

**CULTURE AND LEISURE  
REVIEW COMMITTEE**

**16 SEPTEMBER 2008**

**LINK TO WORK PROGRAMME – MONITORING AND EVALUATION  
MANAGEMENT OF ALLOTMENTS**

**REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF COMMUNITY & CULTURAL SERVICES**

**1.0 Why has this report come to the Committee?**

1.1 To advise members of progress made in relation to the allotments review.

**2.0 Introduction And Background**

2.1 The Culture and Leisure Review Committee considered and agreed the management of allotments report on 20 March 2007.

2.2 This report outlines further progress made to improve the service.

**3.0 Current Position**

3.1 An Officer Working Group was formed in February 2007 to look at the following issues:-

- Standardisation of allotment agreements including direct tenancy and self managed sites.
- Publication of a helpful guidance manual for self managed sites which will include standard letters and procedures.
- Review of site provision including supply, demand and rents.

The Officer Working Group consists of representatives from Community and Cultural Services, Legal Services and Property Services.

3.2 The review has taken longer than anticipated due to a large amount of officer time being taken up dealing with specific complaints that required detailed investigations.

3.3 The Officer Working Group has met on a regular basis over the last twelve months and reviewed the following existing documents:-

- i) Tenancy Agreement
- ii) Management Agreement

The following draft documents have also been produced:-

- iii) The Really Useful Allotment Tenants Handbook
- iv) Guidance Manual for Self Managed Allotment Sites

- The draft tenancy agreement has been amended to allow the Allotment Officer greater control on the management of allotments on a daily basis. This agreement (when approved) will be issued to all new tenants. Following a recent meeting with secretaries from self managed sites, concerns were expressed about some sections within the agreement and secretaries requested further input into the final version.
- The management agreement has been amended to clarify the roles and responsibilities of a society.
- The Really Useful Allotment Tenants Handbook will be issued with new tenancy agreements. This is a plain English simple guide for the benefit of the tenant and should be read in conjunction with the tenancy agreement.
- The Guidance Manual has been produced to assist the Secretaries in managing their self managed allotment site. The guidance manual includes standard letters, forms and procedures. Secretaries of societies have advised that the document is onerous. The manual however is for guidance only and not compulsory.

A copy of these documents will be circulated at the meeting.

#### **4.0 Consultation**

4.1 Representatives from five allotment sites were consulted in October 2007 in relation to a draft tenancy and a draft management agreement.

Comments received from the representatives were incorporated where possible into the revised documents.

4.2 A full consultation exercise in relation to the following documents was carried out between 10 March 2008 and 7 April 2008:-

- i) Tenancy Agreement
- ii) Management Agreement
- iii) The Really Useful Allotment Tenants Handbook
- iv) Guidance Manual for Self Managed Allotment Sites

During the consultation period the documents were available on the Council's website, Parsons Office, Libraries and public buildings. Society secretaries and site contacts also had access to copies.

Notices were erected at the entrance to all allotment sites advising of the consultation exercise and where documents could be obtained/viewed.

The National Association of Allotment and Leisure Gardeners were also consulted.

4.3 The consultation period ended on Friday 7 April 2008.

4.4 Feedback from the consultation exercise was analysed and where appropriate incorporated in the final documents.

## **5.0 Review Of Allotment Charges In Neighbouring Local Authorities**

5.1 Allotment rents were compared against five other neighbouring local authorities which identified that the rental charge for allotments in Sunderland are comparable and reasonable.

The following information is attached for members information:-

- a list of charges for renting an allotment in Sunderland as from 1 April 2008
- a list of charges for renting an allotment in other neighbouring local authorities

5.2 Following the outcome of the asset review it is anticipated that a review of rental charges based on the quality of the site and facilities available be undertaken.

## **6.0 Review Of Current Asset Holdings**

6.1 A review is currently being carried out on all allotment sites to categorise the overall condition of sites which will include perimeter fencing, roads, internal footpaths and water supplies.

As part of this exercise the condition of the site, number of plots occupied and number on waiting lists will be considered.

6.2 The completion dated for this work is now expected to be September 2009 due to the volume of work involved.

## **7.0 Devolved Management**

7.1 Nationally local authorities are promoting devolved management of allotment sites. This involves a lease agreement between the Council and the allotment association for 10 or 21 year period.

This agreement gives total responsibility for the management of the allotment site including issuing and terminating tenancy agreements to the allotment association. This arrangement reduces administration costs for the Council and gives autonomy to the allotment associations. This also allows the association to access sources of external funding. In such circumstances the Council remains available to give advice and support.

7.2 There are ten self-managed sites in Sunderland. These arrangements rely on the Council's Allotment Officer issuing and terminating tenancy agreements. This is not considered to be best practice.

7.3 In accordance with best practice it is proposed that all existing self-managed allotment sites in Sunderland are given a long-term lease agreement.

## **8.0 Conclusion**

- A draft allotment tenancy agreement has been developed.
- A draft management agreement has been developed for self-managed allotment sites.
- A Really Useful Allotment Tenants Handbook has been developed.
- A draft Guidance Manual for self managed sites has been developed.
- A consultation exercise was carried out.
- Allotment rent charges have been compared with other neighbouring local authorities.
- A review of current asset holdings is ongoing.

## **9.0 Recommendation**

9.1 Members are requested to note the content of this report and receive a further progress report in due course.

## **10.0 Background Papers**

10.1 The background papers relied upon to compile this report are as follows:-

- i) Tenancy Agreement
- ii) Management Agreement
- iii) The Really Useful Allotment Tenants Handbook
- iv) Guidance Manual for Self Managed Allotment Sites

**Newcastle City Council**

Individual Plots	per 250 sqm	£37.51
Association Occupied Sites	per 250 sqm (water on site)	£23.77
	per 250 sqm (no water)	£19.93

On top of this the Allotment Association themselves pay for the water

All of these rents will be increased by 15% in April 2008

**South Tyneside**

Small	0-100 m2	£44.10
	101-125 m2	£48.70
	126-150 m2	£53.30
	151-175 m2	£57.90
	176-200 m2	£62.60
Medium	201-225 m2	£67.20
	226-250 m2	£71.90
	251-275 m2	£76.50
	276-300 m2	£81.00
Large	301-325 m2	£85.80
	326-350 m2	£90.40
	351 m2	£94.90
Pigeon/Poultry		£71.90

**Middlesbrough**

868 plots in total	Most plots are 1/16 acre or 252m2	£31.00 per year £15.50 for O'60's
	Concession (low income or unemployed)	£5.00 per year for two years
	Schools or charitable organisations	£1.00 peppercorn rent

**Gateshead**

Revised every 3rd year, usually in line with inflation  
In April 2007 increased approx 50% to bring prices inline with other authorities  
Will be revised in 2010.

Area up to 200m2	£19.00
Area up to 300m2	£26.50
Area up to 400m2	£35.50

No Concessions, however there is a 25% discount for allotment sites which are part of an Allotment Association

# SUNDERLAND CITY COUNCIL

## ALLOTMENT CHARGES

AS FROM 1 APRIL 2008

<b>TIER CATEGORY</b>	<b>PLOT SIZE</b>	<b>CHARGES AS FROM 1 APRIL 2008</b>
1	0 – 125 square yards	£9.34
2	126 – 175 square yards	£14.08
3	176 – 225 square yards	£18.75
4	226 – 275 square yards	£23.51
5	276 – 325 square yards	£28.18
6	326 square yards & above	£32.86