



SCRUTINY TASK GROUP REPORT

ALLOTMENTS REVIEW

JANUARY 2013



1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 A review of allotments was initiated by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee in July 2012, the background to which was a petition submitted to Council on 26 March 2012 and discussed in June 2012 against a preliminary proposal for the development of an allotment site on part of Weavers Field in the borough. This petition had raised various issues, not least the process for identifying the need for allotment sites in Cheltenham. In addition the council also received a number of queries from the public on unattended allotments and it was agreed that the council's policy on this needed to be reviewed.
- 1.2 The demand for allotments has seen a huge increase nationally. It is recognised that they play an important role in the community and contribute to a healthy diet and exercise; a means of producing food cheaply and the development of social activity. The popularity of "grow your own" has meant that waiting lists for allotment plots have soared. Figures quoted in The Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) publication "Space for food growing: a guide" published on 22 August 2012 provide the following statistics – In 1996 there was an average of 4 people waiting for every 100 plots but today around 87,000 people are on waiting lists for just over 152,000 statutory plots managed by principal local authorities, the equivalent of 57 people waiting for every 100 plots nationally. In acknowledging its statutory duty to provide a sufficient number of allotments, Cheltenham Borough Council has undertaken analysis to identify the number of allotments that would satisfy current and perceived future demand in a sustainable way.
- 1.3 Growth in demand for allotments in Cheltenham has mirrored the national picture. In 2005, there were 85 applications for allotments in Cheltenham. Since 2008, there have been in excess of 200 applications each year. In order to meet some of this demand, the Council has brought significant areas of uncultivated land back into cultivation and has undertaken plot splits to cater for the demand for smaller allotments. As a consequence, the number of allotment tenancies has risen from 555 in 2007 to 814 as of December 2012.
- 1.4 This report sets out the findings and recommendations arising from the scrutiny review by the scrutiny task group.

2. MEMBERSHIP AND TERMS OF REFERENCE

- 2.1 Membership of the task group:-
- Councillor Anne Regan (Chair)
 - Councillor Nigel Britter
 - Councillor Colin Hay
 - Councillor Helena McCloskey
 - Councillor Duncan Smith
 - Councillor Charlie Stewart

2.2 Terms of reference agreed by the O&S Committee

- (i) To review the legal position in relation to the provision of allotments and clarify the position in relation to areas covered by Parish Councils.
- (ii) To review the process for identifying the need for allotment sites in Cheltenham and establish how this is allocated to parished and non parished areas.
- (iii) To review the Allotments strategy and ensure it is fit for purpose.
- (iv) To review the need for developments of allotments against the available capital receipts
- (v) To review the proposals for allotments at Weavers Field in light of the evidence in (i) - (iv)

3. HOW DID THE TASK GROUP GO ABOUT THIS REVIEW?

3.1 The task group met on 5 (to date) occasions and spoke to a range of people, namely :

- Adam Reynolds, Green Space Development Manager, Cheltenham Borough Council
- Emma Burton, Acting Allotments Officer, Cheltenham Borough Council
- David Roberts, Head of Property, Cheltenham Borough Council
- Gary Spencer, Solicitor, OneLegal
- Lorraine DuFeu, Transition Town Cheltenham
- Dennis Sutton, Committee member, Cheltenham and District Allotments Association
- Councillor Roger Whyborn, Cabinet Member Sustainability

The task group also undertook three site visits during its review, to two Cheltenham Borough Council Allotment sites and to a potential new site for development into allotments.

3.2 Members would like to thank everyone who attended the task group meetings and contributed to the review and also thank those officers who provided support to the work of the group.

4. OUR FINDINGS

This report is structured in accordance with our terms of reference.

It was felt important to firstly clarify the roles and responsibilities of those mentioned in the report:

- Allotments and Green Space Officer - responsible for day to day management of allotment service
- Green Space Development Manager- responsible for management of public green space for Cheltenham Borough Council
- Transition Town Cheltenham - an initiative which aims to build local resilience and community cooperation as a practical and creative community response to reduce dependence on oil
- Cheltenham and District Allotment Holders' Association - represents 240 members in the borough of Cheltenham

4.1 LEGAL POSITION IN RELATION TO ALLOTMENTS AND POSITION IN RELATION TO AREAS COVERED BY PARISH COUNCILS

- 4.1.1 Members learnt that the Allotments Acts of 1908, 1922 and 1950 laid down the functions of Parish and District Councils in terms of the provision of allotments and defined the Allotments Authority. Any allotments provided under the Allotments Acts are referred to as Statutory Allotments.
- 4.1.2 In general, the Allotments Acts give the role of Allotments Authority to both the District Council and the Parish Council. However, under Schedule 29 of the Local Government Act 1972, if there is a Parish Council in a District Council area, then the powers, duties and responsibilities of the Allotment Authority for allotments within the boundaries of that parish lie with them. The District Council, in these cases, is not permitted to use the Allotments Acts to exercise allotment functions in that Parish Area.
- 4.1.3 Written representations may be made to the Allotments Authority on the need for allotments by any 6 electors in the borough or parish, as the case may be. The Council must take those representations into account by undertaking a review of allotment provision and if there is proven demand for allotments the Allotments Acts state that the Allotments Authority shall provide a sufficient number of allotments to meet that demand. The quality of provision depends on the authority itself.
- 4.1.4 The situation regarding the South of Cheltenham would be the same as any other part of the Borough. The first question is whether there are Parish Councils in that particular part of the Borough. As there are, then the Allotment Act duties, responsibilities and powers have to be exercised by the Parish Council.

Outside the Parish Areas of Cheltenham those duties, responsibilities and powers lie with the Borough Council.

Thus, the responsibility of providing allotments, if a Parish Council exists, lies with that Parish Council and the 6 electors mentioned previously would petition the Parish Council. Schedule 29 of the Local Government Act 1972 stops the Borough Council exercising those Allotments Acts functions in those cases.

- 4.1.5 In terms of providing non statutory allotments, Members learned that under the Local Government Act 1972 there was a power for local authorities to purchase land for functions in advance of needing them for those functions and that such land could be used for other purposes in the meantime on a temporary basis. Even in parished areas, temporary non statutory allotments could be provided but the Allotments Acts could not be used in respect of that as this would be governed by a lease or a licence. Allotment holders would not have the protection of the Allotments Act unless this was put in the lease or the licence.
- 4.1.6 There is no legally prescribed minimum size for an allotment. Land has to be suitable for growing purposes but authorities have discretion in which additional elements they provide.
- 4.1.7 Having been advised of the above, Members understood that in the context of the Weavers Field proposals, the Borough council was proposing to provide non statutory temporary allotments in the parish of Leckhampton with Warden Hill to address the high demand in that part of the Borough.
- 4.1.8 In addition Members agreed that the Parishes needed to take responsibility for providing allotments as the Allotment authority in their areas if land is available. In the past the need for allotment sites was always calculated on a borough wide basis but the Borough Council should now define this in non parished areas and take this forward with the Parish Councils.

4.2 REVIEW OF PROPOSALS FOR WEAVERS FIELD

- 4.2.1 The STG reviewed the Weavers field issue only briefly and agreed that it would not need to be investigated further. It was recognised that the strength of local opposition to the proposal had not been taken into account and this should be a key consideration should such a situation arise again. It was also recognised that there was confusion with regard to the position of the Parish Council with the Chair initially wishing to move forward with the proposal. Also there was an apparent lack of clarity with regard to the statutory power of parish councils in terms of provision of allotments, including temporary allotments.

Recommendation 1 : the strength of local opposition to a proposal for a new allotment site should be a key consideration should such a situation arise again.

4.3 IDENTIFYING ALLOTMENT SITES IN CHELTENHAM

New sites

- 4.3.1 Availability of land for allotments in the South of Cheltenham remained the significant issue. In investigations so far by officers and ward councillors in this area (including by the Chair of the STG) very few opportunities were

considered to exist. Members were informed that there were therefore very few sites available in the borough to address current demand although Members stressed that should future developments take place, allotment space should be considered as part of the development agreement. However, to address the current issue, an alternative was a small part of the farmland owned by the borough council at Priors Farm located to the north of the borough. Accompanied by David Roberts, Head of Property and Adam Reynolds, Green Space Development Manager, members of the STG undertook a site visit to Priors Farm on 10 September. This land had been identified by officers as the best current solution to addressing the allotments waiting list.

- 4.3.2 Members acknowledged that whilst this site was not ideally situated it did represent a starting point. The site had been previously farmed but is not currently tenanted. It was in a pleasant location and a small, popular pathway across the field would benefit from being wide and open to preserve the feeling of open space as a walking route up to Cleeve Hill. Members suggested that a natural fencing line with Blackthorn or Blackberry grown against it would be a suitable partially secure boundary for the allotment site. Members of the group recognised that vehicular access would be necessary although car parking provision for allotment holders would be kept to a minimum.
- 4.3.3 Members were reassured to learn that although there would be housing development adjacent to the site and thus new occupiers may express an interest in having an allotment, the potential new site would be opened up to everyone on the waiting list. Members were keen for Cabinet to pursue this option further. The Cabinet Member Sustainability had confirmed to the STG that this option would be pursued whilst still looking for opportunities to fulfil demand in the south of the town.



Site visit to farmland at Priors Farm

Recommendation 2 : Request Cabinet to pursue the development into allotments of a small part of the farmland owned by the Borough Council at Priors Farm to the north of the borough, not affecting any rights of way

Provision of allotments in parished areas

4.3.4 It was recognised that Cabinet was in any case keen to speak to the parishes with regard to the provision of allotments in parished areas and the existing council waiting lists for allotments. Members recommended that rather than getting the C5 group of Parishes together, a better approach may be to talk directly with those Parish councils in the south of Cheltenham, i.e. Up Hatherley and Leckhampton with Warden Hill Parish councils. The remaining Parish Councils should be informed of the process.

4.3.5 Members wished Cabinet to encourage Parish councils to open up their waiting lists to residents outside of the parish where they had vacancies. This was already happening in Charlton Kings.

Recommendation 3 : That the Cabinet Member Sustainability maintain dialogue with Parish Councils in terms of their responsibilities for addressing allotment waiting lists

4.4 ALLOTMENTS STRATEGY

4.4.1 Members were provided with detailed statistics relating to CBC Allotments. These included the number of plots on each site, the number or lettable and

unlettable plots, number of vacancies, number of split plots, tenanted plots and the waiting list for each site. The current waiting list stood at 750 although it was recognised that there was an element of double counting with some parish council waiting lists and that some people no longer required an allotment when contacted. Up to date statistics at the time of publication of this report can be found in Appendix 2. A waiting list review is underway to ensure an accurate report on the exact number of people on the waiting list and should be completed by the end of January 2013.

- 4.4.2 STG Members undertook a site visit to two allotments in the south of the town on 29 October - Alma Road and Warden Hill Allotments. Members noticed that there were at least several plots on both sites which required attention as they were not conforming to the terms of their tenancy agreement. Whilst acknowledging that this year had been a bad year for cultivating it was apparent that some plots had barely been touched this year. Parts of some plots were completely overgrown contained a large amount of rubbish, including old tyres, carpets and general household waste, which appeared to have been there for a significant period. In some instances it was apparent that cars have been brought on to the plot for parking purposes (which is permitted) but this part of the plot then slowly becomes overgrown and unusable, meaning that only part of a plot is actively cultivated. Members were also of the view that it was important that allotment holders were encouraged to clearly number their plots.



Site visit to Alma Road allotments

- 4.4.3 Members were informed of the process for approaching plot holders who were visibly not cultivating their site. Voluntary wardens undertook a monthly inspection tour and if there was evidence that someone had not been cultivating, they would approach them informally to see if all is well and prompt them to start working on the plot. If the tenant still does not start working on the plot then the warden reports to the Council's Allotments Officer and a Notice to Remedy (NTR) is issued giving the plot holder one

month from the date of the letter to start working the plot. The wardens inspect again after one month and if there still has been no action then a Notice to Quit (NTQ) is issued by the Allotments Officer. In principal this system should take less than 3 months from start to finish. In practice ploholders start working their plots after receiving the NTR which means no further action is taken. Wardens do however closely monitor repeat offenders and only so many chances are given before a NTQ is finally issued.



Site visit to Alma Road allotments

- 4.4.4 Members felt strongly that the polite approach to enforcement did not appear to be getting results and if tougher action was taken such plots could be brought back into use which would alleviate the pressure on the waiting list, particularly in the south west of Cheltenham where there is significant demand for plots. Members commented on the content of the letter accompanying the Notice to Quit (attached as an appendix to this report) and were of the view that the wording should be strengthened. They recognised that the gentle approach was adopted at a time when demand for allotments in the town was significantly lower. Members acknowledged that consideration of particular personal circumstances should still be taken into account.



Site visit to Alma Road allotments

- 4.4.5 Concern at the length of time it can take to remove an inactive tenant and let a plot to someone on the waiting list was also expressed to the STG by the Allotments Association representative. In his view the rules for evicting tenants should be reviewed given the long waiting lists although there should obviously be some flexibility to accommodate illness or other such reasons for inactivity over a reasonable period of time. He also made the point that if plots have been neglected for a long time it is much more difficult for the successor to bring the plot back into production. This discourages the new tenant and can result in them giving up their plot.
- 4.4.6 Members were of the view that site wardens should encourage allotment holder to ask for help from other ploholders, friends or family during times of difficulty to avert the plot becoming unmanageable.
- 4.4.7 The Allotments Association representative also alerted the STG to the fact that demand for allotments could increase further should schemes such as the RHS School Gardening scheme be successful.
- 4.4.8 The examples of two Parish Councils with tougher approaches regarding allotment management was given by members of the STG. A red, amber, green traffic light warning system was in effect in one area and a “three strikes then out” policy in another. Thought should also be given to whether the plot should be cleared prior to vacating the site.
- 4.4.9 Members agreed that the policy whereby two half-size plots are created when a full sized plot is relinquished should be continued, along with the policy of taking back half plots where tenants are not using the whole extent. This should encourage allotment usage and reduce waiting times further. Members also suggested that occupying multiple plots at a time when there is such demand should no longer be allowed, although it was acknowledged that it was not possible to evict someone from an allotment unless they were

in breach of the terms of their agreement. Current, and successful, practice of approaching multiple plot-holders to relinquish plots would continue. At several sites, the allotment officer had approached multiple plot-holders and succeeded in getting plots back voluntarily. It is estimated that there are only approximately 10 plot-holders with multiple plots left.

- 4.4.10 Members considered that the council could play a facilitating role in making smaller plots of land available to contribute (albeit on a small scale) to reducing the allotments waiting list. These potential plots could, for example, be sites on highways land, at the back of public buildings, such as hospitals, etc. Officers could signpost members of the public, who have initiated a request, to the relevant contact of the public body under whose ownership the land is.

Recommendation 4 : A review of enforcement of uncultivated allotment plots should be undertaken to alleviate the pressure on the waiting list, and that the current tenancy agreement should be revised to enable this and the points raised above to be enforced.

Communication

- 4.4.11 Members of the STG heard from the Allotment Association that the Association's relationship with the Borough Council had previously been quite close via the Allotment Forum but in recent years there had been a lot less contact. The Association acknowledged that there had been some disruption over the last 18 months due to maternity cover for the Allotments Officer Post and recognised that managing 9 allotment sites and 700 tenants was a difficult task, even with the support of the wardens. The Association believed the council was doing its best although communication was sometimes poor. However, Members of the Association had recently met with the Green Space Development Manager, and the temporary Allotments Officer and it was hoped this would be the start of a continuing dialogue. Members of the STG were informed by the Allotment Officer that the Allotment Association could perhaps be invited to quarterly meetings held between officers and the allotment wardens meetings so everyone was involved, subject to the agreement of the allotment wardens.
- 4.4.12 In talking informally to allotment holders in their ward, some members of the STG had received feedback which suggested that the Allotments Officer had not been seen on site and therefore contact with the Council appears to be limited. Members were of the view that the role should be more public facing with more interaction with plot holders. Whilst recognising limited resources Members felt that the Allotment Officer role should be a full time post and therefore recommended that additional support for allotments should be considered in the Green Space Development team.
- 4.4.13 More advice to allotment holders should be available on the Council's website. It was suggested that there could be a link from the Council's allotment web pages with the Allotments Association website and introducing online notice and discussion boards could also be investigated. Transition

Town Cheltenham has also offered to provide material for the website on advising the public on growing food and in a sustainable way.

Recommendation 5 : The Allotments Officer should endeavour to visit allotment sites more regularly in order to become known to allotment holders and ensure a good rapport is developed to encourage the best working relationship for the improvement of allotment sites

Recommendation 6 : That additional support for allotments should be considered in the Green Space Development team

Recommendation 7 : To review current lines of communication with allotment stakeholders and the Council's Allotments Service

Recommendation 8 : To review the information about what commitment is required by taking on an allotment on the Council's website and include links to the Allotments Association website and investigate opportunities to introduce online notice and discussion boards



Site visit to Warden Hill Allotments

Help and Advice to new allotment holders and sharing knowledge

4.4.14 Members learned that new allotment holders received an information pack from the Council but no real practical help there on in. Whilst it was recognised that this was not the role of the Council, there was a fear from members that new allotment holders were often unaware of the commitment and knowledge required when working an allotment. The Allotments Association representative informed members that because of unrealistic expectations, new allotment holders often became disheartened and would subsequently abandon the plot. It was suggested that more advice could be provided to those on the waiting list, which should explain the commitment and costs involved, particularly in the first year. The Cheltenham and District

Allotment Holders Association has identified the need for a leaflet giving prior advice on commitment before signing up. This view was also expressed by Lorraine Du Feu, of Transition Town, recognised that there needed to be more education of prospective allotment holders in terms of gardening, and in a sustainable way.

4.4.15 The Allotments Association representative estimated that for the first year the costs involved, i.e. rent, tools, shed etc was on average between £120-£190. He believed that if people were made more aware of what was involved there would be fewer people giving up. It was also suggested that there could be an initial rent reduction should in the first year the plot be in a poor state and it was pointed out that this was already in place. It was emphasised that a derelict site would require significant perseverance from the tenant to get it under control, and it was asked whether prior to someone taking on a plot it should be brought up to a minimum standard so it did not put off a new tenant. It was suggested that there should be more support for prospective allotment holders on the waiting list. The STG had heard that the Transition Town Annecy Garden project, supported by CBC, had been successful in converting part of the Annecy Garden in Sandford Park into a vegetable garden. As it was very accessible, it was suggested that as people came to the top of the waiting list, a series of open evenings could be held there to raise awareness of the implications of taking on a plot. A prize winning allotment holder could also be asked to host a similar event which would of course be low cost. These proposals were supported by the representatives of the organisations involved.

4.4.16 Members recognised the health and wellbeing and social benefits of working an allotment. Whilst recognising that subletting was disallowed under the tenancy agreement, Members suggested that where it was becoming apparent that an elderly person was having difficulty in managing his plot, he should be encouraged to work with someone on the waiting list. Such a mentoring or buddying system for new plot holders could also facilitate “knowledge sharing”. Whilst there should be caution with regards to “jumping the queue”, such an initiative could also prevent new plot holders from abandoning their plots. Reference was made to The “Share a Garden Scheme” which Councillor Barbara Driver was involved in. This scheme pairs up gardeners who have nowhere to grow their own food with garden owners or allotment holders who have the space to grow but for whatever reason are not able to.

4.4.17 Members agreed that projects such as the Annecy Garden project and the “Share a Garden Scheme” should be promoted on the CBC website.

Allotment Provision in future developments

4.4.18 Members of the STG pledged to ensure that in the development of the Cheltenham Local Plan were made to create new and enhance existing allotments. The Allotments Association had told members that this was particularly important given that the gardens attached to modern houses are often small and offered no scope for growing vegetables. Opportunities to create community gardens alongside allotments was also suggested in order

to encourage more interaction among residents. This would however have to be thought through carefully in terms of how it would be managed, but nevertheless could be discussed with developers.

- 4.4.19 Members were of the view that the Cabinet Member Built Environment should be made aware of the need for allotments in new developments.

RECOMMENDATION 9 : That consideration be given to an allotment provision and enhancement policy in the emerging Cheltenham Local Plan and in the meantime planning officers should include the provision of allotments as a subject for discussion with developers at the pre-application stage.

Community Based Scheme to distribute Surplus Produce

- 4.4.20 Members were keen to explore further launching an initiative to distribute surplus produce to those in most need in the town. Reference was made to the recent call for help by Cheltenham Community Project (CCP) and it was suggested that wardens from each allotment site could coordinate with CCP to address the issue. The Allotments Association would consider supporting such a community based scheme but recognised that this would be difficult to organise. The Allotments Officer had informed members that previously collection points were relatively easy to organise, it was the distribution of the produce which was problematic particularly as the produce is perishable. It was also suggested that other projects in the town, such as the Open Door project could benefit from receiving produce.
- 4.4.21 Members recognised that an independent facilitator was needed. They acknowledged that the council did not have the resources to facilitate this but working in partnership with other organisations could be explored such as with the Inspiring Families project and GAVCA.
- 4.4.22 Two members of the STG who were also the Council's representatives on the Board of Cheltenham Borough Homes, suggested that one option may be to work closer with Cheltenham Borough Homes tenants. Such a scheme may be a legitimate area whereby CBH could use Housing Revenue Account funding for the benefit of tenants. The CBH Board appeared to now have more of an appetite to work in partnership and the HRA could potentially pump prime projects such as these.
- 4.4.23 The Green Space Development Manager mentioned that land behind some council housing estates was once used for gardening but was now just maintained as open space at a cost to the council. This could be potentially revisited as communal garden plots.
- 4.4.24 Members had investigated whether NHS or third party funding was available for allotment promotion as a way of promoting healthier lifestyles but grants were unavailable at this time.

Recommendation 10 : To request Cabinet to investigate opportunities to work in partnership with organisations such as Cheltenham Borough Homes, GAVCA and CCP to facilitate a scheme to distribute surplus produce to those in most need in the town.

Self-Management

4.4.25 Members discussed self-managed allotments which in their view would encourage plot holders to take greater ownership of their plots, improve the condition of some allotments and possibly reduce management costs for the Council. Reference was made to some Parish Council sites which were often managed by allotment holders. In this instance plot holders were only provided with the plot. Maintenance would be undertaken by plotholders themselves. However, there was currently no appetite for it according to the Allotments Association representative who informed members that there was a general lack of enthusiasm of allotment holders to take on work above and beyond what they were already doing. Self management would, in his view, only be manageable on small sites.

Rents

4.4.26 A chief concern of the Allotments Association had been the significant increase in rents and the proposals for further inflation plus increases. It hoped and expected that allotments would be treated no less favourably than other activities run by the Borough Council. Members supported this. An on going concern was that low income pensioners and young families may be priced out of allotments.

4.4.27 The STG agreed that the Allotment Strategy Action Plan (included as an appendix to this report) remained a relevant and comprehensive document and members were encouraged to see what progress had been made particularly in the light of the lack of resources. Staff were working to capacity in terms of the administration of sites, particularly now with the exploration of potential new sites. However further work, particularly with regard to enforcement, as outlined above, could improve the service further and assist in reducing the numbers on the waiting list.

5. TO REVIEW THE NEED FOR DEVELOPMENTS OF ALLOTMENTS AGAINST THE AVAILABLE CAPITAL RECEIPTS

Financial considerations for funding allotment provision is laid down in section 3 of the Ground Works documents (August 2010). A broad estimate of the cost for providing 290 half sized statutory allotment plots (calculated to be the shortfall) for Cheltenham Borough Council was estimated at £507 000. Accordingly the sum of £600,000 (the most up to date estimate) has been put aside from the sale of land at Midwinter to provide these, and would be available to use in developing allotments on sites such as Priors Farm.

6. CONCLUSIONS

- 6.1 The STG recognises the difficult position faced by the council, both in terms of finance and availability of appropriate land but acknowledges the efforts that are being put into investigating opportunities for new sites. We hope that in the future more can be done to meet the demand for allotments particularly in the south west of the borough (including effective enforcement), and in the meantime progress the Priors Farm option and do everything possible to ensure appropriate support is given to new & existing community growing initiatives.

7. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 7.1 The Allotments review scrutiny task group therefore recommends to Cabinet that :

Recommendation 1 : the strength of local opposition to a proposal for a new allotment site should be a key consideration should such a situation arise again.

Recommendation 2 : Request Cabinet to pursue the development into allotments of a small part of the farmland owned by the Borough Council at Priors Farm to the north of the borough, not affecting any rights of way

Recommendation 3: That the Cabinet Member Sustainability maintain dialogue with Parish Councils in terms of their responsibilities for addressing allotment waiting lists

Recommendation 4 : A review of enforcement of uncultivated allotment plots should be undertaken to alleviate the pressure on the waiting list, and that the current tenancy agreement should be revised to enable this and the points raised above to be enforced.

Recommendation 5 : The Allotments Officer should endeavour to visit allotment sites more regularly in order to become known to allotment holders and ensure a good rapport is developed to encourage the best working relationship for the improvement of allotment sites.

Recommendation 6 : That additional support for allotments should be considered in the Green Space Development team

Recommendation 7 : To review current lines of communication with allotment stakeholders and the Council's Allotments Service.

Recommendation 8 : To review the information about what commitment is required by taking on an allotment on the Council's website and include links to the Allotments Association website and investigate opportunities to introduce online notice and discussion boards

Recommendation 9 : That consideration be given to an allotment provision and enhancement policy in the emerging Cheltenham Local Plan and in the meantime planning officers should include the provision of allotments as a subject for discussion with developers at the pre-application stage.

Recommendation 10 : To request Cabinet to investigate opportunities to work in partnership with organisations such as Cheltenham Borough Homes, GAVCA and CCP to facilitate a scheme to distribute surplus produce to those in most need in the town.

Recommendation 11 : The Allotments Scrutiny Task Group should be reconvened in 12 months time to review the implementation of the recommendations.

8. PROGRESSING THE SCRUTINY RECOMMENDATIONS

8.1 The Scrutiny Task Group intends to undertake a review in 12 months time to ascertain what action has been taken on its recommendations.

9. APPENDICES

Appendix 1 - One page strategy agreed for the review
Appendix 2 - Allotments statistics as at 4 January 2013

10. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- Food for thought- A strategy for Allotments in Cheltenham and for Allotment Sites managed by Cheltenham Borough Council
- Ground Works-Background information and analysis to inform the Action Plan 2010-2015 in 4 key areas
- A review of the allotments Action Plan 2005-2010



(DRAFT) SCRUTINY REVIEW – ONE PAGE STRATEGY

FOR COMPLETION BY THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE	
Broad topic area	Allotments
Specific topic area	<p>(i) To review the legal position in relation to the provision of allotments and clarify the position in relation to areas covered by Parish Councils.</p> <p>(ii) To review the process for identifying the need for allotment sites in Cheltenham and establish how this is allocated to parished and non parished areas.</p> <p>(iii) To review the Allotments strategy and ensure it is fit for purpose.</p> <p>(iv) To review the need for developments of allotments against the available capital receipts</p> <p>(v) To review the proposals for allotments at Weavers Field in light of the evidence in (i) - (iv)</p>
Ambitions for the review	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An allotment strategy fit for purpose • Identify learning points from Weaver's Field
Outcomes	To enhance allotment provision in the town
How long should the review take?	3 months
Recommendations to reported to:	Cabinet
Membership:	Cllrs Regan (chair), Stewart (vice-chair), Britter, C Hay, McCloskey, Smith
FOR COMPLETION BY OFFICERS	
Officers experts and witnesses	Adam Reynolds, Green Space Development Manager, Emma Burton, Allotments Officer, Gary Spencer and Donna Ruck, OneLegal
Sponsoring officer	Grahame Lewis
Facilitator	Bev Thomas
FOR COMPLETION BY THE SCRUTINY TASK GROUP	
Are there any current issues with performance?	None apparent
Co-optees	None
Other experts and witnesses	Allotments Association, Transition Town Cheltenham, Cabinet Member Sustainability
Background information	Allotments Strategy

Suggested method of approach	Series of meetings to include invitation of witnesses, site visit
How will we involve the public/media? Or at what stages	Towards the end
Preferred timing for meetings	End of working day