

TRAFFORD COUNCIL

Report to: Scrutiny Committee
Date: 16th January
Report of: Head of Climate Change and Sustainability

Report Title

This note provides an update on the Council's plans regarding allotments in Trafford.

Summary

Overview

The Allotment Service was inaugurated into the newly formed Climate Change and Sustainability Service in November 2023. This highlights the important front-line role the provision and management of allotments plays in enabling residents access to healthy lifestyles, locally produced food enhancing biodiversity and preserving of vital green spaces.

The Council Allotment estate delivers a clear and tangible contribution towards achieving Trafford Council's three key priorities:

- Reducing health inequalities through promoting a healthy lifestyle including increased physical activity, a nutritional diet, and improved mental wellbeing.
- Supporting people out of poverty through providing affordable opportunities for growing food, improving social skills and community involvement.
- Addressing our climate crisis through preserving green spaces, promoting biodiversity, and driving green-conscious behavioural change.

Trafford Council currently has 36 allotment sites across the Trafford borough. Please refer to Appendix 1. Of these, 12 are leased self-managed sites, 15 sites are run by volunteer committees with shared responsibilities with the council and 8 are fully managed by the Council. The Allotment Service would be untenable without the diligent organisation, local knowledge, diplomacy and countless hours invested by our community groups; we would like to thank them for all that they contribute.

Funding & resources

Trafford's Allotment Service is funded solely through revenue generated from plot rental. The current rental fee is set at £104 for a full-sized plot, £52 for a half plot, and £26 for a quarter plot. Tenants over the age of 60 receive a 50% discount on their first plot. This revenue must cover all water charges, maintenance of boundary fences and gates, grass cutting, hedge trimming, tree works, necessary repairs, scheduled asbestos and legionella checks, and much more.

Allotment rents in Trafford have remained static since 2015, despite significant increases in costs over that time.

The Allotment Service is run by one, full-time dedicated member of staff, also funded from allotment revenues. This is an increase from the previous part time role and recognition of the investment required to run the service.

Challenges ahead

Cost Pressure

- Maintaining the expected level of service to our allotment sites in the context of increased operational costs due to inflationary pressures is a key concern.
- Water bills, cesspit emptying, grounds maintenance, and structural repairs, and many other services, are essential to running the estate, but costs have increased significantly in recent years.
- We use a prioritisation matrix to make tough decisions on a daily basis about what the Council can and can't afford to provide, whilst sensitively managing various stakeholders' expectations.

Climatic changes

Climatic changes causing increased rainfall and a higher frequency of "weather events" is already impacting allotments, with the situation likely to worsen in coming years.

- With significant recurring flooding on several sites, and insufficient capital for adequate drainage solutions, some plots are rendered unusable for parts of the year.
- Conversely prolonged periods of hot weather make crop irrigation difficult, and whilst rainwater harvesting is encouraged, reserves are quickly depleted in a dry spell.

Waiting lists

Whilst not as lengthy as reported by some authorities, Trafford's allotment waiting list includes approximately 540 residents across the borough who are currently being denied the opportunity to access all the benefits presented by allotment leasing.

Opportunities

Allotment Strategy

The Council has begun developing an Allotment Strategy that will reflect Trafford Council's Priorities and improve the service's financial sustainability.

- The strategy will seek to optimise Trafford's allotments by establishing a clear framework to manage and improve sites in partnership with existing and future plot holders.
- Our standard Tenancy Agreement and rules will also be updated to align with modern allotment gardening practices and Trafford's Aims.
- The strategy development will include consultation with stakeholders (including Allotment committees, plot tenants and Councillors)

Communications

- In 2024 the allotment service offering will be publicised by Trafford's communications department as part of the Climate Change and Sustainability communications plan.
- Within an urban setting, allotments are an invaluable tool to teach children where food comes from and the nutritional benefits of fruit and vegetables as part of a healthy lifestyle. School visits are already taking place on our allotment sites and are one example of the many positive impacts of allotment services that can be shared through online and print channels.

Website Development

The Allotment service has an established presence on the council website. However, this offer could be significantly improved at relatively little cost to make resources such as relevant forms and processes more easily accessible, and signpost users to practical information for allotment cultivation.

Internal processes

With a full time Allotment officer in place, we will undertake a review of our internal processes to modernise our administrative functions and make the running of the service more accessible and efficient.

Networking and training

- Many committees and individuals with unique and varied skill sets are key to the operation of our service. We are going to facilitate small group meetings between neighbouring sites to create a tenant support network and encourage the exchange of ideas, skills and experiences.
- Training requirements will be identified as part of the strategy consultation process, and we will deliver sessions designed to ensure secretaries and committee members are equipped for these challenging volunteer roles.

Promotion and support of self-management

Self-managed sites in the borough are maintained to an excellent standard and are a fantastic community run asset. We will continue to provide advice and support to allotment groups wishing to explore devolved management, and actively seek to identify sites where we think this style of management would benefit service users.

Funding

We will proactively seek to explore all potential funding streams for our Allotment Service, including grants, community payback schemes, corporate sponsorship, and contributions from other public sector organisations e.g., NHS Green Prescribing. We will advise and support allotment committees to independently apply for funding where possible.

Food Cultivation

Urban food production has the potential to play an important role in meeting demand for fruit and vegetables at a local scale. Producing food in and around cities can improve health outcomes whilst delivering habitats for local wildlife. Cultivating food within Trafford reduces food miles within the borough and could be used to reduce food deserts. We will:

- Encourage plot holders to cultivate without the use of harmful pesticides.
- Consider the scope for promoting community growing groups through the council website, liaising with them so we can help residents without allotments to get involved.

Appendix

1. April 2023

Self managed
Committee
No Committee

Total no of plots	In use	Untenable plots	Vacant	Waiting
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ALTRINCHAM

Grove Lane	31	27	4	0	4
Riddings Hall	80	78	2	0	10
Trafford Drive	57	57	0	0	9
Pickering Lodge	27	27	0	0	6
Woodstock	12	12	0	0	4
	207	201	6	0	33

BOWDON

Vicarage Lane	33	32.5	0.5	0	53
Eaton Road	9	9	0	0	20
	42	41.5	0.5	0	73

HALE

Golf Road	75	70.5	1.5	3	16
Moss Lane	25	14.5	10	0.5	15
Wellfield Lane	48	47.5	0	0.5	6
	148	132.5	11.5	4	112

SALE

Totnes Road	8	8	0	0	5
De-Quincey Road	12	12	0	0	6
Warslow Drive	29	29	0	0	2
Grosvenor Road	86	86	0	0	15
Moor Nook	70	69	0.5	0.5	29
Tavistock Road	4	4	0	0	2
Walton Road	34	33	1	0	33
Winstanley Road	93	93	0	0	20
	336	334	1.5	0.5	112

STRETFORD					
Church Street	9	9	0	0	19
Gorse Hill	112	111	0	1	15
Old Trafford	99	96	0	3	76
Urmston Lane	35	35	0	0	30
	255	251	0	4	140
URMSTON					
Balmoral	31	29	2	0	3
Leagate	12	11	0	1	1
Brookfield	42	42	0	1	4
Chadwick	42	41.5	0	0.5	6
Granville Park	42	42	0	0	11
The Grove	28	28	0	0	4
Laneheads (Private)	33	32	0	1	0
Mansfield	17	16.5	0	0.5	0
Marlborough	80	70	10	0	4
Mossfields	62	62	0	0	12
Humphrey Park	70	69.5	0	0.5	5
Wyndcliffe	4	4	0	0	4
	463	448	12	3	54
PARTINGTON					
St Marys	10	10	0	0	5
Moss View	39	39	0	0	15
	49	49	0	0	20
TOTAL FOR BOROUGH	1500	1457	31	12	539

Recommendation(s)

That the report be noted.

Contact person for access to background papers and further information:

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Background Papers: NA