



**Report to: Environment Committee, 20<sup>th</sup> July 2021**

**Report of: Corporate Director, Homes and Communities**

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**Subject: REVIEW OF THE DELIVERY AND MANAGEMENT OF ALLOTMENTS**

**1. Recommendation**

**That the Committee:**

- 1.1 Note the contents of this report;**
- 1.2 Approve the recruitment of a dedicated Allotments Officer;**
- 1.3 Note that further engagement with key stakeholders and interested parties has commenced and is ongoing;**
- 1.4 Note that a further report will be presented to this Committee in October 2021 detailing the outcomes of this further work.**

**2. Background**

- 2.1 Following a report to Environment Committee, 25<sup>th</sup> May 2021 (**Appendix 1**) it was agreed that further work in respect of Option 2 (The Council to appoint a dedicated Allotments Officer, with reduced roles for the Forum and the Site Representatives) be undertaken by officers, this further work to include further engagement with key stakeholders and interested parties.
- 2.2 The further engagement with stakeholders is still being progressed but has not yet been completed. Work is currently in progress to update the Tenants Agreement and Handbook, and to create role profiles for the Allotment Officer, Site Representatives and Forum.
- 2.3 Allotment holders have been contacted. They were updated on progress with the allotments review and provided with a redacted copy of the NAS report. Recipients of the report have been invited to feedback any comments or questions they have.
- 2.4 Details of the topics that are to be considered as part of the further consultation were communicated, these are:
  1. A revised tenancy agreement and allotments handbook (these are currently in development);
  2. The roles and responsibilities of Site Representatives and Forum;
  3. How we can improve the management of environmental issues, such as bonfires, water usage etc.

- 2.5 A job description with suggested role responsibilities has been created for the new post of Allotments Officer; some of the key duties and responsibilities of suggested for the role include:

Ensuring that the allotment service is provided safely and that sites are safe and secure, including the managing the safe delivery of improvement and rectification works.

Regular monitoring of sites and liaison with the Site Representatives to ensure that tenants are complying with the terms of the tenancy agreement, are using the sites safely and employing best environmental practices.

Proactively managing customer relations and taking responsibility for ensuring complaints and stakeholder conflicts are dealt with in a courteous and timely manner.

Lead the creation of an 'Issues Log', to record and action site complaints/problems, with ongoing management of that log basis.

Work with Site Representatives to improve the allotment service provision, supporting Site Representative elections and ensuring consistent induction of new Site Representatives.

Supporting Site Representatives and the Forum with the delivery of events and shows. Promotion of the allotment service, including arranging and hosting allotment information days.

Working with Site Representatives and the Forum to design, deliver and monitor green and Bio-diverse initiatives and helping to drive environmental improvements, such as water conservation, on-site composting, waste management etc.

Financial monitoring of the services costs and revenues, identify and supporting capital bids for site improvements and new initiatives

It is recognised that different levels of support and management will likely be required at different sites, given the varying levels of site representative experience and knowledge, it is expected that the successful candidate will be flexible, and capable of adapting their involvement to best suit the requirements of individual sites.

- 2.6 The recruitment of the Allotment Officer has not yet commenced, this recruitment is likely to take some time, given that the successful applicant may have to work a notice period, if currently employed.
- 2.7 Potential options for how a revised fees & charges structure could support the service are still under consideration.

### **3. Preferred Option**

- 3.1 The preferred option is to commence with the recruitment of an Allotment Officer.
- 3.2 To present the updated documentation (Tenancy Agreement, Handbook, suggested roles and responsibility) to a member briefing session (to be arranged) for consideration.
- 3.3 To share the updated documentation with stakeholders, as part of the consultation, for their feedback and comment.

- 3.4 To present options for a revised fees & charges structure to a member briefing session (as 3.2), for consideration.
- 3.5 It is then intended to bring a report back to this Committee in October 2021 detailing the information gathered during consultation with final proposals for the roles and responsibilities of the Allotment Officer, Site Representatives, and the Forum.

#### **4. Alternative Options Considered**

- 4.1 The alternative option considered would be to delay the recruitment of an Allotment Officer until after the completion of the stakeholder consultation. This was discounted as there continues to be a number of challenges and the service would benefit from the introduction of a dedicated resource as soon as possible.

#### **5. Implications**

##### 5.1 Financial and Budgetary Implications

The revenue implications of introducing a dedicated Allotments Officer at PTC level, are currently £32,555 per annum.

##### 5.2 Legal and Governance Implications

No Legal or Governance implications have been identified at this stage, however the next report will detail any proposed changes to the allotments Terms of Reference, roles and responsibilities etc.

##### 5.3 Risk Implications

Improving the way in which allotments are managed will help minimise financial, legal and reputational risks to the Council. It will also ensure a greater chance of plot holders wanting to sustain active use of their plots.

##### 5.4 Corporate/Policy Implications

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.

Improved management of the provision of allotment services will contribute towards the City Plan; helping to sustain and improve City assets whilst also encouraging users to actively participate in outdoor activity contributing to a healthy and active City.

##### 5.5 Equality Implications

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. At this stage no equality implications have been identified but further work will be undertaken ahead of the October 2021 report to ensure no one group of protected characteristics is unduly impacted by any set of proposals put forward.

## 5.6 Human Resources Implications

Creation of a new role, advertising and recruitment of suitable candidate.

## 5.7 Health and Safety Implications

It is extremely important that allotments are well managed in terms of ensuring health and safety for allotment users and visitors. Regular inspections would be undertaken by the Allotments Officer, liaising with the site reps (who would retain a role in reporting issues).

## 5.8 Social, Environmental and Economic Implications

Allotments have a key role in providing green open spaces for exercise and activity. In addition to physical health benefits there is also a mental health benefit and a social benefit from the provision of allotments.

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.

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

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**Background Papers:** Allotments Review Report, Environment Committee  
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