
ALLOTMENTS IN THANET – WORKING PARTY REPORT

To: **Overview and Scrutiny Panel 11th May 2010**

Main Portfolio Area: **Environmental Services**

By: **Overview and Scrutiny Allotments Working Party**

Classification: **Unrestricted**

Ward: **All wards**

Summary: **To set out the recommendations from the Allotments Working Party to the Overview and Scrutiny Panel in relation to the future of allotments in Thanet.**

For Decision

1.0 Introduction and Background

- 1.1 The Allotment Improvements carried out since 2008 caused some residents to complain about the works carried and have led to the formation of the Working Party. The interest in allotments has grown considerably in the last few years and led a service which was underused to become a service where there are a significant number of plot holders on the waiting list.
- 1.2 In 1998 a report to Island Planning and Transport Committee put forward a recommendation to sell some of the then surplus allotment land to generate income to carry out improvements in an attempt to reverse the decline in uptake, which in part was due to the damage from vandalism and lack of investment in the sites. Resulting from this report Officers made the necessary arrangements to sell 2/3rds of the Manston Road site to create the funds needed for works.

2.0 The Current Situation

- 2.1 The Working Party have visited all the Thanet District Council allotment sites where improvements have been carried out. This included inspecting the perimeter fences, compost toilets and access roads.
- 2.2 Officers and allotment holders were interviewed during the site visits and during meetings of the working party to establish the methods undertaken to establish needs for improvements.
- 2.3 Working Party members were informed that the list of improvements was based upon discussions of plot holders with officers, a review of the service undertaken by post in 2002 and an open meeting with plot holders held in 2004. This information gave the basis for a number of choices which were then presented to all allotment plot holders for their priorities. Once these results had been received a series of local meetings were held in Ramsgate, Broadstairs, Margate and Garlinge to advise plot holders of the results of their response.
- 2.4 Fencing as a security issue was the main issue for 11 out of the 12 Council allotment sites and this was seen as needing immediate action as some sites were suffering regular damage including arson. Two major tenders were offered for contractors under the

Council Financial Standing orders and works undertaken in 2007/8 and 2008/9. Works undertaken in 2009/10 have been minor fencing adjustments and other enhancements such as compost toilets, water supplies and roadway and path improvements.

- 2.5 Members during site visits found all the sites were pleasant to visit and in general most plots were being well used. Some minor works were required on some sites. The list of allotments and the issues noted from the site visit are detailed in Annex 1.

3.0 Options – Relating to Terms of Reference

- 3.1 **Review position of fencing in relation to permitted development** – The Working Party were concerned and unsure whether the advice from Planning had been correct as another Council contacted by a Member indicated that they would have interpreted the matter in a different way. This was felt to be particularly important when placing the fence near a highway.
- 3.2 **Examine and request update of the 2006 Allotments Policy** – The Working Party received the policy and had no specific comments on its content but did feel that it would need an update next year to take into consideration the changes undertaken as a result of the investment of funds from the Manston Road sale.
- 3.3 **Note the Capacity and examine waiting list** – The Working Party noted that there is an increasing waiting list and there does need to be consideration for a number of extra sites in Thanet when provision can be made. A new site has already been indicated at Pysons Road on the Asset list and this has been offered to Broadstairs Town Council to create a new allotment site. At present this site has not been taken up by the Town council but this relates in part to the next item below.
- 3.4 **Note the legislative requirements in relation to Parish and Town Councils** – The Working Party were advised that the law in relation to this matter was complex. In relation to the Broadstairs site it was the considered opinion of the District Council's Legal section that the allotments service in that town should have transferred to the Town Council when it was created in 1974 as it followed directly on from their role as an Urban District Council. The view of the Town Council is not in agreement and negotiations are underway to see if this matter can be resolved.
- 3.5 In Ramsgate the matter is clearer in that any Statutory sites, which are Chilton and Jackey Bakers allotments, these are automatically owned by the new Town Council. At present the District Council is managing the sites and charging a management fee to the Town Council. This arrangement is subject to a 12 month notice period and it is believed that the Ramsgate Town Council is or has served notice to end this arrangement. There may be further transfers of the non statutory sites should the Town Council in Ramsgate wish to take these over, but this is as yet undecided.
- 3.6 **Report on capital receipts from sale of allotments and allocation of funds** – The Working Party were informed that £900,000 has been made available for the new improvements with the capital receipts from the sale of the Manston Road allotment s site. This site has at present produced a receipt of £3.2 million.

4.0 Corporate Implications

4.1 Financial

- 4.1.1 The working party requests that funds be set aside for further improvements to allotments and proposes an additional employee to assist with allotment administration.

4.2 **Legal**

- 4.2.1 There may be a need to assess the implications of the Small Holdings and Allotments Act 1908 Section 32(2), which requires that the proceeds of the sale of allotment land shall be applied to discharging debts incurred in the provision of allotments or acquiring, improving or adapting allotment land. The Council must therefore consider the need for further allotment land or the need to improve existing allotments before deciding whether any of the proceeds of sale are surplus to allotment requirements.

4.3 **Corporate**

- 4.3.1 The provision of allotments assists the Council in meeting national recommendations in providing exercise and promoting healthy living and eating.

4.4 **Equity and Equalities**

- 4.4.1 The allotment service has carried out an Equality Impact assessment. The service is open to all residents.

5.0 **Recommendation**

- 5.1 That the Allotments Working Party meet during in 2010 to consider the position in relation to allotment waiting lists and receive an update on the handover of allotment sites to Town Councils.**

Contact	<i>Paul Verrall on behalf of Allotments Working Party</i>
Reporting to:	<i>Mark Seed, Director of Environmental Services</i>

Notes taken on site visits to Allotment Sites

The comments in brackets are works that have since been undertaken

Nash Road site

- Water on site
- Good Fencing
- Track ruts being resurfaced with type one aggregate
- Some ground may be needed by adjacent Margate cemetery
- Car parking to be provided (now provided)
- Compost toilets to be provided (now provided)

Tivoli site

- Water on site
- Fencing done
- Do not want toilets

Brooke Avenue site

- Toilets in place
- Fencing in place
- Water in place

Lymington Westgate

- Flush toilet in place
- Water on site
- Some fencing done but with issues with Orbit Housing in corner of site

Quex Road Birchington

- Fencing in place
- Have not requested toilets
- Water on site
- Want extension to water supply (now provided)

Dane Valley

- Water on site
- Roadway work in progress
- Type one aggregate filling ruts
- Charity plots – The Windmill Project and Pot a Lot for disabled
- Two compost toilets required (now provided)

Norman Road Broadstairs

- Water on site
- Toilets not requested
- Needs more rubbish collection

Prospect Road Broadstairs

- Water on site
- Toilets not required

Cecilia Road Ramsgate

- Water on site
- Flush toilets nearby in cemetery
- Area needed for manure

Margate Road Ramsgate

- Fencing in place
- Toilet in place
- Water on site

Jackey Bakers Ramsgate

- Fencing in place
- Toilet in place
- Needs more water points (some now provided)

Chilton Ramsgate

- Water on site
- Gates need moving due to proximity to roundabout (now provided)
- Shed needs moving on plot 18 to make way for path (resolved)
- Encroachment problem (resolved)
- Water supply more needed
- Weed problem from adjacent site
- Path needed (now provided)