

Report of the Scrutiny Review of Allotment Service Delivery - Management Options

January 2006

CONTENTS

- 1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**
- 2. INTRODUCTION**
- 3. THE VALUE OF ALLOTMENTS AND PLANNING GUIDANCE**
- 4. CURRENT PROVISION AND DEMAND**
- 5. MAINTENANCE AND MANAGEMENT OF SITES**
- 6. LEGAL ISSUES**
- 7. FUNDING MATTERS**
- 8. CONSULTATION**
- 9. FUTURE DIRECTION**
- 10. DEVELOPMENT OF A STRATEGY**
- 11. CONCLUSIONS**

APPENDICES

- | | |
|----------|---|
| A | List of sites and occupancy rates |
| B | Location of sites |
| C | Catchment Areas |
| D | Comparable information on shed sizes |
| E | Comparable London Borough's data |
| F | Budgetary information |

1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.0 This Executive summary outlines the work undertaken by the Panel during the course of the review and areas identified by Members for recommendation.
- 1.1 The suggestion for Overview and Scrutiny to examine Allotment Service Delivery Management options was agreed at the start of the Municipal Year.
- 1.2 The Panel's aim was to review the current arrangements by the Council to the management of the Allotments service and, in particular to consider issues relating to meeting of local needs, value for money and funding sources and to make recommendations on possible improvements to the service.
- 1.3 During the course of the review the Panel:-
- Visited Creighton Road, DeQuincey and Shepherds Hill Allotments
 - Met with the Allotments Lettings Officer
 - Heard from Planning regarding policy provision in the UDP
 - Sent a questionnaire and met with Allotment Site Secretaries
 - Met with Parks and Recreation Services to discuss the current issues and challenges facing the service
- 1.4 As a result of the above process, which is detailed in the report, the Panel have made the following key findings and **recommendations**:

• Key Findings

- At present there is no dedicated Allotments Officer. This means that the Area officer's have to cover parks as well as Allotments, resources are stretched.
- There are not enough plots available across the Borough to met current and projected demand. There is a particular deficit in a number of Wards.
- There was concern in relation to management of plots in terms of no adherence to guidance on permitted shed size, removal of tenants that did not maintain their plots, and sub letting of plots
- There was a need for more investment in Allotments demonstrated by a number of maintenance issues raised. However it was acknowledged that funds had to be raised externally.
- There was no formal consultation mechanisms in place.

• Recommendations

1. That consideration be given to the appointment of a dedicated officer for Allotments.
2. That an Allotments Strategy be developed for the future provision and management of Allotments. This would guide and develop management over the next 5 years, develop quality and quantity of provision, adopt and promote best practice in terms of design and management and develop an Allotments Forum for partnership working.
3. That options for the development of future sites either temporary or permanent be explored, to include:-
 - a survey of land for new sites,
 - consideration to the securing of additional land through the use of S106, possible diversification of existing open spaces such as playing fields, or green areas on housing estates.
4. That the tenancy agreement be reviewed to include an examination of:-
 - The procedures for removal of plot holders
 - The size of permitted shed and other developments
 - A system for temporary sub letting
 - The permitted uses of sites.
5. That further consideration be given to the allocation of capital funding to enable under used allotments to be brought back into use at the earliest opportunity.
6. That there be a review of rent charges to ensure that they are comparable with other Authorities , to include an examination in charges between in and out of borough residents. This would enable maintenance works to be carried out ,improvements to site security and health and safety issues to be undertaken.
7. That there be more formal consultation with Allotment holders. This would be achieved by the establishment of Allotments Forum. Additionally consideration to be given to the publicity given to Allotments to be achieved by promoting the use of the internet, Council's website, Newsletters, Events etc. Also key documents to be translated into the main community languages.

2 INTRODUCTION

Background

- 2.0 There is national, regional and local policy that reflects the need to retain allotments where there is demand, and also to provide allotment

space where there is a demand and where there is a deficit of allotment space.

- 2.1 Recreation Services are responsible for the management of 26 allotment sites across the Borough containing 1,665 plots.
- 2.2 Over recent years interest in allotments has increased due to public awareness of 'green' issues and concerns over links between food and health. Modern housing developments are also being developed with smaller garden sizes which may stimulate demand for community gardens and allotments. Demographic changes including a larger number of older, but relatively healthy individuals could also stimulate demand for allotment plots as allotment participation is highest amongst the over 50s.
- 2.3 The Open Space Study identifies that there are 42 hectares of allotment land in Haringey and that an additional 32 hectares would need to be brought into use by 2016 to meet both existing demand and that generated by future population growth.
- 2.4 It was against this background that the proposal to undertake a scrutiny review on the issue came about.

Scrutiny Review Scope and Terms of Reference

- 2.5 The terms of reference of the review were:-
 - To examine the overall legislative context for the provision of allotments.
 - To identify current levels of demand for allotments within the overall needs and demands for Open Space provision.
 - To review existing management, policy, and letting of allotments.
 - To develop more effective measures to manage underused plots.
 - To examine the health and safety, security and vandalism associated with allotments.
 - To examine the role of allotments in the context of sustainable development, healthy living and education objectives.

Membership of Panel

- 2.6 The membership of the Panel was Councillors Davies and Santry.

3 THE VALUE OF ALLOTMENTS AND PLANNING GUIDANCE

- 3.1 Allotments have been part of the fabric of many communities for nearly 100 years. An allotment is a small piece of land (approximately 250 square metres in size) generally owned by the local council, which can be rented by the public primarily for the growing of fruit and vegetables.

- 3.2 Within the policy arena, the contribution of allotments to urban regeneration, sustainable development and quality of life is being increasingly recognised. Benefits of allotments include:
- ❖ Providing access to affordable fresh vegetables, physical exercise and social activity;
 - ❖ Localised food production brings environmental benefits of reducing use of energy and materials for processing, packaging and distributing food. Allotments also perform a role in recycling of green waste;
 - ❖ Therapeutic value in promoting good physical and mental health. Gardening is identified as one of the Health Education Council's recommended forms of exercise for the over 50s;
 - ❖ Allotments are an important component of urban green space and provide a green lung within urban environments;
 - ❖ Cultivated and untended plots contribute towards maintaining biodiversity particularly where plots are maintained using organic methods;
 - ❖ Allotments have an important role to play in the implementation of plans for encouraging local sustainable development and community development, potential links exist with local schools, and with the mentally and physically ill and disabled. At present such links only exist at Stockton Road and Wolves Lane allotments; and
 - ❖ Allotments have an important historical and cultural role in community heritage, values and identity.

The Biodiversity Value of Allotments in Haringey

- 3.3 13 allotments in Haringey are classified as Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (Sites of Local Importance) within the Unitary Development Plan. They cover an area of 29.4 ha.
- 3.4 Allotments provide valuable habitats for wildlife. In Haringey they can support important populations of amphibians and reptiles, particularly slow worms and grass snakes, as well as birds, mammals and invertebrates. Mature trees may also support bats, which are protected by law.
- 3.5 Allotments may contain a range of habitats that support wildlife. Hedgerows and scrub can provide nesting and foraging places for birds, are used by a range of invertebrates and provide cover for mammals such as foxes. Compost heaps support invertebrates, provide breeding sites for grass snakes and locations for mammals such as hedgehogs to over-winter. Flowers provide nectar sources for

bees and butterflies. Freshly dug soil is visited by foraging birds such as blackbirds, robins, starlings and pied wagtails. Undisturbed margins next to hedgerows provide nesting sites for small mammals such as mice and field voles. Unused plots may support a range of wild plants and other wildlife.

Planning Policy Guidance

- 3.6 The national planning framework relating to allotments is set out in PPG17 published in July 2002. This guidance identifies the role of informal open space including allotments as performing:
- The strategic function of defining and separating urban areas;
 - Contributing towards urban quality and assisting urban regeneration;
 - Promoting health and well being;
 - Acting as havens and habitats for flora and fauna;
 - Being a community resource for social interaction; and
 - A visual amenity function.
- 3.7 PPG17 also identifies the issues which Local Planning Authorities should take into account in considering allotment provision and circumstances when disposal may be appropriate.
- 3.8 Policy 3D7 of the **London Plan**, Realising the Value of Open Space, recognises the value and benefits of open space associated with, among other things, health, biodiversity and the environment, and the policy refers to allotments as valuable open space.
- 3.9 Para 2.26 of the **Mayor's Biodiversity Strategy** sets out the value of allotments as considerable areas of wildlife habitat in London that are managed organically, or with the minimum use of pesticides. It acknowledges their importance, particularly for people who do not have access to a private garden and for helping to develop a closer community. It also acknowledges how growing one's own food provides very important contact with nature, and can also involve the expression and celebration of Londoners' diverse culture origins through, for example, growing some of the ingredients for traditional cuisine, which can be hard to source in this country.

Provisions of the 1998 UDP and the Revised Deposit UDP in relation to open space and allotments.

- 3.10 Chapter 4 of the current UDP is concerned with Open Space and the Natural Environment. The strategic aims of the chapter include to

safeguard and enhance the remaining green and open character of Haringey by protecting areas and features contributing to that open character, recreational open space and open space serving other roles.

- 3.11 Chapter 8 of the Revised Deposit Unitary Development Plan is concerned with open space. The guiding principle of the chapter is that everybody in the borough should have good access to well-maintained, good quality, sustainable open space. The key objectives of the chapter are 1) to maintain a satisfactory level of easily accessed open space in the borough with a variety of uses, and 2) ensure that the flora and fauna of nature conservation value in the borough is protected and encouraged, and that the provision helps to meet the aims of the Haringey Biodiversity Action Plan (Draft 2002).
- 3.12 **Policy OS11** of the Revised Deposit UDP states that; “the Council will seek to protect allotment space and will have regard to possible future demand in times of lesser uptake of allotment space. The value of allotment space visually and in ecological, biodiversity and historical terms will also be taken into account where there is development pressure on the land. Where allotments become surplus to demand, and it is considered that there is unlikely to be future demand, other forms of public open space or facilities for the wider community which maintain the openness of the site will be sought.

4. CURRENT PROVISION AND DEMAND

- 4.1 There are currently some 42 hectares of actively managed allotment land in Haringey, with 26 allotment sites within the borough containing 1665 plots. All sites are managed with the exception of the Fortis Green site which is privately managed by Thames Water and Mill Mead Road Allotments which are owned and managed by Lee Valley Park Authority (LVPA).
- 4.2 A summary table with the names of sites, number of plots per site, number of vacant plots and percentage occupation of plots is attached. AT APPENDIX A
- 4.3 In summary, 92% of plots were occupied as of June 2005.
- 4.4 2 maps are also attached. Appendices B and C. The first of these illustrates the location of the different allotment sites within the Borough. The second, drawn from the Haringey Open Space Study, illustrates the catchment areas of the allotment sites within the Borough.
- 4.5 There is no formal guidance on how allotment needs should be assessed, however the Local Government Association good practice guide ‘Growing in the Community’ identifies issues which should be considered. Local Authorities are duty bound to provide allotments for their residents if they consider there is demand under section 23 of the

1908 Allotments Acts (as amended). The 1969 Thorpe Report recommended a minimum standard of allotment provision of 0.2 hectares (0.5 acres) per 1000 population (this is reflected in Policy OP1.7 of the 1988 UDP). In the context of Haringey this would equate to an area of 43 hectares. In 1996, the National Allotment survey identified an average provision in England of 15 plots per 1000 households. Haringey compares well with these figures providing 17.9 plots per 1000 households (2001).

- 4.6 It will be important to ensure that local standards of provision reflect local circumstances of supply and demand. This assessment fulfils the requirements of the Revised PPG17 to provide a robust and defensible assessment of allotment needs accounting for different components of demand identified above.

Catchment Areas

- 4.7 Using an accepted 800m indicator more than three quarters of the Borough (in terms of area) is located within walking distance of an allotment site. However from this information alone it cannot be concluded that there is sufficient need in the underserved areas for additional allotment sites.
- 4.8 Previous studies have found that, although participation is highest amongst those who live in close proximity to their plot, the relationship between site size, occupancy, availability and catchment area indicates that some plot holders are able and prepared to travel to alternative sites where a plot is not available at their nearest site. However the extent to which local allotment demand can be satisfied outside of the immediate neighbourhood is limited. Many plot holders wish to be near to their plot for reasons of security and ease of access. The Open Space residents' survey indicates that 50% of allotment users travel to their site on foot, with 75% taking only 0-10 minutes travel time. Furthermore, given the age and socio-economic profile of existing and potential allotment holders, a significant proportion of plot holders are unlikely to have access to a car. Some residents are currently excluded from allotment gardening by the distribution and availability of vacant plots within the Borough.

Demographic Change

- 4.9 Between 2001 and 2016 the population of the Borough is expected to increase by some 25,000 households (78% increase). This is supported by the **Open Space and Sports Assessment** which was produced by Atkins Consultants for the Council in 2003. The Assessment concludes that between 2001 and 2016 there will be an estimated requirement for up to 32ha of allotment land (approx 450 allotment plots). This demand will obviously depend upon the success of marketing initiatives and the extent to which additional households in the borough are able to take up/access the existing supply of allotments. The Assessment also concludes that, currently, across the

borough some 16% of households are not well served by the distribution of existing allotment sites.

- 4.10 At present parts of several wards are not well served by the existing distribution of allotment sites. Wards where the existing supply of allotments may be particularly deficient are Bounds Green, Bruce Grove, Crouch End, Fortis Green, Harringay, Northumberland Park, Seven Sisters, St Ann's, Tottenham Green
- 4.11 Within the context of overall demand for land within the Borough, up to 2016, which will need to provide for population growth, education, community facilities, business needs and open space, officers did not consider that it is realistic to provide more permanent allotment sites.

Waiting Lists

- 4.12 At present there are 425 people on the Council's and LVPA allotment waiting list, although this figure fluctuates throughout the year with greatest demand in summer months. The sites most in demand include Alexandra Park, The Grove and Railway Bank, Mannock Road, Quernmore Road and Shepherds Hill, the majority of which are in the south-west of the Borough. The turnover at these sites is around 18 months. The Panel heard from Site secretaries that some sites had closed their waiting lists. Camden also has over 400 people on their Waiting Lists with an estimated over 10 year wait.
- 4.13 The extent of unfulfilled demand needs to be considered in conjunction with the size and distribution of sites (see Appx). Although allotment sites exist in many parts of the Borough there are fewer sites located in the central area and south-east corner. Furthermore the sites which do exist are relatively small leading to unsatisfied demand.

Out of Borough plot holders

- 4.14 Previous studies have shown that several allotments will have a significant number of plot-holders from outside the Borough. This is most likely to be the case in the South of Haringey as the neighbouring Boroughs of Hackney, Islington and Camden do not have allotments sites that fall within 1km of the Borough boundary. Most out of Borough plot holders are likely to live in areas just beyond the Borough boundary and may not have access to nearer provision within their own Borough.
- 4.15 There is an estimated 179 plots in the Borough that are underused. The reason for this is largely because they are in a poor condition. The key issue affecting the quality of the services is lack of capital investment over the years.
- 4.16 Allotments which are well maintained are likely to prove more attractive and be easier to let.

- 4.17 For the last 2 years, 04/05 and 05/06, Recreation Services have been successful in obtaining £85,000 of NRF funding to enable works to take place on allotment sites within the NRF area. This was seen by the Panel at Creighton Road Allotment site where £30,000 had been spent on the site. The money had been utilised on tree lifting, rubbish removal, and clearing of plots, signage and general maintenance. BTCV had been working on the site to bring back plots into use. An action Plan has now been produced and a Management Committee established.
- 4.18 Additionally a further £50,000 NRF has been agreed for White Hart Lane/ Northumberland Park area to bring back allotments into use.

Use of Planning Powers

- 4.19 The Panel explored the possibility of the use of S106 monies to secure additional sites. The Panel heard that there is no general requirement/guidance in Haringey that ask for allotments/money for the provision of per se. Any monies for allotment will have to be negotiated on an individual basis when dealing with planning applications and this can only be done if the test are met. For example, if a proposal involves any impact on existing allotments. Currently, no money has been negotiated or rec'd is in respect of improving allotments. The money that has been negotiated for our recreation department has to be spent on defined projects, which does not include allotments. However, given the findings of the Atkins Open Space Study and the likely shortfall of allotments in the borough given population projections, it *may* be possible to seek allotment provision in the future if the circumstances were appropriate.

New sites

- 4.20 The Panel received evidence from Site Secretaries suggesting that the provision of new sites should be explored. This could possibly be achieved through conversion of parks, use of edges of playing fields, within schools.

Recommendation

That options for the development of future sites either temporary or permanent be explored, to include:-

- a survey of land for new sites,
- consideration to the securing of additional land through the use of S106, possible diversification of existing open spaces such as playing fields, or green areas on housing estates.

5. Maintenance and Management of sites

- 5.1 The Open Space residents' survey indicates that 75% of allotments are in 'very good' or 'good' condition.
- 5.2 The majority of Recreation Services are responsible for the health and safety of sites, for providing security and for securing sites against vandalism. For the majority of sites, informal assistance is provided through site secretaries who will undertake informal inspections and report the outcome of these to the Council.
- 5.3 Site security is a significant issue for the majority of sites, where people are mindful to gain unauthorised access, this is difficult to prevent, even where fences and gates are in a good condition.
- 5.4 Vandalism is not seen by officers as a major issue for plot holders though where this does occur, it is clearly very distressing.
- 5.5 Site Secretaries raised issues relating to overgrown trees, lack of water and non removal of skips. They were also concerned over the lack of funding for basic maintenance such as fencing repairs, pathways and dilapidated buildings.

Erection of sheds

- 5.6 The Panel saw evidence of the use of sites as community areas where families congregated. It was noted that some structures had been erected in excess of the guidelines. Advice received from the Legal Service is that the construction of any buildings on allotments is considered as development. This is because any permitted development rights relate to plots that are over 5 hectares, and none of the individual allotment plots in the borough are this large! On that basis enforcement action could be taken against the construction of any oversized sheds where it was deemed to be appropriate, but we would have only four years to take any enforcement action from the date that the shed is built. Alternatively, we could grant retrospective planning permission within that four year period and attach relevant conditions as appropriate (e.g. that the shed shall only be used for purposes ancillary to the main use of the plot as a domestic allotment), Legal Services were keen that we should regularise the position in respect of these sheds where we are within the four year period. Gates, fences and walls can all be constructed around the plots assuming that they do not exceed 2 metres in height (1 metre where the gate/wall/fence abuts with an adopted highway).
- 5.7 A comparison with other Borough's on permitted development is set out at Appendix D.

Recommendation

That the tenancy agreement be reviewed to include an examination of:-

- The procedures for removal of plot holders
- The size of permitted shed and other developments
- A system for temporary sub letting
- The permitted uses of sites.

6. Legal Issues

The Allotment Acts

6.1 The legal framework for Allotments has developed in a piecemeal fashion and is encapsulated within a number of Acts identified below.

Principal Allotments Legislation

Act and Date	Relevance
Small Holdings and Allotments Act 1908	Consolidated all previous legislation and laid down the basis for subsequent Acts.
Allotments Act 1922	Placed duty on local authorities to provide sufficient allotments according to demand. Makes provision for local authorities to compulsorily purchase land to provide allotments. Limited the size of an individual allotment to one quarter of an acre and specified that they should mostly be used for growing fruit and vegetables.
Allotments Act 1925	Required local authorities to recognise the need for allotments in any town planning development.
Allotments Act 1950	Established 'statutory' allotments which a local authority could not sell or convert to other purposes without Ministerial consent. Made improved provisions for compensatory and tenants rights. Confined local authority's obligation to 'allotment gardens' only.

6.2 For legal purposes there are two types of allotment. 'Statutory Allotment' status refers to land of which the freehold or very long lease is vested in the allotments authority, and which was either originally purchased for allotments or subsequently appropriated for allotment use. Statutory allotments are afforded protection under section 8 of the Allotments Act 1925 which provides that the consent of the Secretary of State must be obtained for disposal of land by a local authority which they have appropriated for the use of allotments, if it is proposed to sell, appropriate or use that land for a use other than allotments.

6.3 Such consent may not be given unless the Secretary of State is satisfied that:

- The allotment in question is not necessary and is surplus to requirements;
- Adequate provision will be made for displaced plot holders, or that such provision is unnecessary or impracticable;

- The number of people on the waiting list has been taken into account; and
 - The authority has actively promoted and publicised the availability of allotment sites and has consulted the National Society of Allotments and Leisure Gardeners.
- 6.4 Various parameters have been laid down through case law to assist in the definition of 'adequate provision' and 'not necessary' etc.
- 6.5 A 'temporary allotment' is land rented by the authority but ultimately destined for some other use. Unlike local authority allotments, privately companies and institutions are not under any obligation to provide allotments. Neither temporary nor privately owned allotments are afforded protection under the various allotment Acts although they are subject to protection through planning legislation.

Tenants Agreement

- 6.6 All new plot holders have to sign a tenants agreement which covers issues such as payment of rent, sub-letting, maintenance of plots and buildings.
- 6.7 There was considerable discussion with Site Secretaries regarding plot maintenance and how to remove plot holders that did not maintain their plots.
- 6.8 The Council was responsible for sending out dirty plot letters and notices to quit. (more detail on process in here???) Due to the fact that a plot holder could invoke the Council's complaints procedure the whole process of eviction could be very protracted -How long?? However Brent Council did not have any problems evicting their plot holders with the whole process taking only 6 weeks and they have never had anyone appealing.
- 6.9 The Panel acknowledged that there could be circumstances which temporarily prevented plot holders from maintaining their plots and therefore there should be a system in place for temporarily sub letting. The Panel noted that at some sites plot holders could come off their sites for a period and when they returned they would go to the top of the Waiting List.
- 6.10 There was a discussion on how details of waiting lists were made available and whether residents on waiting lists were regularly contacted. One site had the waiting list posted on a notice board and another invited those on the Waiting list to open days.
- 6.11 The Panel was advised that the Council's records on tenants was reasonably accurate. The only discrepancy can come when a new plot holder has a 2 or 3 month trial on an allotment. This is organised by the Site Secretary and the details passed to the Council if they decide to

formally apply for the plot at the end of the trial. As referred to previously the Panel noted that there was some variation in the size and structure of buildings erected and that enforcement of the guidelines was sporadic.

Recommendation

That the tenancy agreement be reviewed to include an examination of:-

- The procedures for removal of plot holders
- The size of permitted shed and other developments
- A system for temporary sub letting
- The permitted uses of sites.

7 .Funding Matters

- 7.1 The current charges for an allotment is Rent £4.20 per sq m and Water £2.40 per sq m. The average amount paid is £32.50 per annum for a plot of 125sq metres. There is a reduced rate for OAP's and disabled people. At present there is no price variation for out of borough residents. There are currently 241 out borough residents. This compares with other Borough's –set out in Appendix E.
- 7.2 At present the allotments service is funded primarily through Recreation Services budgets. The Annual budget is £59,500 which was split £34,000 to the West area , £14,00 to the East area and £10,000 to the Central area. Additionally site secretaries have a small maintenance budget of £300. Last year the income from lettings was £48,000 (although there were some rebates). Therefore the net cost to the Council for the allotment operation is £13,200. see table at Appx F
- 7.3 The Panel heard that £100,000 had been allocated to improving allotments as part of the Parks Improvement Programme for 2005/6 which was welcomed. There had been discussions between Allotment Committees and Parks managers on this expenditure , which was determined on the basis of need as identified by the site inspections. however many wished Site Secretaries to be involved and any funds available for the next year should be the subject of detailed consultation. The breakdown of expenditure was as follows:-XXXX
- 7.4 £55 k was NRF monies to be spent in the north east of the Borough on bringing allotments back into use.
- 7.5 An estimated xxx is needed to bring all remaining allotments back into use
- 7.6 There was an acknowledged need for securing external funding: There are a number of potential funding sources that could be applied to fund

specific improvement projects. Of these some would be available to the Council whereas others would only be available to voluntary organisations.

- 7.7 The Panel heard that Brent Council had an established Allotments Forum which had been successful in raising funds for improvements to Allotments. They have secured grants from the Lottery and Esmée Fairburn for fencing repairs, the most recent grant was for £7000. Whatever money the group raises, the Council matches.
- 7.8 Several external funding sources exist which could be drawn upon to fund specific projects rather than ongoing management and allotment administration. These may include:
- Local Agenda 21 funds;
 - SRB Budgets – Several SRB schemes exist within the Borough. There is a possibility that these funds could be tapped for initiatives relating to allotments, subject to the initiative fulfilling the aims and objectives of the SRB strategy;
 - National Lottery New Opportunities Fund;
 - The SEED programme;
 - The ENTRUST Landfill tax credit scheme;
 - The Co-operative Group Community Divided;
 - The Shell Better Britain Campaign; and
 - Support in kind including B&Q Quest, BCTV, probation service.

Recommendations

That further consideration be given to the allocation of capital funding to enable under used allotments to be brought back into use at the earliest opportunity.

That there be a review of rent charges to ensure that they are comparable with other Authorities, to include an examination in charges between in and out of borough residents. This would enable maintenance works to be carried out, improvements to site security and health and safety issues to be undertaken.

8 Consultation

- 8.1 The Panel considered that currently consultation was patchy. Site secretaries considered that they were not involved in the allocation of the £100,000 identified in XXX above.

- 8.2 In particular the Panel heard that there was a lack of new information given to existing plot holders and a mechanism was needed for allotment holders to share and exchange good ideas such as an Allotments Forum.
- 8.3 The view was expressed by some site Secretaries that the Council should have consulted more widely in respect of this review.
- 8.4 The way in which plots are promoted and publicised also influences demand. At present little active promotion and publicity has taken place. Currently the Council provides a contact for the use of allotments on their website and in the 'Haringey People' magazine which is delivered monthly to every home in the Borough. Other promotional initiatives through the use of posters and other Council information channels to broaden demand for allotments could be used. Site Secretaries were in favour of the provision of a newsletter and for every site to have a notice board. In addition it was suggested that more information should be provided on the Council's Website such as details of waiting lists, the tenancy agreement and other useful information. The publication of a good practice guide was seen as a useful document that could be produced.

Recommendation

That there be more formal consultation with Allotment holders. This would be achieved by the establishment of Allotments Forum. Additionally consideration to be given to the publicity given to Allotments to be achieved by promoting the use of the internet, Council's website, Newsletters, Events etc. Also key documents to be translated into the main community languages.

9. Future Direction

- 9.1 At present responsibility for the management of allotments rests with the Area Manager within whose area the site is located. Additionally, the Parks Customer Services Officer spends approximately 50% of their time in the management of allotments.
- 9.2 According to some Site Secretaries there was a lack of clarity regarding roles and responsibilities and there was not always clear communication between Area Managers and Site Secretaries.
- 9.3 There was universal support from the Site Secretaries for the establishment of a dedicated Council employee to whom Site Secretaries could contact with particular issues.
- 9.4 If appointed such a post holder could be responsible for the setting up of an Allotments Forum. Additionally they would be able to co-ordinate site management and follow up of plot inspections.

- 9.5 A dedicated officer would work with site Management Committees in seeking to raise external funding and could examine the potential for self management of sites.
- 9.6 The costs of such a post could be in the region of £15 - £30K plus revenue costs. If approved funding for this would need to be further explored.
- 9.7 Details of other Borough's that have Allotments Officers is set out in Appendix E

Recommendation

That consideration be given to the appointment of a dedicated officer for Allotments.

10. Development of an Allotments Strategy

- 10.1 The Parks Service has an opportunity to develop a coherent vision for allotments within the Borough. This vision should recognise the multiple roles which allotments can play and the benefits of allotment gardening and be used as a basis to gather support and funding for improvements from other sources within the Council, external funding sources and relevant community and voluntary sector partners.
- 10.2 The vision should include an action plan which seeks to integrate allotment gardening within other strategies and programmes and identifies improvements to individual allotment sites and other projects and initiatives to foster participation in allotment gardening. It will be necessary to identify resources to implement projects including human resources to implement improvements.
- 10.3 There is significant scope to develop active social and educational roles through links with schools and other community organisations. These roles can be encouraged through specific initiatives which integrate allotments within other strategies and programmes and fostering allotments within the wider community.

Recommendation

That an Allotments Strategy be developed for the future provision and management of Allotments. This would guide and develop management over the next 5 years, develop quality and quantity of provision, adopt and promote best practice in terms of design and management and develop an Allotments Forum for partnership working.

11 Conclusions

- 11.1 It was clear to the Panel that allotments were valued by individual plot holders and provided a valuable contribution to sustainability as well as being an important leisure and recreational facility.
- 11.2 There is currently provision for an additional 179 allotment holders within the Borough from vacant plots. Overall it is estimated that between 2001 and 2016 there will be demand for a further 450 plots arising from demographic changes and 712 number of plots from areas underserved by existing provision. In addition, between 75 and 150 plots could be taken up through improvements to site management and initiatives to promote demand. Therefore, there is an estimated requirement for up to 1552 plots or 31ha of allotment land (latent demand plus demand linked to improvements minus number of vacant plots) depending upon the success of marketing initiatives and the extent to which additional households are able to take up/access existing supply.
- 11.3 It would probably not be feasible to acquire land for allotments within the London context, however given that allotment sites do not have to be particularly large, allotment provision could be associated with new development in the Borough. Scope may exist within underserved areas to bring forward allotment land through diversification of existing open spaces such as playing fields. Within other local authorities, school sites have proved good locations where there is sufficient space available as funding can be sought to develop allotments jointly as outdoor classrooms for curriculum use and as a community resource. Opportunities for bringing forward new allotment sites should be investigated within wards where there are the highest levels of latent demand.
- 11.4 At present allotment provision is funded solely from the Parks Service allotment budget. In order to achieve a step change in the quality of allotment provision and management it will be necessary to secure additional funding. This may be achieved by integrating the improvement of allotments within other initiatives relating to regeneration, neighbourhood renewal and Local Agenda 21 and bidding for external funding.
- 11.5 The Haringey Open Space Strategy (HOSS) has been developed from analysis of the trends and issues arising from a number of detailed studies, including the Atkins Open Space Assessment. Assessments have been undertaken of Haringey's open spaces, their facilities and their users. The HOSS concentrates on achieving a variety of open space outcomes or goals which are based, in part, on the outcomes of the Atkins Open Space Assessment (see above). The HOSS concludes that careful planning and innovative solutions are required if Haringey is to meet the level of allotment demand predicted over the next 10 years.

- 11.6 However within the resources available the Council's priority is towards Parks and Open Spaces where there are 10,000 visitors per annum. Additionally there are at present no performance indicators relating to Allotments
- 11.7 Any proposals for change must be seen in the above context.