

WTF159  
FOR DECISION  
WARD(S): WINCHESTER TOWN

WINCHESTER TOWN FORUM - 25 JULY 2011

CABINET – 14 SEPTEMBER 2011

LEASE OF ALLOTMENTS TO WINCHESTER NEW ALLOTMENT HOLDERS SOCIETY

REPORT OF HEAD OF LANDSCAPE AND OPEN SPACES

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RECENT REFERENCES:

CAB 2118 – Playground Five Year Refurbishment Plan – Cabinet 9 February 2011 & WTF 26 January 2011

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

The City Council currently directly manages three allotment sites in Winchester at Greenhill Road, Trussell Crescent and Prince's Place. The rest of Council allotment land is leased to the Winchester New Allotment Holders Society, which supervises the management of allotments for the benefit of its members.

This report sets out a proposal to lease the three allotment sites at Greenhill Road, Trussell Crescent and Prince's Place to the Winchester New Allotment Holders Society. The proposal is part of the service re-design within the Council and will allow staff to focus on opportunities for developing new allotments rather than running existing ones.

**RECOMMENDATIONS:**

- 1 That the Town Forum ask Cabinet to agree to the proposal to lease three Council allotment sites at Greenhill Road, Trussell Crescent and Prince's Place to Winchester New Allotment Holders Society as an addition to the existing lease under the existing terms with a nominal increase in rent of £125 pa.
- 2 That Cabinet authorise the Landscape and Open Spaces Team to assess the potential for development of additional allotment sites on Council-owned land within the Town.

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DETAIL:

- 1.1 The legislation governing allotments requires that 'allotment authorities' provide allotments where there is demand. The allotment authority must give consideration to providing additional allotments where six ratepayers make representation to that authority.
- 1.2 The City Council has both statutory and voluntary allotments. The former are provided under the 1908 Allotments Act and protected under the provisions of the 1925 Allotments Act. Voluntary allotments are provided by the Council on land that may be held for alternative end use. Voluntary allotments are not afforded protection under the 1925 Act and the Council can legitimately convert the land to alternative uses such as affordable housing.
- 1.3 The City Council is the allotment authority for Winchester Town, whereas the respective parish councils are the allotment authorities for the parishes of the District.
- 1.4 There are eight allotment sites within Winchester Town, the majority of which are managed by allotment societies. The Council provides information on allotment provision within the Town on its website along with relevant contact details <http://www.winchester.gov.uk/GeneralR.asp?id= SX9452-A781C963>

2 COUNCIL ALLOTMENTS

- 2.1 The Council directly manages three allotment sites within Winchester Town at Prince's Place in Stanmore, Trussell Close in Weeke and Greenhill Road in Fulflood. The combined allotment provision on these three sites is 28 plots.
- 2.2 There are waiting lists for all three sites and low turnover, so there is little prospect of those on the waiting list being allocated an allotment in the near future. Greenhill Road is the most popular with a waiting list of 26. The person currently at the top of the list has been waiting since April 2005. There are 15 people on each waiting list for Prince's Place and Trussell Crescent. People have been on those waiting lists since October 2009.

### 3 MANAGEMENT COSTS AND CHARGES

- 3.1 The Council charges an annual rent at the rate of £4.40 per rod at all three sites which includes the supply of water. These charges have been increased from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2011 to bring them into line with rates charged by other local authorities and the Winchester New Allotment Holders Society (WNAHS).

### 4 WINCHESTER NEW ALLOTMENT HOLDERS SOCIETY

- 4.1 The Council currently leases two statutory allotments (at Edington Rd and Park Road) and six voluntary allotments to the Winchester New Allotment Holders Society (WNAHS). The current lease dates from 1st January 2005 and runs for a term of 20 years. The rent is reviewed every 5 years based on Retail Price Index (RPI). WNAHS currently pays rent of £2,755 per annum.
- 4.2 There are termination clauses included within the lease. The six voluntary sites are located on land held by the Council under provisions within Housing Acts. The lease includes provision for return of the land to the Council at six month's notice.

### 5 PROPOSAL

- 5.1 It is proposed that three allotment sites at Greenhill Road, Trussell Crescent and Prince's Place should be leased to the Winchester New Allotment Holders Society as an extension of the existing lease. The three sites are also on land held by the Council under Housing Act provisions and would thus be subject to the existing termination clause.
- 5.2 The sites will be handed over to WNAHS in a mutually acceptable condition and would thereafter be maintained by the Society. Responsibility for maintenance of boundaries will be incorporated into the terms of the lease with WNAHS.
- 5.3 Leasing the three allotment sites to WNAHS will release staff time to explore the potential for developing new allotments, rather than running existing ones.
- 5.4 The Head of Estates has assessed the three sites and determined that the addition of these allotments to the lease should be accompanied by a nominal rent increase of £125 per annum.

### OTHER CONSIDERATIONS:

#### 6 SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY STRATEGY AND CORPORATE BUSINESS PLAN (RELEVANCE TO):

- 6.1 Provision of allotments for the community contributes to the Sustainable Community Strategy through maintaining a High Quality Environment (biodiversity, climate change, sustainable resource use, climate change) and encouraging Active Communities (active lifestyles, local food, health and well-being).

6.2 Passing the running of existing Council allotments to WNAHS will free staff resources to focus on the exploring the potential to develop new allotments on Council land, thus addressing waiting lists and improving delivering against Community Strategy outcomes.

6.3 In response to consultation with the Winnall Community Association, the Council is currently converting a disused play area at Firmstone Road in Winnall to allotments (see CAB 2118 - Five Year Play Strategy approved by Town Forum in January 2011 and Cabinet in February 2011). Once Firmstone Road allotments are set up, they will be transferred to the Winnall Community Association.

7 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS:

7.1 Release of staff time for developing new allotments rather than running existing ones.

7.2 Rent increase of £125 pa.

8 RISK MANAGEMENT ISSUES

8.1 Council rents have already been brought into line with those of WNAHS, which has prompted no adverse reaction from current tenants. This has resolved the principal potential source of objection to the transfer which would have been the increase in rent.

9 BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS:

None

10 APPENDICES:

None