

Executive Member Response To Allotments Scrutiny Review

Date Recommendations agreed by Scrutiny Select Committee:

Environment & Economy Select Committee, Wednesday 18 January 2017
(circulated 28 February 2017)

Date responses should be made by:

Executive responses on behalf of the Executive Portfolio Holders for Environment & Regeneration should be received by Monday 24 April 2017

Recommendations:

1. That Members and officers work with the Stevenage Gardens and Allotments Association and local schools to establish ways to encourage young people to take up gardening and keeping allotments, as a way of widening the demographics of allotment users.

Executive Response:

The emerging strategy includes actions to promote the benefits of allotment gardening for the whole community, and to investigate opportunities for community plots.

Officers will work with SGAA to consider opportunities to encourage involvement with children and young people.

Action: Assistant Director Stevenage Direct Services (To be appointed) & Environmental Performance & Development Manager, Julia Hill	
<p>2. That officers explore the possibility of working with Stevenage Gardens and Allotments Association to explore the possibility of Community Ownership of Allotments.</p> <p>Action: Assistant Director Stevenage Direct Services (To be appointed) & Environmental Performance & Development Manager, Julia Hill</p>	<p>Stevenage Gardens and Allotment Association currently manage the administration function of the allotment service on behalf of the Council. The Executive Members, of the Association, have previously expressed an interest in taking on additional maintenance responsibility in the future, but have concerns about their capacity to do so at the present time.</p> <p>The emerging strategy includes an action for SGAA and officers to develop proposals for future governance opportunities.</p>
<p>3. That officers revisit the current Appeals arrangements to improve and speed up the process.</p> <p>Action: Assistant Director Stevenage Direct Services (To be appointed) & Environmental Performance & Development Manager, Julia Hill</p>	<p>The Appeals process has been reviewed, and revised, by officers and approved by SGAA. The process will now take a maximum of 45 working days.</p>
<p>4. That officers discuss with Stevenage Gardens and Allotments Association ways in which overgrown allotments might be tidied up (without using a cultivator that spread weeds) to encourage new allotment hirers to take on new allotment strips.</p> <p>Action: Assistant Director Stevenage Direct Services (To be appointed) & Environmental Performance & Development Manager, Julia Hill</p>	<p>In 2017 we propose to work with SGAA to provide appropriate materials to use on vacant plots to suppress the weeds. These can be installed by Site Agents and removed as new plot holders start working their plot.</p> <p>This arrangement will be reviewed to assess the effectiveness.</p> <p>SGAA will also promote the availability of similar material at the allotment shop to assist plot holders struggling to keep larger plots weed free.</p>

<p>5. That officers work with the Stevenage Gardens and Allotments Association to consider ways in which new allotment hirers could be trained to gain the basic understanding and knowledge to work an allotment successfully.</p> <p>Action: Assistant Director Stevenage Direct Services (To be appointed) & Environmental Performance & Development Manager, Julia Hill</p>	<p>The emerging strategy includes actions for officers and SGAA to develop an introduction pack to assist new plot holders, and also to develop a series of seasonal advice sheets to assist all plot holders in making the most of their plot.</p>
<p>6. That officers consider what measures can be taken to direct allotment holders to publicly available toilets in the area, as any further onsite provision is not viable within the current budgetary restraints, but better information such as a map would be helpful.</p> <p>Action: Assistant Director Stevenage Direct Services (To be appointed) & Environmental Performance & Development Manager, Julia Hill</p>	<p>Over 56% of allotment sites now have toilet facilities available. Officers will consider the opportunities for access to other existing publicly available toilet facilities. Public toilets are limited to the town centre and Middle Row, Old Town.</p>
<p>7. That, building on the achievements already made, officers consider along with Stevenage Gardens and Allotments Association, ways in which the security can be improved and vandalism designed out of the allotment sites.</p> <p>Action: Assistant Director Stevenage Direct Services (To be appointed) & Environmental Performance & Development Manager, Julia Hill</p>	<p>An extensive capital programme of improvements has been undertaken in consultation with SGAA, which has included the installation of security fencing to all sites. The incidents of vandalism and theft has decreased significantly, following these works, and there have only been 2 incidents during the past 12 months.</p> <p>Officers will continue to work with SGAA to ensure that site security is maintained, and will provide advice to plot holders about securing their own property stored on the allotment sites.</p>
<p>8. That a detailed breakdown of the internal service charges be provided to Members of the E&E Select Committee in order</p>	

<p>that they can better understand why this makes up the largest proportion of the Allotment services overall costs.</p> <p>Action: Assistant Director Stevenage Direct Services (To be appointed) & Environmental Performance & Development Manager, Julia Hill</p>	
<p>9. That improved facilities for disabled plot holders will be monitored by Members when they revisit the review at a future meeting of the Environment & Economy Select Committee.</p> <p>Action: Assistant Director Stevenage Direct Services (To be appointed) & Environmental Performance & Development Manager, Julia Hill</p>	<p>The emerging strategy does include actions to support a review of the need for allotment facilities accessible to disabled or less-abled plot holders.</p>