

## **Leisure, Events & Environment**

**Tuesday 3<sup>rd</sup> September 2024**

**Agenda Item LEE1855/24**

### **Future of the Parish Council Maintained Allotment Plot**

#### **Introduction**

This paper aims to provide an overview of the status of the Parish Council-maintained allotment plot at Barton Way, and to present recommendations for its future use and development.

#### **Discussion**

The Parish Council has maintained an allotment plot at Barton Way since 2018. In 2019 the Council began to run pre-school allotment sessions on the site. These sessions more recently included the keeping of chickens to enhance educational opportunities.

The Council is now being asked to review its allotment project now to determine its alignment with current community needs and ensure that it remains a valuable local resource. With recent challenges such as staff shortages and changes in project activities, a review will allow the Council to assess the project's effectiveness, explore new opportunities for engagement, and make informed decisions about its future.

- **Pre-School Allotment Sessions:**

- In past years, the Parish Council successfully ran pre-school allotment sessions on the plot. The sessions were attended fortnightly by 8 pre-school children and their parents/guardians in its last year of operation (2023). These sessions, led by the Rangers, were highly valued by participants and provided early exposure to nature and gardening.
- Unfortunately, due to staff shortages, the sessions were suspended this year.

- **Keeping of Chickens on the Plot:**

- The plot previously housed three chickens; however, the Council is no longer currently maintaining chickens due to several incidents:
  - One chicken died from an infection.
  - Another was lost following a fox attack.
  - The remaining chicken has been re-homed with a local allotment holder.

- **Plot Maintenance and Current Use:**

- Since the previous committee meeting plot has been tidied up with the help of councillors and staff and is now back in use. The Ranger currently dedicates

no more than 2 hours per week to maintaining the plot, which has been sufficient to keep it in good condition.

### **Discussion on the Future of the Allotment Plot**

Despite the recent suspension of activities and the challenges faced, after discussing with the Ranger team and the Council's Community Events & Engagement officer, I am of the opinion that the allotment plot remains a valuable community resource with great potential for future educational and community-focused programs.

### **Benefits of Continuing with the Project:**

- **Community Engagement and Education:** Restarting the pre-school allotment sessions and potentially expanding them to other local groups will help to foster community spirit, encourage outdoor activity, and provide hands-on educational experiences for children and adults alike.
- **Cost & Time Effective Community Engagement:** The allotment project is a cost-effective form of community engagement, as all major initial purchases have already been made, leaving only minimal ongoing costs. The sessions were previously run once a fortnight for two hours in the afternoon and were easily incorporated into the Ranger's work schedule.

It is recommended that, if the Council chooses to continue to keep the allotment plot, a councillor be appointed to lead the project in partnership with the Senior Ranger.

A decision will need to be made at a future committee meeting whether to incorporate chickens back onto the plot.

### **Recommendations:**

That the Parish Council:

1. Continues to hold a plot at the Barton Way allotments.
2. Re-starts the pre-school allotment sessions in Spring 2025.
3. Explores opportunities to involve other local groups or community organisations, to enhance the educational and community value of the allotment plot.
4. Appoints a councillor to lead the project alongside the Senior Ranger.

**Ryan Bennett**  
**Clerk to the Council**

**August 2024**