

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.

14th January 2013.