

Public Document Pack

Supplementary information for 25 September 2013 Scrutiny Board (Safer and Stronger Communities) Call In Meeting

Pages 1-20: Agenda item 7 - Supplementary information tabled at the meeting in relation to 'The Future Management and Pricing Arrangements for Allotments'

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Allotment Consultation Timeline

1. **December 2012 – Executive board budget strategy report**
2. **January 2013 – Scrutiny Board (Safer Stronger Communities)**
Initial budget proposals for Environment and Neighbourhoods Directorate
(minutes attached)
3. **4th April 2013 – Draft consultation options circulated**
(Copy of email to Leeds & District Gardeners Federation attached)
4. **18th April 2013 - Allotment Working Group**
Options discussed, (minutes attached)
5. **May 2013 – Consultation Start**
(Document attached) Sent to 99 Ward Members, 51 Allotment Associations, 3400 allotment holders and the LDGF. Also available on Talking Point and Council website
6. **June 2013 – Frequently Asked Questions**
(Attached placed on website and sent to interested recipients.
7. **July 2013 – Consultation Closes**
578 responses. 15% return



Scrutiny Board (Safer and Stronger Communities)

2013/14 initial Budget Proposals of the Environment and Neighbourhoods Directorate

An extract of the agreed observations and recommendations of the Scrutiny Board

Proposal to remove the subsidisation of allotment services

The Scrutiny Board identified allotment provision as an area of interest as part of its work this year. In line with the proposal to eliminate the subsidy on this service, the Scrutiny Board notes that income would potentially need to increase threefold.

Increases in allotment rents have previously been kept in line with inflation and this could change significantly depending upon what model is put in place to increase service income. Allotment charges have also previously been agreed via the Allotment Working Group (a consultative group representing allotment holders), with a full years notice given to plot holders of any planned increase. Such consultative practices would therefore need to be considered in terms of the directorate's ability to achieve the savings anticipated for the 2013/14 financial year.

Whilst the Scrutiny Board supports the principle of removing subsidy of this service, it recommends that the Executive Board investigates whether a phased approach in terms of any proposed charging increases would be more appropriate. Linked to this, further effort should also be given to building capacity for more plots to become self-administered in the future.

The Scrutiny Board acknowledges that Leeds City Council is not the allotment authority for the whole of the metropolitan district as responsibility also lies with relevant Parish and Town Councils to develop further land for allotment use. In view of this, the Scrutiny Board has already requested further mapping of all allotment provision across the city with a view to exploring how best to meet existing demand for allotment plots.

Recommendation 1

That the Executive Board investigates whether a phased approach in line with proposals to remove subsidy of allotment services through increased charges would be more appropriate. Linked to this, further effort should also be given to building capacity for more plots to become self-administered in the future.

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From: Clough, Joanne
Sent: 04 April 2013 14:54
To: [REDACTED]
Subject: Consultation Draft - Options Appraisal

Hi Ian

Please see attached as discussed. For some reason, it has split the wording of 'DRAFT' between the two pages.

This will form part of the wider consultation process and will need a covering letter to explain why we are going out to consultation and needs to be as brief as possible.

Thanks.

Jo.

Joanne Clough
Trading and Operational Support Manager
Tel: 0113 3957400

ISSUES AND OPTIONS

The key issue for the Council is financial sustainability and reducing, or removal altogether the existing subsidy. The Council is therefore considering the following options:

- Option 1: review prices by applying an increase to all plot holders in proportion to what they currently pay
- Option 2: review prices by applying an increase to plot holders who currently pay the full rate whilst retaining plot rental levels for those entitled to concessions
- Option 3: review the management arrangements to seek a third party operator for allotment provision who would determine pricing arrangements and meet all costs associated with provision

It would be necessary regardless of which option is decided to terminate the existing leases with allotment associations. Options 1 and 2 only consider the allotment rental element of the price and not any charges for water which currently meet the cost of provision.

Each option is now considered in turn:

Option 1: review prices by applying an increase to all plot holders in proportion to what they currently pay

It is estimated that the total income generated by allotment plot rental (excluding water charges) is £24k and that there are 3,719 rented plots. There are around 76% of rented plots for which no concession is applicable. The average amount per plot is £24.70 for non-concession holders and £12.35 for concession holders. If the full level of subsidy was to be recovered, then an increase of £133k would be required which equates to almost 179%. The impact of this price increase would mean that non-concession holders would pay an average of £68.82 each year, or £5.73 a month, and concession holders would pay an average of £34.41 or £2.87 a month. Headline plot prices would be as follows:

Rental	Non-Concession holders	Concession holders	Water Supply (Council Managed)
Full plot price (250 sq m)	£103.07	£51.53	£17.00
Half plot price (125 sp m)	£51.53	£25.77	£11.00

As part of the implementation of this option any increases would take place on a phased basis.

Option 2: review prices by applying an increase to plot holders who currently pay the full rate whilst retaining plot rental levels for those entitled to concessions

The impact of this price increase would mean that non-concession holders would pay an average of £81.41 each year, or £6.87 a month, and concession holders would pay an average of £12.35 or £1.03 a month as at present. Headline plot prices would be as follows:

Rental	Non-Concession holders	Concession holders	Water Supply (Council Managed)
Full plot price (250 sq m)	£123.43	£18.00	£17.00
Half plot price (125 sq m)	£61.71	£9.25	£11.00

As part of the implementation of this option any increases would take place on a phased basis.

Option 3: review the management arrangements to seek a third party operator for allotment provision who would determine pricing arrangements and meet all costs associated with provision

This option could be considered if all allotments currently managed by Parks and Countryside were managed by a voluntary organisation. If this was the case, then some of the costs associated with administering and maintaining allotments could be saved which in turn would mean a reduction in price increases.

There are certain fixed costs associated with allotment provision such as water services and rental payments for which the managed body would need to take responsibility and for which it would not be possible to make any savings. Similarly, for repairs and improvements it would be difficult for any operator to make efficiencies.

The Council may opt to reduce the target saving and issue an annual grant to the managing organisation to assist with the financial provision of managing allotments and mitigate price increases.

ALLOTMENTS WORKING GROUP

MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON

18TH April 2013

Civic Hall

Joanne Clough (Chair)	(JCI)	LCC
Lynne Rogers	(LR)	LCC
Lynne Nowland	(LN)	Headingley Station West AA
Melvyn Nowland	(MN)	Headingley Station West AA
Hazel Bartle	(HB)	Crimbles AA
Jim Taylor	(JT)	Crimbles AA
Paul Wilkinson	(PW)	Osmondthorpe AA
Vicente Rodriguez	(VR)	Osmondthorpe AA
Alison Barrie	(AB)	Flicks AA
Phil Gomersall	(PG)	Victory Gardens AAL&DGF
Peter Temple	(PT)	Clarksfield AA
Sandra Temple	(ST)	Clarksfield AA
Sara France	(SF)	Clarksfield AA
Tony Donegan	(TD)	Clarksfield AA
Stella Hodgson	(SH)	Rothwell AA
Graham Daniels	(GD)	Cobden Road Allotments
Kevin Longbottom	(KL)	Cobden Road Allotments
Janette Dooley	(JD)	The Station Allotments
Graham Dooley	(GDO)	The Station Allotments
Alderman B Nelson	(BN)	Brooklyn Terrace Allotments
Keith Shackleton	(KS)	Dolphin Lane Allotments
Tom Maynard	(TM)	L&DGF
Judy Turley	(JTU)	Oakwood Lane AAL&DGF
Gill Walsh	(GW)	Oakwood Lane AAL&DGF
Ian Wood	(IW)	Lidgett Lane AAL&DGF
Stuart Hey	(SH)	Garforth AA
Susan Naylor	(SN)	Shadwell Allotments
Mike Duncanson	(MD)	Headingley Station West AA
Tony Ryan	(TR)	Bye Law Mens Field AA
Stewart Golton	(SG)	Rothwell AAL&DGF
Dennis Noble	(DN)	Gledhow Valley AA

Action

Introduction
(JCI) welcomed everyone to the meeting and asked people to introduce themselves and which allotment site they represented.

All to note

1. Apologies:

- 1.1 Councillor John Illingworth, Helen Tebb and Alec Denton, Crowtrees AA, Maggi Jozefowicz, Gledhow Valley AA, Les Martin, Seacroft Hall Allotments, David Pattinson, Toll Bar AA, Trina Duncan, New Wortley AA.

2. Minutes of the last Meeting held on 24th January 2013 and Matters Arising

- 2.1 The minutes were agreed.

- 2.2 6.1 (IW) informed the group that the new rules and structure rules had been updated and would now be submitted to LCC for distribution. Any further comments or changes to be submitted to LR.
- 2.3 6.1 Feed Leeds Update. (JCI) asked (IW) for his feedback from the Feed Leeds meeting. (IW) gave a brief description of the group and their ambitious projects. He suggested to the group that they could consider offering assistance to other allotment plot holders to help them clear any over grown allotment plots including any allotment redundant sites.
- 2.4 (JCI) informed the group that to encourage more community food growing projects across the city, the Parks & Countryside service had offered to provide growing spaces within the Community Parks. This information is being promoted via the 'Feed Leeds' website and (JCL) recommended members of the AWG to visit this website which shows a food map and other areas of interest to do with food growing across the city. The Feed Leeds website is www.feedleeds.org
- 3. Management Issues**
- 3.1 Allotment Service Provision All to note
- 3.2 (JCI) informed the group that at the last meeting in January 2013, the Parks and Countryside service had identified a net deficit of £132k within the allotment service provision. A consultation document will soon be going to all allotment plot holders including the wider public, to seek peoples views on a number of different options that will help address the £132k subsidy.
- 3.3 (JC) explained that the main options being considered may be summarised as follows:
- Review prices by applying an increase to all plot holders in proportion to what they currently pay
 - Review prices by applying an increase to plot holders who currently pay the full rate whilst retaining plot rental levels for those entitled to concessions
 - Review the management arrangements to seek a third party operator for allotment provision who would determine pricing arrangements and meet all costs associated with provision
- 3.4 The Leeds & District Gardeners Federation are currently carrying out a feasibility study with a view to exploring the third available option and are currently collating information. (IW) informed the group that the L&DGF are holding an EGM on the 8th May to which all members of the federation are invited to attend to vote as to whether the L&DGF go ahead with their proposal. (IW) asked all site representatives to encourage their plot holders to attend the meeting.
- 3.5 (JCI) stressed that although the allotment working group was attended primarily by self managed site representatives, it is the intention of the Parks and Countryside service to contact all allotment plot holders to seek individual views.

4. L&DGF Workshop and Training Day

- 4.1 (IW) gave a brief description of the training day, the morning session consisted of an outline of the feasibility study progress and allotment management in the 6 other cities, and possible ways forward for allotments in Leeds. The afternoon session included site security and grant applications.
- 4.2 (IW) had circulated a document listing each site and what security measures they had taken to secure their allotments.
- 4.3 A number of sites are looking into installing cameras on allotments and asked for advice on whether cameras could be hidden from view. (JCI) informed the group that all cameras had to be in view and that posters informing visitors and allotment holders should be clearly displayed on the allotment saying that cameras were in operation.
- 4.4 (JC) also informed the group that the LCC Parkswatch service could be asked to patrol allotment sites as part of their rounds.
- 4.5 It was agreed that all incidents of theft and vandalism should be reported to the police which can be done via the WYMP website: <http://www.westyorkshire.police.uk/contact-us/report-crime>
- 4.6 Other suggestions that came out from the training day included; only committee members having keys to the allotment gates, dog patrols on sites, encouraging young people/groups onto allotments, befriending neighbouring properties, local businesses, not to leave anything of value in sheds and to leave open if possible. (IW) explained that these were only peoples ideas and not that anyone was condoning some of the suggestions being made, but did make for some open discussions about matters of security.
- 4.7 Use of anti-vandal paint was also suggested as a deterrent, but this could only be used on fences 1.8m high and above. Warning signs saying that anti-vandal paint had been used had also to be displayed.
- 4.8 Fund raising – the group discussed various ways of raising funds for their sites. Some sites have shops or stalls where excess produce is sold to the public with funds going back to the committee. (IW) mentioned that there were changes to the allocation of 106 funds but it was possible to bid for these funds and involve your local Ward Member more.

5. Future Discussion Topics

- 5.1 (JCI) asked the group what topics they would like discussing at future meetings. It was agreed that the following topics would be:
- 5.2 Environment – what type of toilets are acceptable and in what areas
Yorkshire Water - Drainage
Pest Control – Plant Pests
Site Security – Trees
- 5.3 It was agreed that the topic for the next meeting would be Pest Control – focus being on plant pests.

6. Any Other Business All to note

6.1 (IW) informed the group that Alan Gledhill had passed away on Monday, 15th April. Alan's family had requested flowers from family only. However, if anyone would like to give a donation, please donate to Arthritis UK. Alan is to be cremated at Cottingley Crematorium on Monday, 22 April at 1:40pm. (JCJ) expressed her condolences to Alan's family on behalf of the group.

6.2 (IW) said that the L&DGF will, once again, be having a stand at the Harrogate Spring Show and are hoping for another gold medal.

6.3 (JCJ) informed the group that the annual Parks & Countryside open days are to be held on the 1st and 12th May at Red Hall Nursery, between 9am and 3pm

Oakwood Lane are holding their annual plant sale on 25th May between 10am and 2pm – everyone welcome.

7. **Date of Next Meeting** – 18th July 2013.

Consultation

ABOUT THIS CONSULTATION

Allotments are an important resource in Leeds, providing home grown food that contribute to healthy eating as well as the health benefits to the grower. Allotments also bring other important benefits to the environment, education, and contribute to social interaction and wider community involvement. There are currently 97 allotment sites in Leeds that fall under the responsibility of the Parks and Countryside service, of which there are 37 sites directly managed by the service, with 60 managed by allotment associations. There are over 3,500 rented plots and a waiting list of around 1,400, which reflects the growing popularity of allotment gardening in recent years.

This consultation concerns allotment facilities that are managed by the council's Parks and Countryside service. The provision of allotments is heavily subsidised by the council, by around £1.30k each year, and furthermore the council is under acute financial pressure and needs to economise where possible.

Savings are needed and a recent report that went to the council's Executive Board identified the need to remove the subsidy from allotment provision. The council is therefore considering how it might review the way allotments are managed and the pricing structure to deliver these savings. It is looking at options based on the following:

- To increase the level of charges for allotment plots.
- To consider those who find it more difficult to pay or would find it difficult to pay more.
- To reduce the cost to the council in providing allotments.
- To look at alternative management arrangements.

Options are considered based on supporting information presented in this document. But there may be other options, and the detail also needs to be worked out. So before taking decisions, the council wants to open a discussion with representative organisations, allotment associations, and plot holders to ensure that its plans are shaped to produce a strong and sustainable future for allotments in Leeds.

If you want to help shape the future of allotments locally, please read this document and then let us have your views. You can feed your views back to us in the following ways:

- **write to us** at
Allotments Review,
Parks and Countryside,
Farnley Hall,
Hall Lane,
Leeds LS12 5HA.
- **e-mail us** at parks@leeds.gov.uk
- **discuss** your views with your allotment association secretary
- we are planning to invite these to forum meetings at the end of the consultation period.

TIMESCALE

The consultation period will close on 12th July 2013. Following this, detailed proposals will be formulated and brought to the council's elected Executive Board for final decisions to be taken.



WHAT DO WE WANT THE ALLOTMENTS REVIEW TO ACHIEVE?

The aim of the review is to agree a way forward for allotments in Leeds which:

- provides good quality and accessible facilities
- supports and develops allotments sites that are well managed, with well tended plots
- continues to support those who are least able to pay
- puts the council's provision onto a sustainable financial footing

THE CURRENT PICTURE

Leeds City Council provides 97 allotment sites of which there are 37 sites directly managed by the service, with 60 managed by allotment associations. Allotment associations are made up of volunteers who manage each site, including allocating plots, collecting income and enforcing rules and regulations. There are 45 allotment associations, with 42 managed on a single site basis, and 3 others that manage more than 1 site for the remainder.

Individual leases with each allotment association have been agreed and are for a period of 7 years and took effect from January 2012. The Council can terminate these leases by giving 12 months' notice ending on or before 6th April or on or after the 29th September in any year. Under the terms of the lease, associations pay one third of the plot rental collection from each plot holder for the year. The associations may grant a 50% reduction of the allotment rent to plot holders who are in receipt of state pension, certain welfare benefits, unemployed or full-time students.

Allotment charges are agreed via the Allotments Working Group (a consultative group representing allotment holders) and a full years notice is given to plot holders of any planned increase. Any increases in allotment rent have been kept in line with inflation and the following outlines the charges applicable from October 2012:

Rental

	Non-Concession holders	Concession holders	Water Supply (Council Managed)
Full plot price(250 sq m)	£37.00	£18.50	£17.00
Half plot price (125 sq m)	£18.50	£9.25	£11.00

In practice, self-managed sites generally apply concessions to all those eligible. With regard to Council managed sites, all people entitled to concessions are granted a 50% discount on the headline price.

The council receives income of around £45k each year and incurs costs associated with administering allotment provision, repairs and maintenance, and carrying out improvements of £178k. This represents a net subsidy of £133k each year.

ISSUES AND OPTIONS

The key issue for the Council is financial sustainability and reducing, or removal altogether the existing subsidy. The Council is therefore considering the following options:

- Option 1:** review prices by applying an increase to all plot holders in proportion to what they currently pay
- Option 2:** review prices by applying an increase to plot holders who currently pay the full rate whilst retaining plot rental levels for those entitled to concessions
- Option 3:** review the management arrangements to seek a third party operator for allotment provision who would determine pricing arrangements and meet all costs associated with provision

It would be necessary regardless of which option is decided to terminate the existing leases with allotment associations. Options 1 and 2 only consider the allotment rental element of the price and not any charges for water which currently meet the cost of provision.

Within each of the available options, the local authority will continue to be the Allotment Authority and would retain land ownership for the majority of the allotment sites. The Council would also determine the allotment pricing structure within Options 1 and 2.

Each option is now considered in turn:

Option 1: review prices by applying an increase to all plot holders in proportion to what they currently pay

It is estimated that the total income generated by allotment plot rental (excluding water charges) is £74k and that there are 3,719 rented plots. There are around 76% of rented plots for which no concession is applicable. The average amount per plot is £24.70 for non-concession holders and £12.35 for concession holders. If the full level of subsidy was to be recovered, then an increase of £133k would be required which equates to almost 179%. The impact of this price increase would mean that non-concession holders would pay an average of £68.82 each year, or £5.73 a month, and concession holders would pay an average of £34.41 or £2.87 a month. Headline plot prices would be as follows:

Rental

	Non-Concession holders	Concession holders	Water Supply (Council Managed)
Full plot price(250 sq m)	£103.07	£51.53	£17.00
Half plot price (125 sq m)	£51.53	£25.77	£11.00

As part of the implementation of this option any increases would take place on a phased basis. It is assumed that the level of rental income retained by the Allotment Association would remain the same and thus the proportion of income would decrease from two-thirds to around 24%. The Council would determine the pricing structure within this available option.

Option 2: review prices by applying an increase to plot holders who currently pay the full rate whilst retaining plot rental levels for those entitled to concessions

The impact of this price increase would mean that non-concession holders would pay an average of £81.41 each year, or £6.87 a month, and concession holders would pay an average of £12.35 or £1.03 a month as at present. Headline plot prices would be as follows:

Rental

	Non-Concession holders	Concession holders	Water Supply (Council Managed)
Full plot price(250 sq m)	£123.43	£18.50	£17.00
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As part of the implementation of this option any increases would take place on a phased basis. It is assumed that the level of rental income retained by the Allotment Association would remain the same and thus the proportion of income would decrease from two-thirds to around 24%. The Council would determine the pricing structure within this available option.

Option 3: review the management arrangements to seek a third party operator for allotment provision who would determine pricing arrangements and meet all costs associated with provision

This option could be considered if all allotments currently managed by Parks and Countryside were managed by a voluntary organisation. If this was the case, then some of the costs associated with administering and maintaining allotments could be saved which in turn would mean a reduction in price increases.

There are certain fixed costs associated with allotment provision such as water services and rental payments for which the managed body would need to take responsibility and for which it would not be possible to make any savings. Similarly, for repairs and improvements it would be difficult for any operator to make efficiencies.

The Council may opt to reduce the target saving and issue an annual grant to the managing organisation to assist with the financial provision of managing allotments and mitigate price increases.

A third party provider could be an organisation such as the Leeds and District Gardener's Federation or another similar organisation or service provider that can demonstrate allotment expertise. Within this arrangement, the Council would also anticipate a 'Not for Profit' arrangement. However, it is acknowledged that a third party provider would still need to cover their costs and as such would determine the pricing structure for the allotment service provision. It is for these reasons, we are unable to set out any financial detail within this available option.

ALLOTMENTS PROVISION - WHAT DO YOU THINK?

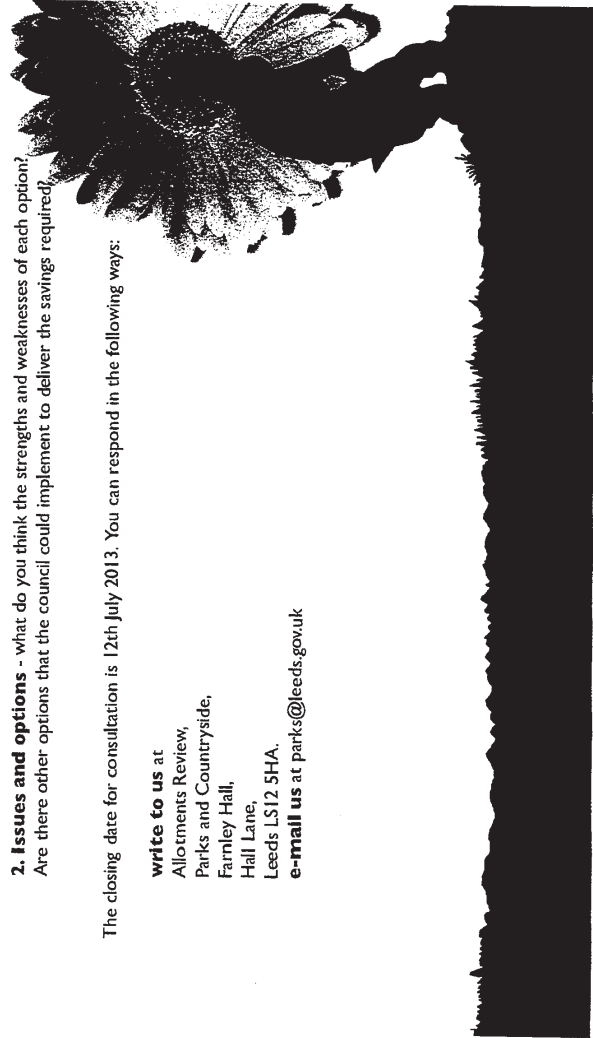
Thank you for reading this document. Now please let us know what you think about the future of allotment provision in Leeds. We have set out above our current thoughts based on the information we have but we believe that local people and organisations have a lot to add to our understanding of the issues and the way forward.

We are interested in your views in general, but the following questions may help:

- 1. The current picture** - is there anything important missing from the description starting on page 3? Is it an accurate picture?
- 2. Issues and options** - what do you think the strengths and weaknesses of each option? Are there other options that the council could implement to deliver the savings required?

The closing date for consultation is 12th July 2013. You can respond in the following ways:

write to us at
Allotments Review,
Parks and Countryside,
Farnley Hall,
Hall Lane,
Leeds LS12 5HA.
e-mail us at parks@leeds.gov.uk



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Allotments Consultation – Frequently Asked Questions

The following table provides a summary of the 2012/13 projected financial position for a full year effect is as follows:

Description	Projected	
	Income £	Expenditure £
Income via allotment rent	44,995	
Expenditure:		
Staffing and administrative		72,331
Water services		10,005
Repairs and maintenance		12,050
Improvements e.g. fencing		47,700
Rental payments		10,000
Grass cutting and hedge trimming (estimated)		25,764
TOTAL	44,995	177,850
NET DEFICIT		132,855

A1

Yes, the first two options look similar but are slightly different. Option 1 assumes a uniform price increase for both concession and non-concession holders in equal proportion, so plot holders in both circumstances would pay more. With option 2, concession holders continue to pay the current rate with the increase only applied to those who are non-concession holders. With both option 1 and 2, the value of rental income retained by allotment associations at self-administered sites would remain the same.

A2

Currently self-administered sites are allowed to retain two thirds of the rental income. One third comes to the Council. The rental income retained by the self-administered site is used to cover costs associated with running the day to day management of the site and for any development work to enhance the site.

A3

You don't have to choose any of the three options as it is important for us to listen to your views. If you don't like any of the three options being put forward, tell us why or you could provide an alternative proposal altogether.

A4

The Council have not made any decision as to the future provision of allotments. This is a genuine consultation process and it is important for us to hear your views. If you feel that there are other options you think we haven't considered then tell us.

A5

A6	<p>If the Council decided to outsource then the organisation would be accountable to the Council under the terms and conditions of the contract.</p>
A8	<p>With regard to city controlled sites, the Council is responsible for managing the site and carrying out improvements. With regard to self administered sites, for the most part it is up to the allotment association to determine how funds are allocated to carry out improvements, although some of the current budget is also used to assist self-administered sites in for example the provision of drainage work.</p>
A9	<p>No decision has been made and before the Council would even consider this option it would have to be satisfied it was within the public's interest to do so and that the organisation would be a not for profit organisation.</p>
A10	<p>There are no guarantees which is why we have not been able to give any financial detail within option 3, however any future price rise would be retained as part of the proposal.</p>
Q11	<p>At present the current price for a 250m2 full size plot is £37 per year or put another way is equivalent to .71p a week. This is not a sustainable position for the Council, therefore this will go towards removing the deficit. However, it would allow the service to fill the current vacancy whereby another officer would help towards more site inspections and evictions across city controlled sites and to work towards reducing waiting list numbers. It would also assist other sites to become self-administered and to focus more on community engagement and grant funding applications.</p>
A13	<p>The Consultation deadline has been extended until 31 July 2013. It is important that you submit your comments in writing to parks@leeds.gov.uk or write to us at Leeds City Council Parks and Countryside, Farnley Hall, Hall Lane, Leeds, LS12 3HA.</p>