

CULTIVATING COMMUNITIES

FOREWORD

It gives Northampton Allotments Network (NAN) great pleasure to present this, Northampton's first Allotment Strategy.

It is timely, because there is a country-wide upsurge in interest in allotment gardening.

Evidence shows that not only is the concept of allotments alive and well, it has many new supporters. In fact, the Northampton Borough Council (NBC) is presently unable to meet the demand for plots in some areas, such is their enduring appeal.

In this strategy we emphasise the need for the NBC to be committed to retaining and increasing allotment capacity.

It is now recognised that allotments deliver a wide range of benefits. These include being sources of fresh fruit and vegetables and the improvements that they make to diet, thus making a contribution to a healthy and active lifestyle, and also providing reservoirs of biodiversity, and opportunities for creativity and learning.

The advantages of the allotment in the modern day environment are well described in this document, and the strategy seeks to make these more widely available.

The pressure on NBC land resource for housing and other development is well known. This makes it difficult to secure land for the provision of new allotment sites which are needed to meet demand, both present and future. Therefore creative solutions are required, ones which the NBC cannot provide on its own.

The strategy proposes a number of ways of promoting both traditional and new types of allotments. To deliver these a partnership approach is required, perhaps involving some agencies and individuals not previously involved in this specific scene.

In particular, it suggests that new partnerships are needed to deliver the important potential benefits.

The purpose of creating this strategy is to guide the management and development of Northampton's allotments over the next five years.

At the end of this period this document should be reviewed.

The strategy has the following overarching aims:

- ◆ To ensure a sustainable future for Northampton's allotments
- ◆ To develop the quality and quantity of allotment provision
- ◆ To adopt and promote best practice in terms of design and management of allotments
- ◆ To develop a constructive and ongoing partnership between the NBC and stakeholders – allotment holders and the wider community – that will provide opportunities for all to participate in allotment development in varied ways.

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OPPORTUNITIES

Allotments are an opportunity for all people to engage in a healthy lifestyle all year round that is active, socially inclusive and sustainable.

In common with the rest of the UK, most allotments in Northampton have had little investment for some time. Northampton has a waiting list in some areas and, on the other hand, over capacity in others.

The benefits will not be confined to just the promotion of health and well being of the individual allotment holder.

Communities will be strengthened through:

- ◆ Active participation
- ◆ Landscape quality will be improved
- ◆ Biodiversity will be enhanced
- ◆ Innovative approaches to site design and management will be encouraged.

Funding will be required for the upgrading of existing allotment sites and the provision of completely new facilities, and the NBC cannot realistically meet this commitment alone. A partnership approach is required.

A Steering Group should be formed from the allotment holders' representative body locally (NAN), from specialists in various fields and from council staff. It will oversee the implementation of the strategy. The group will be pro-active both in developing a **five year action plan** for the upgrading of existing allotments and also identifying new sources of external funding.

This could include future funding via a trust fund. It will oversee the publication of a new Good Practice Guide for allotment holders and co-ordinate a training programme for stakeholders.

NBC will continue to be responsible for letting arrangements on all of its allotment sites, other than those with devolved management, and maintain its statutory responsibilities.

The development of an allotment site, such as Harlestone Road, has already had initial commitment given to it and it is suggested that this site be developed as a demonstration of good design and management practice incorporating green technologies. The site will represent a model of good practice.

NBC will support the development of this strategy by making additional staff time available for community development work associated with allotments.

This Strategy is compiled by the NAN Executive after consultation with its members.

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1** Allotments are a unique resource. Allotment gardening provides the opportunity for a year-round healthy lifestyle which is active, socially inclusive and which reflects the ideals of sustainability and well-being.

Unlike other leisure activities, it provides not only exercise, mental relaxation and lifelong learning opportunities, but also the fresh fruit and vegetables that benefit healthy living.

Allotment gardening, fundamentally, is about healthy living.

- 1.2** Also allotment gardening has the capacity to benefit the wider community. Allotments are multi-dimensional places where benefits are not only confined to fresh fruit and vegetables and a healthier lifestyle for the allotment holders.

Allotments have a significant role to play in the protection and promotion of biodiversity.

They represent an important opportunity for community interaction and in particular where Senior Citizens are concerned.

- 1.3** Like other categories of public open space in the UK, there has been a long period of under-investment in allotments. The resulting deterioration in the condition and appearance of sites contributes to the general assumption that “allotment gardening is an activity where marginal benefits accrue to a few”.

A strategic approach is required to counter this attitude and to ensure that the benefits of allotment gardening are properly recognised and valued.

- 1.4** Allotments are an important asset to Northampton, providing a wide range of benefits to individuals, families, communities and the environment.

- 1.5** Allotments are not just a great way of producing good low cost food, though this certainly remains important.

They also offer a variable recreational role involving healthy exercise, social contacts, and the fun and challenge of growing competition vegetables, fruit and flowers.

1.6 Allotments are a valuable green sustainable open space - part of the urban culture. They contribute to the retention of traditional skills and wisdom, as well as being highly beneficial to the wildlife of the town.

1.7 Current house building trends are towards smaller gardens, as pressure increases to optimise building land. Those who live in flats often have no individual garden. Allotments provide an opportunity to adjust this imbalance.

1.8 The provision of allotments, by local authorities is a statutory duty.

NBC will continue to provide and promote allotments not only because of this statutory requirement but because:

- ◆ Allotment gardening can make a valuable contribution to the town's sustainability by providing health, social, economic and environmental benefits
- ◆ Allotments are an important recreational facility with benefits to both physical and mental well being

1.9 These benefits can be increased significantly over the period of this strategy.

Fundamental to this is the marked increase in the number of people involved in allotment gardening.

The overall objective of this strategy is to optimise the number of people using allotments. - This is broken down into five target areas:

- ◆ Ensuring sufficient allotments
- ◆ Promoting allotment gardening
- ◆ Encouraging sustainability
- ◆ Cultivating good administration
- ◆ Maintaining adequate resources

2. THE VALUE OF ALLOTMENTS

- 2.1** The benefits provided by allotments are more varied than may at first be appreciated. In terms of individual and social wellbeing they offer physically active outdoor exercise, mental refreshment and stimulus and the production of good value, nutritional fruit and vegetables.

Less obvious are the wider benefits. Allotments form a part of the open space resource of the borough, and can be a focus for education, public enlightenment, and neighbourliness. Allotment sites also make a contribution to the increasingly significant areas of biodiversity and sustainability.

- 2.2** It is worth noting that family members and friends often join in with the activities on the allotment and/or share the produce. The value of having an allotment is therefore not confined to the individual allotment holder but spreads outwards in a ripple effect.

- 2.3** A selection of comments from allotment holders give us an impression of the value of their experiences in having an allotment:

"I love my allotment."

"we (a husband and wife partnership) love our allotment."

"I love gardening"

"an escape from the humdrum of life, routine and drudgery, counterbalances employment, a sanctuary, an oasis"

"total satisfaction, peace, quiet, tranquillity, relaxation, a calming influence, constructive, therapeutic, and good for mind, body and soul"

"it is great being outside in the fresh air, with plenty of physical activity and exercise"

"enjoying the fruit of one's labour, and being productive, a reward for all the hard work coupled with a feeling of achievement"

"it is to combat loneliness, a reason for getting out, good community spirit, good company and companionship"

"solitude, being able to get away from it all"

"total freedom, space and greenery, a little bit of ground and being able watch things grow, and then on most occasions being able to eat the produce"

"the wildlife, it is like being out in the country, with natural surroundings"

"being surrounded by birds and insects "

"simply growing your own fruit, herbs and vegetables, and knowing what you are eating"

"being able to avoid chemicals, eating healthily, with good value for money food, and feeding your family well"

Recommendation:

A participatory approach to the management and development of allotments will be adopted as a guiding principle

2.4 In a survey* existing allotment holders indicated that the three most important improvements to allotment sites were:

- ◆ Better water supply
- ◆ Better security
- ◆ Toilets

*These findings were consistent with surveys carried out by other local authorities and the National Society Allotments & Leisure Gardens (NSALG)

3. PARTNERSHIP WORKING

3.1. It is the intention of the NAN/NBC to create a strong and productive partnership with the stakeholders in allotments. These stakeholders are identified as the following:

- ◆ The owners/managers of the allotment land (including NBC)
- ◆ The wider community – (elected councillors)
- ◆ NAN – as the federation of the allotment site associations locally and allotment holders
- ◆ NSALG – as the national body offering a wider perspective and expertise

3.2. There are compelling reasons for the partnership body to encompass both NBC owned and privately owned allotments.

Firstly, a forum where non NBC allotment managers can communicate with each other, or with other stakeholders, does not exist and it is suggested that they may find such a body useful.

Issues such as biodiversity and landscape quality are common to all allotments and the partnership group will allow specialists from these fields to have an input in a structured way.

Secondly, if NBC is to act as a leader and enabler with regard to allotments, a broad forum will be essential to carry forward this role.

3.3. It is suggested that the creation of a strong, representative and inclusive partnership body is fundamental to the process of implementing this strategy and advancing the development of allotments in Northampton.

This Steering Group should be formally established as soon as is practicable and invited to take ownership of the strategy.

3.4. The Steering Group must be representative. This means that its members must have both a recognised mandate and the means to communicate effectively with those whom they represent. It should be inclusive in that it seeks the support of the stakeholders in the widest sense, including those whom, for whatever reasons, may not wish to participate.

Stakeholders who indicate that they do not wish to participate, for instance, in site management, do not also as a matter of course abdicate any rights that they may have.

Similarly, those who choose not to be members of bodies, such as NSALG for instance, must not be excluded from the partnership process on that basis.

- 3.5.** Wider membership of the Steering Group is a matter for discussion between the key stakeholders. As a guide, it is suggested that representatives of certain wider community themes could be co-opted onto the group as required.

Neighbourhood community interests should be taken into account at site association level, rather than at the partnership group.

- 3.6.** The Steering Group will meet at quarterly intervals, or more often as required.

There will be an “open” annual meeting, where progress in implementing the strategy can be presented, thereby allowing stakeholders to monitor progress.

Recommendation:

A Northampton Allotment Steering Group that represents stakeholders’ interests will be established and accept responsibility for taking forward the strategy.

- 3.7.** The partnership approach will have the benefit in dealing with external agencies and should therefore be extended.

Issues such as healthy living suggest mutually productive partnerships, with health authorities and trusts, biodiversity similarly with conservation bodies, such as English Heritage.

Site developments could attract sponsorship from businesses. The Steering Group is the ideal body to form such relationships and may open the door to new sources of funding.

Recommendation:

Partnerships with relevant external businesses/agencies will be explored by the Steering Group.

4. DEMAND FOR ALLOTMENTS

MEETING PRESENT DEMAND

- 4.1. NBC currently provides and manages 17 allotment sites. In addition, there are a number of privately owned and managed allotment sites.

It is recognised that there is unmet demand for plots in certain areas, particularly in the south and west of the town. Currently there are a number of people on the waiting list for NBC allotments.

- 4.2. It is probable that there is also a level of latent demand, which could add significantly to this.

It seems academic to put resources into attempting to measure this demand when, currently, a great deal needs to be achieved to significantly reduce the existing waiting lists in some areas, particularly south and west of the town.

- 4.3. Since the majority of allotment holders live under two miles from their sites, expanded capacity would best be provided within a similar distance. It would also be good practice to encourage allotment holders to walk or cycle to their site, rather than using private cars. The development of any new site should progress on a phased basis, to allow careful engagement of unmet demand.

Recommendation:

A survey of available land for new sites will be undertaken especially to the south and west of the town.

Recommendation:

Due to the demand to the south and west of the town, Mereway, which is currently a temporary site should be given permanent statutory status.

Recommendation:

Targets for reduced waiting times will be agreed in conjunction with the Steering Group.

5. CURRENT PROVISION

THE PRESENT ALLOTMENT ESTATE – Site Maps are available at Appendix 1

- 5.1. At the outset, it is necessary for NBC to confirm that it is committed to retaining the existing number and area of allotments under its management and, further, to increase allotment capacity in the south and west of the town.
- 5.2. WNDC/NBC will consider the provision of allotments when considering development through the planning process.
- 5.3. There continues to be a large number of closures of local authority sites which are reported to be surplus to requirements.

It is clear that there is widespread unease among NBC's allotment gardeners and their representatives about the possible future closure and disposal of allotment sites.

- 5.4. The protection of allotment sites should strongly be reinforced by a clear planning policy. The commitment of NBC to allotments is evidenced by its support shown by the Water Charges on Allotments Report and incorporating to the local development framework.
- 5.5. Where development is deemed on balance to be beneficial, there is a need to require the developer via a Section 106 Agreement to provide a suitable alternative allotment facility.

This will serve to reassure allotment holders that NBC and WNDC are committed to the protection of the borough's allotment estate.

Recommendation:

That NBC formally confirms its commitment to retaining the existing number of allotments, and where necessary, expanding capacity.

Recommendation:

Further commitment and confirmation is required for NBC through WNDC, as appropriate, to increase its allotment estate to the south and west of the town.

Recommendation:

That NBC ensures that when local development plans are drawn up and/or revised they give due cognizance to allotments and their protection.

Recommendation:

At the planning stage of new developments, provision for allocation of land for allotments must be taken into consideration, and enforced, by means of a Section 106 Agreement.

6. DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

UPGRADING OF EXISTING CAPACITY WHERE NEEDED

- 6.1. It is clear that a number of developments are required in respect of existing allotments as per this strategy.
- 6.2. More detailed plans for the upgrading of individual sites are not extensively explored in this strategy. What allotment holders feel is required, is likely to vary from site to site. However, an open process for designing and undertaking upgrading work should be adopted, in which allotment holders are consulted and given the opportunity to become involved in the process.

It is logical, therefore, that the Steering Group will be the body that is responsible for agreeing and overseeing the implementation of an upgrading action plan. It is suggested that a **five year plan** be created so that it can be made clear to all where the priorities lie.

Recommendation:

A five year action plan for the upgrading of existing sites will be drawn up on a site by site basis.

- 6.3. The survey of allotment holders, discussed in Section 2 yielded data that will be useful in compiling the action plan.

FACILITIES AND SERVICES

Toilets:

Survey - respondents said that there should be toilet facilities on sites. This is particularly important to all gardeners.

Recommendation:

Toilets and washing facilities will be provided on all sites.

Water:

All allotment sites' water infrastructure will be replaced with 50mm piping at the very earliest opportunity (as agreed by the NBC Cabinet in October 2006 in response to the Overview and Scrutiny Water Charges on Allotments Report) and stand pipes put in place at the end of each plot, (see Task and Finish Group Report).

All gardeners who have roofed structures will be encouraged to install roof guttering and water butts (water conservation)

Recommendation:

All sites to have a piped water supply (50mm)

Site hut:

All allotment sites will have structures for meetings and secure storage.

Recommendation:

All sites will have a site hut and secure storage facilities.

Notice boards:

All sites will have a notice board for the site committee, NAN, NBC and NSALG notices.

Recommendation:

All sites will have a water tight, lockable notice board of adequate size.

Composting facilities:

All plot holders will be encouraged to regularly compost waste. Fallen leaves, and any other suitable materials that can be composted, collected from the NBC estate should be made available for allotment composting.

Recommendation:

Each site will have the option of a communal composting facility to make use of park deposits of fallen leaves and other biodegradable materials.

Car parking:

Allotment holders consider car parking provision - fairly, to very important.

Recommendation:

All sites will have car parking where there is space available.

Rubbish facilities:

All sites will have appropriate rubbish collection facilities, (i.e. cages) as agreed by NAN/NBC

Recommendation:

All sites will have appropriate rubbish collection facilities, (ie cages) as agreed by NAN/NBC.

Access and provision for the less able-bodied:

Provision of facilities for less able-bodied people will be made, after consultation with appropriate organisations.

Recommendation:

Provision for the less able-bodied will be prioritised on the basis of demand.

PROVISION OF NEW ALLOTMENT CAPACITY

- 6.4. There is clearly a need to provide additional capacity, especially in the south and west of the town.

The creation of new allotment facilities will go some way to alleviating the backlog, and more provision will be required to reduce waiting times to an acceptable level.

- 6.5. It has been argued above that a variety of types of allotments may represent the best way forward, given land values in Northampton. Options for the increase of allotment capacity are summarised as follows:

- ◆ New allotment sites on land already owned by NBC – one is already planned at Harlestone Road.
- ◆ New sites created as a by-product of large-scale developments such as that at Avon – Ransome Road and subsequently managed by NBC.
- ◆ Suitable land that may be available by other bodies (English Heritage etc)

Note: It is suggested that all of the above will require active consideration.

As mentioned above, funding should be allocated towards the creation of a new allotment site at Harlestone Road No 2.

This development is in effect a replacement for the former site at Harlestone Road No 1.

It is suggested that this project be developed as a demonstration of good practice, and that specialist advice is sought at an early stage to consider which aspects of good design could be integrated (incorporating such things as green technologies etc). The site should represent a model of good practice.

Features to be considered will include:

- ◆ Design of plots to fit well with the existing landscape
- ◆ Provision of a communal building and secure storage facilities

- ◆ Provision of sheds
- ◆ Creation of a safe and secure environment
- ◆ Enabling good access
- ◆ Use of tree planting and screen hedging both around and within the site to enhance biodiversity and landscape quality
- ◆ Setting aside part of the area as a communal garden/facility (communal orchard etc)
- ◆ Use of sustainable or green technology in building and site design, such as:
 - Timber construction;
 - Banked earth for insulation;
 - Maximising use of natural light;
 - Wind/solar/geothermal power sources;
 - Toilet facilities;
 - Water conservation facilities
 - Creation of biodiversity features such as a pond fed by site drainage, log piles etc.

Recommendation:

The rationalized new site at Harlestone Road will be developed in an innovative way and will represent a model of good practice.

- 6.6.** The creation of new allotments, as an integral part of large scale developments, is an area where WNDC and NBC can have influence through the planning process and provide advice through early consultation with the appropriate Corporate Manager/Director.

Pursuing objectives under this option must be a matter for discussion with the Head of Planning.

Recommendation:

The advice of the Head of the relevant Planning Authority will be sought on the feasibility and processes involved in creating allotments as part of large scale developments.

7. NBC MANAGEMENT

- 7.1. NBC Management can have a direct influence on the financial position of the allotments service through effective letting arrangements.

In particular, the efficient collection of rents and the prompt re-allocation of vacant plots will assist in increasing revenue, the latter by increasing the proportion of plots under cultivation.

- 7.2. It is suggested that there will continue to be a full time NBC official to manage allotments and to assist with the implementation of the Allotment Strategy.

Recommendation:

NBC will continue to employ a dedicated member of staff committed to letting and allotment management under the auspices of the Allotment Strategy.

Note: Should Trust Management be adopted and Devolved Management ensue this position will require reviewing

8. SITE AND PLOT MANAGEMENT

- 8.1. An Allotment Good Practice Guide in the form of a handbook will be produced and made available to all allotment holders (in hard copy or via NBC website).

Its content will be agreed by the Steering Group and contain clear advice on the following:

- ◆ Safety on site
- ◆ A brief description of good practice in terms of plot cultivation and site management
- ◆ Good practice in terms of biodiversity and the environment
- ◆ References for further information
- ◆ Contacts for NAN, site associations and an explanation of their roles
- ◆ The allotment inspection arrangements and the termination procedure
- ◆ All plots will preserve an open aspect (ie no solid fencing around plot boundaries)
- ◆ The Guidelines for Hens and Rabbits

- 8.2. A shorter guide for the prospective allotment holder will also be produced and made available.

It will contain information on the following:

- ◆ Allotment sites available in Northampton and a brief description of each (in hard copy or via NBC website)
- ◆ The application process (in hard copy or via NBC website)
- ◆ What is expected of allotment holders and what their likely commitment in terms of time is required to maintain a five or 10 pole plot
- ◆ The opportunities for participation in site management

Recommendation:

Guides for good allotment practice are to be produced.

Recommendation:

A Guide is produced for prospective allotment holders.

9. DEVOLVED MANAGEMENT

- 9.1. The process of devolving management is one that is likely to proceed at a differing rate, as sites' circumstances will vary. The extent to which management is devolved may vary from almost total, to nothing at all, as it depends upon the willingness of volunteers to devote time, effort and expertise to this issue.

It is a process which must be handled with sensitivity, where the key objectives are as follows:

- ◆ The Steering Group will work towards the enabling/empowering of site associations
- ◆ Devolution must be inclusive – those who do not wish to participate do not sacrifice their rights to be consulted
- ◆ NAN is the interface between associations and NBC and will encourage the sharing of good practice in this area

Recommendation:

Stakeholder participation in the management of allotments will be fostered. It should be handled sensitively and in the knowledge that the outcomes will vary between sites.

10. FORM OF TENANCY AGREEMENT

10.1. A copy of the current NBC Form of Tenancy Agreement is reproduced and can be found at Appendix 2.

The Tenancy Agreement is in need of revision and updating.

Recommendation:

The form of Tenancy Agreement will be reviewed at the earliest opportunity by NBC in consultation with NAN and agreed by the Steering Group.

11. UNDER-UTILISATION OF SITES

- 11.1. Given the inability of the present allotment estate to meet demand, under-utilisation needs to be countered wherever it occurs to ensure that sites are cultivated to their full potential.

Necessarily, this will involve careful site inspections, investigation as to the reasons for under utilisation and action where appropriate.

Recommendation:

Surveys on a site-by-site basis will be carried out to identify under-utilisation and an action plan be prepared by NBC in agreement with NAN and the Steering Group to deal with this issue.

12. **SITE INSPECTIONS AND TERMINATIONS**

- 12.1.** It will be the aim of NBC to reduce terminations to the absolute minimum through effective communication with allotment holders.

In conjunction NBC/NAN will review site inspections, termination and appeal procedures.

The process that is agreed will be clearly set out in the allotment Good Practice Guide.

Recommendation:

Site inspections, termination and appeal procedures will be reviewed by the NBC/NAN.

13. WAITING LISTS

13.1. At present, prospective tenants may register on the waiting lists of a number of sites.

In order to keep the list current, these registrations of interest will be reviewed quarterly and data produced for the Steering Group only, on a site by site basis.

The prospective tenants will be given full information on all sites and their position on the waiting lists.

Those on the waiting list have expressed strong frustration over not knowing where they stand.

Annually, one month prior to the renewal of Tenancy Agreements, all allotment holders will be asked might they wish to share, or use a half-plot, thus possibly reducing the waiting list.

Recommendation:

Waiting list positions will be communicated quarterly to both the Steering Group and prospective allotment holders, this to include field managed sites.

Recommendation:

Allotment holders will be invited to share or divide their plot upon renewal of their tenancy as a matter of course.

14. PRACTICE, DESIGN AND ENVIRONMENT

- 14.1.** This document will not deal with the detail of what constitutes good practice or design. However, it is necessary to raise some of the issues that require consideration.

How these are resolved depends in some cases on the individual circumstances of the site.

The Steering Group should take on the key role of identifying, agreeing and publishing good plot and site management practice through the guides previously recommended and the provision of supplementary information.

In this regard, the document “Growing in the community – a good practice guide for the management of allotments” (produced by the Department of the Environment, Transport and Regions, The Greater London Authority plus the Local Government Association) is an excellent source of advice.

15. LANDSCAPE QUALITY

- 15.1.** There is no doubt that the landscape impact of some allotment sites needs to be addressed. A run-down appearance may create antipathy amongst some agencies and members of the public, which acts as a barrier to the further development of allotments.

Advice from landscape specialists will be sought and incorporated into the **five year action plan** for the upgrading of existing sites.

Clearly, landscape quality is an issue of high priority in the design of new and existing allotment sites.

Recommendation:

Expert advice will be sought on the landscape impact of allotment sites and action to address this incorporated in the five year action plan.

16. BIODIVERSITY

- 16.1.** Expert advice will be sought on how allotment site management and the cultivation of individual plots can make a positive contribution to the enhancement of biodiversity.

Of equal importance is to identify practices that may have a negative impact.

In both cases, communications and awareness raising are critically important.

Advice and actions will be incorporated into the **five year action plan** and basic information for allotment holders included in the Good Practice Guide produced for allotment holders.

Recommendation:

Expert advice will be sought on how allotments can contribute to the enhancement of biodiversity, and actions to address the issue included in the five year action plan.

17. COMMUNICATION AND TRAINING

- 17.1. At the heart of communication is information. Trust can suffer when there is lack of effective communication between parties.

It is essential, therefore, that data relating to allotments be communicated in an atmosphere of trust and understanding of shared objectives.

- 17.2. At a minimum, the allotments data base should cover:

Borough wide:

Number, area, ownership and location and planning designation of all allotment sites

At site level:

Allotment holders' details (Data Protection Act 1998 applies to personal information):

- ◆ Comprehensive and detailed site maps – available at Appendix 1
- ◆ Overlay plans and background information relating to drainage water supply and other services
- ◆ Survey plans and notes
- ◆ Site history

Recommendation:

This information will be updated on the data base annually.

- 17.3. It is for the Steering Group to decide what communication is required and stakeholders will advise them. However, the adoption of an open and transparent approach by NBC is a prerequisite for the formation of a strong and effective partnership.

It should be appreciated at the outset, there is some information such as personal details that must be held centrally and not communicated for unauthorised purposes, but otherwise much information is effectively in the public domain and should be shared.

- 17.4. The creation of the allotment Good Practice Guide and prospective Allotment Holders Guide referred to above will go some way to developing communication channels. There are a number of linkages that need to be

considered in detail.

The following are suggested for discussion by the Steering Group:

Linkage	Methods
NAN – NBC	Allotment Overview and Policy
NBC – Allotment holders board	Good Practice Guide, letter, notice board
Allotment holder-Allotment holder	On site facilities, common room, etc
Site Association–Site Association competitions	Website, exchange site visits,
Site association–local communities	Open days and guided tours, school visits

Recommendation :

The Steering Group will consider communications as a matter of priority and agree a methodology to be followed.

Recommendation :

NBC will adopt an open and transparent approach as far as possible given the requirements of the Data Protection Act 1998.

- 17.5.** An important part of the enabling work referred to above is training. The need for training applies to allotment holders, site committee members, Steering Group members and council staff.

Training needs will not be restricted to horticulture but may include biodiversity, green technology, organising meetings, desktop publishing, among other topics.

An assessment of training needs requires to be carried out, followed by an audit of available skills – it may well be that among allotment holders there is a willingness to share skills at no cost.

Financial Management on allotments should be of a transparent nature and, where possible, adhere to good accounting practice – See Appendix 3

Recommendation :

The Steering Group will carry out a training needs assessment and a skills audit of all allotment holders as a prelude to embarking on a prioritised training programme.

FINANCE

18. CAPITAL BUDGET

18.1. Capital spend in most cases comes from the sale and disposal of allotment land.

Areas other than the disposal of allotment land will be explored for future capital funding requirements.

The establishment of a Steering Group and the demonstration of widespread support for allotment developments may increase the possibility of successful capital bids.

Recommendation :

The Corporate Director/Manager will continue to bid for NBC capital funds with the support of the Steering Group.

Recommendation :

Other avenues for the obtaining of Capital Funding will be explored.

19. REVENUE BUDGET

19.1. Wherever possible, breaking even is the ideal objective of all local authorities in their public services.

Local authorities have experienced declining revenue budgets for parks and open spaces maintenance for some considerable time.

The only source of income in respect of revenue expenditure on allotments is rents.

Recommendation :

The Corporate Director/Manager will review the revenue budget provision after discussion with the Steering Group.

20. RENT

- 20.1. The Overview and Scrutiny for Allotment Water Charges Task & Finish Group 2006 have covered this area adequately.
- 20.2. Fair and equitable rent will be set by the Steering Group and levied on a pole by pole basis.

Note: It should not be assumed that rental income will be increased annually, as currently Northampton allotment holders pay above the national average.

21. NEW SOURCES OF INCOME

21.1. It is also necessary to seek funds from new sources.

The possibilities for new partnerships with external agencies have been discussed briefly above and some of these may lead to new sources of funding.

The wide-ranging demands on its financial resources mean that NBC cannot alone bring about the transformation required in Northampton's allotments.

The success of NBC and the Steering Group in effecting this change will depend to a large extent on their ability to attract outside funding.

Creation of new allotment sites is likely to be "capital intensive" and the following in-exhaustive sources are a sample of those which could be considered:

- ◆ New Opportunities Fund
- ◆ Shell Better Britain Campaign
- ◆ Heritage Lottery Fund
- ◆ Esme Foundations

21.2. Each site could be encouraged to engage in fundraising activities, the revenues from which could be used to support the development of the site

Such activities could include:

- ◆ Guided tours of individual sites – such as Open Days
- ◆ Sponsorship from garden centres, seed merchants etc.

Recommendation :

The search for funding will be extended as widely as possible and include encouraging allotment sites to undertake fundraising, as is the current practice.

22. SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

- (1) A participatory approach to the management and development of allotments will be adopted as a guiding principle **Page 9 ~**
2.3
- (2) A Northampton Allotment Steering Group that represents stakeholders' interests will be established and accept responsibility for taking forward the strategy **Page 11 ~**
3.6
- (3) Partnerships with relevant external businesses/agencies will be explored by the Steering Group **Page 11 ~**
3.7
- (4) A survey of available land for new sites will be undertaken especially to the south and west of the town **Page 12 ~**
4.3
- (5) Due to the demand to the south and west of the town, Mereway, which is currently a temporary site should be given permanent statutory status **Page 12 ~**
4.3
- (6) Targets for reduced waiting times will be agreed in conjunction with the Steering Group **Page 12 ~**
4.3
- (7) That NBC formally confirms its commitment to retaining the existing number of allotments and where necessary expanding capacity **Page 13 ~**
5.5
- (8) Further commitment and confirmation is required for NBC through WNDC, as appropriate, to increase its allotment estate to the south and west of the town **Page 14 ~**
5.5
- (9) That NBC ensures that when local development plans are drawn up and/or revised they give due cognizance to allotments and their protection **Page 14 ~**
5.5
- (10) At the planning stage of new developments, provision for allocation of land for allotments must be taken into consideration, and enforced, by means of a Section 106 Agreement **Page 14 ~**
5.5
- (11) A five year action plan for the upgrading of existing sites will be drawn up on a site by site basis **Page 15 ~**
6.2

- (12) Toilets and washing facilities will be provided on all sites
6.3 **Page 15 ~**
- (13) All sites to have a piped water supply (50mm)
6.3 **Page 16 ~**
- (14) All sites will have a site hut and secure storage facilities
6.3 **Page 16 ~**
- (15) All sites will have a water tight, lockable notice board of adequate size
6.3 **Page 16 ~**
- (16) Each site will have the option of a communal composting facility to make use of park deposits of fallen leaves and other biodegradable materials
6.3 **Page 16 ~**
- (17) All sites will have car parking where there is space available
6.3 **Page 16 ~**
- (18) All sites will have appropriate rubbish collection facilities, (i.e. cages) as agreed by NAN/NBC
6.3 **Page 16 ~**
- (19) Provision for the less able-bodied will be prioritised on the basis of demand
6.3 **Page 17 ~**
- (20) The rationalized new site at Harlestone Road will be developed in an innovative way and will represent a model of good practice
6.5 **Page 18 ~**
- (21) The advice of the Head of the relevant Planning Authority will be sought on the feasibility and processes involved in creating allotments as part of large scale developments
6.6 **Page 19 ~**
- (22) NBC will continue to employ a dedicated member of staff committed to letting and allotment management under the auspices of the Allotment Strategy
7.2 **Page 20 ~**

- (23) Guides for good allotment practice are to be produced
8.2 **Page 22 ~**
- (24) A Guide is produced for prospective allotment holders
8.2 **Page 22 ~**
- (25) Stakeholder participation in the management of allotments will be fostered. It should be handled sensitively and in the knowledge that the outcomes will vary between sites
9.1 **Page 23 ~**
- (26) The form of Tenancy Agreement will be reviewed at the earliest opportunity by NBC in consultation with NAN and agreed by the Steering Group
10.1 **Page 24 ~**
- (27) Surveys on a site-by-site basis will be carried out to identify under-utilisation and an action plan prepared by NBC in agreement with NAN and the Steering Group to deal with this issue
25 ~ 11.1 **Page**
- (28) Site inspections, termination and appeal procedures will be reviewed by the NBC/NAN
12.1 **Page 26 ~**
- (29) Waiting list positions will be communicated quarterly to both the Steering Group and prospective allotment holders this to include field managed sites
13.1 **Page 27 ~**
- (30) Allotment holders will be invited to share or divide their plot upon renewal of their tenancy as a matter of course
13.1 **Page 27 ~**
- (31) Expert advice will be sought on the landscape impact of allotment sites and action to address this incorporated in the five year action plan
15.1 **Page 29 ~**
- (32) Expert advice will be sought on how allotments can contribute to the enhancement of biodiversity, and actions to address the issue included in the five year action plan
30 ~ 16.1 **Page**
- (33) This information will be updated on the data base annually
17.2 **Page 31 ~**

- (34) The Steering Group will consider communications as a matter of priority and agree a methodology to be followed **Page 32 ~**
17.4
- (35) NBC will adopt an open and transparent approach as far as possible given the requirements of the Data Protection Act 1998 **Page 32 ~**
17.4
- (36) The Steering Group will carry out a training needs assessment and a skills audit of all allotment holders as a prelude to embarking on a prioritised training programme **Page 32 ~**
17.5
- (37) The Corporate Director/Manager will continue to bid for NBC capital funds with the support of the Steering Group **Page 33 ~**
18.1
- (38) Other avenues for the obtaining of Capital Funding will be explored **Page 33 ~**
18.1
- (39) The Corporate Director/Manager will review the revenue budget provision after discussion with the Steering Group **Page 34 ~**
19.1
- (40) The search for funding will be extended as widely as possible and will include encouraging allotment sites to undertake fundraising, as is the current practice **Page 36 ~**
21.2

TYPICAL EXAMPLE OF "Income & Expenditure Account"
*
Allotment Association

Balance sheet for year ending *

2004/5	INCOME	2005/6		2004/5	EXPENDITURE	2005/6
£138.00	Membership	£180.00		0	Membership	0
£1,050.65	Shop Sales	£697.98		£851.70	Shop Purchase	£441.94
£89.00	Machine Hire	£142.00		£82.36	Petrol/Line	£159.38
£112.44	Donations	£231.70		0	Donations	0
0	N'pton in Bloom	0		0	N'pton in Bloom	0
0	Trophies	0		0	Trophies	0
0	Message Board	0		0	Message Board	0
£202.36	Annual Show & BBQ	£176.10		£111.59	Annual Show & BBQ	£44.61
0	Christmas Social	0		0	Christmas Social	0
0	Stationery/Postage	0		£102.55	Stationery/Postage	£62.02
0	Plants	£36.35		£4.98	Plants	0
£90.00	NBC Field Maintenance	£55.00		£40.00	Maintenance	£10.00
0	Field Rotavating	0		0	Field Rotavating	0
0	Keys	0		£7.00	Keys	0
0	Condolence	0		0	Condolence	£25.00
0	Sundries	0		£75.25	Sundries	£12.30
0	Subs N A C	0		£10.00	Subs N A C	0
£617.27	Fund Raising/Path Fund	£101.85		£1,200.00	Path Fund	0
£0.48	Bank interest	£0.83		0	Bank Charges	0
0	N'pton E'nv't Forum	£400.00		0	N'pton E'nv't Forum	£343.83
£185.23	Loss on year	0		0	Profit on year	£922.73
£2,485.43		£2021.81		£2,485.43		£2021.81

Current Assets

2004/5		2005/6		2004/5		2005/6
£2,300.20	Income	£2,021.81		£543.76	Current Account	£1,230.66
£2,485.43	Expenditure	£1,099.08		£112.29	Cash in Hand	£70.11
0		0		0	Unbanked Cheques	0
£185.23	Loss on year	0		£703.56	Shop Stock	£470.86
0	Profit on year	£922.73		0		0
				£1359.61		£1,771.63

Treasurer Date

Auditor Date

Chairman Date

TYPICAL EXAMPLE OF "Income & Expenditure Account"
*
Allotment Association

Balance sheet for year ending *

2004/5	INCOME	2005/6		2004/5	EXPENDITURE	2005/6
0	Membership	0		£74.81	Shop Purchase	0
£118.04	Shop Sales	£57.02		0	Petrol/Line	0
£0.50	Donations	0		0	N'pton in Bloom	0
£202.36	Annual Show & BBQ	£176.10		0	Trophies	0
0	Bank interest	0		0	Message Board	£6.48
0	NBC Field Maintenance	0		£111.59	Annual Show & BBQ	£44.61
£148.00	Fund Raising	£1.00		0	Christmas Social	0
£5.00	Machine Hire	£6.00		0	Stationery/Postage	£17.02
0	N'pton En'vt Forum	£400.00		0	Plants	0
0		0		£10.00	Maintenance	0
0		0		0	Rotavation	0
0		0		0	Keys	0
0		0		0	Condolence	0
0		0		£3.00	Sundries	£5.82
0		0		0	Profit on year	0
0		0		0	2004 Subs N A C	0
£473.90		£640.12		£199.40		£73.93

Current Assets

2004/5		2005/6				2005/6
£473.90	Income	£640.12		0		0
£199.40	Expenditure	£73.93		0		0
0		0		0	Current Account	£910.61
0	Cash B/f	£1022.88		0	Cash in Hand	£406.32
0	Unbanked Cheques	0		0	Unbanked Cheques	£400.00
0		0		0	Float Asst. Treasurer	£20.00
		£1736.93				£1736.93

Signed

Treasurer

TRADING SALES LIST

*

Allotment Association

Please LIST BELOW any item sold

DATE	ITEM SOLD	QUANTITY	PRICE	FUND RAISING	MACHINE HIRE	SOLD BY
1						
2						
3						
4						
5						
6						
7						
8						
9						
10						
11						
12						
13						
14						
15						
16						
17						
18						
19						
20						
21						
22						
23						
24						
25						
26						
27						
28						
29						

Sheet No	£	£	£
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