

Report of Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods

Report to Executive Board

Date: 15th February 2013

**Subject: Deputation To Council Leeds And District Gardeners' Federation
Regarding Growing Your Own Food In Leeds And The Costs To The
Council Of The Allotment Model**

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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input 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. This report considers the matters arising from the deputation to Council on the 14th November 2012 by the Leeds and District Gardeners' Federation regarding the role that the Council plays in the 'Feed Leeds' initiative.
2. The deputation raised the following concerns, themed as follows.
3. ***The level of resource allocation from Parks and Countryside to support the Feed Leeds initiative.*** The Feed Leeds network is now established and a committee has been formed. The Council is not represented on the committee, but Parks and Countryside provide some outreach support and there is a Community Food Growing Officer role planned to manage allotments and promote allotment gardening as well as help deliver the relevant elements of the Feed Leeds initiative in parks.
4. ***Using public parks for fruit and vegetable growing.*** There is a proposal to develop ornamental food growing beds in community parks which will be undertaken by replacing bedding plants with ornamental edibles. A competition is also underway to design an edible flower bed for planting outside the Civic Hall and the nursery has provided materials and food growing starter packs for sale.
5. ***The need to promote allotment gardening.*** In addition to activity conducted as part of the Feed Leeds initiative, there are a number of other promotional activities that are more specific to allotment gardening. The Leeds City Council website has useful

information and links, with an allotment competition organised annually. There are also a number of organisations that have allotment plots which help promote allotment gardening to children and the wider community.

6. ***The need to allocate more land for allotment gardening.*** Since 2007, 343 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.

Recommendations

7. That Executive Board note the contents of the report in response to the deputation from the Leeds And District Gardeners' Federation.

1 Purpose of this report

- 1.1 This report considers the matters arising from the deputation to Council on the 14th November 2012 by the Leeds and District Gardeners' Federation regarding the role that the Council plays in the 'Feed Leeds' initiative.

2 Background information

- 2.1 A report to Executive Board in May 2012 highlighted the fact that there are a number of organisations in Leeds who support and undertake food growing, harvest produce or process food for sale. It highlighted in particular the importance of locally grown and distributed food to health, the environment and the local economy. Executive Board supported the planned development of a community food growing network in Leeds.
- 2.1 The Leeds and District Gardener's Federation made a deputation to full council on 14th November that raised the following concerns:
- The level of resource allocation from Parks and Countryside to support the Feed Leeds initiative
 - Using public parks for fruit and vegetable growing
 - The need to promote allotment gardening
 - The need to allocate more land for allotment gardening

3 Main issues

- 3.1 In order to address the concerns raised in the deputation speech, this report considers each of the concerns outlined above.

3.2 The level of resource allocation from Parks and Countryside to support the Feed Leeds initiative

- 3.2.1 Feed Leeds is a network of individuals and organisations working in partnership to promote and support local food growing for its social, economic, environmental and health benefits. It promotes sustainability, healthy living and social cohesion through local food growing and consumption. The agreed aims are as follows:
- To increase food growing in Leeds
 - To increase the consumption of locally grown food in Leeds
- 3.2.2 It is working to achieve these aims by promoting local food growing and consumption through activities such as events, competitions, establishing a website and linking up with national initiatives. In addition Feed Leeds will seek to provide information and advice on how to grow food, find land available for food growing, join local community food growing projects and where to buy locally grown food.

- 3.2.3 Feed Leeds was launched in September 2012 with funding support via the Social and Economic Research Council (through Leeds University). The event was attended by around 70 people, involved guest speakers from Brighton University, Leeds University and Leeds City Council. As part of the launch, an orchard was planted at Potternewton Park with local school gardening group 'New Shoots', and there was a tour of Chapeltown's community gardens guided by a volunteer local food grower from the area.
- 3.2.4 Membership of Feed Leeds involves representation from the following organisations:

Organisation / Project	Description
Back2front project	Led by NHS Leeds and based in East Leeds it aims to encourage more local food growing, particularly in the front gardens of back to back houses.
Create Foundation	A social enterprise offering catering and food services and work based mentoring programmes.
Edible Cities	Local business offering gardening design, consultancy, planting and landscaping themed around permaculture.
Environment Forum	Supports third sector environment organisations and disseminates local environment news.
Federation of City Farms and Community gardens	Supports, represents and promotes community-managed farms and gardens.
Groundwork Leeds	Work all over Leeds doing hands-on development of projects including community food growing with various organisations such as schools and homeless charities depending on availability of funding.
Leeds City Council	Representatives from Parks and Countryside, education, libraries, museums, markets, sustainability team, ALMOs, planning.
Leeds Metropolitan University	Landscape Design.
Leeds University	School of Geography.
New Shoots gardening group	Local school gardening group.
NHS Leeds	In support of the food strategy and linked with the benefits of physical activity.
Northern Fruit Group	Membership based group of individuals interested in the growing of fruit.
Permaculture Association	A national organisation based in Leeds.
RHS	Royal Horticultural Society
Roundhay Environmental Action Partnership	Community organisation that has set up a local farmers' market and other projects.
Space2	A neighbourhood facility based in Seacroft.
The Urbal Fix	Led by a landscape architect based at Leeds Metropolitan University investigating how community food growth can be implemented within the city.

Organisation / Project	Description
TCV	The Conservation Volunteers which has a food growing project at Hollybush in Kirkstall.
Urban Harvest	A voluntary group who aim to harvest and process otherwise unused fruit from trees around Leeds.
Voluntary Action Leeds	Provides support and advice to third sector organisations and community groups and helps people to volunteer across Leeds.

3.2.5 A committee was formed in November 2012, with committee members as follows:

- Chairperson: a representative from Permaculture UK
- Vice Chair: a representative from the Trust for Conservation Volunteers (TCV)
- Secretary: a representative from the University of Leeds / Urban Food Justice
- Publicity Officer: a representative from Leeds Metropolitan University
- Committee member: a representative from Roundhay Environmental Action Partnership

3.2.6 Further applications have been made by 3 other volunteers to become committee members, considered at a meeting of the Feed Leeds partnership at the end of January 2013. Outreach staff from Parks and Countryside were involved in establishing Feed Leeds, but as indicated above, are not represented on the committee.

3.2.7 The University of Leeds has been successful in obtaining funding from the Social and Economic Research Council to carry out a series of workshops aimed at researching and facilitating local food growing. These workshops are supported by Feed Leeds and two workshops have already taken place as follows:

- Land access for food growing
- Urban metabolism and soil rehabilitation. Viable food growing solutions in former industrial cities.

3.2.8 Further workshops are planned as follows:

- Public space, urban aesthetics, edible landscapes.
- The challenges of promoting community cohesion and overcoming urban food deserts through community gardens and landshare.
- The economic viability and long term sustainability of urban agriculture
- Food system models: learning from good practices
- Leeds city region food growers fair/Spring event
- Conclusions and presentation of outcomes

3.2.9 There are some practical examples where the Feed Leeds network is already developing local food growing and production. An organisation has been identified that can turn orchard apples at Lotherton Hall Estate to cider and juice

that is now being sold in the shop. A new friends of group 'Friends of Allerton Grange Fields' have been inspired to create an orchard on their site. Following a request for advice on suitable fruit trees, several members of Feed Leeds have offered to visit the site and provide them with ideas on what would grow most successfully.

3.2.10 Feed Leeds partners are planning to provide specialist training for Parks and Countryside staff on managing fruit trees in parks, thus ensuring newly planted fruit trees can develop to their maximum potential.

3.2.11 There are further plans via the Feed Leeds committee for the development of the network which include the following:

- Formally constitute *Feed Leeds*
- Develop a marketing and communications plan
- Conduct an inventory of local food growing projects
- Continue to increase membership
- Develop the website
- Create a demonstration local community food growing project in Leeds

3.2.12 Parks and Countryside continue to support Feed Leeds via outreach activity and there is a Community Food Growing Officer role planned to manage allotments and promote allotment gardening as well as help deliver the relevant elements of the Feed Leeds initiative in parks.

3.3 Using public parks for fruit and vegetable growing

3.3.1 There is a proposal to develop ornamental food growing beds in community parks. This will be undertaken by replacing bedding plants with ornamental edibles. This will not cost any more, but will provide demonstration beds that show how food growing can be incorporated into amenity displays. It is anticipated that this will encourage more people to grow ornamental edibles in their garden that can be eaten, without detracting from the aesthetic appeal and recreational use of their space. A competition is also underway to design an edible flower bed for which the winning entries will be planted outside the Civic Hall. To encourage beginners, the nursery has also provided materials and food growing starter packs for sale.

3.3.2 Where there is opportunity, existing allotment sites will be extended to provide further allotment gardening opportunities to fulfil demand. This could be in existing parks, and where this is appropriate, traditional allotment gardens would be provided. Community food growing will also be considered in local parks where this is appropriate and where a suitable community group wishes to undertake such a project. Any food growing would be carried out under the supervision of Parks and Countryside officers, and would be in keeping with the character and amenity value of the park.

3.4 The need to promote allotment gardening

- 3.4.1 In addition to activity conducted as part of the Feed Leeds initiative, there are a number of other promotional activities that are more specific to allotment gardening. The Leeds City Council website has a page dedicated to allotments which provides useful information and links to the Leeds and District Gardeners Federation, allotment associations and the National Society of Allotment and Leisure Gardeners.
- 3.4.2 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.
- 3.4.3 An allotment training day was held at Pudsey Civic Hall in February 2012. The aim of this training was to invite all new committees of self managed sites and new site representatives from city controlled sites to help them with the running of the site. However, all committees were invited and a number of established committees attended the event. The speaker was from the National Society of Allotment and Leisure Gardeners and a handout was given out at the end of the day. The feedback from this event was that it had been very informative.
- 3.4.4 In addition to the many individual ploholders throughout the city, a number of organisations also have allotment plots which help promote allotment gardening to children and the wider community. These include from the education sector, Thomas Danby College, Leeds East Academy, 6 primary schools and 2 nurseries, along with Swarthmore Education Centre, a centre for lifelong learning offering community, education and leisure based part time courses.
- 3.4.5 Adult Social Services have 2 plots used by Bramley Day Services and Moor End Day Services. Organisations that promote health also recognise the importance of allotments and Active for Life, part of Leeds Cardigan Centre whose aim is to improve the health of local people working with communities in the Burley, Hyde Park, Little London, Woodhouse and Kirkstall areas have an allotment plot. Other organisations that have allotment plots include those involved in mental health services, including Seacroft Hospital, work with homeless people and a range of other community and charity groups including the Bangladeshi Community Centre.

3.5 The need to allocate more land for allotment gardening

- 3.5.1 Demand for allotments has increased over recent years and as indicated in the deputation speech there are around 1,500 on waiting lists. 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 are 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, of which 60 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 37 sites not self administered are directly managed by Parks and Countryside.

3.5.2 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, compared to the 145 hectares identified above.

3.5.3 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
Victory Gardens	30
Westfields, Allerton Bywater	2
Total	225

3.5.4 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
Total	140

3.5.5 Most of these proposals have been funded by S106 funding, Area Committees or individual ward members. From the tables above, 343 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 Corporate Considerations

4.6 Consultation and Engagement

4.6.1 Ongoing consultation with allotment holders is via the Allotments Working Group which 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. Consultation has also recently taken place with the citizens panel to identify the views of non-allotment holders.

4.7 Equality and Diversity / Cohesion and Integration

4.7.1 Given that this is a response to a deputation to full council and the content of the deputation, it is not relevant to complete an equality impact assessment.

4.8 Council policies and City Priorities

4.8.1 The content of this report relates to the following priorities from the City Priority Plan:

- Best city for health and wellbeing, in particular *to make sure that people who are the poorest improve their health the fastest.*
- Best city for business, in particular *get more people involved in the city's cultural opportunities and improve the environment through reduced carbon emissions.*
- Best city for communities, in particular *increase a sense of belonging that builds cohesive and harmonious communities.*

4.8.1 It also supports the priority in the Council Business Plan *to improve the quality of Leeds' parks.*

4.9 Resources and value for money

4.9.1 Feed Leeds has brought together a number of partner organisations, projects and initiatives, that has maximised the potential for synergies by pooling expertise and enabling funding opportunities. Parks and Countryside have utilised existing outreach resources to support the development of the Feed Leeds network, and organise a competition. Resources in the nursery have been diverted to support the development of ornamental food growing displays, as well as offering materials for sale.

4.9.2 It should be noted that in the budget report that went to Executive Board in December 2012, reference was made to a review that would place to address the

current level of subsidy of allotment provision. The outcome of this review will form a part of future Executive Board consideration in due course.

4.10 Legal Implications, Access to Information and Call In

4.10.1 This report is in response to a deputation to full Council as requested. There are no issues with access to information. The report is subject to call in.

4.11 Risk Management

4.11.1 There are no significant risks associated with this report.

5 Recommendations

5.1 That Executive Board note the contents of the report in response to the deputation from the Leeds And District Gardeners' Federation.

6 Background documents¹

6.1 None.

¹ 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.