

PLYMOUTH CITY COUNCIL

Subject:	BRIEFING PAPER: Allotment Management in Plymouth
Committee:	Place and Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee
Date:	1 November 2017
Cabinet Member:	Cllr Nicholson
CMT Member:	Anthony Payne (Director for Place)
Author:	Kaja Curry, Acting Natural Infrastructure Manager (Maternity Cover)
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Key Decision:	N/A
Part:	1

1. Plymouth's Current Allotment Services

- 1.1. Allotments are provided under legislation, the first of which was the 1908 Small Holdings and Allotments Act which placed a duty of local authorities to provide sufficient allotments according to demand. Legislation was further strengthened and the Allotments Act of 1925 established statutory allotments that local authorities could not sell off without Ministerial consent, which is still the case.
- 1.2. Plymouth City Council has a number of sites and lets these out in accordance with the relevant legislation. Allotment holders are required to pay rent and to cover the water rates and general maintenance costs and must sign a tenancy agreement.
- 1.3. The Council's Allotment Service sits within the Natural Infrastructure Team of Strategic Planning and Infrastructure. The Service provides 1,757 allotment plots on 37 sites across the city. The Table in the Appendix provides details of all the sites with their names, number of plots and occupancy rates. Many sites also operate a Tenants Association which provides additional benefits.
- 1.4. Stats: In the last year - We terminated 393 tenancies, and made over 282 plot offers. We currently have 118 vacant plots to offer and have 55 on offer waiting for responses. We respond to a weekly average of 130 phone calls and 357 emails.

2. Joint Local Plan & Plymouth Plan

The Draft Plymouth and South West Devon Joint Local Plan sets out the principles for sustainable linked neighbourhoods and communities and identifies an aspirational target of 0.15ha of allotment / community growing space per 1,000 people.

Table 1: Allotment plots per Plymouth Plan Area

Plymouth Plan Area	No Plots per 1,000 people	Approx. amount ha per PP area
South West	15.1	0.27
West	5.3	0.09
Plymstock	4.26	0.07
South	0	0
North West	4.81	0.08
Plympton	5.2	0.09
Central	15	0.27
North	5.3	0.09
City Total	7.7	0.13

3. Management

3.1. In 2014 the management of the Allotment Service moved from Street Cleansing and Grounds to the Natural Infrastructure (NI) Team in order to provide an integrated service for green space management, particularly in terms of capital improvements. The service is now run by 1.5 FTEs plus the support of 0.5FTE admin support.

3.2. SCG provide maintenance support for the allotments through a dedicated operative. They also provide a path-cutting service during the growing season and maintain the hedges through periodical cuts.

3.3. Since moving to the NI Team the following improvements have been made:

- Programme of rent increases to enable the service to be self-financing (excluding support service costs) over a period of 5 years;
- Introduction of a new allotment management system which has introduced efficiencies for dealing with requests, queries and plot offers;
- Introduction of online payments and electronic communications for the majority of our tenants;
- Introduction of First Stop for dropping off keys and for payments.
- Integration of payments with Civica ensures that payments are correctly credited to Allotments.
- PCC officer serving on the Management Committee of the National Society of Allotments enable sharing of best practice.

3.4. The impact of the improvements that have been introduced has resulted in:

- The Plot Offer process has been reduced from 2 weeks to 3 days;
- Increased efficiencies in the financial systems;
- There have been few complaints about the rent increases with the majority of tenants stating that the Allotment service provides value for money.

4. BUDGET

4.1. The budget for Allotments is given in the following table but excludes the Natural Infrastructure Staff:

Table 2: Allotment Budget 2017/18

Description	(£)
Premises	27,469
Transport	12,132
Supplies and Services	1,500
Third Party Payments	50,264
Income	-100,187
TOTAL	-8,822

4.2. RENT INCOME

In 2015, Plymouth introduced a five year programme of rent increases in order to enable the service to break even by 2020 which involved increasing rent from £25 to £76 for a small plot and £50 to £152 for a large plot. This was carried out in full consultation with tenants and the majority of tenants have been fully supportive.

5. CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS

5.1. The following key capital improvements have been undertaken in the last four years: :

- Creation of 20 plots at Channel Park Site (Efford & Lipson);
- Creation of 50 plots at Swarthmore Site (Peverell)
- Improvements to entrances and security at: Swarthmore, (Peverell) Penlee (Stoke), Mays & Frys (Devonport), Central Park & Venn Farm (Peverell), Blunts Lane (Moorview), Southway Drive (Southway), Hermon Terrace (Ham).
- Installation of composting toilets at Penlee, Swarthmore and Channel Park.
- Creation of 'Billy's Way' main access path at Central Park.
- Creation of community Orchard & Edible Hedge at Central Park, Channel Park, Southway Drive, Swarthmore.
- Capital improvements have been funded through a variety of sources including S106 and external funding sources.
- These have been funded through a variety of means, including S106 and external grant aid including Big Green Space Challenge and Tesco's Community Fund.
- Installation of water troughs on two sites to reduce water costs.
- Extensions to existing sites are also being explored.

6. ASSOCIATIONS AND COMMUNITY GROUPS

6.1. Many sites also operate Tenant Association's which can provide many benefits for the tenants to work closely with the Council to raise funds for site improvements, support development and provide a single line of communication between the Council and the site tenants.

Currently 30% of the sites have an association whilst one of the Council's sites, at York Road, with eight tenants is now self-managed.

6.2. We support and work with various growing organisations, NHS, Food Plymouth, Plymouth Community Orchard Network, Schools, Colleges and Universities.

6.3. We are the first local authority to have an elected officer on the National Allotments Committee. This gives us strong links and support from the National Allotment Society who are a consultee for any requests made to the Secretary of State for disposal of any allotment land.

7. CONCLUSIONS

- 7.1. There has been a large increase in the number of plot holders, due to implementing smaller plots by halving the vacated larger plots', this has meant more people can have an allotment.
- 7.2. We have managed the increase in workloads by implementing new systems and improving links with Finance, which includes us having direct access to amend or check records.
- 7.3. The assistance of an apprentice has made a huge difference to improving our media output and general day-to-day customer contact.
- 7.4. Our link with the National Society of Allotments meant that we had their support at the difficult time of increasing rents, which subsequently received only a few complaints.
- 7.5. The impact of the Northern Corridor Road improvements on one of our sites we managed well and this assisted Planning to achieve their aims.
- 7.6. We are continuously evolving our service by liaising with and listening to our site associations and individual tenants to make improvements to our sites and services as demand and needs dictate.

Appendix:

I: Wards waiting & vacancies report.

II: Rents increases Letter 2015 (decision made under delegated authority).

Appendix I: Wards waiting & vacancies report.

Ref No.	Name of site	Ward	No Plots	No Vacant	No under offer	No on waiting list	Association
01	Barn Park Road	Peverell	59	5	1	31	Y
02	Blunts Lane	Moorview	93	0	5	13	Y
03	Bridwell Road	Devonport	19	6	0	8	N
04	Brockley Road	Efford & Lipson	50	12	2	3	N
05	Central Park	Peverell	146	0	7	55	Y
06	Channel Park	Efford & Lipson	21	6	1	5	N
07	Chaucer Way	Hornicknowle	27	5	0	11	N
08	Derwent Avenue	Efford & Lipson	12	0	0	0	N
09	Ditch Gardens	Plymstock Erle	18	0	0	20	N
10	Dunstone Lane	Plymstock Dunstone	20	2	0	41	N
11	Eliot Street	Devenport	16	1	0	7	N
12	Embankment Road	Sutton & Mount Gould	53	1	4	44	N
13	Fosters Field	Ham	26	5	0	22	N
14	Henderson Place	Devonport	19	1	1	5	N
15	Hermon Terrace	Ham	46	9	0	19	N
16	Hooe	Plymstock Radford	48	2	0	58	Y
17	Ivydale Road	Sutton & Mount Gould	2	0	0	5	N
18	Kendal Place	Southway	30	5	0	9	N
19	Knowle Avenue	Devonport	50	3	5	12	Y
20	Lower Compton	Compton	53	14	0	8	Y
21	Lucas Lane	Plympton St. Mary	25	3	0	41	N
22	Mays & Frys	Devonport	57	0	4	11	N
23	Newnham Park	Plympton St. Mary	71	7	1	29	Y
24	Oreston	Plymstock Radford	29	0	4	22	N
25	Parkside	Devonport	32	7	0	24	N
26	Penlee Valley	Stoke	88	9	0	18	N
27	Peverell Park Road	Peverell	62	2	1	29	Y
28	Pike Road	Efford & Lipson	22	1	0	1	N
29	Rowdens Reservoir	Stoke	77	8	0	16	N
30	Seymour Road	Compton	78	7	1	11	N
31	Southway Drive	Southway	65	11	0	7	Y
32	Southway Lane	Southway	47	1	1	2	N
33	Stoggy Lane	Plympton St. Maurice	36	3	0	30	Y
34	Swarthmore Higher Field	Peverell	159	3	7	9	Y
35	Swarthmore Lower Field	Peverell	50	18	0	8	Y
36	West Park Terrace	Hornicknowle	39	9	0	8	Y
37	York Road	Devonport	12	0	0	6	N



To All Allotment Tenants

Natural Infrastructure (Allotments)
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www.plymouth.gov.uk

21st September 2015

Dear Tenant

Notice of Allotment Rent Increases

As a result of continued government cuts to Plymouth City Council's budget, we are writing to all council allotment tenants to give notice of plot rent increases. However, these increases will not come into force for 12 months as recommended by the National Allotment Society.

Plymouth City Council provides high quality allotment services at 35 sites across the city with a range of support that includes:

- dedicated maintenance person which last year dealt with 40 tonnes of flytipped / mixed rubbish from across all sites;
- improved fencing and security at 15 sites;
- dedicated administration, advice and support for current tenants, new members and community groups.

This service is currently heavily subsidised by Plymouth City Council. The aim is to continue offering the same high quality allotment service which includes the popular maintenance person, whilst reducing the subsidy over the next 5 years. Therefore we are proposing to increase rents as follows:

Rent from 1 September 2015 (Inflation only)	Small Plot	£25	Large Plot	£50	
Rent from 1 September 2016	-	Small Plot	£35	Large Plot	£70
Rent from 1 September 2017	-	Small Plot	£44	Large Plot	£88
Rent from 1 September 2018	-	Small Plot	£55	Large Plot	£110
Rent from 1 September 2019	-	Small Plot	£65	Large Plot	£130
Rent from 1 September 2020	-	Small Plot	£76	Large Plot	£152

NB. Small plot is any size up to 179sqm. Large plot any size over 179sqm

By 2020 this will equate to a weekly cost of £1.46 for a small plot and £2.92 for a large plot.

There is no change to how water charges are calculated. These will remain as shared usage, the charges set and metered by South West Water, and recharged annually.

We'd like to find out how you use your allotment and how you think we can improve the sites and service. Please take 10 minutes to complete our survey at -

www.plymouth.gov.uk/allotments available until 31 October 2015.