

Part A

**Report to:** Cabinet

**Date of meeting:** Monday, 2 March 2020

**Report author:** Head of Parks, Heritage and Culture

**Title:** An Allotment Strategy 2020-2025

## 1.0 Summary

1.1 In 2013, the Council adopted a 5 year Allotment Strategy based on a significant consultation exercise carried out in 2011 on the state of our allotments. This strategy had a significant impact on how we manage our allotment stock and what improvements were required. Based on the success of this 5 year strategy, in 2019, a new consultation exercise was carried out and has led to an updated strategy from 2020 for the next 5 years.

1.2 The results of the consultation exercise are summarised in the new strategy.

## 2.0 Risks

2.1 No risks are identified

## 3.0 Recommendations

3.1 To note the contents of the report and attached strategy

3.2 To approve and adopt the strategy for the next 5 years

### **Further information:**

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**Report approved by: Alan Gough, Group Head of Community and Environmental Services**

## 4.0 Detailed proposal

4.1 The adoption of the 2013-2018 Strategy was a milestone in the development and management of allotments in Watford. The outcome was a number of key policies and action plans leading to significant investment in allotments across the town. As part of the development of this new strategy, all policies and actions have been reviewed and where still relevant, included in this new and revised strategy. However, the following successes should be noted from the last 5 years:-

- £800,000 investment in our allotments with improvements to fencing, water provision, footways, introduction of toilets, signage;
- Occupancy rates have remained high, between 85-90% overall;
- Successful re-provision of Farm Terrace tenants and the successful extension at Paddock Road allotments;
- Successful promotional campaigns across the borough using a wide variety of media;
- An allotments forum established and successfully meets bi-annually and last met in February 2020;
- Terms and conditions fully updated and the tenancy agreement updated;
- Clear guidance on animal welfare from the RSPCA issued where relevant;
- Stricter regulations on non-cultivations;
- Rents reviewed annually; and
- The successful award of a Green Flag for Paddock Road Allotments in 2017, 2018 and 2019.

However, a number of actions require carrying forward with further work required including:-

- The role of the site supervisor;
- The lack of enthusiasm for self-management;
- Tackling waiting lists;
- Maintaining occupancy rates and vacancies on some sites; and
- Improving local biodiversity on sites.

4.2 As a result, an updated strategy has been developed and is based on consultation carried out with tenants in 2019. The feedback was excellent and is summarised below. The overall response rate was 43% with over 427 survey forms returned. Figures in brackets indicate 2011 survey results.

Many people have had an allotment for many years. However, several have recently taken up allotment gardening only recently.

14% (17%) less than a year; 40% (45%) 1 to 5 years; 18% (14%) 6-10 years; 15% (12%) 11 to 20 years; 13% (12%) more than 20 years +

77% of respondents stated that it would have been helpful if the plot had been pre-prepared before letting

The main reason why tenants have an allotment is to grow their own - 76% of respondents; get fresh air and contact with nature - 70% of respondents; keeping fit and healthy - 53% of respondents.

Most people only have only one plot and choose their site because of convenience to home. - 87% of respondents chose this as the main reason.

The quality of current allotment sites ranges but overall 95% (92%) of allotment tenants rate their site as average to excellent and only 5% (8%) as poor to very poor.

The most essential items on an allotment are water, secure boundary fencing and maintenance of vacant plots.

Visiting their allotments, the majority visit three times or more a week 79% (75%).

33% (55%) travel by car with 54% (35%) who walk. The majority take no longer than 10 minutes to get there 83% (88%).

On average, each visit lasts 3 to 4 hours per visit 50% (53%).

A vast range of crops are grown on plots, but the most popular are root vegetables and green vegetables.

94% only grow with 6% having livestock (chickens and bees)

87% of tenants have a shed

91% of tenants compost their own waste

66% of plotholders were dissatisfied with the level of maintenance on untended plots

88% of tenants felt that the level of rent was reasonable

**60% of tenants felt that a dedicated allotment officer was a good idea**

**52% of tenants were supportive of a rental increase, although 44% said it depended on by what amount**

82% of tenants supported offering a plot to residents outside the borough but subject to paying a higher rent and subject to agreeing a distance from Watford.

### **Allotment Tenant Profiles**

Male - 50% (57%)

Female – 50% (43%)

White British – 80% (95%)

20% (16%) have a disability

16-24 years – less than 1%

25-34 years – 6% (5%)

35-44 years – 18% (15%)  
45-54 years – 19% (19%)  
55 – 59 years – 11% (12%)  
60-64 years – 14% (14%)  
65+ years – 31% (34%)

4.3 One of the key issues that was raised was the suggestion to employ a dedicated but permanent part time allotment officer. The retention of site supervisors remains a challenge with a number of sites still without one. The performance of some site supervisors is also mixed. The question of whether a dedicated resource would help with the day to day management of allotments was raised with tenants and whether they would be prepared to accept an increase in rents to pay for this. This was supported in the survey results and as a result, a growth item was approved in January 2020 at Council to assist in the funding of a new officer, to be employed by Veolia.

4.4 A new Action Plan has been developed and is attached as part of Appendix A.

## 5.0 **Implications**

### 5.1 **Financial**

5.1.1 The Shared Director of Finance comments that the financial implications are contained in the report, any additional investment will require a growth bid as part of the budget process.

### 5.2 **Legal Issues (Monitoring Officer)**

5.2.1 The Group Head of Democracy and Governance comments that the legal implications are contained within the strategy

### 5.3 **Equalities, Human Rights and Data Protection**

5.3.1 Having had regard to the council's obligations under s149, it is considered that an EqIA is not required as this is an updated strategy that has undergone significant consultation with no impact on equalities, human rights or data protection.

Having had regard to the council's obligations under the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) 2018, it is considered that officers are not required to undertake a Data Processing Impact Assessment (DPIA) for this report.

### 5.4 **Staffing**

5.4.1 Not applicable

## 5.5 **Accommodation**

5.5.1 Not applicable

## 5.6 **Community Safety/Crime and Disorder**

5.6.1 Not applicable

## 5.7 **Sustainability**

5.7.1 The adoption of a strategy to manage our allotments adds to the Councils wider sustainability agenda and Climate Change Emergency. The importance of retaining, managing our allotments as important green spaces is essential to this wider agenda as well as increasing the biodiversity of them.

## **Appendices**

- Appendix A – Watford Allotments Strategy 2020-2025

## **Background papers**

No papers were used in the preparation of this report.