

**Report of Chief Officer Parks and Countryside**

**Report to Safer and Stronger Communities Scrutiny Board**

**Date: 12<sup>th</sup> November 2012**

**Subject: Allotments**

Are specific electoral Wards affected? If relevant, name(s) of Ward(s):	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Are there implications for equality and diversity and cohesion and integration?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Is the decision eligible for Call-In?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Does the report contain confidential or exempt information? If relevant, Access to Information Procedure Rule number: Appendix number:	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No

**Summary of main issues**

1. Demand for allotments has increased over recent years and the waiting list as at October 2011 was 1,858 with the highest in the Inner North East, Outer North West, Outer West and Inner North West areas.
2. The Open Space, Sport and Recreation Assessment for Leeds identifies the need to increase the quantity of allotments to meet demand from 0.19 hectares per 1000 population (average current provision) to 0.24 hectares, equivalent to bringing nearly 39 hectares more allotment land into use.
3. Since 2007, 310 plots have been brought into use, with a further 22 planned in the near future, overall equivalent to nearly 8 hectares of allotment land, thus making an important contribution to meeting the increased demand for plots.
4. The 'Feed Leeds' network was launched on 20<sup>th</sup> September, bringing together a number of partners to promote and support food growing and improve the environment by bringing unused land into use and promoting sustainable food sources. The Council will seek to support the 'Feed Leeds' initiative by identifying parks land that can be used for allotments, incorporate ornamental food growing into existing public displays, encourage food growing via the plant nursery and create a 'Community Food Growing' officer post.
5. With regard to identifying new land for allotment use, where appropriate, Parks and Countryside would instruct investigation as to whether Council owned land is appropriate. In relevant areas, responsibility lies with Parish and Town Councils as allotment authorities to develop further land for allotment use.

**Recommendations**

6. That members note the content of the report.

## 1 Purpose of this report

- 1.1 This report sets out the context of allotment provision in Leeds with particular reference to demand for food growing space. It discusses options and related issues in providing additional allotment space to fulfil demand.

## 2 Background information

- 2.1 The Open Space, Sport and Recreation Assessment for Leeds published in July 2011 identified a total of 143 allotment sites in Leeds covering 145 hectares. There were 35 of these in private ownership, leaving 108 in Leeds City Council ownership. There are currently 97 allotment sites in use under the overall management of Parks and Countryside, although the owner of Reservoir allotment site in Rothwell has given notice to quit to secure vacant possession by February 2013. Almost 63% of these sites (61) are self administered by allotment associations, who are voluntary organisations who promote allotment gardening locally as well as administer plot allocation and deal with other management issues on each site. The Council seeks to encourage and support the formation of allotment associations to self administer allotment sites at every opportunity. The remaining 36 sites not self administered are directly managed by Parks and Countryside.
- 2.2 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:
- § Full plot (250 sq m): £37.00  
§ Half plot (125 sp m): £18.50
- 2.3 On sites managed directly by Parks and Countryside, plots with water supply are an extra £17 per year for each full plot and £11 per year for each half plot. Water charges at self administered allotment sites may be different to these charges.
- 2.4 The following table shows the financial position for allotment provision based on a projected full year end spend:

Description	Projected	
	Income £	Expenditure £
<b>Income</b> via allotment rent	44,995	
<b>Expenditure:</b>		
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
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>44,995</b>	<b>177,850</b>
<b>NET DEFICIT</b>		<b>132,855</b>

### 3 Main issues

- 3.1 Demand for allotments has increased over recent years and there are waiting lists in some areas of the city as illustrated in the following table as at October 2011.

Area Committee	Waiting List
Inner East	74
Inner North East	337
Inner North West	262
Inner South	28
Inner West	196
Outer East	197
Outer North East	4
Outer North West	307
Outer South	186
Outer West	267
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,858</b>

Table 1: Waiting List Data by Area Committee as at October 2011

- 3.2 From this data it can be observed that there are waiting lists in some areas of the city particularly in the Inner North East, Outer North West, Outer West and Inner North West areas.
- 3.3 The Open Space, Sport and Recreation Assessment for Leeds identifies the need to increase the quantity of allotments to meet demand from 0.19 hectares per 1000 population (average current provision) to 0.24 hectares, equivalent to bringing nearly 39 hectares more allotment land into use, compared to the 145 hectares identified in paragraph 2.1.
- 3.4 There is no capital funding currently allocated to provide additional allotment space. However, the Council is keen to support opportunities to bring more allotment plots into use, and indeed to bring whole sites into use where this can be accommodated. Since 2007, a total of 225 plots at 18 sites have been prepared and offered for rental (or are in process) as set out in the following table:

Site	No. of Plots
Bandstand, Meanwood Road	6
Bickerdike, Kippax	3
Bridge Street, Morley	6
Calverley	3
Cave Lane, East Ardsley	12
Cobden Road, Wortley	22
Common Lane	36
Old Lane, Beeston	2
Osmondthorpe	20
Red Road, East End Park	9
Roundhay, Soldiers Field	14
Shafton Lane, Holbeck	20
St. Annes, Headingley	3
Stanningley Road	6
Tofts Road, Pudsey	6
Victoria Pit, Rothwell	25

Site	No. of Plots
Victory Gardens	30
Westfields, Allerton Bywater	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>225</b>

**Table 2: Plots brought back into use in 2007**

- 3.5 In addition to the above, a total of 140 plots at 5 new sites have been prepared and offered for rental (or are in process), as set out below:

Site	No. of Plots
Brookfields, Rodley	22
Church Lane, Kirkstall	75
Laith Gardens, Cookridge	8
Springfield St, Rothwell	29
Westover Road, Bramley	6
<b>Total</b>	<b>140</b>

**Table 3: Sites brought into use since 2007**

- 3.6 Most of these proposals have been funded by S106 funding, Area Committees or individual ward members. From the tables above, 310 plots have been brought into use, with a further 22 planned in the near future, overall equivalent to nearly 8 hectares of allotment land, thus making an important contribution to meeting the increased demand for plots.
- 3.7 More generally, site improvements tend to be done by 'working parties' made up of existing plot holders. More recently, Parks and Countryside have encouraged more people to take part in volunteering, and for example the service have supervised volunteers at Woodhouse Moor refurbishing the allotment, and Lady Pit Lane where additional site security has been undertaken. There are further opportunities which are being considered to involve local businesses in improving allotments and bringing more plots into use through organisations such as Leeds Ahead and Business in the Community.
- 3.8 The annual allotment competition was originally established in 1917 and is organised by the Leeds and District Gardeners Federation in partnership with Leeds City Council, and entries are taken from all allotment site across the city. Judging takes place in July each year and there has been an increase in plots entered over the years. Whole sites and individual plots can be entered for the award, and prizes are awarded for best sites and plots and also best newcomer and best plot on a city controlled site.
- 3.9 Allotments are clearly a key element to support community food growing. However, in recent years a lot of interest has been developed in wider community food growing projects. 'Feed Leeds' was launched on 20<sup>th</sup> September, bringing together a number of partners to promote and support food growing. The Council is coordinating the network, bringing together local community groups, landowners, food outlets and schools to develop projects to grow communal food. It is hoped the network will also offer health benefits in terms of encouraging people to follow healthier lifestyles and balanced diets, and improving the environment by bringing unused land into use and promoting sustainable food sources.

- 3.10 The Council will support this initiative in a number of ways:
- § Where there are existing allotment sites in parks then opportunities to extend these allotments will be considered to provide more growing space to meet demand in consultation with local ward members and community groups.
  - § In 2013 there is a plan to incorporate beds that will combine flowers, herbs and vegetables to support and encourage community food growing into existing public displays. Initially the focus will be on suitable community parks where there is a full-time gardener.
  - § The Council's plant nursery, based at Red Hall is growing fruit and vegetables, (including tomatoes, chillies, lettuce, peas/sweet peas, lettuces, and sweetcorn), fruit bushes and herbs with a view to encouraging more community food growing.
  - § The nursery is also producing a starter pack with seeds, pots, compost and information on growing, as well as demonstrations on how fruit and vegetables can be combined with non-edible plants to provide aesthetically pleasing displays.
  - § Parks and Countryside intend to create a 'Community Food Growing Officer' post to manage allotments and generally raise the profile of allotments and food growing as well as support and encourage specific community food growing projects across the city.
- 3.11 It is hoped that developing the 'Feed Leeds' food growing network will increase awareness of all the options available to people interested in food growing, including renting allotments and developing more land for allotment use.
- 3.12 Where the need for allotments is identified this would normally be met by encouraging use of existing allotments, extending existing sites or utilising unused allotment sites. Where appropriate, Parks and Countryside would firstly instruct investigation as to whether Council owned land available in the vicinity is appropriate in terms of the nature and location of the land, term of existing use and future potential use, and such as planning considerations.
- 3.13 If no Council owned land is considered appropriate then in exceptional circumstances consideration could be given to acquisition of land, but this requires the cooperation of the prospective vendor, and land acquisition fees can add considerably to costs. Funding for new sites, including the capital cost of acquisition, laying out, and management would need to be identified.
- 3.14 From a legal perspective, Leeds City Council is not the allotment authority for the whole of the metropolitan district. Therefore in relevant areas, responsibility lies with Parish and Town Councils as allotment authorities to develop further land for allotment use.
- 3.15 Where Council owned land is identified by a Parish or Town Council as being suitable, the Council is prepared to investigate whether it can be made available for allotment use on appropriate terms depending on the nature and location of the land, terms of existing use and future potential use and planning considerations. However, responsibility for funding the proposed arrangement

and obtaining any planning or other consents and laying out the site will rest with the Parish or Town Council.

- 3.16 Where privately owned land is identified, the Council would not normally anticipate being involved unless the Parish or Town Council sought to engage its services. All funding would be the responsibility of the Parish or Town Council as allotment authority.

## **4 Corporate Considerations**

### **4.1 Consultation and Engagement**

- 4.1.1 This report is in response to a request from the Safer and Stronger Communities Scrutiny Board for discussion at the board meeting in November. The Allotments Working Group is a consultative group representing allotment holders across Leeds. The group currently meet on a quarterly basis to discuss issues relating to allotments and allotment use. Minutes of these meetings are recorded and published on the Leeds City Council Allotments page.

### **4.2 Equality and Diversity / Cohesion and Integration**

- 4.2.1 In order to gain an understanding of the demographic profile of allotment users, around 4,000 questionnaires were sent out during the summer of 2012 to all plot holders who currently have an allotment and to those on waiting lists. 629 completed questionnaire were returned representing a 16% response. With regard to disability, the percentages stated are with regard to the 26.9% who did state a disability. The following summarise the profile of allotment users:

<b>Gender</b>	<b>Male</b>	59.4%
	<b>Female</b>	40.6%
<b>Age</b>	<b>18-25</b>	0.5%
	<b>26-35</b>	8.8%
	<b>36-65</b>	57.3%
	<b>66-75</b>	25.9%
	<b>76+</b>	7.5%
<b>Stated a disability</b>	<b>Physical impairment</b>	11.4%
	<b>Sensory impairment</b>	12.6%
	<b>Mental health impairment</b>	26.3%
	<b>Learning disabilities</b>	6.6%
	<b>Long standing illness</b>	43.1%
<b>Relationship Status</b>	<b>Married</b>	61.6%
	<b>Co-habiting</b>	12.1%
	<b>Civil Partnership</b>	1.8%
	<b>Single</b>	18.6%
	<b>Other</b>	5.9%
<b>Ethnic Origin</b>	<b>White</b>	96.2%
	<b>Asian</b>	0.8%
	<b>Black, African or Caribbean</b>	2.1%
	<b>Mixed race</b>	0.9%
<b>Religion / belief</b>	<b>Christian</b>	62.4%
	<b>No religion</b>	32.6%
	<b>Other religion / belief</b>	5.0%

<b>Sexual Orientation</b>	<b>Hetro / Straight</b>	93.7%
	<b>Lesbian / gay woman</b>	2.8%
	<b>Gay man</b>	1.6%
	<b>Bisexual</b>	1.9%

### **4.3 Council policies and City Priorities**

- 4.3.1 Planning Policy Guidance Note 17 (PPG17), 'Planning for Open Space Sport and Recreation' was published in July 2002. PPG17 required local planning authorities to carry out an assessment of needs and opportunities to set locally derived standards for the provision of open space, sport and recreation facilities. The Leeds assessment was prepared to fulfil the requirements of PPG17, and chapter 8 of the study (available on the Council's website) concerns allotments.
- 4.3.2 In the Parks and Green Space Strategy (2009) allotments are noted as a way of providing opportunities for those people who wish to grow their own produce as part of the long-term promotion of sustainability, health and social inclusion. Additionally, they are recognised as promoting healthy eating, recreation, exercise and links with education.

### **4.4 Resources and value for money**

- 4.4.1 The net cost to the Council of allotment provision is projected at £133k.
- 4.4.2 In exceptional circumstances consideration could be given to acquisition of land, but this requires the cooperation of the prospective vendor, and land acquisition fees can add considerably to costs. Funding for new sites, including the capital cost of acquisition, laying out, management would need to be identified. In relevant areas, responsibility lies with Parish and Town Councils as allotment authorities to develop further land for allotment use.

### **4.5 Legal Implications, Access to Information and Call In**

- 4.5.1 Leeds City Council is not the allotment authority for the whole of the metropolitan district. Therefore in relevant areas, responsibility lies with Parish and Town Councils as allotment authorities to develop further land for allotment use.

### **4.6 Risk Management**

- 4.6.1 There are no specific risks identified with this report.

## **5 Conclusions**

- 5.1 Demand for allotments has increased over recent years and the waiting list as at October 2011 was 1,858 with the highest in the Inner North East, Outer North West, Outer West and Inner North West areas.
- 5.2 The Open Space, Sport and Recreation Assessment for Leeds identifies the need to increase the quantity of allotments to meet demand from 0.19 hectares per 1000 population (average current provision) to 0.24 hectares, equivalent to bringing nearly 39 hectares more allotment land into use.

- 5.3 Since 2007, 310 plots have been brought into use, with a further 22 planned in the near future, overall equivalent to nearly 8 hectares of allotment land, thus making an important contribution to meeting the increased demand for plots.
- 5.4 The 'Feed Leeds' network was launched on 20<sup>th</sup> September, bringing together a number of partners to promote and support food growing and improve the environment by bringing unused land into use and promoting sustainable food sources. The Council will seek to support the 'Feed Leeds' initiative by identifying parks land that can be used for allotments, incorporate ornamental food growing into existing public displays, encourage food growing via the plant nursery and create a 'Community Food Growing' officer post.
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## **6 Recommendations**

- 6.1 That members note the content of the report.

## **7 Background documents<sup>1</sup>**

- 7.1 The Open Space, Sport and Recreation Assessment for Leeds.
- 7.2 Parks and Green Space strategy.

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<sup>1</sup> The background documents listed in this section are available to download from the Council's website, unless they contain confidential or exempt information. The list of background documents does not include published works.