

EXETER CITY COUNCIL
SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – COMMUNITY
10 MARCH 2009

ALLOTMENT STRATEGY REVIEW

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 To report to committee the progress made to date on the action plan outlined in the revised Allotment Strategy, adopted by the Council in 2007.
- 1.2 To set out further actions planned for 2009/10 (see Appendix I).

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The original Allotment Strategy adopted in 2002 was revised in 2007. The revision built on the achievements of the first strategy, and identified the significant improvements in occupation levels and success in meeting the needs of ploholders.
- 2.2 The continuing high demand for allotments has put considerable pressure on the Council officers to provide new plots to meet this. In addition 2008 saw the continuance of a number of existing projects and development of new ones.
- 2.3 Five target areas are identified within the strategy
 - 1. Ensuring sufficient allotments
 - 2. Promoting allotment gardening
 - 3. Encouraging sustainability
 - 4. Cultivating good administration
 - 5. Maintaining adequate resources

Using these headings an action plan has been produced, which identifies specific targets.

3. PROGRESS IN 2008

- 3.1 Larger plots continue to be divided into smaller ones wherever practicable. These smaller plots not only enable a higher number to have access to a plot, but suit the requirements of many younger working people. To this end a further 18 full size 10 rod (250m²) allotment plots were split into 5 rod plots as they became vacant on sites across the city. Overgrown areas of land at Mincinglake Road Allotments have been cleared and let, providing 8 additional plots.
- 3.2 There are 26 Council Allotment sites in Exeter, providing around 1365 Plots, an increase of 72 plots since 2007. Despite this, earlier in the year there were no available plots, and the decision was reluctantly taken to temporarily suspended waiting lists in May 2008, due to overwhelming demand. At that time, there were approximately 250 people waiting for plots, equating to over 18% of the total number of plots.
- 3.3 Waiting lists have now been re-opened to accept applicants at ten sites. It is intended to re-open other sites when their current waiting list decreases.

- 3.4 Equalities issues are being addressed by further provision of a new disabled accessible facility at the Ashwood Road site in Alphington with raised beds of varying heights and wheelchair accessible paths. Water for the plot is harvested from the existing shed roof. This site compliments our existing fully accessible site at Marypole Road Allotments.
- 3.5 Two new “self-composting” toilets have been provided at Hamlin Lane and Trews Weir Allotments. The new toilets use no chemicals at all and provide usable compost within 2 years.
- 3.6 Support was given for a new association at Stoke Hill (Marypole Road) by providing a shed from which trading can take place.
- 3.7 Further works have been carried out to ensure that tracks within the allotments enable users to safely access their plots.

4. ENSURING SUFFICIENT ALLOTMENTS

- 4.1 Unfortunately, part of the Trews Weir Allotment site has been put up for sale by the landowner. The Council leases 2.46 acres of land here for allotments. The 73 tenants have been served with Notices of Intended Re-entry, expiring on 20 September 2009. The allotment land is being marketed with fishing rights outside of the allotments. The Council has made an offer for the land on which the allotments are sited and the adjoining riverbank.

5. PLANNED WORK FOR 2009

- 5.1 Key actions planned for 2009 are to;
- Continue to maximise the current available allotment space.
 - Investigate starter plots to give an indication to new tenants the hard work that is entailed in looking after a plot. These would be for people on the waiting list as a taster, before being allocated a plot.
 - Endeavour to secure future additional provision within existing financial constraints, particularly further self-composting toilets.
 - Introduce greater sustainability awareness.
 - Investigate water harvesting and other measures to reduce the use of treated water for crops.
 - Provide further security to perimeter fencing of vulnerable sites
 - Take further measures to try to prevent flooding of plots, specifically at Clapperbrook Lane.
 - Investigate the use of raised beds on otherwise unusable areas of allotment land.
 - Investigate whether charges could be made for allotment clearance
 - Install self shut-off taps near toilets for washing of hands.

Further details are provided in the Appendix.

6. RECOMMENDED that

- 1) progress is noted and future proposals contained in the action plan are approved.

HEAD OF CONTRACTS AND DIRECT SERVICES

S:PA/LP/ Committee/309SCC9
24.2.09

COMMUNITY & ENVIRONMENT DIRECTORATE

Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985 (as amended)
Background papers used in compiling this report: