

# **Taunton Deane Borough Council**

## **Executive – 2 December 2009**

### **Development of an Allotments Strategy and Policy**

#### **Report of Leisure Development Manager**

(This matter is the responsibility of Executive Councillor Richard Lees)

#### **1 Purpose**

1.1 To present to Members the draft Allotments Strategy and Policy for consideration and adoption.

#### **2 Executive Summary**

2.1 With sustained, high levels of demand for allotments the Council needs to adopt a policy for provision to inform the development of the Local Development Framework, respond to anticipated population growth in the Borough and ensure that allotments are developed and managed in the most appropriate way.

#### **3 Background**

3.1 In November 2008 a report was presented to the Strategy and Performance Panel on the progress with this Strategy and seeking Members' views on the drafted policy and vision statements.

3.2 The Panel decided to appoint a Steering Group to complete the work on the document. This has been chaired by Councillor Hayward with councillors Mrs Lees, Mrs Stock-Williams, Thorne and Stuart-Thorne on the group assisted by the Regional Director of the National Society for Allotments and Leisure Gardeners and a member of the Taunton Transition Town Movement both of whom are local allotment plot holders.

3.3 The Steering Group has met on 5 occasions and worked through a heavy workload to develop the strategy to propose a policy, standards and an action plan for allotments in the future in the borough.

3.4 The full draft Allotment Strategy is available on the Members' Portal and has been circulated as part of the consultation with stakeholders over the last six weeks.

#### **4 Summary of the Allotments Strategy**

4.1 Allotments are a statutory duty for this council in the unparished area and of parish councils elsewhere. The planned building of 20,000 new dwellings in the borough means the council must consider the needs of its growing population and plan for the future.

4.2 Demand for allotment plots is growing across the country and Taunton Deane has both waiting lists and latent or “hidden” demand. This is a reflection of changing lifestyle priorities and concerns with issues such as diet, food origins, cost etc which have given allotment gardening a sustained, wider appeal.

4.3 Allotments could be a vehicle for delivering on the health, social and economic targets for this council and its partners if they are managed and developed appropriately as is happening in other parts of the country.

4.4 The emerging Local Development Framework is an opportunity to actively allocate new land for allotments in the new urban extensions and through the community infrastructure levy to ensure improvements in existing allotment sites.

4.5 There is a great deal of national and local policy that supports the role of allotments mostly aspiring to improve the local diet especially in deprived wards, increase the amount of food locally produced, reduce obesity and to increase physical activity levels.

4.7 Wide local consultation on the subject of allotments whilst developing this Strategy has provided useful information. Some general points arising are:

- Lack of information available about how to find a plot
- People want to be able to walk to a plot
- Lot of latent demand for allotments (people who would like one but who don't appear on any waiting list)
- Lot of masked demand – sub division of plots into halves, quarters or even smaller hides the true picture of demand
- Need to provide new sites
- Security is perceived to be a problem on some sites
- Toilets are needed on many sites especially to reflect growing number of female plot holders
- Plot holders are enormously passionate about their plots
- Little disabled provision on sites

#### **4.8 The proposed Vision for Allotments is:**

Everyone in Taunton Deane who wishes to grow vegetables and fruit on an allotment should have the opportunity to do so at the earliest opportunity and within a reasonable distance of their home.

## 5 The Proposed Policy for Allotments

“Taunton Deane Borough Council recognises that the provision of allotments for residents is an important contributor to the well-being of the community.

The Council recognises that growing flowers, fruit and vegetables on allotment sites provides an important opportunity for community interaction, for physical activity, healthy eating and recycling.

The Council has adopted a standard for the provision of allotments 15.4 square metres of allotment land per dwelling which it will seek to provide and will require to be provided on new developments of 376 houses or more. Smaller developments will make a contribution in lieu of provision to be used to improve existing sites.

The Council will seek to:

- monitor any unmet demand for allotments in relation to the adopted standard;
- investigate possible solutions to any unmet demand and promote the provision of new allotment sites where they are needed;
- support the improvement of existing allotment sites to enable more people to share the benefits of allotments;
- support the development of horticultural knowledge and skills with a particular emphasis on food growing both on allotments and in containers;
- encourage the adoption of organic and sustainable cultivation methods on allotments.
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Through so doing the Council aims to:

- increase the numbers and diversity of people growing their own food;
- increase levels of consumption of fresh fruit and vegetables across the community with special emphasis in North and East Taunton;
- contribute to raising physical activity levels especially among older people;
- provide opportunities for social interaction and community integration;
- contribute to environmental improvements and use of sustainable growing methods;
- raise skill and knowledge levels of horticulture and cultivation;
- improve the health of the community;

## **6 The Proposed Standards for Allotment Provision**

### **6.1 Accessibility Standard**

Allotments will be provided within 1Kilometre of new homes.

### **6.2 Quality Standard**

Allotment sites will be well maintained and secure with appropriate facilities such as controlled water supplies, toilets, parking for bicycles and a shared shed or meeting room.

They will be easy to get to on foot or by public transport, easy to find out about, and easy to get around with appropriate provision for people with disabilities.

Allotment sites will be welcoming to people from all parts of the community, with support for first time growers and encouragement for sustainable cultivation practices. Sites will be managed to benefit wildlife and maintain good soil quality.

### **6.3 Quantity Standard**

There should be 15.4 square metres of allotment land per dwelling in Taunton Deane. This amount of land should be provided on-site for all new developments over 376 dwellings and an off-site contribution in lieu of £154 (2009) per dwelling collected on smaller developments.

## **7 The proposed action plan**

7.1 Members are referred to appendix 1 of this report which summarises the proposed action plan.

## **8 Consultation**

8.1 The draft document including the Vision, Aims, Objectives, Standards and Policies, Action Plan has been circulated to all potentially interested parties including parish councils. The comments received were considered by the Steering Group and three amendments were proposed to the draft and agreed by the Community Scrutiny Panel at its meeting on 17<sup>th</sup> November 2009. These are:

1. insertion of the word “controlled” in the Quality Standard referring to water supplies;
2. addition of an action in the Action Plan on Plotwatch ;
3. The inclusion of a new statement in the Strategy:

“Where development is in a parished area, land or money to be transferred to TDBC and passed to the PC to discharge its duty in connection with allotments or to an organisation nominated in the S106 agreement”

## **9 Equalities**

9.1 An Equalities Impact Assessment has been carried out on the Strategy. The assessment and resulting Equalities Action Plan are attached as APPENDICES 2 and 3.

## **10 Recommendations**

Members are asked to consider the following and propose any changes:

- 10.1 consider and adopt the Strategy including the Vision, Aims, Objectives, Standards, Policies and Action Plan;
- 10.2 accept the Strategy as a technical document to be weighed in the decision-making process for the determination of development proposals;
- 10.3 approve for the draft Taunton Deane Allotments Strategy to go out to wider consultation which will enable it to be considered for adoption as a Supplementary Planning Document;
- 10.3 delegate the Executive Councillor for Sport, Parks and Leisure to approve any alterations to the Strategy resulting from the consultation and the outcomes for the Action Plan as they are developed.

APPENDIX 1

ALLOTMENTS ACTION PLAN 2010-2015

KEY TO ABBREVIATIONS USED IN ACTION PLAN

AA	allotment associations	PCT	Primary Care Trust
SWT	Somerset Wildlife Trust	SCC	Somerset County Council
TTT	Taunton Transition Town movement	CSO	Community Safety Officer
PC	Parish and Town Councils	NSALG	National Society of Allotment and Leisure
LDM	Leisure Development Team members	Gardeners	
DLO	Deane DLO Parks Manager's staff		
HL	Heritage and Landscape team		

<b>Demand</b>					
ref	action	description	leader	Officers/partners	Target/timeframe
D1	Explore possibility of changing parts of some public open spaces into allotments to meet demand	Higher Holway open space has potential for extension to existing allotment site	LDM	Holway Allotment Association, DLO	Agreement on area of land by December 2009 Identify funding by December 2009 Layout the site by April 2010
		Area of land in Lambrook cut off from Victoria Park to be considered for conversion to allotments	LDM	TTT, DLO, tenants and residents, JH	Consult community on proposal and seek funding by April 2010
		Land at rear/side of Blackbrook	LDM	DLO, tone leisure	Agree area of land and seek funding by April 2010

		sports centre not useable for football to be considered			
		Land at Longrun Meadows	LDM	PT,SWT, NSALG, NE	Apply for funding as part of wider NE bid for this site
D2	Support Parish Councils to find land and set up allotments	signposting funding and offering advice and information	LDM	NSALG	Research current funding opportunities and provide information to interested parishes by March 2010
D3	Ensure the allotments policy and standard become part of the new Local Development Framework	Engage with Strategy Team and update the Standard calculation annually	LDM	Strategy Team	Strategy to be part of the formal development of the Core Strategy of the LDF April 2010
D4	Ensure that all new developments include provision for allotments where appropriate or make contributions to improving existing sites	Comment on development proposals at pre application stage and make formal requests when planning applications are received	LDM	Strategy Team	Ongoing
D5	Consider using land being sought for cemetery extensions for	May be opportunities in Wellington and	LDM	Cemeteries and Crematorium Manager	Timescale to reflect acquisition timetable

	temporary allotments	Taunton			
D6	Encourage employers to make land around the work place available to employees for allotments	Use Deane House as an example based on the work underway at Musgrove	DLO	Musgrove Park Hospital	Identify possible sites at Deane House
		Contact other large employers	TTT	SCAT, SCC, MOD Hydrographic,	Encourage provision and engage at least one employer by Sept 2010
D7	Look for opportunities for using amenity land around housing estates	Discuss with housing dept and DLO	DLO,	Housing Asset Management	Assess opportunities and consult tenants and residents groups by Sept 2010
D8	Ensure a variety of plot sizes are provided to cater for all needs	Subdivide existing plots where appropriate and layout new ones in varying sizes	DLO	AA TDBC Developers	Ongoing on existing sites to reflect need.

<b>Promotion</b>					
ref	action	description	leader	Officers/partners	Target/timeframe
P1	Investigate the possibility of centralised information on waiting lists	Request information from AAs every quarter to ensure demand trends	LDM/DLO	AAs	Spring 2010



		are monitored			
P2	Open up the current Taunton Deane allotment competition to all allotment growers		DLO	AAs and PCs	Summer 2010
P3	Develop the Taunton Deane Borough Council website to include more information about allotments and links to other information		LDM	DLO, AAs, NSALG	Spring 2010
P4	Showcase allotment growing at the Taunton Flower Show via the Deane DLO display	Allocate a part of the display area for displaying vegetable growing and promoting allotments	DLO	AAs	August 2010
P5	Publish information on other opportunities eg Landshare, container growing, "dumpy bags" etc	Use websites and leaflets	TTT	TDBC	April 2010
P6	Seek funding for the development of a staffed project to teach growing skills to schools and public	Include a sum in the Access to Nature bid to Natural England	LDM	SWT	September 2010
P7	Showcase easy ways to get growing via the media and in conjunction with Taunton Transition Town	Plant up an edible bedding scheme and encourage AAs to provide examples	TTT	DLO AAs	Summer 2010

P8	Organise an Annual Allotments Trail Day with sites open to the public	Seek agreement from allotments sites along the lines of the Heritage Open Days	LDM	AAs PCs	Summer 2010
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<b>Inclusion</b>					
ref	action	description	leader	Officers/partners	Target/timeframe
IN1	engage with the appropriate organisations representing people from ethnic groups to ensure they are aware of the availability of allotments	Identify the groups and find out what their needs are and provide information as appropriate	LDM		April 2010
IN2	Provide training for Allotment Associations to undertake an access audit of their site to identify issues for people with disabilities	Identify a training provider	LDM	SAIN	April 2010
IN3	Encourage the development of plots and facilities for people with disabilities	Provide information and advise on funding	LDM		April 2010
IN4	Publicity information to showcase the diversity of plot holders	All leaflets and website to include appropriate photographs	LDM		ongoing

<b>Site management</b>					
ref	action	description	leader	Officers/partners	Target/timeframe
SM1	Explore interest in setting up a Federation of Allotments Associations in Taunton Deane	Bring together the interested parties to discuss common issues and to promote allotments	LDM	AA PC TTT employers	March 2010
SM2	Allotment Associations to be encouraged to hold occasional sales of plot holder surpluses to generate funds for improvements	Provide information on the legal situation and support the promotion of sales events	NSALG	All allotment providers	ongoing
SM3	Allotment Associations to be encouraged to open their sites for community group and school visits		NSALG	All allotment providers	ongoing
SM4	Allotment Associations to be encouraged to run sessions to pass on skills and knowledge to other plot holders and the public	Provide information on the legal situation and support the promotion of such events	NSALG	All allotment providers	ongoing
	As Allotment Associations leases come up for renewal with TDBC, ensure they reflect the vision, policy and standards of the allotments strategy and engage in the development of the proposed Federation of allotment associations.	Liaise with Property Services to provide relevant information.  Encourage Parish and Town Councils to do the same	LDM	SW1 Property Services  PCs	Ongoing. Rowbarton and Holway by April 2010
SM6	Encourage applications for Green Pennant award	Provide information on the requirements and benefits of the award and support the	LDM	AAs	Target of one application by December 2010

		submissions			
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<b>Facilities</b>					
ref	action	description	leader	Officers/partners	Target/timeframe
F1	Promote and support provision of on site facilities such as meeting “rooms”, toilets and clear information boards		LDM	AA	ongoing
F2	Promote and support the provision of sustainable facilities and growing techniques on allotments	Provide information on sustainable alternatives and ensure that if any TDBC funding is provided that it reflects the preference for sustainable provision	LDM	AA	Ongoing
F3	Promote and facilitate a Plotwatch scheme to assist Allotment Associations with security issues	Invite the Police to have a representative on the Federation of Allotment Associations	CSO	AAs	April 2010

<b>Health</b>					
ref	action	description	leader	Officers/partners	Target/timeframe
H1	Explore opportunities for improving health and diet through allotments with partners eg PCT, Education	Identify appropriate officers who can ensure the delivery of projects to improve health	LDM	PCT TLL SCC	ongoing

	Authority	and diet			
H2	Explore funding opportunities for a supported growing project in Halcon	Include a sum in the Access to Nature bid to Natural England	LDM	SWT TTT Link Centre	September 2010
H3	Consider how to link into other initiatives to encourage more cycling and walking to allotment sites		TTT	SCC	Ongoing

<b>Wildlife</b>					
ref	action	description	leader	Officers/partners	Target/timeframe
W1	Survey sites to identify beneficial or protected species	provide training for AAs to survey their sites	HL	SWT AA	ongoing
W2	Give advice to AAs on ways to improve habitat for wildlife on their sites		HL	SWT AA	ongoing
W3	Engage with the local bee keepers to provide advice to Allotment Associations on how to encourage bees and other pollinators		LDM	AA	ongoing

APPENDIX 2

Equalities Impact Assessment

What are you completing this impact assessment for	<b>Allotments Strategy</b>
<b>Section One – Aims and objectives of the policy /service</b>	
To ensure that everyone in Taunton Deane who wishes to grow vegetables and fruit on an allotment should have the opportunity to do so at the earliest opportunity and within a reasonable distance of their home.	
<b>Section two – Groups that the policy or service is targeted at</b>	
<p>All citizens wishing to lease an allotment          All Taunton Deane Allotment Associations          All Parish Councils          South West Regional branch of the National Society of Allotments and Leisure Gardeners Limited.          National Society of Allotments and Leisure Gardeners Limited.          Developers and House Builders.          Private / Charity landowners who manage allotments          Other public bodies who manage allotments</p>	
<b>Section three – Groups that the policy or service is delivered by</b>	
<p>Taunton Deane Borough Council          All Taunton Deane Allotment Associations          All Parish Councils          South West Regional branch of the National Society of Allotments and Leisure Gardeners Limited.          National Society of Allotments and Leisure Gardeners Limited.          Developers and House Builders.          Private / Charity landowners who manage allotments          Other public bodies who manage allotments          Taunton Transition Town          Taunton Deane PCTs</p>	
<b>Section four – Evidence and Data used for assessment</b>	
<p>Audit of Sites 2007          Open Spaces survey 2005          Plot holders survey 2007          Non Plot holders growing event 2007          Allotment associations consultation 2006-7</p>	

National comparators

**Section Five - Conclusions drawn about the impact of service/policy/function on different groups highlighting negative impact or unequal outcomes**

The policy revealed that there is an overall shortage of allotments in Taunton Deane. This has a potential negative impact on the following groups:

Low socio economic groups, Elderly and Disabled groups (form of exercise), rurality (urban dwellers). The Council will need to consider the overall supply of allotments and the distribution of these.

The current delivery mechanism through Parish Councils and allotment associations has a potential negative impact on the following groups; Disability, Age, Race.

The Council will need to use its influence to ensure that all parish councils adopt policies that ensure equality of access to all groups. This will require the adoption by Parish Councils of policies that are compliant with the Equality Framework. It will also require the adoption of constitutions by allotment associations that are compliant with good equality and diversity practice. The Council will need to develop a draft constitution for adoption by allotment associations that meets these needs.

The monitoring of good equality practice will be through the leases provided by parish Councils and by the Borough Council to allotment associations. The council will need to ensure that a draft lease is drawn up that meets these requirements. Policy SM5 states that “As allotment association leases come up for renewal with TDBC ensure that they reflect the vision, policy and standards of the allotments Strategy, and engage in the development of the proposed federation of allotment associations.

The Council will need to consider providing Equality and Diversity training to Parish Councils and Allotment Associations.

The mechanisms for the control of waiting lists vary across the Borough. This potentially creates negative impacts for all groups. Under Policy P1 The Council intends to investigate centralised information from waiting lists. The Council will also need to consider the adoption of a central waiting list, or some other means by which potential negative effects could be addressed. The Council has identified the need, through the strategy, to increase the numbers and diversity of people growing their own food.

Only one of the allotment sites in Taunton Deane has a toilet on site. This has a potential discriminatory effect on age, gender and disability. The Policy (IN4) recommends a standard that “appropriate facilities” be provided on site accessible for people with disabilities. The policy also promotes and supports provision on sites of facilities such as toilets (F1) The Council will need to consider the mechanism for delivering against this standard.

The Council has identified that no sites have been subjected to accessibility audits. This had a potential negative impact on disabled people. The strategy has an action (IN3) to provide training for DDA assessments and (IN4) to provide advice on funding to meet accessibility standards.

The Council has identified that information relating to provision of allotments is insufficient to enable full access to all groups. This has potential negative impact on race and socio economic groups. The Strategy (IN1) has identified the need to be aware of the appropriate organisations representing people from ethnic groups to ensure that they are aware of the availability of allotments. The council will need to consider how to ensure that this is effected by the various organisations involved in delivery.

**Section six – Examples of best practise**

The policy is aimed at addressing the current negative impact felt by low socio economic groups, (North and East Taunton) Elderly and Disabled groups (form of exercise), rurality (urban dwellers).

The policy aims to address the overall shortage of allotments by establishing higher standards of provision from 5.5m2 to 15.4 m2 per household though the adoption of the policy as an evidence base for the Developer Contribution Supplementary planning document. This will have the effect of adding 31.5 hectares to the exiting provision of 26 hectares of allotment land.

**APPENDIX 3**

**Impact Assessment Issues and Actions table**

Service area				Date		
Identified issue drawn from your conclusions	Groups affected	Actions needed – how will your service or policy be amended	Who is responsible	By when	Is a monitoring system required	Expected outcomes from carrying out actions
<b>Knowing our Communities, engagement and satisfaction</b>						
Develop constitutions that require allotment associations to maintain equality of provision based on NSALG model Constitution. Put systems in place to monitor compliance with these requirements	Allotment Associations	Draft a model constitution that addresses equality	K Hughes / Legal	Sept 2010	Yes	A model constitution in place for all Allotment associations
<b>Responsive services and customer care</b>						
Encourage the development of		Identify minimum standards of provision	K Hughes	June 2010	Yes	Parish councils use precept to assist in



plots and facilities for people with disabilities.  Consider either the adoption of a central waiting list, or some other means by which potential negative effects could be addressed.		and distribute to allotment associations and parish councils  Creation of central waiting list	D Arscott	November 2011	No	developing / develop facilities on sites  A more equitable means of plot allocation
<b>Place shaping, leadership and partnerships</b>						
Develop a model Lease agreement for Parish Councils and provide training and monitoring to ensure that minority groups are not treated unfairly as a result of local policies and actions promoted by allotment associations  Provide training for allotment associations to undertake an		New agreements to be drawn up to replace existing lease agreements  Provide training materials and organise courses  Provide training materials and organise courses	K Hughes / Legal	Sept 2010  Sept 2010  June 2010	Yes  No  No	Creation of agreements that meet the Equality Framework requirements  Courses on E & D run in all areas with representation from Parish Councils and Allotment associations  Courses on Access auditing run in all areas with representation from Parish Councils and

access audit of their sites to identify issues for people with disabilities						Allotment associations
<b>A modern and diverse workforce</b>						
No actions identified						