

Report of the Strategic Director

ALLOTMENTS IN BROXTOWE1. Purpose of report

To update members on the provision of allotments in Broxtowe.

2. Background

The Borough Council is responsible for 8 allotment sites in the Attenborough, Beeston and Chilwell areas of the borough, with three of the sites operating as “self-managed” sites by the respective associations (see appendix 1).

The allotment sites in Parish areas of the borough are maintained by the respective Town and Parish Councils. The fees for the Borough allotment rental and water charges are set on an annual basis with the current rates detailed in appendix 2. The rental charge goes towards the cost of managing and maintaining the sites, with the water charge funding the cost of the water and any repairs and maintenance to the water supply infrastructure.

Appendix 3 makes reference to community orchards and the provision of toilets on the allotments.

3. Financial implications

The net cost of the Council’s allotments is met by Beeston Council Tax payers through the Beeston Special Expenses charge. This cost in 2019/20 amounts to £1.51 per property based upon a Band D council tax.

There are no additional costs at this stage arising from the report. However, if following discussions with the allotment associations on the management and maintenance of composting toilets proposals are brought before the committee for consideration then the financial implications of these proposals and the implications for Beeston council tax payers will be included in the information provided to Members

Recommendation

The Committee is asked to NOTE the report.

Background papers

Nil

APPENDIX 1

ALLOTMENT SITES MAINTAINED BY BROXTOWE BOROUGH COUNCIL

SITE	NUMBER OF PLOTS	SELF MANAGED SITE	WATER SUPPLY TAP/BOREHOLE	CURRENT VACANCIES
Attenborough Lane, Chilwell	10	No	Tap	1
Borehole, George Avenue, Chilwell	132	No	Borehole	3
Dennis Avenue, Beeston	16	No	Tap	6
Grove Avenue, Chilwell	147	No	Tap	1
Inham Nook, Pearson Avenue, Chilwell	100	Yes	Tap	0
Leyton Crescent, Beeston	116	Yes	Tap	0
Trent Vale	38	No	Tap	3
Wollaton Road	128	Yes	Tap	0

SELF MANAGEMENT OF ALLOTMENT SITES

The sites at Inham Nook, Leyton Crescent and Wollaton Road are classed as self-managed. The process operates as follows:

- The Allotment Associations rent the sites from the Council, arrange tenancy agreements, collect rents and undertake maintenance and repairs.
- The Associations are paid an annual sum by the Council for undertaking this function and use this money along with the rents collected to maintain and develop the sites.
- The plot holders are the tenants of the Associations rather than of the local authority. The Borough Council retains defined oversight and strategic functions.
- The Associations pay the Council an annual rental based on the income collected from the tenants.

The system works very well for both parties with the Associations having more direct control over the site and the Council has to spend less administrative and officer time on the sites.

ALLOTMENT SITES MAINTAINED BY PARISH/TOWN COUNCILS

PARISH / TOWN COUNCIL	NUMBER OF SITES	NUMBER OF PLOTS	WATER SUPPLY	NUMER OF VACANCIES
Eastwood Town Council	2	99	Tap	2
Greasley Parish Council	1	23	Tap	0
Kimberley Town Council	2	32	Tap	2
Stapleford Town Council	5	255	Tap	43

In the Parishes of Awsworth, Brinsley, Cossall, Nuthall and Trowell there are no allotments managed by the Town or Parish Councils.

WAITING LISTS

In recent years the number of people on the waiting lists has reduced significantly and in general plots are available on most sites. The self-managed sites are however often more popular and at these sites there can be a waiting period for a plot.

APPENDIX 2

CHARGES FOR ALLOTMENTS

The figures detailed below were approved by Leisure and Environment Committee on 23 January 2019.

	Full charge per standard 250m ² plot	Concession charge per standard 250m ² plot	Water charge per plot
Effective 1 Jan 2019	£33.00	£16.50	£19.00
Effective 1 Jan 2020	£34.00	£17.00	£20.00
Effective 1 Jan 2021	£35.00	£17.50	£21.00

The charges for future years are approved in advance as notice must be given to allotment holders as part of their tenancy agreement. With different size plots the plot rental is charged pro rata on the plot size. Plots below 125m² are charged at the 125m² rate.

The concessionary rate for allotments includes concessions for plot holders who are:

- Receiving state pension
- Disabled
- Unemployed

The water charge is per plot irrespective of size or if the water is supplied by tap or borehole.

Concessions

The Council offers a 50% concession on the plot rental to allotment holders who are either receiving state pension, have a disability or are unemployed. Concessions are offered on all plot sizes and not just the standard 250m² plots.

The table below provides information on the number of plots on each of the Council controlled allotment sites and the number of concessions.

SITE	TOTAL NO OF PLOTS	PLOTS WITH CONCESSIONS
Attenborough Lane	10	1
Borehole	132	30
Dennis Avenue	16	2
Grove Avenue	147	45
Trent Vale	38	5

The sites at Leyton Crescent, Inham Nook and Wollaton Road are self-managed and the Council do not hold records of the number of concessions at these sites.

Water Charges

For a number of years comments have been received about water charges. The main issues raised are:

- Why do I have to pay for 2 water charges when I have 2 plots?
- Why do I have to pay a full water charge when I only have half a plot?
- Why do I have to pay water charges when the site has boreholes and not water taps?

A previous review of allotments recommended a standard charge for water across all plots, irrespective of the type of supply and the size of plot. The charge for the water supply not only contributes to the cost of the water used on the site but also for the ongoing repairs to the pipes, taps and borehole pumps.

It is appropriate however to encourage allotment holders to adopt a 'greener' approach to allotment gardening by promoting horticultural methods that reduce water consumption, using water butts to collect water and looking to introduce push button taps as and when taps need to be replaced on the sites. This in turn will reduce water consumption and may allow water charges to be frozen or even reduced in future years.

In January each year a newsletter is sent to all plot holders. In the 2020 edition the focus will be on 'Greening your Allotment' with tips on water saving and gardening methods that will help the environment. It is however proposed that when the fees and charges for subsequent years are revised at the Environment and Climate Change Committee on 3 February 2020 that a 50% reduction to the water charge be introduced for half plots.

APPENDIX 3**COMMUNITY ORCHARDS**

Allotments do offer the potential to create community orchards where the fruit grown can be used by the allotment holders on the site. Orchards are places for the community on the allotment sites to come together. They promote the health benefits of fresh fruit and offer a hands on approach to learning new gardening skills. They also have their own special calendar, creating opportunities for the community to take part in events such as Blossom Day and Apple Day. At the present time there are orchards on the allotments sites at Inham Nook and Wollaton Road. At Inham Nook an event is planned this winter which will see two apple trees of the cultivar “Bess Pool” planted. This is a very old cultivar that originated in Chilwell. The event will also include work to promote biodiversity on the site.

The Council is also currently working with the “Dig-In” project at Albany Allotments in Stapleford to develop a community allotment this winter and also looking to create a small pocket orchard at Dennis Avenue Allotments Beeston.

Working with Community Groups such as “Dig-In” allows the social and mental health benefits that allotments provide to be further developed.

There is an opportunity to create additional community orchards on suitable vacant plots when they become available at the other sites. The target is to create one new community orchard each year working with the respective Allotment Associations to ensure that the areas will be appropriately managed and maintained.

TOILETS

The major obstacle in providing toilet facilities at allotment sites is an absence of mains sewer connections or an electric supply. This can be overcome in a number of ways with various companies offering compost and waterless toilets. The other option is to hire in portable toilets and have these serviced on a regular basis.

Detailed below is a summary of current toilet provision on the allotments.

Inham Nook Allotments – portaloo toilet, no problems reported. This is financed direct by the allotment association from their budget allocation as part of the self-management agreement.

Leyton Crescent Allotments – compost toilet. This was installed a number of years ago but unfortunately due to misuse and the lack of volunteer cleaners is not used any more. Again this toilet was funded by the association as part of the self-management agreement.

Wollaton Road Allotments – portaloo toilet, no problems reported. There is also a compost toilet and whilst no problems have been reported it is not popular and gets limited use. These are both funded by the association as part of the self-management agreement.

There are no toilets on the remaining 5 borough owned sites. The sites at Attenborough Lane, Dennis Avenue and Trent Vale are relatively small. Both the

Borehole and Grove sites have over 100 plots and have the biggest potential for toilet provision. Whilst compost toilets are not without their issues, as identified at Leyton Crescent, there are many new suppliers on the market offering different options. It is therefore proposed to explore the possibility, working with the allotments associations at Borehole and Grove Avenue, to look at the potential of installing compost toilets at these sites with the associations taking on the management and maintenance of the facilities. Given that the cost of compost toilets ranges from £4,000-£8,000 dependant on the type and suppliers then there would need to be full support from the association to manage and maintain these prior to progressing this further. The biggest single issue is likely to be recruiting volunteers to maintain and clean the toilets.