



# Doncaster Council

## Report

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Date: 27<sup>th</sup> June 2019

To: The Cabinet Member for Communities, Voluntary Sector and the Environment

### ALLOTMENTS POLICY FOR DIRECT MANAGED ALLOTMENT SITES

Relevant Cabinet Member(s)	Wards Affected	Key Decision
Councillor Chris McGuinness	Adwick & Carcroft, Balby South , Bentley, Bessacarr, Conisbrough, Hatfield, Hexthorpe & Balby North, Tickhill & Wadworth, Town, Wheatley Hills & Intake	Yes

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. Following a recent 'soft' review of the allotment service under the auspices of service improvement, it has been identified that there is currently no formal policy in place covering the governance and management of the Council's direct-managed allotment sites. Therefore this report sets out the case including background and rationale for the need for a new policy.
2. Doncaster Council has 18 direct-managed allotments sites covering more than 30ha and consisting of over 500 plots. There are a further 26 Self-Managed sites run on our behalf by local allotment associations as well as other sites owned by parish and town councils.
3. It is envisaged that the introduction of a new direct-managed allotment policy will have the following aims and benefits:
  - An improvement in the quality and standard of the allotment environment for users, neighbours and residents
  - A reduction in numbers on waiting lists, maximising the use of take up and enable as many residents as possible access to allotment plots
  - A recognition of the important role that allotments can play as part of as healthy lifestyle and community resource

- Enable users of allotments to take ownership of site issues and to encourage the take up of 'self-management'
  - Provide consistency in terms of standards and management of sites
4. Therefore, this report recommends the approval and implementation of the new policy to cover the Council's direct-managed allotment sites as set out in Appendix 1.

### **EXEMPT REPORT**

5. This is not an exempt report.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

6. That the Cabinet Member for Communities, Voluntary Sector and the Environment approves the introduction and implementation of the new allotment policy covering the Council's direct-managed allotment sites.

### **WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR THE CITIZENS OF DONCASTER?**

7. Access to well-maintained and quality allotment sites is both important and beneficial from a health and wellbeing perspective and in terms of protecting and preserving environmental biodiversity. The introduction of a clear and coherent policy founded on good practice will serve to increase access and participation for more people across the borough, whilst promoting and encouraging sound environmental practice.

### **BACKGROUND**

8. Local Authorities have a legal obligation to provide sufficient allotments to meet demand under the Small Holdings and Allotments Act 1908.
9. In 2018 the Government produced a 25 Year Environment Plan, which acknowledges that connecting people to their environment will also benefit their personal health and well-being. Allotments provide valuable green spaces and community assets that offer opportunities for people to grow their own produce, improve their physical and mental health, cut 'food miles' and foster community cohesion and inclusion.
10. The responsibility for the management and delivery of the allotment service transferred from Street Scene Services to the Communities Service circa 2014/15 following a review and split of 'People' and 'Place' based services.

### **OPTIONS CONSIDERED**

11. The following options have been considered:
- To not develop a new allotment policy and continue to manage the service accordingly
  - To produce a new policy and implement in accordance with the recommendations contained within this report

## REASONS FOR RECOMMENDED OPTION

12. The introduction of a policy will provide a clear and consistent framework that will help further the aims of the service, give clarity for tenants in terms requirements and expectations and it is envisaged will reduce the volume of breaches and enquiries received by the service due to the current lack of a policy. Whilst the policy is intended to cover the Council's direct managed sites, the formation of allotments committees and self-management is promoted by the council. Therefore, the policy will act as a template for good practice to assist those setting up committees or taking up self-management.

## IMPACT ON THE COUNCIL'S KEY OUTCOMES

13.

	Outcomes	Implications
	<p><b>Doncaster Working:</b> Our vision is for more people to be able to pursue their ambitions through work that gives them and Doncaster a brighter and prosperous future;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Better access to good fulfilling work</li> <li>• Doncaster businesses are supported to flourish</li> <li>• Inward Investment</li> </ul>	
	<p><b>Doncaster Living:</b> Our vision is for Doncaster's people to live in a borough that is vibrant and full of opportunity, where people enjoy spending time;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The town centres are the beating heart of Doncaster</li> <li>• More people can live in a good quality, affordable home</li> <li>• Healthy and Vibrant Communities through Physical Activity and Sport</li> <li>• Everyone takes responsibility for keeping Doncaster Clean</li> <li>• Building on our cultural, artistic and sporting heritage</li> </ul>	<p>Accessible, safe and well maintained allotments provide valuable opportunities for people of all abilities and age to become physically active whilst preserving and promoting the age-old cultural nature that the art of 'allotmenting' brings to communities.</p>
	<p><b>Doncaster Learning:</b> Our vision is for learning that prepares all children, young people and adults for a life that is fulfilling;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Every child has life-changing learning experiences within and beyond school</li> <li>• Many more great teachers work in</li> </ul>	<p>Well managed allotments offer an interesting and vibrant environment for young people with a raft of opportunities to participate in such as interactive educational activities that increase environmental and health awareness, as well as heling to</p>

	<p>Doncaster Schools that are good or better</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Learning in Doncaster prepares young people for the world of work</li> </ul>	<p>develop key transferable skills.</p>
	<p><b>Doncaster Caring:</b> Our vision is for a borough that cares together for its most vulnerable residents;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Children have the best start in life</li> <li>• Vulnerable families and individuals have support from someone they trust</li> <li>• Older people can live well and independently in their own homes</li> </ul>	<p>Allotments often provide valuable and safe spaces for people to meet and socialise thus helping to tackle loneliness and social isolation. They can also provide a means for families to build on relationships and offer opportunities for intergenerational activities.</p> <p>The introduction of a 'best practice' set of policy statements will help to ensure that access to sites that are of a high standard in terms of maintenance and safety are consistent across the borough.</p>
	<p><b>Connected Council:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A modern, efficient and flexible workforce</li> <li>• Modern, accessible customer interactions</li> <li>• Operating within our resources and delivering value for money</li> <li>• A co-ordinated, whole person, whole life focus on the needs and aspirations of residents</li> <li>• Building community resilience and self-reliance by connecting community assets and strengths</li> <li>• Working with our partners and residents to provide effective leadership and governance</li> </ul>	<p>The introduction of a new policy will support service improvement ensuring that the management of the service/assets are efficient, delivers value for money and the approach is consistent across the borough.</p>

## RISKS AND ASSUMPTIONS

14. The introduction of a new policy forms part of service enhancement work aimed at improving good practice on a consistent basis across the full direct-managed allotment site portfolio. Failure to introduce the policy could impact on the service's ability to achieve the desired outcomes i.e. operational improvements and efficiencies.

The initial risk rating is = 4 Likelihood 2 (unlikely) x Impact 2 (moderate)

However, during the development of the policy, research into industry practice has taken place and the key learning points considered good practice have been incorporated into the policy statements to ensure they are fit for purpose. Therefore the current risk rating = 2 Likelihood 1 (very unlikely) x Impact 2 (moderate)

#### **LEGAL IMPLICATIONS [Officer Initials NJD Date 07/06/19]**

15. Section 1 of the Localism Act 2011 provides the Council with the general power of competence, meaning that “a local authority has power to do anything that individuals generally may do.”
16. The Council has a statutory duty to provide allotments under S.23 of the Small Holdings and Allotments Act 1908 (SHAA) if it believes there to be a demand for them.
17. The Council is empowered under S.28 SHAA to make such rules as appears necessary or proper for regulating the letting of allotments under the Act.
18. The adoption of an allotment policy will provide clarity and transparency to the citizens of Doncaster in relation to allotments and their use.

#### **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS [Officer Initials OB Date 05/06/19]**

19. There are no direct financial implications arising from this report. The new policy details the charging process to which there are no changes proposed. As detailed in the policy, the rent tariff per 100 square metres is reviewed annually by Cabinet to account for price inflation and any other factors in accordance with Doncaster Council’s budget setting strategy.

#### **HUMAN RESOURCES IMPLICATIONS [Officer Initials KW Date 05/06/19]**

20. There are no Human Resources Implications.

#### **TECHNOLOGY IMPLICATIONS [Officer Initials PW Date 29/05/19]**

21. There are no specific technology implications in relation to this report.

#### **HEALTH IMPLICATIONS [Officer Initials RS Date 24/05/19]**

22. The health benefits are fully represented in this policy report and demonstrate the wellbeing benefits both physically, mentally and socially of allotment tenure. The policy supports the social isolation agenda, Good Food Doncaster and Get Doncaster moving agendas by promoting opportunities for connectivity and social interaction in communities thus strengthening community assets; the growing, making and sharing of local food produce as defined in the Good food Doncaster/sustainable food cities agenda and also helps people to keep active by maintaining the allotments as well as reaching a wide age range and diversity of communities and promoting community inclusion and cohesion.

## **EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS [Officer Initials DWR Date 23/05/2019]**

23. Decision makers must consider the Council's duties under the Public Sector Equality Duty at s149 of the Equality Act 2010. The duty requires the Council, when exercising its functions, to have 'due regard' to the need to eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited under the act, and to advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between those who share a 'protected characteristic' and those who do not share that protected characteristic
24. A Due Regard Statement (Appendix 2) is in the process of being produced alongside the development of the Allotment Policy. The Due Regard statement will not be completed until the strategy has been approved and adopted; however the current working version is included in the 'background papers'.

## **CONSULTATION**

25. The draft policy statements have been shared for comment with the Cabinet Member for Highways, Street Scene and Trading Services and direct-managed site secretaries for consultation purposes.

## **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

26. None

## **REPORT AUTHOR & CONTRIBUTORS**

David Ridge, Stronger Communities Manager  
☐☐01302 735947 ☐☐David.Ridge@doncaster.gov.uk

**Damian Allen (DCS/DASS)**  
**Director of People**  
**Learning and Opportunities: Children and Young People/Adult Health & Wellbeing Directorates**