



Report to: Environment Committee, 27th October 2020

Report of: Corporate Director - Place

Subject: ALLOTMENTS REVIEW

1. Recommendation

- 1.1 That an independent organisation is commissioned to help the City Council review the purpose and management of allotments with recommendations brought back to the Committee in March 2021.**
- 1.2 That authority is delegated to the Corporate Director Place in consultation with the Chair and Vice Chair of Environment Committee to agree the scope of the review.**

1.2 Background

- 2.1 Allotments form a very important element of Worcester's green space and are community assets owned by the City Council for the benefit of all residents. Many studies have suggested that access to green space, including parks, allotments, playgrounds and residential greenery supports mental and physical wellbeing. Green space can play an important role in fostering social interactions and promote a sense of community that is essential for social cohesion and health.
- 2.2 Worcester City Council works in partnership with the Worcester Allotment Forum to provide allotments around the City. The Council has recognised the Allotment Forum as the collective representative for allotment holders since its formation in 2001. There are currently 26 allotment sites owned by Worcester City Council, 3 of which are self-managed by the tenants with their own allotment association (Hill Avenue, Oldbury Road and Warndon Villages). **Appendix A** provides a map and details of all allotment sites.
- 2.3 An information report outlining how the City Council's allotment service operates was considered by the Committee in October 2019. The report noted that officers were doing further work to understand the costs of managing allotments, including income and management costs such as water and the costs of repairs, maintenance and administration.
- 2.4 As part of this work the independent experts will review the purpose of allotments taking into account wider changes and trends in society together with the City Council's own aspirations for allotments now and in the future.

3. Preferred Option

- 3.1 It is recommended that an independent organisation is appointed to undertake a review of the way that allotments are governed and managed including their social, financial and environmental impacts. An important part of the brief will be to provide advice on options and ways of governing and operating allotments to ensure that they continue to be community assets managed to support biodiversity in line with the recent commitment towards bio-diversity at Full Council and remain accessible and available to all.
- 3.2 A key element of the work will be to undertake stakeholder consultation with the Allotment Forum members as well as with plot holders and local members. There is a significant amount of documentation involved in managing allotments, including tenancy agreements, letters and guidance on different aspects of managing plots such as livestock and bonfires, non-cultivation and termination procedures and the Forum has its own Constitution.
- 3.3 This will be an independent review with the organisation undertaking the work able to provide regular communications and report back to both the Council and the Forum with its findings and recommendations. This may require presentations to meetings with officers from the Council, the Allotment Forum and the Council's Environment Committee.
- 3.4 The review presents an opportunity for the City Council to take stock of allotments, and how they support Council priorities in relation to social, economic and environmental benefits. The review will provide benchmarking information and recommendations ensure that allotments are managed in the most appropriate way and that they are being utilised fully.
- 3.5 It is anticipated that a report will be brought back to Environment Committee with the conclusions from the review in March 2021.

1.4 Alternative Options Considered

- 4.1 It is an option to continue with the current arrangements, but there is a risk that improvements may not be realised, and the allotments may not fulfil their potential in terms of contributing to Council priorities.
- 4.2 It is an option for Council officers to undertake the review in house. However, this would not provide the benefit of fresh thinking and an independent perspective and there is insufficient officer capacity currently to undertake the review.

5. Implications

5.1 Financial and Budgetary Implications

- 5.1.1 Quotations have been received for undertaking the work and officers are evaluating the prices and bids in accordance with the Council's procurement procedures. The cost will be in the region of £12,000 and funded from the Transformation Fund Reserve.

5.2 Legal and Governance Implications

5.2.1 The proposed review will assist the Council and the communities of allotment users to gain a better understanding of what the best governance model should be for these important community assets. The benefits of a good governance model will include volunteer recruitment and retention, equality of access, compliance with site specific requirements and general legal requirements, risk management and investment in the sites for future generations.

5.3 Risk Implications

5.3.1 Improving the way in which allotments are managed will help minimise financial, legal and reputational risks.

5.4 Corporate/Policy Implications

5.4.1 It is important for the Council to consider the options for managing allotments and concludes as to the best model and method that meets its social, economic and environmental priorities.

5.5 Equality Implications

5.5.1 The Council would expect all allotment sites to be managed in compliance with the Equality Act 2010 and to be working towards best practice accessibility standards.

5.6 Human Resources Implications

5.6.1 There are no direct Human Resource implications in doing the review. Any implications due to changes in approach will be highlighted in the March report with recommendations around the future management of allotments.

5.7 Health and Safety Implications

5.7.1 It is extremely important that allotments are managed well in terms of ensuring health and safety for allotment users and visitors. Regular inspections are undertaken by a Council officer and the site reps also have a role in reporting issues and monitoring sites to ensure that they are maintained in accordance with agreements.

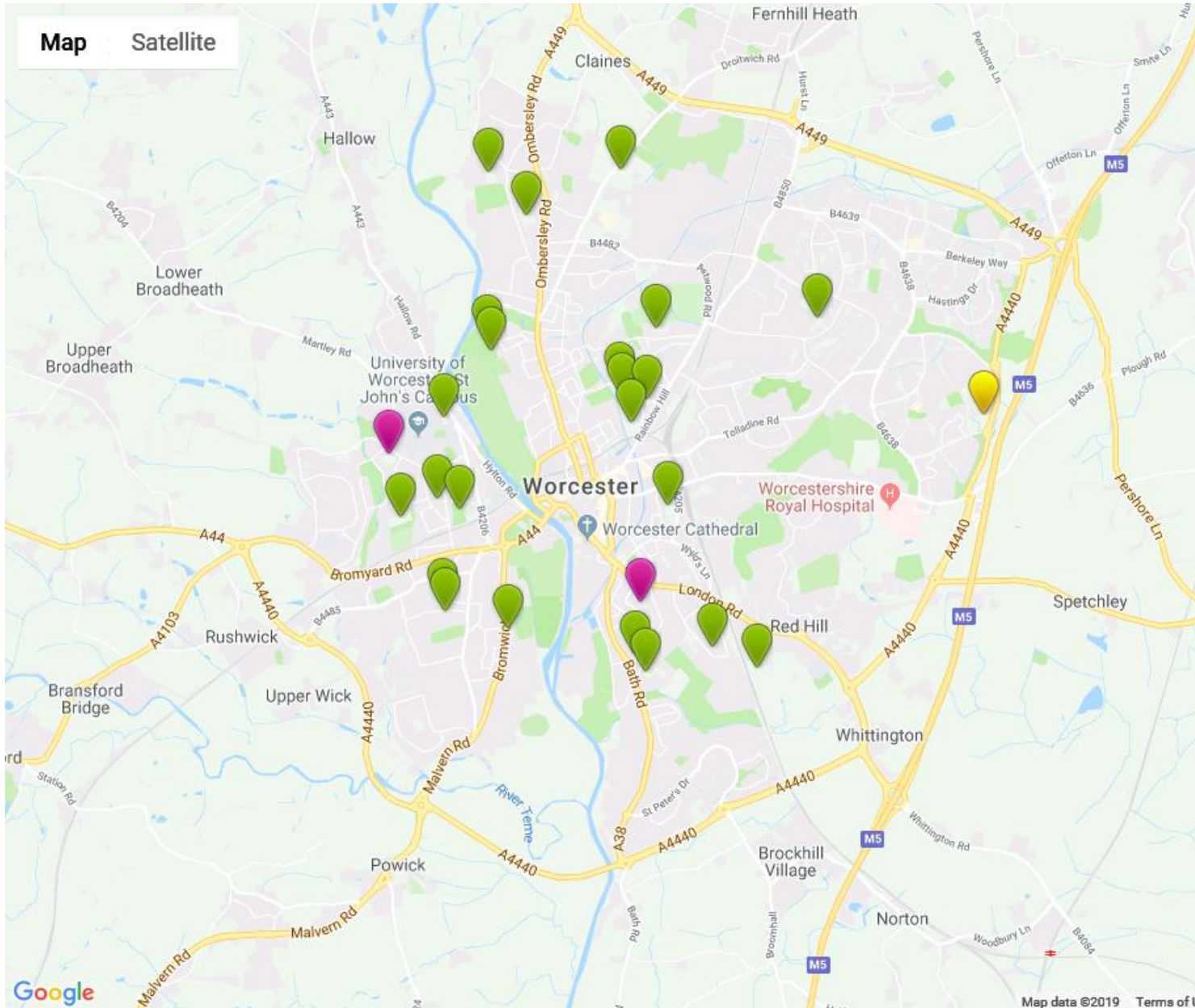
5.8 Social, Environmental and Economic Implications

5.8.1 Allotments have a key role in providing green open spaces and a social benefit. This has been particularly highlighted and important this year during the pandemic where allotment holders have valued the opportunity to be outdoors in open space, and also be part of the community spirit that exists amongst allotment sites.

5.8.2 Allotments provide vital patches of green open space within our urban areas that must be well managed to support biodiversity and environmental benefit.

Ward(s): All
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Background Papers: Managing Conservation Areas and Allotments, report to Environment Committee, October 2019

Appendix A1 - Map of allotment sites



Appendix A2 – Details of Allotment sites

Site	Full 1/16 Acre	Half 1/32 Acre	Quarter 1/8 Acre	Raised Bed 8ftx4ft	Area	Description	Post Code
Battenhall Avenue	6	16			City	Off Battenhall Road	WR5 2HN
Bromwich Road	31	17			St Johns	Off Bromwich Road	WR2 4AR
Cherry Street	6	0			City	Between St Dunstans Crescent & Bath Road	WR5 3EB
Comer Avenue	7	13	3		St Johns	Off Comer Avenue	WR2 5HZ
Comer Road	11	25	3	4	St Johns	Off Comer Road	WR2 5HY
Foxwell Street	51	18			City	Off London Road	WR5 2ET
Green Lane	21	11			City	Off Green Lane, near Astwood Cemetery	WR3 8NZ
Henwick Road	6	18			St Johns	Off Henwick Road	WR2 5PD
Hillborough	32	22			City	Between Midland Road & Stanley Road	WR5 1BB
Langdale Drive	6	6			Warndon	Off Langdale Drive	WR4 9GL
Lansdowne Crescent	13	8			City	Off Lansdowne Crescent	WR3 8JE
Lansdowne Road South	33	28			City	Off Lansdowne Road	WR3 8LJ
Northwick Road	44	60			City	Off Northwick Road	WR3 7LT
Old Northwick Lane	17	32			City	Between Lugano Road & Geneva Close	WR3 7LZ
Perdiswell/Droitwich Road	93	17			City	Off Droitwich Road & John Comyn Drive	WR3 7NS
Pitchcroft Lane	4	8			City	Off Pitchcroft Lane	WR1 3JW
Pitmaston	4	14			St Johns	Off Malvern Road	WR2 4JF
Rogers Hill	8				City	Off Lansdowne Crescent	WR3 8JD
The Grove	17	10			City	Off Lansdowne Crescent	WR3 8LX
Timberdine Avenue	23	29		4	City	Timberdine Close, Off Timberdine Avenue	WR5 2XD
Waterworks Road	16	23			City	Off Pitchcroft Lane	WR1 3JP
Winchester Avenue	3	2			St Johns	Off Winchester Avenue	WR2 4JF
Windsor Avenue	58	18			St Johns	Off Buck Street or Bromyard Road	WR2 5LZ

Appendix A3 – Allotment Fees & Charges 2020/2021

(NB. Fees and charges commence in October each year rather than April)

Plot Size	Concession	Amount
Full	None	£63.00
Full	Advance 25	£47.25
Full	Advance 50	£31.50
Full	Standard	£31.50
Half	None	£31.50
Half	Advance 25	£23.63
Half	Advance 50	£15.75
Half	Standard	£15.75
Quarter	None	£15.75
Quarter	Advance 25	£11.81
Quarter	Advance 50	£7.88
Quarter	Standard	£7.88
Raised Bed	£12.00	£12.00
Raised Bed	Advance 25	£9.00
Raised Bed	Advance 50	£6.00
Raised Bed	Standard	£6.00