



# Thyme's Up

A review of the allotments Action Plan 2005 - 2010

August 2010

**Key Action 1: Effective Management**

**Aim:** To identify, learn and implement effective management practices from the Allotment Forum, other local authorities and other allotment groups.

**Target:** To implement at least 2 good practice ideas each year.

OBJECTIVES	ACTION	2010 REVIEW AND COMMENTS
<p>To ensure the effective day to day maintenance and operation of allotment sites.</p>	<p>Maintain a system of on-site wardens who can report problems and good practice suggestions to the Allotment Officer.</p> <p>Maintain the Allotment Forum to liaise and feedback on more strategic management and operational maintenance issues.</p>	<p>12 wardens in place. Good working relationships built up and frequent contact. Quarterly meetings.</p> <p>Use of Parks Technical Officer for response maintenance has speeded up repairs/maintenance.</p> <p>January 2010 tenant survey indicates 78% of tenants consider condition of their site to be good or excellent. 19% described condition as fair (202 surveys returned represents approx 32% response rate).</p> <p>More new sites will stretch resources. Consider increase in on-site responsibility or use of ranger to organise site clean-ups / maintenance in conjunction with tenants. Consider self-management options.</p> <p>Forum limited to CDAHA members, many of whom are based at one site only, and small number of councillors. Consider widening representation to ensure representative body. Much of meeting taken up with feedback which could be provided in writing, therefore perhaps scope to reduce frequency of Forum-type meetings.</p>
<p>To provide an effective and efficient administration system.</p>	<p>Implement new computerised database and system for allotment administration.</p>	<p>New COLONY system implemented by 2006. However, requirement to input all invoice details into another system (ASH) very inefficient and time-consuming. A move to postal system for tenancy agreements could save quite a lot of officer time (at present, new tenants visit the office for a meeting with the allotment officer.)</p> <p>January 2010 tenant survey indicates 79% view customer services as good or excellent, 17% fair.</p>

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<p>To charge fair and affordable rents with an appropriate range of discounts and payment systems.</p>	<p>Review rent charges, in line with the council's review of fees and charges, to ensure that they do not discourage people on low incomes from renting allotments</p> <p>Consult the Allotment Forum on proposed changes</p> <p>Implement new charging scheme</p> <p>Review after 2 years.</p>	<p>Charges bench-marked with other authorities in 2007 and found to be slightly above peer group average but with additional facilities provided.</p> <p>No evidence that people on low incomes discouraged from having plots. (Half-plot costs under £25 per annum).</p> <p>87% of 2010 survey respondents indicate plot is good or very good value for money. Further 12% indicate fair value. 1% responded allotment was poor value. 48% indicated they would be happy to pay a bit more.</p> <p>Rent system currently charged per metre squared. Complicated to administer. Other authorities use set fee for small, medium, large plot. Scope to change system and also have minimum fee (cost to collect some rents is higher than rent value – many tenants paying less than £20 per annum, with some paying less than £10). Notice of one year required to change rent amount.</p> <p>Discount for over 60's only. Scope to change age at which senior discount applies. Scope to consider additional discounts but would require additional administration.</p>
<p>To offer a range of plot sizes and group plots.</p>	<p>Identify areas where smaller plots may be appropriate.</p> <p>Redefine plot areas on the ground.</p> <p>Revise tenancy agreement to provide for multiple tenants.</p>	<p>'Size to Suit' policy launched in 2008. Areas unused by long-standing tenants handed on as smaller plots for new tenants. Large plots divided when vacated (as deemed appropriate in consultation with site warden). New tenants take on half, third or quarter plot, as they require.</p> <p>1 in 6 new tenants later take up additional half plot but 5 in 6 content with half-sized plot or less.</p> <p>Plots redefined on the ground and on council allotment site maps.</p> <p>Multiple tenants named on tenancy agreements.</p>
<p>To provide the staff and financial resources necessary for effective management.</p>	<p>Review the existing resources and identify areas where additional funding may be necessary.</p> <p>Seek funding to provide any additional resources identified.</p>	<p>Allotment Officer became full-time post end 2006. Additional resources 2 -3 days per week from November 2008 to August 2009 while allotment improvements overseen by allotment officer.</p> <p>To be reviewed in light of forthcoming projects and completion of works programme. New sites will create additional administration and work to set up but streamlining administration (postal system) or requiring sites to self-manage to a greater extent could save officer hours.</p> <p>Survey responses indicate management of allotments currently effective, given high service satisfaction levels.</p>

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<p>To seek other sources of income to support allotments, e.g. grants.</p>	<p>Identify potential projects which could attract external funding – 1 per annum.</p>	<p>2007-2010 service focussed on spending existing investment funds in required timeframe. Given large investment in sites and current satisfaction levels, additional funding may not be a focus for the next 5 year action plan. Additional funding perhaps appropriate at site / Association level. Also, projects require additional staff for grant applications and project implementation. For review.</p>
<p>To provide help and support to new tenants.</p>	<p>Develop a starter pack for new tenants. Provide links to sources of advice and information.</p>	<p>Starter Pack feedback fairly positive. 96% survey respondents found pack at least sufficient. 68% found it good or excellent. Consider survey of tenants one year on and find out what additional information they would have found helpful. Support at site level would probably need to be developed through CDAHA, wardens or mentors.  Links provided to various organisations but could possibly be further improved by incorporating more links on the Council web-site.</p>
<p>To consult plot holders and their representative organisations on day to day management and strategic direction of allotments.</p>	<p>Continue to host the Allotment Forum</p>	<p>Allotment forum hosted 3 or 4 times per year but many groups and sites not represented. Warden meetings fulfil much of consultation remit.  Requirement to use Officer time to best advantage therefore number of meetings per annum could be reviewed.  Consider introducing new body instead to look at wider issue of local food production and associated planning issues.</p>

**Key Action 2: Infrastructure**

**Aim:** To maintain and improve the infrastructure of allotments.

**Target:** To complete the investment programme described below, on time, within budget and to a high quality.

OBJECTIVES	ACTION	2010 REVIEW AND COMMENTS
To ensure effective maintenance of allotment infra-structure	See Action Area 1.	Inspection regime for allotment sites in place alongside other parks infrastructure. Scope to review use of contractors versus internal resources to deal with e.g. fly-tipping, grounds maintenance. Scope to review ranger involvement as more cost effective approach.
To undertake a structured programme of investment in the infrastructure of allotments	<b>Alma Road</b>	
	Improve water supply	Water supply from road upgraded in conjunction with Severn Trent. Pressure improved.
	Repair / replace taps and water pipes where necessary	All underground pipe-work and above ground standpipes replaced.
	Repair / replace fencing as required	Site perimeter fence replaced.
	Lay tarmacadam paths through site	Stone path laid through centre of site and lower grass path cleared, levelled and reseeded.
	Erect new sign/information board	Both erected at site.
	Replace two sets of site gates	Both replaced.
	<b>Asquith Road</b>	
	Repair / replace fencing and gates where necessary	Not deemed necessary.
	Lay tarmacadam paths through site	Driveway and car park laid to tarmac but not main path – deemed not appropriate.
	Erect new sign/information board	Both erected.
	Add extension to Allotment Holders Association Office	Existing space remodelled with new walls and doors to make additional office. Space re-decorated. New heaters and kitchen area and new disabled access flushing toilet installed.

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	Repair / replace taps and water pipes where necessary	All pipe-work and standpipes replaced at the site.
	<b>Hatherley Road</b>	
	Repair / replace fencing and gate where necessary	Gate replaced.
	Lay tarmacadam paths through site including car park	Drive and car park laid to tarmac with drainage gulley and pipe installed.
	Erect new sign/information board for site	Both erected.
	Repair / replace taps and water pipes where necessary	All pipe-work and standpipes replaced. New supply in conjunction with Severn Trent to increase water pressure.
	Fit toilet on site	Done.
	<b>Hayden Road</b>	
	Landscape area where necessary	Hayden Two ploughed and entire site laid out and prepared for 50 new plots in 2008. Hayden One: Tree work undertaken and derelict plots renovated.
	Erect new sign/information board for site	Both erected.
	Repair / replace taps and water pipes where necessary	Replacement system not required. Some tap replacements addressed in 2010 Action Plan.
	Fit toilet on site	Two installed.
	<b>Midwinter</b>	
	Repair / replace fencing and gate where necessary	Replacement not necessary. Some gate repairs undertaken and fencing materials provided for wardens to undertake on-going upkeep.
	Lay tarmacadam paths where necessary	To be addressed in 2010-2015 Action Plan
	Repair existing paths	To be addressed in 2010-2015 Action Plan
	Erect new sign/information board	Both erected.

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	Repair / replace taps and water pipes where necessary	12 replacement taps and 10 new standpipes in 2009 in existing and new areas of site. Bloor development necessitates changes to water system, which loops under area to be sold.
	Fit toilet on site	Toilet fitted. Additional toilet required, given size of site and number of tenants.
	<b>Reddings Road</b>	
	Repair / replace fencing where necessary	Edible hedges funded in 2010 and some materials provided for fence repairs and improvements.
	Lay tarmacadam paths through site	Stone path installed entire length of site.
	Erect new sign/information board	Both erected.
	Repair / replace taps and water pipes where necessary	Water system replaced and new standpipes installed.
	Fit toilet on site	Toilet installed.
	<b>Severn Road</b>	
	Repair / replace fencing and gate	Fence replaced. Very positive feedback from plot-holders on improved security.
	Lay tarmacadam paths through site	Entrance and parking area laid to tarmac.
	Erect new sign/information board for site	Both erected.
	Repair / replace taps and water pipes where necessary	Not required.
	Fit toilet on site	Not deemed appropriate: 4 tenants only and estimated cost of £10,000 for toilet.
	<b>Terry Ashdown</b>	
	Repair / replace fencing and gate where necessary	Not necessary.
	Prune perimeter trees where necessary	Trees not on Council owned land. Item will remain on Action Plan in hope that land-owners can be identified and consulted for tree works to go ahead.
	Erect new sign/information board	Both erected.

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	Repair / replace taps and water pipes where necessary	Taps repaired. One additional tap outstanding and therefore in Action Plan 2010-2015.
	Fit toilet on site	Fitted.
	<b>Warden Hill</b>	
	Repair / replace fencing and gate where necessary	Palisade gates installed.
	Lay tarmac paths through site widening existing path, moving water supply	Stone path laid through site and water supply replaced at the same time, with new standpipes installed, evenly spaced throughout site.
	Erect new sign/information board	Both erected.
	Repair / replace taps and water pipes	Entire system replaced.
	Fit toilet on site	Fitted.
Capital items generated by other parts of the strategy	This will evolve and will be added to through the life of the strategy.	53 new plots created at Midwinter. Land drains installed. Area cleared, weed-killed, ploughed and marked out. New car parks. Similar project at Hayden Two for 50 new plots. Sheds included. Communal areas created at 5 sites. Tree work undertaken at several sites.
	<b>Other items not already on the list</b> Communal composting areas Shredding facilities Secure tool storage as seen at Bristol Manure delivery/storage	Composting area in Hayden Two in place and being used, delivery bays for Midwinter for leaves, chippings and manure not yet completed. Central tool store for Midwinter acquired and awaiting delivery.



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<p>To undertake improvements to Hayden 2 allotment site to provide facilities for people with special needs.</p>	<p>To be undertaken as part of the Esmee Fairburn project</p>	<p>Four raised beds suitable for wheelchair use in place. Disabled toilet in place. Communal poly-tunnel suitable for wheelchair access installed. Picnic / meeting area developed with turf and picnic benches installed. Community orchard established. Esmee Fairburn project now completed and various groups making use of the facilities installed.</p>
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**Key Action 3: Promoting allotment gardening**

**Aim:** To promote allotment gardening to the people of Cheltenham to increase the uptake of allotments and increase the value placed on allotments by the community as a whole.

**Target:** To increase the number of CBC allotment tenants by 2% each year.

OBJECTIVES	ACTION	2010 REVIEW AND COMMENTS
To develop communication tools to promote allotments.	Produce a new leaflet promoting allotments Improve the allotment information on the website Develop a briefing pack for key council and other staff who could promote allotments through their work, esp. to under-represented parts of the community.	Allotment information re-written for web-site including short videos offering advice about getting started. Further promotion judged unnecessary. Big increase in interest from target groups following media focus on allotments. No longer considered to be a priority for action. Could be taken up again once additional plots available.
To encourage take-up of allotments by groups of people under represented in the current tenants – particularly women, families, people with special needs and people on low incomes.	Develop targeted campaigns to promote allotments to these groups – 1 per annum. Collect data on the representation of these groups in the tenant group and monitor success of campaigns.	See above. Huge uptake of allotments among women and families and many special needs and low income groups now operating on sites as a result of national media interest in allotments. Not considered a priority for action. Could be taken up again once new sites developed and plots available to let. Collection of data on make-up of existing allotment tenants would be time-consuming and costly but some scope to introduce collection of this data as new people go on the waiting list or when they sign the tenancy agreement for a plot. Consider whether priority and which data...
To promote the value of allotment gardening to the whole community as an important part of the town's green spaces.	Participate in Cheltenham in Bloom annually.	Annual participation in Cheltenham in Bloom. Participation in National Allotments Week with events organised by Council achieving local media recognition and coverage. Further involvement in National Allotments Week to be handed over to sites / CDAHA, as more appropriate to organise at site/association level. Clarify position on Cheltenham in Bloom.

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<p>To work with other organisations, such as the health and housing agencies, to promote allotment gardening.</p>	<p>Discuss with Primary Care Trust, Cheltenham Borough Homes, Cheltenham Federation of Tenants, Leaseholders and Residents, Housing Associations and Social Landlords others ways in which allotments can meet the needs of their clients.</p> <p>Undertake agreed actions to promote allotments to these groups.</p> <p>Review success and repeat/revise processes.</p>	<p>Currently being undertaken by the private and charity sectors with external groups obtaining funding to support NHS patients, low income families and more. Not considered a priority for further action by Council, given current waiting list for allotments and existing involvement from outside agencies.</p>
<p>To provide advice, guidance and training to new and experienced allotment holders.</p>	<p>Survey tenants to identify advice, guidance and training needs</p> <p>Develop a programme</p> <p>Deliver programme</p> <p>Review success and repeat/amend as appropriate.</p>	<p>Item allocated to CDAHA. Extent of programme delivery or success not known.</p>
<p>To explore ways in which the allotments can be used as a educational resource.</p>	<p>Work with local schools, adult education providers and educational charities to identify opportunities</p>	<p>Decision made for department not to be liaising with or going into schools given new emphasis on food and food production within the education system. Other organisations / agencies fulfilling this role.</p>

**Key Action 4: Provision and protection of allotments**

**Aim:** To ensure that there are enough allotments in the right locations, as defined by the guidelines within Key Issue 4.

**Target:** By 2015 to have halved the residential area which fails to meet the guidelines.

OBJECTIVES	ACTION	2010 REVIEW AND COMMENTS
To ensure that the contribution of allotments is properly recognised in the strategies of the Borough Council and other agencies.	Promote the contribution that allotments make to other key policies and initiatives e.g. Community Plan, Local Plan and Local Development Framework, Regeneration Programme, Social Justice Strategy, Cultural Strategy, Green Space Strategy and ensure that allotments are properly considered in these initiatives.	Allotment provision and food growing is key area in Green Space Strategy which will feed into community and local plans, in whichever format they will take over the coming years.
To identify and dispose of surplus allotment land and reinvest proceeds in acquisition and improvement of other sites.	Work with the Asset & Property Management Working Group, Allotment Forum and Cheltenham and District Allotment Holders Association to ensure that any disposals of allotment land generate appropriate income for allotments elsewhere in the borough.	On-going. Action Plan 2005-2010 dealt with programme of investments and improvements following sale of allotment land in Welch Road. Action Plan 2010-2015 will incorporate additional provision envisaged to be funded by sale of allotment land in Midwinter area.
To protect existing and secure the provision of new allotment sites in areas of need through Planning System e.g. Sect. 106 & SPD.	Identify areas of need for new allotment provision, as part of the Green Space Strategy, and incorporate them in the Local Plan and Local Development Framework, through Supplementary Planning Guidance or directly.	On-going. 2010 application for development in Windsor Street incorporates grow patches / small allotments following recommendation of Parks Department. Study undertaken in 2010 to identify geographic loci of demand and report presented to Head of Properties.
	Develop Supplementary Planning Guidance to help protect existing allotments and secure the provision of new ones.	To be addressed in Action Plan 2010-2015. Demand analysis will be used to develop local standards e.g. plots per thousand households and areas for priority for new provision.

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	Negotiate the provision of new allotments in area of need through Section 106 agreements for appropriate development.	<a href="#">Underway. See reference to Windsor Street development above.</a>
	Develop sample S106 agreements for use by planning officers	<a href="#">Action Plan 2010-2015.</a>

**Key Action 5: Health, Safety and Environment**

**Aim:** To improve the health, safety and risk management and environmental benefits of allotments

**Target:** No health and safety or environmental incidents.

OBJECTIVES	ACTIONS	2010 REVIEW AND COMMENTS
To ensure that health and safety risks are known.	Carry out regular reviews of the Health and Safety audit and risk assessment of the condition of allotment sites	Health and safety policy written and allotments included in infrastructure checks for other parks and open spaces. Risk assessments undertaken for works at the sites. New health and safety leaflet written and distributed to all plot-holders. Traffic calming measures introduced on sites with vehicle access. Adoption of ARI health and safety checks. Introduced as item on agenda of wardens meetings.
To implement measure to manage the health and safety risks	To adopt a risk management approach with regular inspections and risk assessments within allotment sites, including following up and resolving identified risks	See above. Important to ensure continued focus on health and safety. Suggest consulting H&S advisor for any additional measures that could be incorporated.
To provide plot holders with advice and guidance on legal, safe and environmentally friendly allotment gardening techniques.	Identify key and current issues for allotment holders Provide information via existing newsletters See actions in Key Issue 1.	Key issues identified and addressed in existing newsletter and also in health and safety leaflet distributed to all plot-holders. Do's and Don'ts guidelines developed and issued to all plot-holders. Suggest review of new tenant pack as in Key Action 1 to see whether additional information beneficial. Review CDAHA or CBC lead on this.
To work with plot holders and others to develop the wildlife value of allotment sites.	Undertake a survey of the wildlife and biodiversity of allotments – current and potential. Identify areas/features for protection and enhancement	Biodiversity audit undertaken. Booklet on improving bio-diversity and wildlife on allotments distributed to 80 plot holders.  2010-2015 Action Plan: Address further through community rangers to identify specific areas for improvement / enhancement, if considered a priority. Allotments scored more highly for bio-diversity than most amenity green spaces.

