



To investigate the proposed water charges for allotment holders within the borough

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Foreword

The Overview and Scrutiny Task and Finish Group, comprising Councillors Marion Allen, Trini Crake, Michelle Hoare, Les Patterson and two co-opted members, Mr Tony Care and Mr Barry Oliver, was set up because a motion was put forward and carried at Full Council on 22 May 2006 that asked for a time limited Scrutiny investigation to be undertaken for the proposed water charges for allotment holders within the Borough.

The review was a short, focussed piece of work that linked to the Council's corporate priorities and examined a range of information. The Task and Finish Group looked at water usage on allotment sites within the Borough of Northampton, water costs were investigated as were other Local Authorities allotment rental and water charges. Site visits to various allotments within the Borough took place, interviews with the Portfolio Holder (Community Engagement and Democratic Services) and senior staff from Northampton Borough Council were held, baseline information was received and desktop research carried out using the Internet.

This review was carried out between July 2006 and September 2006.



Councillor Marion Allen

Chair of the Allotments (Water Charges) Task and Finish Group

Acknowledgements to all those who took part in the Review:-

- Councillors Trini Crake, Michelle Hoare and Les Patterson who sat with me on this Task and Finish Group
- Councillor Les Patterson for producing the checklist template for the site visits
- Tony Care and Barry Oliver, representing the Northampton Allotments Network, co-opted members, for sharing their invaluable knowledge and expertise
- Councillor Phil Larratt (Portfolio Holder) for attending a meeting and providing essential information to inform the review
- Carl Grimmer (Corporate Manager), Tony Spiezick (Street Scene and Environment Manager) and Paul Chambers (Team Leader) for their hard work and dedication to this piece of work
- Tracy Tiff (Scrutiny Officer) for providing invaluable advice and helping compile the final report
- Margaret Martin (Consortium) for providing advice and support

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Following a motion to Full Council, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee set up this Task and Finish Group to investigate the reasons for the proposed water charges for allotment holders within the Borough.

A significant amount of evidence was heard, details of which are contained in the report. After gathering evidence the Task and Finish Group established that the introduction of water charges to allotment holders could not be investigated in isolation. Other issues such as water leakage, water conservation, security on the allotment sites and possible concessionary discounts needed to be considered too.

- A number of Local Authorities charge allotment holders for water usage. However, where other Local Authorities' allotment rental charges are near or above that of Northampton's, concessions are given. Concessions range from a reduction in rental charges of 25% to 50%. Where water usage is charged by other Local Authorities, allotment rental is significantly lower than that of Northampton Borough Council. The possibility of introducing allotment rental reductions for the following categories was considered to be important: -
 - Individuals over 60 years of age
 - Disabled users
 - Unemployed users
- Anglian Water is unable to waive standing charges for the winter period as these cover the costs of providing and maintaining the services, which it has to do even though the usage may be seasonal. Water is often not used during the winter months on the allotment sites but a standing charge still applies for that period.
- There is a need to stop leakages on all sites. The installation of standpipes on allotment sites would be a simple solution that works in other areas.
- It was felt that it would probably be more cost effective to install standpipes on allotment sites at the same time that the water pipes are replaced as these would appear more cost effective to maintain than the current system.
- The water tanks that are currently on sites could be recycled and used similarly to a water butt, they would just need to be disconnected from the water mains.
- There is a need to ensure good security measures on each allotment site in order to alleviate vandalism, for example damage to water systems and encourage people to use allotments.
- Water leakage puts up water usage and cost. It is a priority that repairs should be made to the water pipes at Eastern Avenue (North) allotment site to prevent the current water leakage problem. In the short term, the Council could borrow finance to repair water leakages. For every £1 of revenue spent, £20 could be borrowed. In accordance with the Allotments

Act 1908, any money from the sale of allotment land can be used to re-pay a loan. If the Eastern Avenue (North) allotment site was to be downsized there could be a reduction of approximately 80-100 plots. Any sale of land from this site could be utilised to cover some costs of replacing the water pipes. At current, land prices per acre would raise approximately £1,000,000.

- It would be beneficial for consideration to be given to the water supply for allotment sites that do not use water to be turned off.
- The Council does not have a water conservation plan and there do not appear to be imminent plans to introduce one.
- The Allotment Strategy that was produced in 2004 was not adopted.
- It appears that with better-run allotments there is autonomous allotment management which could be achieved through allotments being run by Allotment Societies or Charitable Trusts. There are other advantages of allotments being run Trusts such as the ability to apply for external funding and special grants, security of tenure which enables better future planning, a more focussed approach and removal from the political arena.

The above overall findings have formed the basis for the following recommendations. The recommendations are aimed at providing a sustainable future for allotments in the Borough. The Task and Finish Group asked the Cabinet to consider implementing the following recommendations by April 2008:

- That there should be no introduction of water charges until all water pipes on each allotment site have been replaced.
- That a Water Charging Policy be introduced containing the following conditions:-
 - (a) Water usage to be charged at a rate per pole per field as an incentive to conserve water.
 - (b) When permission to erect a shed on an allotment plot is granted, the placing of a water butt with guttering, for water conservation should be a condition of approval.
- That when the water pipes are replaced, the installation of standpipes of allotment sites is explored.
- That consideration be given to taking out a short-term loan against future land sale to cover the cost of replacing water pipes on all allotment sites.

The following recommendations are outside the Group's original remit but are being put forward for consideration as they are connected to the issue under review. They arose during the work of the review and are significant to the future

management of the allotment sites and are offered as support to the work of the Council: -

- That consideration be given to revisiting and updating the Allotment Strategy 2004. The Allotment Strategy should be adopted by April 2007. Once approved and implemented, it could be used as a benchmark for the future, such as an umbrella for a five-year business plan for each allotment site. Within the Allotment Strategy the following issues need to be addressed: -
 - Security
 - Water conservation plan
 - Disabled access
 - Alternative methods to manage/run allotment sites
- That consideration be given to the introduction of 50% concessions for allotment rental charges and the following groups be considered: -
 - Individuals over 60 years of age
 - Disabled users
 - Unemployed users

Northampton Borough Council

Overview and Scrutiny

Report of the Allotments (Water Charges) Task and Finish Group

1. Purpose

The purpose of the Task and Finish Group was to investigate the reasons for the proposed water charges for allotment holders within the Borough. The review was linked to the Council's corporate priorities. A copy of the Scope of the Review is attached at Appendix A.

2. Context and Background

2.1 A motion was put forward and carried at Full Council on 22 May 2006 that asked for a short, focused, time limited Scrutiny investigation to be undertaken for the proposed water charges for allotment holders within the Borough. The motion read as follows: -

"We call on the Council to discontinue the 5% above inflation annual uplift in allotment rents.

We call on the Council to introduce a fair system of charges for water usage on allotments in place of the proposed flawed system.

That a time limited scrutiny investigation is undertaken for the proposed water charges."

2.2 The Overview and Scrutiny Committee, at its meeting on 14 June 2006, agreed to include this short, focussed piece of Scrutiny work in its Work Programme for 2006/2007.

2.3 A Councillor Task and Finish Group was established. The Group sought Co-Optees from the allotment holders in the Borough to participate in the review. Two allotment holders representing the Northampton Allotments Network, Mr Tony Care and Mr Barry Oliver, joined the Group. The Group commenced its work in July 2006 and concluded its findings during September 2006.

2.4 The Task and Finish Group agreed that the following areas needed to be investigated and linked to the realisation of the council's corporate priorities:

- How the Council arrived at the current charging structure
- How the Cabinet came to the decision to implement water charges to allotment holders
- Whether allotment charges previously included water
- Fairness in cost in relation to the size of the allotment

- Water leakage issues
- Conservation of water
- Whether water charges were previously included in the Council's allotment renting arrangements
- Comparisons of a sample of the water charging structures that exist within other Local Authorities

3. Evidence Collection

In scoping this review it was decided that evidence would be collected from a variety of sources:

3.1 Site Visits to various Allotment Sites

Members of the Task and Finish Group undertook visits to allotments sites within the Borough. The aim was to visit a mix of different sizes and sorts of sites, both privately and Borough owned to gain a comprehensive picture. The visits included the following:

- Kettering Road Allotment Site (Privately owned)
- Mereway Allotment Site
- Eastern Avenue (North) Allotment Site
- Blisworth Allotment Site (Privately owned)

A Checklist for the site visit was produced by Councillor Patterson (copies attached at Appendix B).

The key points that emerged from the visits were:

3.1.1 Kettering Road

This is a large site of 280 10-pole plots. The water is all naturally sourced from four wells and a stream. The average distance from the water source is variable but many plots have water butts attached to sheds to ensure the natural collection of water. Most water butts are of average size (500 litres), some being open topped. Water conservation is estimated at 25%. The security on the site was felt to be good and secure gates were in situ. After initial purchase, individual allotment holders own the land for their plot. There is a service charge of £10.00 for a ten-pole plot and no charges for water.

3.1.2 Mereway

Mereway is a temporary site with 60 10-pole plots although just 52 are in use, car parking and the community green area use some plots. Two plots are unusable due to water logging. The water source is via mains supply (large tanks). The allotment holders said that they felt that there is a need for an additional seven large tanks to ensure an adequate supply of water. The allotment holders suggested that if Northampton Borough Council provided the additional tanks, they would fit them on the site. The site operates a strict

hosepipe ban. Some plots have water butts but there are few sheds. The allotment holders try to conserve water but do not have enough facilities. The annual rental charge is £27.35 for a ten-pole plot.

Security on the site is poor. Fencing is poor and it was felt that there is a need for palisade fencing. The continuity of the Mereway allotment site is in question it is a temporary site and will eventually be secured for cemetery provision but it is seen to be well run given the circumstances.

Mereway Allotment Site is an example of a well run site and photographs are attached at Appendix C).

3.1.3 Eastern Avenue (North)

Eastern Avenue (North) is a very large site of 246 10-pole plots. The water source is supplied by mains through tanks. There is a lot of water leakage on the site. Generally, plots are a long distance from the water source. 'DIY' taps have been installed on some of the tanks which indicate possible hosepipe usage.

It was felt the site was generally in poor condition and very untidy, with lots of rubbish, including an abandoned car. There is no evidence of weed control and the weeds, including ragwort, appear very healthy and prolific which could also indicate water leakage. Water conservation is poor on the site. This is symptomatic of what appears to be a badly managed site.

Security on the site is poor due to the need for repair to the fencing. The wire fencing is inadequate and access could be gained via adjacent housing. There are a few sheds on the site and a few allotment holders have water butts.

There are approximately 100 empty plots and many plots are rented but not cultivated. Water is turned off for the winter period, October to March, each year. Last year the site used 400 cubic metres but this year just 34 cubic metres was used for the six-month period ending March 2006. The annual rental charge is £27.35 per 10-pole plot.

If the Eastern Avenue (North) allotment site was to be downsized there could be a reduction of approximately 80-100 plots. Any sale of land from this site could be utilised to cover some costs suggested later in the report. (Photographs of the site are attached at Appendix D).

3.1.4 Blisworth (privately run allotment site)

Blisworth Allotment Site is outside the Borough of Northampton but was visited to use as a comparator. The site is a 610-pole site (1.5 acres) with approximately 55 plots and 50 of which are in use. Most plots are 10 poles. There is flexibility in plot size and usage. The annual rental charge for a 10-pole plot is £11. Water is provided by mains through 12 standpipes. The site operates a water co-operative scheme. Each member pays £20 life

membership and the water bill is then split equally between all members of the co-operative. There is a water metre at the mains and charges are 25p per pole (£2.50 per 10 pole site). However, not all allotment holders are members of the water co-operative and therefore use their own water through methods such as water butts. The site practises 100% water conservation. There are no leaks and hoses are not permitted. The site is very tidy and well kept.

The water scheme is felt to be very fair and the charges for rental are also seen as fair and flexible, for example, annual rental on an 8-pole plot (without water) equates to £5.20.

A copy of the tenancy agreement and constitution for the Blisworth Allotment site is attached at Appendix E.

3.2 Corporate Manager (Street Scene)

The Corporate Manager provided baseline data as requested. Current allotment rental charges are £27.30 per ten-pole plot (pro rata).

It was explained that, the possibility of employing a flat rate water charge to all allotment holders of approximately £6.50 had been investigated. This had been based upon the cost to the Council of water usage over the year. The water charges were per plot irrespective of size and had been scheduled for introduction in October 2006. The introduction of water charges to allotment holders has been suspended until this Overview and Scrutiny review is completed.

3.3 Street Care and Environment Manager

The Street Care and Environment Manager provided information on the following areas: -

3.3.1 Council's Corporate Priorities

This review links to the Council's corporate priorities as it demonstrates further working with the community. (Corporate Priorities attached at Appendix F).

3.3.2 Allotment sites within the Borough

There are 13 Council run sites and two field sites spread throughout the town (Comprehensive details attached at Appendix G.)

Of the Council run sites seven have waiting lists. There is also a waiting list for one of the field sites and the leased site. There are available plots on eight of the sites. (Appendix G refers)

3.3.3 Actual Charge of Water to the Council

The total water charges for allotment sites, including all leaks and standing charges, to the Council per year is around £9,600 (Appendix H refers).

Water is not used during the winter months but a standing charge still applies for that period. Some allotment sites have a zero water usage and the Group felt that it would be beneficial for consideration to be given to the water supply for such allotment sites be turned off. The Graspin Lane allotment site during the period 13 May to 20 October 2005 used 2081 cubic metres of water equating to a bill of £1,810.95 (including £19.84 standing charge). This was the highest water bill for allotment sites in the Borough. There has been no water usage for Bridgewater Drive and Harlestone Road allotment sites.

3.3.4 Allotment benchmarking carried out in October 2005

Allotment benchmarking was carried out in October 2005. (Copy attached at Appendix I.)

The key points from the allotment benchmarking were: -

3.3.4.1 Flexible Charging (Concessions) Policies

Many Local Authorities offered concessionary rates ranging from between 25% to 50%. Where allotment rental charges were near to or above that of Northampton's, concessions were given.

The Group considered the possibility of introducing concessions to allotment rental charges for the following groups: -

- Individuals over 60 years of age
- Disabled people
- Unemployed people

Currently, allotment holders in Northampton are billed annually. Concessionary rates would be based on an individual's eligibility one month prior to the bill being issued. Individuals would be required to supply evidence that they qualified for a concession.

Bedford Borough Council offers concessions to allotment holders over 60 years of age, unemployed people and various concessionary groups as per the Council's leisure card concessionary groupings.

North Hertfordshire District Council offers a 50% reduction in allotment rental charges to individuals over 60, unemployed people, students over 18 and individuals on incapacity benefit.

High Wycombe District Council offers concessions of 50% for senior citizens, as do Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council and Chelmsford Borough Council.

Macclesfield Borough Council offers 50% concessions for pensioners and 30% for society run sites.

Luton Borough Council offers a 50% discount to holders on their first plot and Milton Keynes Borough Council gives 50% discount to concessionary groups (Pensioners, disabled people, unemployed people and single parents).

The majority of the Local Authorities contacted include water charges in their rental charges.

3.3.5 Water Leakages and costs

There would be a need to dig up the current pipe work on individual allotment sites to assess the water leakages. External consultants' fees to carry out this work would be £3,000.

An example was given of the cost to relay a 50mm bore pipe from the mains to cover the allotment site at Weston Favell. It was estimated to be in the region of £13,500. Due to a pre-determined capital programme a 32mm bore pipe is currently being fitted to the Weston Favell site, not 50mm bore as recommended.

3.3.6 Fencing Security Costs

The cost of replacing one metre of palisade fencing would be £52.00. This includes an allowance for ground clearance.

To install palisade fencing around the perimeter of all allotment sites in the Borough would cost approximately £276,496 (Attached at Appendix J is a plan of allotments within the Borough).

Two sites were investigated in respect of implementing new fencing for security purposes: -

A. Mereway Allotment Site

There is existing fencing on Mereway Allotment Site. The cost to introduce palisade fencing to the roadside hedged area alone would be in the region of £6,500, which would provide security for existing and future use.

B. Bants Lane Allotment Site

The Bants Lane Allotment Site is mainly laid to hedges. Palisade fencing would be required around the whole perimeter of the site which would cost between £47,000 and £50,000 depending on the groundworks required once the hedges have been removed.

3.4 Desktop Research

Desktop research was carried out with a number of Local Authorities to determine their allotment rental charges and any charges made to allotment holders for water usage. The following councils were contacted: -

- Bedford Borough Council
- Leicester City Council
- Coventry City Council
- Luton Borough Council
- Southampton City Council
- Milton Keynes Borough Council

The Key points were: -

3.4.1 Bedford Borough Council

Bedford Borough Council comes within Anglian Water Authority. The Council has five allotment sites, giving a total of 608 plots, 90% of which are in use. Each plot is roughly 10 poles, with all five sites covering around 13.57 hectares of land in total. The current rates are £35.70 (per plot) per year. £20.90 per year for holders on concessionary rates. There are no additional charges for the use of water. When a tenancy commences the Council offers to prepare the plot free of charge, whether it be flailing, chisel ploughing, rotovating or removing rubbish/structures. If a holder would like any works completed after the initial preparation, there would be an additional charge. There are also a number of sites in Bedford which are owned by Parish Councils.

3.4.2 Leicester City Council

Leicester City Council comes within Severn Trent Water Authority. There are 45 operational allotment sites across the city offering 3,200 cultivated plots. Annual rental costs are from £5 to £21 per 300 square yard plot (approximately 10 poles), with the higher rates including all water charges.

There are 33 city allotments managed by local allotment societies. 22 allotment societies in Leicester all provide full-time stewards who look after the day-to-day management of their allotment sites. Societies may also offer the opportunity to buy compost, fertiliser, seeds and other gardening supplies on site. The remaining sites are owned by the City Council and leased directly to allotment holders. Direct let sites do not offer on-site management but site visits and any necessary maintenance work or repairs are carried out by the Council.

3.4.3 Coventry City Council

Coventry City Council comes within Severn Trent Water Authority. Allotments are run by an Allotment Society rather than the Council and the Council leases the allotment sites to Coventry and District Allotment Society. The

Coventry and District Allotment Society then sub lets the plots to individual associations. Each association has a representative who agrees the charges on each plot. The current charges are £100 per acre per year, individual associations add fees to this such as subscriptions to the National Allotment Society, charges for watered metre usage and insurance (e.g. public liability). The average size of an allotment plot is 10 poles (250 square metres) and the charge is £15.18 per year. Each site has a water metre.

3.4.4 Luton Borough Council

Luton Borough Council comes within Three Valleys Water Authority. All allotment sites are Council owned. The current charges to allotment holders are £1.96 per pole for first class sites and £0.64 for second-class sites (without water/perimetre fencing) per year. Price increases are due to be implemented from 1 October 2006: - £2.20 per pole for first class sites and £0.70 per pole for a second-class site per year. No additional charges are made to allotment holders for water usage.

There are 1,103 plots within the borough covering 15 sites, 13 of which are active and approximately 900 plots are in use. The size of an allotment plot varies from between 3 and 12 poles. (90.75 square yards and 363 square yards).

3.4.5 Southampton City Council

Southampton City Council comes within Southern Water Authority. All allotment sites are Council owned. The current annual charge to allotment holders are sites with water £3.04 per pole. The annual charge for a ten-pole site is £30.40. One pole equates to 25.3 square metres. Two sites have sheds and toilets and the annual rental charge is £6.75 per pole. The annual charge for a ten-pole site is £67.50. All allotment holders pay a £5 plot deposit and £5 key deposit.

There are 28 allotment sites with over 700 plots. Each plot is usually between 5 and 10 poles. (126.5 square metres and 253 square metres).

3.4.6 Milton Keynes Borough Council

Milton Keynes Borough Council comes within Anglian Water Authority. Rental Charges for the Season from September 2005 - October 2006: -

- Category A Site with all facilities £2.98 per pole per annum (Including water)
- Category B Site with limited facilities £2.29 per pole per annum
- Category C Site with no facilities £1.84 per pole per annum It is proposed that rental charges will increase by 3% for the next season.

Senior Citizens, Registered Disabled, Persons Unemployed and Single Parent Families are entitled to a 50% reduction.

There are approximately 1,500 plots (from 4 to 12 poles) over 57 sites in the Borough.

Comprehensive details of the desktop research are attached at Appendix K.

NB: A 10-pole plot equates to approximately 250 square metres (300 square yards).

3.5 Portfolio Holder Community Engagement and Democratic Services

The Portfolio Holder (Community Engagement and Democratic Services) attended the meeting on 7 September 2006 (Copy of the minutes of that meeting are attached at Appendix L).

The key points of evidence were: -

- Cabinet arrived at the proposed charging structure by dividing the Council's water bill for its allotments by the number of plots in the Borough. An average was calculated which would be the charge to each allotment holder.
- Following research with other Local Authorities regarding how they address water usage and charges on their allotments, it was decided to look at the introduction of water charges to the allotment holders. A number of Local Authorities charge allotment holders for water usage.
- The introduction of water charges to allotment holders is necessary due to there being increased water charges and usage.
- Cabinet is aware of the problem of water leakages. Investigations are taking place to raise the capital monies required to carry out all of the necessary repairs. Water leakages of a significant nature will have to be addressed. It would not be cost effective to repair all water leaks now as there are plans to replace all the 25mm pipes with 50 mm water supply. To repair the water piping at the Weston Favell allotment site would cost £13,500. Water leaks cost £1,800 per year. Water leakage is around 40% for which major capital investment is required to rectify.
- Allotments are a non-profitable operation to the Council. If an allotment site were sold, any surplus monies would be ringfenced for allotment investment and enhancement. In accordance with the Allotment Act 1908 proceeds from the sale of any allotments should be used to improve the facilities on the remaining sites left in the Borough.

- Cabinet is committed to providing successful and flourishing allotment sites that are fully occupied. It is looking to address the current over provision by sale of surplus sites in order to re-invest significantly in the remaining sites thereby enhancing the quality of the sites and facilities.

The future of allotment sites within the Borough is secure. The issue of over provision of allotments needs to be addressed. Existing temporary sites need to be relocated and their future secured. Investigations are taking place to ensure adequate provision as the population of the Borough increases and in areas of the town where there is lack of provision. There is a problem with security on some of the allotment sites and there is a need to ensure this is addressed.

- Section 23 of the Allotment Act 1908 states *‘that, among others, Borough Councils have a duty to provide sufficient allotments according to demand, for letting to persons resident within their areas.’* The rate of provision is 0.2 hectares per 1000 population. 0.2 hectares per 1000 equals 0.49 acres per 1000 population. The Council’s present position is 158.56 acres. Therefore there is an over provision of 60.56 acres, plus Harlestone Road Site 2. The Council is looking to secure provision through the local development framework. The population figures for Northampton were based on the 2001 census.
- The Mereway allotment site is a temporary site and will eventually be secured for cemetery provision. At the current usage, there will be a need to expand Towcester Road cemetery in approximately seven years time. Currently, there are 700 burials per year. The land at Mereway allotment site would provide approximately 22 years of burials.
- Allotments becoming a Charitable Trust should be investigated. Finance would be available to manage the allotment sites should the decision be taken for allotments to be run by a Charitable Trust.
- An Allotment Strategy was produced in 2004 but was not adopted. Following the adoption of an Allotment Strategy it would be a natural progression to introduce a business plan for each allotment site.

3.6 Position Statement from Anglian Water

Correspondence was sent to Anglian Water asking for a position statement regarding grey water on allotment sites and whether it might be possible for standing water charges for allotments to be amended as the allotment holders often only use water six months a year.

Anglian Water confirmed that an allowance against sewerage charges for grey water usage (for example bath water) would not be applicable to an allotment site as there is no domestic usage before the water is used on the allotments. To confirm the volume of water returned or not returned to the main sewer, a private sub metre should be installed. The installation,

maintenance and reading of this metre would be the responsibility of Northampton Borough Council. Water supply pipes after Anglian Water's metre is the responsibility of the landowner who should arrange for the leak to be traced and repaired. Northampton Borough Council does not pay sewerage charges to Anglian Water.

Anglian Water is unable to waive standing charges for the winter period as these cover the costs of providing and maintaining the services, which it has to do even though the usage may be seasonal.

To allow Anglian Water to check the tariff and charges billed for each allotment site, the Council has provided Anglian Water with the individual water account numbers for each site.

A copy of the letter from Anglian Water is attached at Appendix M.

4. Conclusions

After all of the evidence was collated the following conclusions were drawn: -

- 4.1 The introduction of water charges to allotment holders could not be investigated in isolation. Other issues such as water leakage, water conservation, security on the allotment sites and possible concessionary discounts needed to be considered too.
- 4.2 A number of Local Authorities charge allotment holders for water usage. However, where other Local Authorities' allotment rental charges are near or above that of Northampton's, concessions are given. Concessions range from a reduction in rental charges of 25% to 50%. Where water usage is charged by other Local Authorities, allotment rental is significantly lower than that of Northampton Borough Council. For example, Milton Keynes Borough Council offers a 50% concession to senior citizens, registered disabled, persons Unemployed and single parent families. Concessionary Groups would therefore pay a rental charge of £14.90 per year for a plot with all facilities.

The possibility of introducing allotment rental reductions for the following categories was considered to be important: -

- Individuals over 60 years of age
- Disabled users
- Unemployed users

Allotment holders are billed annually and the concessionary rates could be based on the individual's circumstances one month prior to the bill being issued.

- 4.3 Anglian Water is unable to waive standing charges for the winter period as these cover the costs of providing and maintaining the services,

which it has to do even though the usage may be seasonal. Water is often not used during the winter months on the allotment sites but a standing charge still applies for that period. Some allotment sites have a zero water usage. It would be beneficial for consideration to be given to the water supply for such allotment sites to be turned off.

- 4.4 There is a need to stop leakages on all sites. The installation of standpipes on allotment sites would be a simple solution that works in other areas. There is a need to ensure good security on each site which should alleviate vandalism and encourage people to use allotments. It would probably be more cost effective to install standpipes on allotment sites at the same time that the water pipes are replaced as these would appear more cost effective to maintain than the current system.
- 4.5 The water tanks that are currently on sites could be recycled and used similarly to a water butt, they would just need to be disconnected from the water mains.
- 4.6 Currently, good security is not consistent across all sites. There is a need to ensure good security measures on each allotment site in order to alleviate vandalism, for example, damage to water systems and to encourage people to use allotments.
- 4.7 Water leakage puts up water usage and cost. To determine the extent of water leakages on the allotment sites, there would be a need to dig up the current pipework on individual allotment sites to assess leakages for each site. In the short term, the Council could borrow finance to repair water leakages. For every £1 of revenue spent, £20 could be borrowed. In accordance with the Allotments Act 1908, any money from the sale of allotment land can be used to re-pay a loan. If the Eastern Avenue (North) allotment site was to be downsized there could be a reduction of approximately 80-100 plots. Any sale of land from this site could be utilised to cover some costs of replacing the water pipes. At current, land prices per acre would raise approximately £1,000,000.
- 4.8 It is a priority that repairs should be made to the water pipes at Eastern Avenue (North) allotment site to prevent the current water leakage problem.
- 4.9 The Group felt that it would be beneficial for consideration to be given to the water supply for allotment sites that do not use water to be turned off.
- 4.10 Currently, the Council does not have a water conservation plan and there do not appear to be imminent plans to introduce one.
- 4.11 The Allotment Strategy that was produced in 2004 was not adopted.

- 4.12 It appears that with better-run allotments there is autonomous allotment management which could be achieved through allotments being run by Allotment Societies or Charitable Trusts. There are other advantages of allotments being run as Trusts such as the ability to apply for external funding and special grants, security of tenure which enables better future planning, a more focussed approach and removal from the political arena. Local Authorities, such as Coventry City Council, lease their allotment land to Allotment Associations or Charitable Trusts. The Allotment Associations or Trusts then manage the sites. Northampton Borough Council would still have a statutory responsibility for allotments. The Portfolio Holder confirmed that should it be decided for the Council's allotments to be managed by Charitable Trusts, finance would be available to improve and maintain the sites.
- 4.13 It was established that there is a need for more allotment provision in the south of the town.

5 Recommendations

The Task and Finish Group asks the Cabinet to implement the following recommendations as soon as possible but by no later than April 2008: -

- 5.1 That there should be no introduction of water charges until all water pipes on all allotment site have been replaced.
- 5.2 That a Water Charging Policy be introduced containing the following conditions:-
- (a) Water usage to be charged at a rate per pole and per field as an incentive to each field to conserve water.
 - (b) When permission to erect a shed on an allotment plot is granted, the placing of a water butt with guttering for water conservation should be a condition of approval.
- 5.3 That when the water pipes are replaced, the installation of standpipes of allotment sites is explored.
- 5.4 That consideration be given to taking out a short term loan against future land sale to cover the cost of replacing water pipes on all allotment sites.

The following recommendations are outside the Group's original remit but are being put forward for consideration to Cabinet as they are connected to the issue under review. They arose during the work of the review and are significant to the future management of the allotment sites and are offered as support to the work of the Council:-

5.5 That consideration be given to revisiting and updating the Allotment Strategy 2004. The Allotment Strategy should be adopted by April 2007. Once approved and implemented, it could be used as a benchmark for the future, such as an umbrella for a five-year business plan for each allotment site. Within the Allotment Strategy the following issues need to be addressed:-

- Security
- Water conservation plan
- Disabled access
- Alternative methods to manage/run allotment sites

5.6 That consideration be given to the introduction of 50% concessions for allotment rental charges and the following groups be considered:-

- Individuals over 60 years of age
- Disabled users
- Unemployed users

Appendices

NORTHAMPTON BOROUGH COUNCIL

**ALLOTMENTS (WATER CHARGES)
TASK AND FINISH GROUP**

REVIEW SCOPE

1 PURPOSE/OBJECTIVES OF THE REVIEW

Purpose

To investigate the proposed water charges for allotment holders within the borough and to link the review to the Council's corporate priorities.

Objectives

- Fairness in cost in relation to the size of the allotment
- Leakage issues
- Conservation of water issues
- Whether water charges were included previously in allotment rent.

2 POTENTIAL OUTCOMES

- A fair, comparable and acceptable charge for water usage.
- Possible recommendations for further work regarding the Council's overall Allotment Strategy

3 INFORMATION REQUIRED

- Northampton Borough Council's water charges and those of comparable Local Authorities
- Calculations regarding allotment and water charges (provided by the Northampton Allotment Network)
- Details of allotment sites and allotment sizes within the borough
- Details of allotment rental charges and comparable data from other Local Authorities
- How Northampton Borough Council is billed for water usage by Anglian Water
- Identify the water charge as either business or domestic
- Water usage for individual allotment sites in the borough

4 FORMAT OF INFORMATION

- Baseline Data
- Officer reports/presentations: -
Details of allotment sites within the borough
Cost of allotment sites with comparable allotment sites

- Benchmark charges with other Local Authorities)
- Witness Interview with the Portfolio Holder
- Details of allotment sites within the borough

5 METHODS USED

- Minutes of the meetings
- Checklist for site visits
- Views of allotment holders
- Desktop research/ web based
- Alternative(s) to water on allotment sites
- Details from privately owned allotment sites regarding water usage

6 CO-OPTION TO THE TASK AND FINISH GROUP

Suggestions:

- Mr Barry Oliver - Northampton Allotment Network
- Mr Tony Care - Northampton Allotment Network
- Northampton Allotment Council to be asked to nominate a member to be a co-optee of this Task and Finish Group

7 EVIDENCE GATHERING TIMETABLE

July to September 2006

| | |
|--------------|-------------------------------|
| 20 July | Scope the review |
| mid August | Site visits |
| 21 August | Evidence gathering |
| 7 September | Evidence gathering |
| 22 September | Finalise Chair's final report |

8 RESPONSIBLE OFFICERS

| | |
|--------------|--------------|
| Lead Officer | Carl Grimmer |
| Co-Ordinator | Tracy Tiff |

9 RESOURCES AND BUDGET

Possible expert evidence to the meeting scheduled for 7 September 2006

10 FINAL REPORT

Completed by September 2006. Presented by the Chair of the Task and Finish Group to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and then to Cabinet.

11 MONITORING PROCESS

NORTHAMPTON BOROUGH COUNCIL

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY

ALLOTMENTS (WATER CHARGES) TASK AND FINISH GROUP
ALLOTMENT SITE VISIT – CHECK LIST

ALLOTMENT SITE AND DATE VISITED: Kettering Road (privately owned) visited on 10.8.06

Large Site – No Allots 280

10 pole plots

No vacant plots – Waiting list for plots

| | | |
|---|--|---|
| Type of water source | Natural – Four wells and a spring | |
| Average distance from source | Variable – but many plots with butts | |
| Do plots have water butts? Capacity Frequency Good design? | Yes – Many have water butts attached to sheds Mostly standard size – some open topped | Size of water butts:- 500lbs some 1,000 litres (some cost £25 each) |
| Composting practiced? | Yes by majority | Leaf delivery to assist |
| Security? | Gates secure and security felt to be good | |
| Association facilities? Shop Notice board Names Contact numbers Paths Roads Wheelbarrows Other – Plot prep | - Yes - Yes } Held in shop } - Yes but not all good - Good - Supplied to all members | |
| Sheds/storage | Yes | |
| Greenhouses | Some | |
| Labelling of plots | Yes | |
| Visitor parking | Yes | |
| Water conservation % | Approx 25% | 80% from wells no mains water use |
| NBC notice board? | | |

Additional Information

Some users have chickens and geese

Some dumping of wood etc, could be tidier. As from 1 October, debris will be burnt

Site Visit attended by

Cllrs Allen Crake and Patterson, Mr Oliver, Mr Care and Mr T Bailey (from the allotment site)

NORTHAMPTON BOROUGH COUNCIL

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY

**ALLOTMENTS (WATER CHARGES) TASK AND FINISH GROUP
ALLOTMENT SITE VISIT – CHECK LIST**

ALLOTMENT SITE AND DATE VISITED: BLISWORTH – Private Site 15.08.06

610 Pole Site (4½ Acres) **Rental:** £330/PA £11/PA per plot Incl

Approx 55 Plots (Mostly 10 Pole Plots) – 50 Members Flexibility in Plot Sizes + Use

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Type of water source | Mains – Stand Pipes – (12) | Water Cooperative Scheme not all plot holders* |
| Average distance from source | Variable – average 10-20 metres | |
| Do plots have water butts? Capacity Frequency Good design? | Some do Variable Standard Butt not with bottom Taps | |
| Composting practiced? | Yes | |
| Security? | Open site with Bridleway User visit chickens 2-3 times day | |
| Association facilities? Shop Notice board Names } Contact numbers } Paths - Roads - Wheelbarrows Other – Plot prep - | Held by site manager Excellent Not so good – grass tracks Some | Yes if new holder |
| Sheds/storage - | Yes on some plots | |
| Greenhouses - | A small number (with glass intact) | Some plastic |
| Labelling of plots | | |
| Visitor parking - | Very little | |
| Water conservation % - | No hoses permitted No leaks | 100% |
| NBC notice board? | N/A | |

Additional Notes: -

* Water Scheme £20 Life Membership – Meter at Main 95p/Pole £9.50 per 10 pole plot
The Allotment Association for Blisworth has a Constitution
Very tidy well-kept site
Chickens – well cared for – accepted part of Allotment
Community Asset – some plots used as garden extensions

Site Visited attended by: -

Cllr Allen, Mr Oliver, Mr & Mrs Care, Site Manager/Supervisor

NORTHAMPTON BOROUGH COUNCIL

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY

**ALLOTMENTS (WATER CHARGES) TASK AND FINISH GROUP
ALLOTMENT SITE VISIT – CHECK LIST**

ALLOTMENT SITE AND DATE VISITED: Eastern Avenue(North) NBC Owned.
Visited on 14.08.06

Very Large Site
Approx 280 plots. 10 pole. Plots Available. No Plots unattended

| | | |
|---|--|--|
| Type of water source | Tanks supplied by mains – A lot of leakage | |
| Average distance from source | - Generally quite a way from plots | |
| Do plots have water butts? Capacity Frequency Good design? | Some | Taps evident by tanks Suggests possible hose use e.g. Tank number 31 |
| Composting practiced? | By some | |
| Security? | Each plot holder is issued with a key | Subjected to vandalism |
| Association facilities? Shop Notice board Names Contact numbers Paths Roads Wheelbarrows Other – prep | - Yes - Yes - Variable – some cannot be seen Very Uneven & one has dangerous drop to Plots - Some - | |
| Sheds/storage | Variable – Recently new shed burnt down | |
| Greenhouses | Again risk of vandalism | |
| Labelling of plots | - Yes | No visible weed control |
| Visitor parking | - Yes | |
| Water conservation % | Poor – High rate leakage | |
| NBC notice board? | | |

Additional Information

Concessionary Rates 50% Discount

Repair to Fencing by Path to Bradlaugh Fields – appalling Not value for money i.e. £60 call out

Ragwort – A hazard if removed without protection

Proceeds from land sale – to whom??

Uncared for overgrown site – Lots of rubbish dumped

One user seems to have extended his garden

Site Visit attended by

Cllrs Allen and Crake, Mr Oliver, Mr Care and Ms Ash

Additional Notes

Water charged per plot not size

Tidy Site – Large Area Water logged therefore not useable – except possibly raise plots disabled

Has green area for community use

Need fencing by Mereway Road

Site Visit Attended by:

Cllrs Allen, Crake and Mr Oliver



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106 0678.JPG



106 0680.JPG



15/08/2006 15:01:00



15/08/2006 15:01:16



15/08/2006 15:14:33



15/08/2006 15:34:16



15/08/2006 15:34:51



15/08/2006 15:38:31



15/08/2006 15:20:28



15/08/2006 15:21:11



15/08/2006 15:22:26



15/08/2006 15:24:06



15/08/2006 15:28:00



15/08/2006 15:27:29

BLISWORTH ALLOTMENT ASSOCIATION – STOKE ROAD**CONSTITUTION****Definitions**

1. 'The Association' means Blisworth Allotment Association – Stoke Road.
2. 'A member' means a plot holder of the association whose rent is not in arrears.
3. 'The committee' means the executive committee who manage the affairs of the association, i.e. the chairman/secretary, site supervisor, and treasurer.

Name

4. The name shall be 'The Stoke Road Allotment Association.'

Objects

5. To provide members with the opportunity to produce food and flowers, and to share an interest in the continuance of this long standing heritage.
6. To provide members with the advantage of the National Seed Scheme and any other offers as appropriate.

Membership

7. Membership shall be available to any plot holder upon payment of their correct pole rent and fees for National Association membership and public liability insurance as determined by the Annual General Meeting. The fee will be for one calendar year.
8. Membership is also open to non-tenants who may order Kings seeds and other offers, and may attend meetings. Non-tenant members may not vote on constitutional issues.
9. A member will be deemed to be in arrears if rents and fees have not been paid within three calendar months.
10. Each tenant member will have one vote at General Meetings. If the votes are equal the chairman will have a second or casting vote.

The Committee

11. The committee shall have the responsibility for the administration of the association, its property and affairs.
12. The committee shall consist of a Chairman/Secretary, a Site Supervisor and a Treasurer.
13. Nominations for membership of the committee shall only be valid if made and seconded by members other than the nominee and if the nominee is a member who has given consent.
14. The committee shall have the power to co-opt any member as it shall deem fit.
15. The committee shall meet whenever necessary, but at least two times a year.

16. Minutes shall be kept of the proceedings and these should be agreed after any amendments at the beginning of the next meeting. The chairman shall sign the Minutes to signify that they have been agreed.
17. The committee shall present reports and statements of accounts to each Annual General Meeting.
18. No committee member shall receive any benefit in money or in kind, or have any financial interest in the supply of goods and services to the association.

General Meetings

19. An Annual General Meeting shall be held in March every year, or as near thereto as possible.
20. All members shall be entitled to attend General Meetings of the association.

Accounts

21. The committee shall keep proper accounts and records relevant to the income and expenditure of the association.
22. The committee shall prepare an annual statement of account for the association for the Annual General Meeting.

Bank Accounts

23. All cheques shall require two signatories for the authorised members of the committee.
24. No new bank account or other means of investment shall be commenced without the authorisation of all members of the committee.
25. No member shall commit the association financially in any way without the authority of the committee.

Dissolution

26. If the committee or members decide that the association should be dissolved, they shall request an Extraordinary General Meeting at which there must be a quorum on nineteen members. A resolution for dissolution must be proposed and carried by two thirds of those voting for the dissolution to take effect.
27. If the resolution for dissolution takes effect the net monetary assets of the association shall be distributed within the village of Blisworth as determined by a simple majority of the members.

This Constitution was drawn up in draft form for members at the autumn meeting in 2004. Some amendments were agreed and the final document presented to all current members in March 2005.

TENANCY AGREEMENT

For use between the Association and individual tenants of the Allotment Gardens

AN AGREEMENT made this day of Two Thousand and
BETWEEN Blisworth Allotment Association – Stoke Road, (hereinafter called ‘The
Association’) of the one part and of (Name)
(Address) post code Tel.
hereinafter called ‘the Tenant’ of the other part

WHEREBY the Association agree to let, and the Tenant agrees to take on a yearly tenancy
from the day of Two thousand and The Allotment Garden
Plot number(s) in the register of Allotment Gardens and containing –
..... pole, or thereabouts (subject to the exceptions and reservations of contained in
the lease under which the Association holds the land) a yearly rental of the current charges and
fees payable yearly.

THE TENANCY is subject to the Allotment Acts 1908 –1950 and to the regulations endorsed in this
agreement and to the following conditions.

The tenant shall not cut any timber or take, sell or carry away any mineral sand or clay

1. The rent shall be paid on the 29th day of September each year
2. The tenant shall use the plot as an Allotment Garden only (that is to say wholly or mainly for the production of vegetables, fruit and flowers for use by the tenant and his/her family) and for no other purpose and shall keep it clean and free from weeds, in a good state of cultivation and fertility and in a tidy condition.
3. The tenant shall not cause any nuisance or annoyance to the occupier of any other Allotment Garden, or obstruct any path set out by the Association for the use of the occupiers of the Allotment Gardens.
4. The tenant shall not assign or part with the possession the Allotment Garden or any part thereof without the consent of the Association..
5. The tenant shall not keep livestock on the allotment without the prior consent of the Association.
6. The tenant shall keep every hedge that forms part of the boundary of his allotment properly cut and trimmed, and shall keep in repair any fences and sheds on his plot.
7. The tenant shall not use any barbed wire for a fence adjoining any path set out by the Association for the use of the occupiers of the Allotment Garden. Any equipment used by the tenant will be at the users liability
8. The tenant shall not, without the permission of the Association, erect any building on the allotment, and shall be responsible for the removal of any buildings on or before the expiry of the tenancy.
9. The tenant shall not plant trees on the allotment except they are fruit trees, and these only with the permission of the Association. Any soft fruit bushes may be grown.
10. If the tenant shall have been in breach on any of the foregoing provisions of this agreement for a period of one month or longer or if the rent is in arrears for not less than 40 days, then the tenancy shall be terminated.
11. The tenant shall on entry, pay any compensation to the outgoing tenant for crops, sheds or improvements by joint agreement.
12. The tenancy of the Allotment Garden shall terminate on the yearly Rent Day after the death of the tenant and shall also terminate whenever the tenancy or right of occupation of the Association terminates.

Signed
By the Tenant

Signed
For the Association

Date.....

BLISWORTH ALLOTMENT ASSOCIATION

SEPTEMBER 2006

Dear

Rents and Water Scheme payments are now due. Please fill in the form at the bottom of this sheet, as applicable to you, and return it to me at 20, Stoke Road, Blisworth. NN7 3BZ. or **bring it to the Allotment meeting on October 24th**

RENT

You cultivatePoles of ground on plot numbers.....Ground rent at 70p per Pole is £. plus £1.75 for National Association fees and 25p only for insurance.

Total Due £

Rent cheques payable to 'Blisworth Allotment Association' please.

WATER SCHEME

*You are / are not / a member of the Scheme. Your water payment for this year is / would have been 25p per pole plus a standing charge of £1.

A Bargain during this years drought ! Total charge £

If you are not a member but would like to join the Scheme now, the life membership fee is £20. You would have no more to pay until October 2006. The scheme is run as a Co-operative, for more details and conditions call me on 01604 858478.

All water payments to be made payable to Jane Percival please. *THANK YOU*

PAYMENTS 2006

Name Plot No.....Telephone No.

I enclose £ for RENT and fees. **(to Blisworth Allotment Association.)**

*I am / am not / a member of the Water Scheme.

*I enclose £for WATER for 2005.

*I would like to join the Water Scheme and enclose the £20 membership fee.

Please delete * as applicable. **All water payments to Jane Percival.**

The Council's Priorities are:-

- 1 Listen to local people and provide the services they need**
- 2 Improve Northampton's housing by focusing on & improving our weakest services**
 - Revenues and Benefits**
 - Decent Homes Standards**
 - Void Properties**
 - Homelessness**
- 3 Invest in the regeneration of the town, providing economic development and growth**
- 4 Make Northampton a cleaner, safer and greener place to live**
- 5 Manage the Council's finances effectively**
- 6 Improve our performance to be fit for all our purpose**

| Site Name | Number plots | Responsible | Waiting list | Plots Available |
|----------------------------|--------------|-------------|--------------|-----------------|
| Southfields Billing Lane. | 161 | Council | Yes | |
| Parklands | 62 | Council | yes | |
| Broadmead | 68 | Council | Yes | |
| Ekins Wellingborough Road | 60 | Leased | Yes | |
| Bridgewater Road | 313 | Field | No | 120 |
| Billing Rd East | 91 | Council | Yes | |
| Eastern Avenue North | 246 | Council | No | 100 |
| Welford Road | 111 | Council | yes | |
| Kingsthorpe Park | 59 | Council | No | 12 |
| Studland Road | 81 | Council | No | 40 |
| Glebeland Road | 32 | Council | No | 18 |
| Harlestone Road | 182 | Field | No | 140 |
| Bants Lane | 166 | Council | No | 10 |
| Berrywood Road | 120 | Field | Yes | |
| Rothersthorpe Road | 52 | Council | Yes | |
| Pleydale Road | 108 | Council | No | 30 |
| Mereway | 60 | Council | Yes | |
| Private Sites. | | | | |
| Kingsthorpe Grove | 117 | Private | Unknown | Unknown |
| Kingsley Road | 280 | Private | Unknown | Unknown |
| Hardingstone Parish N/P Rd | Unknown | Private | Unknown | Unknown |
| Colligtree, Watering Lane | 21 | Private | Unknown | Unknown |

| Site Name | Date. | M3 Litres Used | Standing Charge | Bill Cost | New Readings 31/08/06 Approx bill cost |
|-------------------|-------------------|----------------|-----------------|-----------|---|
| Bants Lane | 10/12/05-31/5/06 | 107 | £21.48 | £114.77 | £448 |
| | | | | | |
| Bants Lane | 08/06/05-09/12/05 | 555 | £22.80 | £477.68 | |
| | | | | | |
| Bants Lane | 10/12/04-07/06/05 | 147 | £20.65 | £137.19 | |
| | | | | | |
| Berrywood Road | 11.11.05-27.04.06 | 5 | £20.78 | £25.11 | £221.88 |
| | | | | | |
| Berrywood Road | 05.05.05-10.11.05 | 300 | £23.42 | £281.63 | |
| | | | | | |
| Billing Lane | 23.09.05-24.03.06 | 24 | £22.56 | £43.21 | |
| | | | | | |
| Billing Lane | 23.05.05-24.03.06 | | | £43.21 | |
| | | | | | |
| Billing Lane | 24.03.05-22.09.05 | 218 | £22.44 | £211.45 | |
| | | | | | |
| Billing Road E | 27.10.05-28.04.06 | 197 | £22.75 | £193.24 | |
| | | | | | |
| Billing Road E | 24.05.05-26.10.05 | 747 | £19.23 | £662.17 | |
| | | | | | |
| Billing Road E | 02.12.04-23.05.05 | 124 | £19.68 | £116.97 | |
| | | | | | |
| Bridgewater Drive | 28.10.05-25.04.06 | 0 | £22.25 | £22.25 | |

Appendix H

| | | | | | |
|----------------------|-------------------|-----|--------|---------|---------|
| | | | | | |
| | | | | | |
| Bridgewater Drive | 12.05.05-27.10.05 | 0 | £20.83 | £20.83 | |
| | | | | | |
| | | | | | |
| Bridgewater Drive | 26.11.04-11.05.05 | 0 | £18.85 | £18.85 | |
| | | | | | |
| | | | | | |
| Broadmead Avenue | 15.01.06-06.07.06 | 301 | £21.58 | £286.09 | £53.32 |
| | | | | | |
| | | | | | |
| Broadmead Avenue | 11.01.05-14.07.05 | 200 | £21.70 | £184.29 | |
| | | | | | |
| | | | | | |
| Broadmead Avenue | 15.07.05-14.01.06 | 57 | £22.68 | £71.73 | |
| | | | | | |
| | | | | | |
| Eastern Avenue North | 16.09.05-22.03.06 | 34 | £32.44 | £60.47 | £313.24 |
| | | | | | |
| | | | | | |
| Eastern Avenue North | 18.03.05-15.09.05 | 421 | £30.09 | £374.61 | |
| | | | | | |
| | | | | | |
| Glebeland Walk. | 18.12.05-01.06.06 | 47 | £20.63 | £61.63 | £75.68 |
| | | | | | |
| | | | | | |
| Glebeland Walk. | 16.06.05-17.12.05 | 18 | £22.80 | £38.29 | |
| | | | | | |
| | | | | | |
| Glebeland Walk. | 16.12.04-15.06.05 | 8 | £20.97 | £27.31 | |
| | | | | | |
| | | | | | |
| Harlestone Road | 07.01.06-03.07.06 | 114 | £22.19 | £122.25 | £124.70 |
| Bill 2 | 07.01.06-03.07.06 | 0 | £22.06 | £22.06 | |
| | | | | | |
| Harlestone Road | 12.07.05-06.01.06 | 139 | £22.06 | £141.69 | |

| | | | | | |
|------------------------------|-------------------|-----|--------|--------------|---------|
| Bill 2 | 12.07.05-06.01.06 | 0 | | credit £0.25 | |
| | | | | | |
| Harlestone Road | 07.01.05-11.07.05 | 114 | £21.77 | £114.24 | |
| Bill 2 | 07.01.05-11.07.05 | 0 | £21.77 | £21.77 | |
| | | | | | |
| Kingsthorpe (Thornton Pk) | 17.12.05-01.06.06 | 197 | £10.97 | £215.65 | |
| | | | | | |
| Kingsthorpe (Thornton Pk) | 16.06.05-16.12.05 | 568 | £12.09 | £593.89 | |
| | | | | | |
| Kingsthorpe (Thornton Pk) | 24.12.04-15.06.05 | 253 | £10.35 | £250.75 | |
| | | | | | |
| Mereway | 27.09.05-13.03.06 | 3 | £20.71 | £23.29 | £147.92 |
| | | | | | |
| Mereway | 31.03.05-26.09.05 | 196 | £22.06 | £190.63 | |
| | | | | | |
| Parklands | 17.11.05-18.05.06 | 23 | £22.68 | £42.66 | £198.66 |
| | | | | | |
| Parklands | 16.04.05-16.11.05 | 244 | £26.50 | £236.51 | |
| | | | | | |
| Pleydell Road | 27.09.05-13.03.06 | 6 | £20.71 | £25.87 | |
| | | | | | |
| Pleydell Road | 18.03.05-26.09.05 | 987 | £22.06 | £864.74 | |
| | | | | | |
| Rothersthorpe Road | 16.09.05-23.02.06 | 318 | £19.84 | £293.54 | £655.32 |
| | | | | | |
| Rothersthorpe Road | 11.03.05-15.09.05 | 695 | £23.01 | £612.40 | |

| | | | | | |
|-------------------------|-------------------|------|--------|-----------|---------|
| | | | | | |
| Studland Rd Kingsthorpe | 12.08.05-23.02.06 | 12 | £24.16 | £34.48 | |
| | | | | | |
| Studland Rd Kingsthorpe | 03.02.05-11.08.05 | 80 | £22.63 | £88.87 | |
| | | | | | |
| Welford Road | 06.10.05-27.04.06 | 36 | £25.22 | £56.36 | £291.54 |
| | | | | | |
| Welford Road | 14.04.05-05.10.05 | 328 | £21.57 | £303.87 | |
| | | | | | |
| Graspin Lane | 13.05.05-20.10.05 | 2081 | £19.84 | £1,810.95 | |
| | | | | | |
| Graspin Lane | 26.11.04-12.05.05 | 266 | £18.97 | £226.12 | |
| | | | | | |

Appendix I

Allotments Benchmarking - October 2005:

Requests for information were sent to the following Councils:

Arun, Basingstoke, Chelmsford, Colchester, East Herts, Lancaster, Macclesfield, Luton, Northampton, Mid Sussex, St Albans, Wycombe, Cambridge, Milton Keynes, Kettering, Wellingborough, North Herts, Oxford, Cherwell, Braintree

Requests were also sent to the following Town Councils:

Rushden, Dunstable, Leighton Buzzard, Biggleswade, Sandy, Flitwick, Ampthill, Thrapston, Irthlingborough, Higham Ferrers

Replies received are summarised below:

| Council | Cost per plot/size of plot (10 pole=300sq yds or 275 sq.m) | Facilities - Security, water, toilets | Concessions available | Other information |
|---------------|---|---|---|---|
| Bedford | 10 pole plots with some 5 pole at Mile Road £32.50 per 10 pole plot (£19.00 conc) £16.25 per 5 pole plot (£9.50 conc) | Water on all sites All sites key access No toilets | Concessions for 60+, unemployed and various conc groups as per Leisure Card concessions | Plots rotovated foc for new tenants |
| North Herts | 10 pole _£28.00 Half plots increasingly available | Water at all sites 12 sites - 5 have security, 7 open access | 50% reduction for <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 60+ • Unemployed • Students over 18 • Incapacity benefit | No general policy of preparing plots for new tenants, but occasionally they exercise discretion. |
| Northampton | 10 pole, some 5 pole £26.57 per 10 pole + £6.50 water (5 pole pro rata) £28.68 for 2006 | Sites secure All have water 2 sites mains toilets + 3 more in 2006 | None | 15 sites, 2 awaiting disposal, and 6 to be reduced in size Intention to have 10% of plots at 5 pole Remaining sites all to have toilets subject to cap funds from sale of allotment land No rotovation, but provides Assns with black plastic sheeting to kill weeds |
| Flitwick Town | 5 pole plots | Key access | None | 2 sites |

| | | | | |
|-----------------------|---|---|---|--|
| Council | £6.65 per plot | No toilets Water available | | |
| Rushden Town Council | 25p per pole 10 pole plot £2.50 | Water available Key Access | None | |
| Arun District Council | £7.50 to £10.00 per year | Water on some sites Open access No toilets | None | Rent free for one year if in poor condition |
| Colchester | 16p per square metre 10 pole = £44.00 Smaller plots available | Water available Key Access No toilets | 12p per square metre. Concession 10 pole = £33.00 | Will strim if very untidy (foc) but do not rotovate |
| Wycombe | 10 and 5 pole 10 pole £36.00 with water, £26.00 without 5 pole £18.00 with water, £13.00 without | Water at 7 out of 8 sites 2 sites key access Most sites fenced | 50% for senior citizens | 8 sites, water at 7 Plots prepared for new tenants at no charge normally |
| Basingstoke | £3.10 per pole 10 pole = £30.10 Go down to 4 pole | All sites key access All sites have water 23 toilets over all larger sites | 50% for senior citizens | 40 sites Plots prepared for new tenants at no charge |
| Chelmsford | £2.20 per pole + £2.10 for water 10 pole = £22.20 +£2.10 Go down to 3 pole | Most sites secure and most have water 1 site chemical toilet, 1 to have mains toilet | 50% for senior citizens and other categories | Strim/weedkiller as a rule and preparing some sites before winter including rotovation |
| Macclesfield | Various sizes 10 pole no water or roads £14.85 10 Pole either water or roads £23.65 10 pole with both water and roads £31.07 | Not all sites have water All sites key access No toilets | 50% for pensioners 30% for society run sites | 11 Borough sites run by societies 93% occupancy No rotovations, offer some discount for first 12 months if plots not in good condition |
| Lancaster | Council charges Associations £265-£310 per acre, and they then set rents £20-£36 pa currently | All sites key access All sites have water No toilets | Council gives the Associations discount for plots unlet or rented by pensioners or those claiming benefits - passed on to tenants | Sites run by associations Council does not rotovate, not sure if associations do or not |
| Higham Ferrers | Does not operate any allotments | | | |

| | | | | |
|-----------------------|--|--|---|--|
| Mid Sussex | Plots vary from 5 pole to 2.5 pole £6.90 per pole 10 pole equivalent £60.90 | Sites have water Sites have fences and gates but are not locked | No concessions | Two sites are rural on edge of small villages Other sites run by Associations or parishes |
| Sandy Town Council | Mainly 5 pole plots (some 4 pole) £4.12 per pole | No key access Water on site Site not locked No toilets | No concessions | |
| Luton | Plots vary from 2 pole to 15 pole £1.96 per pole for first class sites, £0.70 per pole for second class sites | 13 sites fenced 13 sites have water Most have key access 5 sites have toilets 1 with disabled access | 50% discount to tenants on their first plot | 15 sites |
| Wellingborough | 4 sites let en bloc to societies @ £50 per acre Societies charge 50p per pole | No water or toilets Security poor | No | Large areas abandoned/overgrown |
| Milton Keynes | Plots from 4 poles to 12 poles £2.98 per pole for facilities £2.29 per pole for limited facilities £1.84 per pole for no facilities | Most sites are secure and keys supplied Water at all sites Some sites have portaloo | 50% discount to conc groups (OAP, disabled, unemployed and single parents | |



Name: Fergus M Brazier
Date: 8th September 2006
Scale: 1:50,000
Dept: GIS Development Unit
Project:

Title
NBC Allotments

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NORTHAMPTON BOROUGH COUNCIL

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY –

ALLOTMENTS (WATER CHARGES) TASK AND FINISH GROUP

7 SEPTEMBER 2006

BRIEFING NOTE

DESK TOP RESEARCH – ALLOTMENT SITE CHARGES

1 INTRODUCTION

It was agreed at the initial scoping meeting that desktop research be undertaken with other Local Authorities regarding allotment sites within their boroughs.

The Task and Finish Group particularly requested that a Local Authority that came within Severn Trent Water Authority was contacted.

2 INFORMATION

The following Local Authorities were contacted:-

- Bedford Borough Council
- Nottingham City Council
- Leicester City Council (within Severn Trent Water Authority)
- Coventry City Council (within Severn Trent Water Authority)
- Cambridge City Council
- Luton Borough Council
- Southampton City Council
- Milton Keynes Borough Council
- Oxford City Council

The following Local Authorities have responded:-

Bedford Borough Council

Bedford Borough Council comes within Anglian Water Authority. The Council has five allotment sites in Bedford. A total of 608 plots. 90% of which are in use. Each plot is roughly 10 poles, with all five sites covering around 13.57 hectares of land in total. The current rates are £35.70 (per plot) per year. £20.90 per year for tenants on concessionary. There are no additional charges for the use of water. When a tenancy commences the Council offers to prepare the plot free of charge, whether it be flailing, chisel ploughing, rotovating or removing rubbish/structures. If a tenant would like any works completed after the initial preparation, there would be an additional charge. There are also a number of sites in Bedford which are owned by Parish Councils. Unfortunately, Bedford Borough Council does not have any information regarding these sites. The Council is currently reviewing its Allotments Policy.

Leicester City Council

Leicester City Council comes within Severn Trent Water Authority. There are 45 operational allotment sites across the city offering 3,200 cultivated plots. Annual rental costs are from £5 to £21 per 300 square yard plot, with the higher rates including all water charges. There may also be an initial charge of £5 to £12 as a refundable key deposit.

There are 33 city allotments managed by local allotment societies. 22 allotment societies in Leicester all provide full-time stewards who look after the day-to-day management of their allotment sites. Societies may also offer the opportunity to buy compost, fertiliser, seeds and other gardening supplies on site. The remaining sites are owned by the City Council and leased directly to allotment holders. Direct let sites do not offer on-site management but site visits and any necessary maintenance work or repairs are carried out by the Council.

Coventry City Council

Coventry City Council comes within Severn Trent Water Authority. Allotments are run by Coventry and District Allotments and Gardens Council rather than the Council and the Council leases the allotment sites to Coventry and District Allotment Society. The Coventry and District Allotment Society then sub lets the plots to individual associations. Each association has a representative who agrees the charges on each plot. The current charges are £100 per acre per year, individual associations add fees to this such as subscriptions to the National Allotment Society, charges for watered meter usage and insurance (e.g. public liability). The average size of an allotment plot is 10 rods (250 square meters) and the charge is £15.18 per year. Each site has a water meter.

Luton Borough Council

Luton Borough Council comes within Three Valleys Water Authority. All allotment sites are Council owned. The current charges to allotment holders are £1.96 per pole for first class sites and £0.64 for second-class sites (without water/perimeter fencing) per year. Price increases are due to be implemented from 1 October 2006: - £2.20 per pole for first class sites and £0.70 per pole for a second-class site per year. No additional charges are made to allotment holders for water usage. It is envisaged that Luton Borough Council will shortly investigate the possibility of implementing water charges to allotment holders.

There are 1,103 plots within the borough covering 15 sites, 13 of which are active and approximately 900 plots are in use. The size of an allotment plot varies from between 3 and 12 poles. (90.75 square yards and 363 square yards).

Southampton City Council

Southampton City Council comes within Southern Water Authority. All allotment sites are Council owned. The current annual charge to allotment holders are sites with water £3.04 per rod. The annual charge for a ten-rod site is £30.40. One rod equates to 25.3 square meters. Two sites have sheds and toilets and the annual rental charge is £6.75 per rod. The annual charge for a ten-rod site is £67.50. All allotment holders pay a £5 plot deposit and £5 key deposit.

There are 28 allotment sites with over 700 plots. Each plot is usually between 5 and 10 rods. (126.5 square meters and 253 square meters).

Milton Keynes Borough Council

Milton Keynes Borough Council comes within Anglian Water Authority. Rental Charges for the Season from September 2005 - October 2006: -

- Category A Site with all facilities £2.98 per pole per annum (Including water)
- Category B Site with limited facilities £2.29 per pole per annum
- Category C Site with no facilities £1.84 per pole per annum It is proposed that rental charges will increase by 3% for the next season.

Senior Citizens, Registered Disabled, Persons Unemployed and Single Parent Families are entitled to a 50% reduction.

There are over 1500 plots (from 4 to 12 poles) over 57 sites in the Borough.

Detailed below is a table which includes details of allotment site sizes, allotment charges and water charges:-

| Local Authority | Number of Allotment Sites | Number of Plots | Average Size of Allotment Sites | Council/Privately owned Allotment Sites | Charge per Plot | Water Charges |
|------------------------------|--|-----------------------------------|-------------------------------------|---|--|--|
| Coventry City Council | 45 Allotment sites containing:- 15 plots - small site 200 - large site | 2,800 plots over 45 sites | 10 Rods (250 square meters) | 33 Allotments are Council owned (leased to the Coventry and District Allotments and Gardens Council) 12 Allotment sites are privately owned by organisations such as:- Seven Trent British Rail Trustees Local Churches | Annual rents vary from £10 to £35 per year. Average Allotment Plot of 10 Rods = £15.18 per year | All sites have water metres. Water usage charges are included in the annual charge per allotment plot. |
| Luton Borough Council | 15 Allotment Sites (13 in use) Approximately | Approx 900 plots over 13 `active` | Sites vary from 3 poles to 12 poles | All Council owned | First class site is £1.96 per pole (with | No additional charges are made |

| | | | | | | |
|---------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------|---|---|---|--|
| | 900 plots in use | sites. | One pole equates to 30 ¼ square yards. A ten pole site equates to 302.5 sq yds. | | water/perimeter fencing) due to increase to £2.20 from 1/10/06. Rental on a ten pole site would be £22 per year. Second class site is £0.64 per pole (without water /perimeter fencing) due to increase to £0.70 from 1/10/06. Rental on a ten pole site would be £7 per year. | for water usage but first class sites that have the provision of water are charged at a higher rate. |
| Southampton City Council | 28 Allotment sites with 700 plots | 700 plots over 28 sites | 5 to 10 rods | All Council owned | Sites with water £3.04 per rod. Sites that have toilets and sheds £6.75 per rod. Allotment holders pay £5 deposit and £5 key deposit | No extra charge for water usage but all sites have the provision of water. |
| Bedford Borough Council | Five Allotment sites with 608 plots | 608 plots over 5 sites | Each plot is roughly 10 pole (275 sq meters) covering 13.57 hectares of land | Mostly Council owned/run. Some are run by Parish Councils | Sites with water:- 10 rod £35.70 per year Concessions : £20.90 per year | No additional charges for water usage but all sites have the provision of water |

| | | | | | | |
|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|-------------------|---|--|---|
| Milton Keynes Borough Council | Over 1500 plots over 57 sites. | Over 1500 plots over 57 sites. | 4 to 12 poles | Allotments are managed by either the Council, Allotment Associations, Parish Councils or Newport Town Council | <p>Category A Site with all facilities £2.98 per pole per annum (Including water)</p> <p>Category B Site with limited facilities £2.29 per pole per annum</p> <p>Category C Site with no facilities £1.84 per pole per annum</p> | No additional charges for water usage but those sites that have the provision of water are charged a higher rate |
| Leicester City Council | 3,200 plots over 45 sites | 3,200 plots over 45 sites | 300 sq yard plots | Allotments are managed either by the Council or by local allotment societies | Annual Rental costs range from 35 to £21. The higher rate includes all water charges. | No additional charges for water usage but those sites that have the provision of water are charged at a higher rate |

Author:

**Tracy Tiff
Scrutiny Officer**

NORTHAMPTON BOROUGH COUNCIL

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY ALLOTMENTS (WATER CHARGES)
TASK AND FINISH GROUP

Thursday, 7 September 2006

PRESENT:

Councillor Marion Allen (Chair)
Councillor Trini Crake
Councillor Les Patterson

Mr Oliver Northampton Allotments Network Co-Optee
Mr Care Northampton Allotments Network Co-Optee

Councillor Phil Larratt Portfolio Holder (item 3)

Tony Spiezick Street Scene and Environment Manager
Paul Chambers Team Leader
Tracy Tiff Scrutiny Officer

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor M Hoare and Carl Grimmer (Corporate Manager).

2. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 21 AUGUST 2006

Subject to the following amendments, the minutes of the meeting held on 21 August 2006 were agreed:-

Apologies

Carl Grimmer (Corporate Manager) to be included to the list of apologies.

Eastern Avenue Allotment Site

Delete 'There are no vacant plots'.

.... The road on the allotment site, adjacent to the housing

Blisworth Allotment Site

There are no leaks and **hoses** are not permitted.

.... Charges are **25p** per pole (**£2.50** per 10 pole site)
.. a **10 pole** plot (without water) equated to **£5.20**.

3. WITNESS EVIDENCE - PORTFOLIO HOLDER

Councillor P Larratt, Portfolio Holder, attended the meeting and answered the Task and Finish Group's questions as detailed below: -

How did the Council arrive at the current charging structure?

The Council arrived at the current charging structure by dividing the overall allotments

water bill by the number of plots. An average was therefore calculated which was the charge to each allotment tenant.

How did you arrive at the decision to implement water charges to allotment holders?

Due to reducing budgets and increased water charges, it was decided to look at other Local Authorities and how they re-coup their costs. It was then decided to look at the possible introduction of water charges to the allotment holders.

Why are water charges necessary?

Again due to increased water charges and usage it was decided that some of the monies should be re-couped from the allotment holders direct.

The Chair advised that a vast range of Local Authorities charge allotment holders for water usage. Mr Oliver commented that the allotment tenants were not opposed to paying water charges as long it is a right and proper system.

T Spiezick commented that to install individual water meters on every plot would be very expensive.

Leakage issues put up water usage and cost. Is there a short/medium/long-term plan to address the leakage issues on both financial and environmental grounds?

The Portfolio Holder reported that the Cabinet wants to address the problem of water leakages. Investigations are taking place to raise the required capital monies required to carry out all of the necessary repairs. Water leakages of a significant nature would have to be addressed. It was emphasised that there are pressures on the capital programme.

Allotments are a non-profitable operation to the Council. If an allotment site was sold, for example Harlestone Road, any surplus monies would be ringfenced for allotment investment and enhancement.

It is recognised that an Allotment Strategy was prepared which was not adopted.

In response to the Group's comment that the Council could borrow in the short term to repair water leakages, Councillor Larratt confirmed that he was happy to investigate this. For every £1 revenue spent, £20 could be borrowed. Mr Oliver added that in accordance with the Allotments Act 1908, any money from the sale of allotment land could be used to repay a loan. He then referred to the plans to replace all the 25 mm water piping with 50 mm piping, commenting that it did not appear to be cost effective to repair leaks if the water pipes were to be replaced.

T Spiezick confirmed that allotment tenants pay £30 rental charges per year which equates to £36,000 per annum. To repair the water piping at the Weston Favell allotment site would cost £13,500. Water leaks cost £1,800 per year.

The Chair advised that water charges cannot be investigated in isolation. In response to her query regarding the amount of water lost through leakage, T Spiezick confirmed it to be around 40% and major capital investment is required to rectify this.

How do you intend to tackle the issue of water charges?

By implementing them over a 3-year period. The Cabinet is willing to listen to advice and

any recommendations of this Group. Changes could be introduced.

What is the administration's commitment to investment in allotments within the Borough?

Yes the administration is committed to providing successful and flourishing allotment sites that are fully occupied. It is looking to address the current over provision by sale of surplus sites in order to re-invest significantly in the remaining sites thereby enhancing the quality of the sites and facilities.

Councillor Larratt acknowledged that there is a problem with security on some of the allotment sites and there is a need to ensure this is addressed.

What are the plans for the future of allotment sites within the Borough?

Secure, but the issue of over provision needs to be addressed. Existing temporary sites need to be relocated and their future secured, and we are working through the planning process to ensure adequate provision in areas where facilities are lacking and as the population of the borough increases.

What happens to the proceeds from the sale of allotment sites?

In accordance to the 1908 Allotment Act proceeds from the sale of any allotments should be used to improve the facilities on the remaining sites left in the Borough.

What is the statutory requirement for the number of allotment sites that the Council has to provide for the Borough?

Section 23 of the 1908 Allotment Act states that, among others, Borough Councils have a duty to provide sufficient allotments according to demand, for letting to persons resident within their areas. The rate of provision is 0.2 hectares per 1000 population. 0.2 hectares per 1000 = 0.49 Acres per 1000 population. Our present position is 158.56 Acres. Therefore an over provision of 60.56 Acres plus Harlestone Road Site 2. The Council is looking to secure provision through the local development framework.

Councillor Larratt confirmed that the population figures for Northampton were based on the 2001 census. He acknowledged that some of the allotments are not located in the right place and that there is a need for more in the south of the town.

On an individual allotment site basis, what is the future for the temporary Mereway site?

Mereway site was set up as a temporary site only as there needs to be growth for the cemetery in Towcester Road. At the current usage around 7 years would see the need to expand the cemetery.

The Group conveyed its concerns regarding the Mereway Allotment Site and the fact that it was a temporary site and may close. It was requested that the site be made safe and acknowledged that Mereway was a good allotment site. In response, Councillor Larratt advised that Mereway was a temporary site and would eventually be secured for cemetery provision. There was not enough burial ground in the town. However, if the burial land issue was resolved for the next 20-30 years the status of Mereway allotment site could be reconsidered. Currently, there are 700 burials per year. The land at the Mereway allotment site would provide approximately 22 years of burials.

What is your view about allotment sites becoming the responsibility of Charitable Trusts with the land being leased to them by the Council?

This is an issue that should be investigated and the Cabinet is open to explore all avenues, and possibilities. Councillor Larratt confirmed that if it was decided for allotments to be managed by charitable trust, finance would be available to maintain the sites. It was noted that both Kettering Borough Council and Coventry City Council's allotments sites are managed by charitable trusts.

The Allotment Strategy was produced in October 2004. Has this Strategy been approved and implemented? If so, could it be used as an umbrella for a five-year plan for each allotment site?

This Strategy was prepared but not formally adopted. This needs to be revisited with a view to introducing some changes. Once approved and implemented it can be used as benchmark for the future.

Are there proposals to introduce a water conservation plan? For example, water butts, standpipes.

Not at present, until outcome of this Task and Finish Group is known.

Mr Oliver commented that if an allotment holder requested to put up a shed on their site, that the provision of a water butt should be a prerequisite.

What would be the merits/drawbacks of the Council introducing business plans for each allotment site in the borough?

Once the Strategy is implemented a natural progression would be to introduce a business plan for each site. Once the first business plan has been produced for an allotment site, it would act as the blueprint for each of the other sites.

4. OFFICER'S REPORTS

Water Usage on Allotment Sites

T Spiezick circulated a spreadsheet detailing the water cost for allotment sites up to 31 August 2006. The cost of water for the Bants Lane site was noted as £448. Concerns were also raised regarding the cost of water at the Rothersthorpe site at £655.32.

The Group heard that the Graspin Lane site had a major water leak. It would cost £13,500 to replace the pipes. The water bill was in the region of £1,800.

The Council is paying the standing charge for water provision for the Harlestone Road (2) allotment site. Until the future of the site has been decided, the Council will have to continue to pay the standing charge.

Water Leakages

T Spiezick advised that he had liaised with an independent water engineer who had confirmed that it was difficult to assess the water leakage costings without digging up the

current pipework and evaluating each individual site. The consultant's fees would be in the region of £3,000.

A price had been received for the relaying of a 32mm pipe from the mains to cover the site at Weston Favell - £11,630. To replace it with 50mm pipe would cost £13,500.

The Chair requested that a balance sheet be produced detailing, income, costs and the estimated leakage costs for all allotment sites. This information would be included in the final report.

Fencing Security Costs

Two sites were looked at regarding fencing issues:-

Mereway Allotment Site

Due to the fact that there is some existing fencing at Mereway allotment site, to introduce palisade fencing to the roadside hedged area, would cost in the region of £6,500.

Bants Lane

Due to Bants Lane being laid mainly to hedges, palisade fencing would be required around the whole perimeter, which would cost between £4,700 and £50,000, depending on groundworks required once the hedges had been removed.

In response to a query regarding the Council's maintenance contractor, T Spiezick advised that the maintenance of allotments was just a small part of the Mears contract.

T Spiezick confirmed that he would circulate the cost of one meter of palisade fencing. He would also provide the cost of installing palisade fencing to allotment sites.

Water leakage would be measured based on plot size, and the number of plots being worked.

The Group commented that if the Harlestone Road allotment site was sold, the proceeds of the sale could provide the capital needed to set up Charitable Trusts to run the allotment sites and assist them to be self-financing. The Group also supported individual business plans being produced for each allotment site. The Chair advised that this would be a major change and extensive consultation would be required.

Maintenance of Eastern Avenue (North) Allotment Site

T Spiezick advised that the maintenance of Eastern Avenue (North) allotment site was outside the remit of this Group but plans were in place for staff to walk the whole of the site, identify problems and draw up an action plan. Downsizing the site would also be investigated. This would take a few months to complete.

Flexible Charging

T Spiezick advised that after further investigation it appeared that NBC did not pay sewage charges to Anglian Water.

The possibility of introducing concessions for the following groups was considered:-

Over 60 years of age
Disabled users
Unemployed

It was noted that the majority of Local Authorities that gave concessions gave them to individuals over 60 years of age.

As the allotment holders are billed annually the charges would have to be based on the individual's circumstances one month prior to the bills being sent out, and then remain in force for that complete rental period of one year.

Individuals, who believe that they qualify for one the above categories, would have to write in to the allotments officer, and enclose copies of relevant documentation to support their claim to the discount.

The amount of the reduction, there are details available on the web for various sites across the UK detailing reductions from 25%-50% on the annual rent.

Providing allotment holders keep their details up to date, a database of this information can be kept for invoicing purposes.

Without knowing these details at present it cannot be calculated of how much lost revenue this represents to NBC. Consideration also needs to be given to disabled access to allotment sites.

The Group commented that there was a need for more disabled plots, i.e. smaller plots and raised beds.

DESKTOP RESEARCH - ALLOTMENT AND WATER CHARGES

Desktop research was carried out regarding allotment rental charges (including charges for water) with a number of Local Authorities: -

- Bedford Borough Council
- Nottingham City Council
- Leicester City Council (within Severn Trent Water Authority)
- Coventry City Council (within Severn Trent Water Authority)
- Cambridge City Council
- Luton Borough Council
- Southampton City Council
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Council is currently reviewing its Allotments Policy.

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Leicester City Council comes within Severn Trent Water Authority. There are 45 operational allotment sites across the city offering 3,200 cultivated plots. Annual rental costs are from £5 to £21 per 300 square yard plot, with the higher rates including all water charges.

There are 33 city allotments managed by local allotment societies. 22 allotment societies in Leicester all provide full-time stewards who look after the day-to-day management of their allotment sites. Societies may also offer the opportunity to buy compost, fertiliser, seeds and other gardening supplies on site. The remaining sites are owned by the City Council and leased directly to allotment holders. Direct let sites do not offer on-site management but site visits and any necessary maintenance work or repairs are carried out by the Council.

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Luton Borough Council

Luton Borough Council comes within Three Valleys Water Authority. All allotment sites are Council owned. The current charges to allotment holders are £1.96 per pole for first class sites and £0.64 for second-class sites (without water/perimeter fencing) per year. Price increases are due to be implemented from 1 October 2006: - £2.20 per pole for first class sites and £0.70 per pole for a second-class site per year. No additional charges are made to allotment holders for water usage. It is envisaged that Luton Borough Council will shortly investigate the possibility of implementing water charges to allotment holders.

Southampton City Council

Southampton City Council comes within Southern Water Authority. All allotment sites are Council owned. The current annual charge to allotment holders are sites with water £3.04 per rod. The annual charge for a ten-rod site is £30.40. One rod equates to 25.3 square meters. Two sites have sheds and toilets and the annual rental charge is £6.75 per rod. The annual charge for a ten-rod site is £67.50. All allotment holders pay a £5 plot deposit and £5 key deposit.

Milton Keynes Borough Council

Milton Keynes Borough Council comes within Anglian Water Authority. Rental Charges for the Season from September 2005 - October 2006: -

- Category A Site with all facilities £2.98 per pole per annum (Including water)
- Category B Site with limited facilities £2.29 per pole per annum
- Category C Site with no facilities £1.84 per pole per annum It is proposed that rental charges will increase by 3% for the next season.

Senior Citizens, Registered Disabled, Persons Unemployed and Single Parent Families are entitled to a 50% reduction.

The Group supported Coventry City Council's allotment management system which is managed by Trusts. The Chair added the final report could include a recommendation that the Cabinet considers the management of the Council's allotments being undertaken by Trusts.

AGREED: **(1) That the information be noted.**
 (2) That the final report contain a recommendation that the Cabinet considers the management of the Council's allotments being undertaken by Trusts.

6. ATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting to finalise the Chair's report was noted as Friday 22 September at 2pm in the Jeffery Room at the Guildhall.

The meeting concluded at 6:00 pm

**Anglian Water
Services Limited**PO Box 770
Lincoln
LN5 7WX

Tel 08457 145 145 (Lo-call)

Our ref **CFS/Allotments**

Your ref

Councillor Mrs Marion Allen
Northampton Borough Council
The Guildhall
St Giles Square
Northampton
NN1 1DE

14 August 2006

Dear Mrs Allen

Thank you for your letter of 1 August 2006 and for speaking to me today regarding the water charges billed for allotment sites.

I have listed the answers to your queries below:

- *Disposal of Grey water - we have none.*
Grey water is clean water taken from the mains supply and used for domestic purposes, for example for bathing. The waste water, rather than then being returned to the main sewer, is diverted to a water butt and used on the garden. An allowance against sewerage charges for grey water usage would not be applicable to an allotment site as there is no domestic usage before the water is used on the allotments.
- Where a property or site has a connection to the main sewer and the water supply is measured by a meter, sewerage charges are based on 90 per cent of water usage. However, if you believe that the return of dirty water back to the main sewer is less than 90 per cent, you may apply for a sewerage abatement. To confirm the volume of water returned or not returned to the main sewer, a private sub meter should be installed. The installation, maintenance and reading of this meter would be the responsibility of Northampton Borough Council.
- You referred to leakage on water supply pipes within the allotment sites. Water supply pipes after our meter are the responsibility of the property owner who should arrange for the leak to be traced and repaired.

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Registered Office
Anglian House Ambury Road
Huntingdon Cambridgeshire PE29 3NZ
Registered in England
No 2366656

an AWG company

14 August 2006

Councillor Mrs Marion Allen
for Northampton Borough Council

CFS/Allotments

- We are unable to waive standing charges for the winter period as these cover the costs of providing and maintaining the services, which we have to do even though the usage may be seasonal.
- To allow us to check the tariff and charges billed for each allotment site, you will have to provide us with the individual Anglian Water account numbers for each site.

I hope this clarifies the situation for you. However, if we can be of further assistance, please write to the above address or telephone on 08457 91 91 55 where our customer services staff will be pleased to help.

Yours sincerely



Carolyn Searle
Customer Services