATIONS OF OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY TASK GROUP'S INQUIRY INTO ALLOTMENTS

PURPOSE OF REPORT

1. To approve the Executive Cabinet's response and actions following the Overview and Scrutiny Task Group's inquiry into allotments

RECOMMENDATION

2. To approve the response and actions in Section 8 of this report.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF REPORT

3. The Overview and Scrutiny Task Group's report following their inquiry into allotments is on this evening's agenda.
4. This report outlines the Executive's response to the Task Group's recommendations. The recommendations and the response are detailed in the table at Section 8.

REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION

(If the recommendations are accepted)

5. To respond to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee's recommendations and make improvements to the allotment service.

ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED

6. None

CORPORATE PRIORITIES

7. This report relates to the following Strategic Objectives:

Strong Family Support	√	Education and Jobs	
Being Healthy	√	Pride in Quality Homes and Clean Neighbourhoods	√
Safe Respectful Communities	√	Quality Community Services and Spaces	√
Vibrant Local Economy		Thriving Town Centre, Local Attractions and Villages	√
A Council that is a consistently Top Performing Organisation and Delivers Excellent Value for Money			

BACKGROUND

8.

Overview & Scrutiny Recommendation	Executive Response
<u>Provision and demand for allotments</u>	
That the applicants apply annually to the Council for an allotment,	Agreed. This will be introduced at the next point of correspondence.
That vacant plots from within existing allotment provision be offered to applicants who have been on the waiting list the longest.	Agreed. Current letting criteria to change on 1 April to reflect this recommendation.
That applicants on the general 'any site' waiting list only be allowed refusal of one plot, then placed on to the relevant Neighbourhood Area list.	Agreed. Current letting criteria to change on 1 April to reflect this recommendation. Please note the next response and the use of distance from a site rather than neighbourhood area.
That any new sites be allocated by a 50/50 split between the Neighbourhood Area applicants and the general 'any site' applicants to support Neighbourhood Working.	Agreed in part. The 50/50 split between long standing names on waiting list and local requirements is fair. Rather than use the neighbourhood area as a locality indicator, we plan to use their distance from a Council allotment site.
That Chorley Allotments Society be consulted on the Site Allocations Development Plan Document.	Agreed. They will be consulted at all key stages of the site allocation process.
That the Council considers the provision for allotments when negotiating Section 106 monies.	This will be considered on a case by case basis.
That the Head of Planning Services, be requested to develop a set of guidelines and good practice for use by private allotment owners.	Agreed.
That the Chorley Allotments Society working in partnership with the Council be encouraged to facilitate an exchange scheme across all the sites.	This is felt to be good practice and should support future provision.

<u>Tenancy Agreement and monitoring and inspection procedures</u>	
<p>That the Tenancy agreement be reviewed to include</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - appropriate rules and conditions to promote higher standards of maintenance - Definitive guidance on non compliance issues, to protect the Council's position. 	Agreed.
That the Council provide suitable perimeter fencing on all its new sites that will be adequately maintained.	Agreed.
That the Council be responsible for the delineation of the actual plot, but that the allotment holder be then responsible for defining their boundaries, using safe and suitable materials.	Agreed. New sites will be delivered in this manner.
That the subject to consent, the allotment holder be responsible for erecting structures on the plot for the purposes of storage and cultivation using safe and suitable materials within a total floor space (to be determined).	Agreed. New sites will be delivered in this manner.
That the new Tenancy Agreement be implemented on all new sites and when an existing allotment is occupied by a new holder.	Current letting criteria to change on 1 April to reflect this.
<u>Allotment charges</u>	
That the annual charge of £39.50 be increased annually on 1 April in line with inflation.	The Executive support the general principle of increasing charges by inflation. However, the Executive would want to retain the flexibility to set fees and charges on an annual basis.
That the concessionary rate be phased out over the next two years, 75% of rental to be charged in 2011/12 with the full rental being charged in 2012/13.	Agreed. There is no evidence that the annual charge presents a barrier to take up.
That it be Council policy to reduce the larger plots as and when they become available, dependant on the site and demand for that location. This would be monitored and the work undertaken, according to need.	Agreed.
That the present mains water provision be maintained on the two sites but at cost neutral to the Council.	Agreed.
That the allotment holders be charged for the water provision based on the usage of the previous rental year. The charge would be implemented in 2012/13 based upon water usage in 2011/12.	Agreed.
That the provision of a free water butt for all new allotment holders be withdrawn or offered at cost.	Agreed.

That information help and guidance be provided to new allotment holders on the sustainability agenda.	Agreed.
<u>Community Growing</u>	
That the Council be encouraged to continue working closely with Lancashire Wildlife Trust over the next three years, sharing information, staff time and resources to ensure the success of the Community Food Growing Action Plan.	Sarah Turner (Community Growing Officer) is in place to help ensure this happens.
<u>Community Management of Allotments</u>	
That allotment holders on any new site be supported and encouraged to pilot a community based management arrangement.	The Council's policy of community management will be developed, as appropriate.
That the Council would endorse the value of its allotment holders joining the Chorley Allotments Society through the contract and other associated paperwork.	Agreed.
That User Groups be established as and when required for the purposes of consultation.	Agreed.

SUMMARY

9. All recommendations have been accepted, at least in part. There are no specific recommendations relating to equality issues. However, fairness and access was a constant theme of the inquiry. An Equality Impact Assessment is in place for allotments and will be regularly reviewed.

IMPLICATIONS OF REPORT

12. This report has implications in the following areas and the relevant Directors' comments are included:

Finance	√	Customer Services	
Human Resources		Equality and Diversity	
Legal		No significant implications in this area	

COMMENTS OF THE DIRECTOR OF TRANSFORMATION

13. The recommendations in this report are cost neutral at least, some of the actions will recover expenditure the Council currently incurs.

JAMIE CARSON
DIRECTOR PEOPLE AND PLACES

There are no background papers to this report.

Report Author	Ext	Date	Doc ID
Andy Brown	5574	2 February 2011	