

Wards: All

Allotments Strategy Progress Update

Report by the Director for Communities

1.0 Summary

- 1.1 This report provides an update on the progress made in writing an Allotment Strategy for both Councils.
- 1.2 It also provides information on the work that Officers have started in implementing the proposed actions which will be contained in the strategy.

2.0 Background

- 2.1 Officers have been requested to provide an Allotment Strategy for consideration for approval, which once approved will be used to shape the future management of and opportunities for improvement for both Councils allotment sites.
- 2.2 Work on this strategy has been delayed and is taking longer to complete than anticipated as Officers charged with writing the strategy have also been busy dealing other pressing matters related to the Parks & Foreshore Service.
- 2.3 These have included dealing with traveller incursions; reacting to flooding incidents over the Winter period; helping to facilitate an increasing number of community events; responding to concerns regarding water quality at Brooklands Lake; submitting multiple external funding bids; several meetings with community organisations exploring opportunities for community management of facilities; development of community gardening proposals; and dealing in the Spring and early Summer with the additional pressure placed on the Service by the increased grass growth experienced.
- 2.4 Officers are now proposing that an Allotment Strategy for consideration will be completed in time for the November 2014 meeting.
- 2.5 Discussions have taken place between both Cabinet Members for the Environment and Officers on the allotment sites contained within their portfolios.
- 2.6 The Cabinet Member for the Environment for Adur has worked closely with Officers from the Parks & Foreshore section in a recruitment drive to appoint Overseers from existing plot holders to provide cover for all of Adur's allotment sites. This recruitment drive has proved to be successful with a further 7 people coming forward to fill Overseer vacancies. Officers will continue to seek Overseers for the remaining Adur sites still without an Overseer. A framework exercise to agree

renumeration to each individual Overseer based on the number of plots managed has now been completed and will be subject to a separate report to Adur's Cabinet Member – Environment in the near future for approval.

- 2.7 A recent tour of all Adur allotment sites with the Cabinet Member- Environment and an Adur allotment representative has led to a list being compiled of areas for improvement on the sites. A capital bid for 2015/16 has been submitted to fund some of the improvements identified as being needed at Williams Road. These include pathway remedial works, creation of raised beds for disabled plot holders and renovation of brick built plot holder sheds. It has also provided a greater understanding of what is required to be included in the strategy to benefit Adur allotment plot holders.
- 2.8 In Worthing, the self-management trial at West Tarring allotment site which was started in October 2013 has been considered to be a great success by both the plot holders and also the Council. The plot holders have demonstrated that they have the key skills and commitment required to not only take over the day to day responsibility for the site but have also carried out considerable improvements to the site's infrastructure and general appearance.
- 2.9 The Council has also benefited through providing a greatly reduced grounds maintenance and administrative service for West Tarring. The financial savings in this outweighs the loss in rent received.
- 2.10 Under the direction of Worthing's Cabinet Member – Environment, Officers have been working closely with the elected Executive from West Tarring allotments and Overseers representing the other 7 Worthing allotment sites to work towards the implementation of self-management for all Worthing allotment sites by October 2015.
- 2.11 To achieve this, an All Sites Working Group has been set up to agree a framework for consideration by Worthing plot holders on whether they wish to follow West Tarring's example and become self-managed from October 2015.
- 2.12 It is expected that the self-management framework for all sites will be completed by January 2015, with a vote for the other 7 sites on whether to opt for self-management to take place in January 2015.

3.0 Proposals

- 3.1 It is proposed that Officers complete the Allotment Strategy for consideration by this Committee in November 2014.
- 3.2 It is proposed that the process continues on recruiting Overseers for all Adur Allotment sites.
- 3.3 It is proposed that All Sites Working Group continues to develop the framework for the self-management of the remaining 7 Worthing allotment sites.
- 3.4 It is proposed to report back to this Committee on the progress of the above 3 proposals when considered appropriate.

4.0 Legal

4.1 There are no powers or legal consideration arising from this progress report.

5.0 Financial implications

5.1 There are no direct financial implications arising from this progress report.

6.0 Recommendation

6.1 That the Committee approves the proposals put forward in this report.

Local Government Act 1972

Background Papers:

No background papers

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Schedule of Other Matters

1.0 Council Priority

1.1 The actions detailed in this report meet the Council's following priorities

1.2 Adopt more sustainable ways of delivering services.

1.3 Through greater community involvement, the Councils will be able to develop a more sustainable way of delivering its allotment services.

1.4 Work actively together in partnership to deliver cost effective services whilst retaining separate identities and seek to extend partnerships with others.

1.5 The partnership with Worthing Allotment Management is a great example of how the Council has managed to continue to discharge its statutory duty to provide allotments where there is a demonstrable demand for its provision through greater community involvement and empowerment.

1.6 Keeping Council Tax increases low.

1.7 The actions contained within the report will produce revenue savings through reduced Councils administrative and grounds maintenance costs going forward via transferring responsibilities and duties to the plot holders through self-management in Worthing and the increased direct involvement of Overseers in Adur.

2.0 Specific Action Plans

2.1 Matter considered and no issues identified.

3.0 Sustainability Issues

3.1 Matter considered and no issues identified.

4.0 Equality Issues

4.1 Matter considered and no issues identified.

5.0 Community Safety Issues (Section 17)

5.1 More direct active involvement on the allotment sites by the Overseers and plot holders will contribute to the reduction of crime and anti-social behaviour taking place on allotment sites.

6.0 Human Rights Issues

6.1 Matter considered and no issues identified.

7.0 Reputation

7.1 Matter considered and no issues identified.

8.0 Consultations

8.1 Consultation has taken with place with Allotment Overseers in Adur and also Worthing Allotment Management (WAM) for West Tarring and Overseers for Worthing's other allotment sites.

8.2 The results of this consultation will be used in conjunction with the Cabinet Member's for Environment direction to help shape the Allotments Strategy to be presented for approval.

9.0 Risk Assessment

9.1 Matter considered and no issues identified.

10.0 Health & Safety Issues

10.1 Matter considered and no issues identified.

11.0 Procurement Strategy

11.1 Matter considered and no issues identified.

12.0 Partnership Working

12.1 This report contains information on the greater community involvement that the both Cabinet Members for the Environment and Officers are seeking to develop for both the current and future management of allotment sites in Adur & Worthing.