



Committee Report

PURPOSE: Final Decision Report

KEY OR NON-KEY DECISION: Key decision affects 2 or more wards

COMMITTEE: Public Health and Communities Committee

DATE: 23 August 2024

TITLE: Investment in Allotments and Food Growing

Ward(s): Citywide

Officer presenting the report: Jonathan James. **Job title:** Head of Natural and Marine Environment

Committee Chair: Councillor Stephen Williams

Executive Director lead: John Smith: Executive Director for Growth & Regeneration

Proposal origin: BCC Staff

Purpose of Report:

1. To seek approval for capital investment that will increase the number of allotments plots available, convert land to be used for food growing and allotments and support allotment infrastructure repairs. The investment will respond to the growing demand from Bristol residents for space in which to grow their own food and help contribute to a healthier, more equitable food system.

Evidence Base / Options to consider:

1. The Council adopted a new Food Growing and Allotment Strategy in March 2024, setting out our approach to supporting sustainable food growing and access to healthy food, and helping deliver on the aspirations of the Good Food 2030 Plan and the Bristol Food Equality Strategy. The Strategy sets out a commitment to reduce the number of people waiting to access Council-owned food growing spaces and generate new spaces for food growing. This demand is growing year on year and the number of people on our allotment waiting list currently stands at 7,260, the highest ever total.
2. A new allotment investment fund derived from site-specific S106 agreements and a ringfenced capital receipt will begin to help meet these commitments primarily by allowing the Service to:
 - create new allotment plots on statutory allotment sites,
 - repurpose and improve land to create new allotments and collective food growing opportunities,

- and to improve the infrastructure servicing existing tenants where this is a priority.

A green space mapping exercise taken forward as part of the Council's new Parks and Green Spaces Strategy has helped identify where some early investments may be made.

3. The Council has two investment sums generated from new housing developments:
 - a) A S106 sum of £168.7K from land developed at Bonnington Walk to provide off-site allotments. The proposal is to use this on two local sites:
 - i. Dovercourt Road Smallholdings – where new individual allotment plots will be created. The site will be cleared of redundant buildings, rubbish and overgrowth and upgraded with security fencing, a water supply, internal path network and a small car park. The investment will see between 20 to 35 new allotments created (based on a Band B sized Allotment (75m² -149m² plots))
 - ii. Cotman Walk Former Allotments – where we will establish 2-3 large collective food growing plots. The site will be cleared of overgrowth and stock fencing will demarcate collective areas. The site is open space but its condition means it has had limited value for some time. The investment will see the equivalent of between 15 to 25 new allotments created (based on a Band B sized Allotment (75m² -149m² plots))
 - b) A sum of £1.05M from land to be developed at Hengrove Park to provide new off-site allotments. The proposal is to use this on two local sites:
 - i. Oatlands Avenue allotments – where new individual allotment plots will be created on most of the site including accessible plots and a collective food growing area. The site will be cleared and upgraded with new security fencing, gates, internal path network, water supply, toilets and car parking. Hard surface paths will be installed, and a building upgraded to support collective and communal food growing and accessible plots. The investment will see the equivalent of between 55 to 105 new allotments created (based on a Band B sized Allotment (75m² -149m² plots))
 - ii. Fortfield Road Allotments – where the path network and water infrastructure will be upgraded to modern standards.

These investments will generate some additional income to the service to help support site maintenance.

4. A further capital sum of £1.14M is available from the sale of statutory allotment land at Brislington Meadows. The green spaces that may benefit from this investment are yet to be further defined as feasibility work is needed on appropriate opportunities suggested by the green space mapping exercise. However, the same principles will be applied – prioritising the creation of new allotment plots and collective food growing areas by upgrading existing allotment land or converting spaces.
5. Feasibility work to prioritise where we will invest the capital receipt will include an assessment of existing uses and current tenancies, soil condition testing, a site's location in relation to high demand and its location in terms of areas of deprivation. We will also use our space mapping data from the Parks and Green Spaces Strategy to understand the potential for other uses – recreation, increasing tree canopy and managing for nature for example. From this work we will identify our priority sites to invest in.

Officer Recommendations:

That the Committee for Public Health and Communities:

1. Approves the investment of S106 sums into Dovercourt Road Smallholdings, Cotman Walk Former Allotments, Oatlands Avenue allotments and Fortfield Road Allotments as outlined in this report.
2. Approves the investment of capital receipt sums from the sale of allotment land at Brislington Meadows using the approach set out in this report.
3. Authorises the Executive Director for Growth and Regeneration in consultation with the Chair of the Public Health and Communities Committee, the S.151 Officer, and Director of Legal and Democratic Services to take all steps required, which may be above the key decision threshold, to spend the funding including to procure and enter into contracts required to deliver the proposals and investment approach as outlined in this report.

Corporate Strategy alignment:

1. The proposal will act to support households in Bristol suffering from food insecurity, including access to culturally diverse, nutritional food and building on the success of being a Gold Sustainable Food City.
2. The proposal will create improved approaches to enable and support Disabled people to access food growing opportunities.

City Benefits:

1. The proposals will help progress the Bristol Food Equality Strategy 2022-32 and the aspirations of Bristol Good Food 2030.

Consultation Details:

1. A draft of the Food Growing and Allotments Strategy, within the wider Parks and Green Spaces Strategy, was subject to public consultation between 11 December 2023 and 22 January 2024 with over 700 individuals and relevant organisations responding.

Background Documents:

[Parks and Green Spaces Strategy](#)

[Bristol Good Food 2030](#)

[Bristol Food Equality Strategy 2022-32](#)

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|---------------------|-------------------|----------------------------------|---|
| Revenue Cost | £0 | Source of Revenue Funding | N/A |
| Capital Cost | £2,356,299 | Source of Capital Funding | £1,219,999 – S106 £1,136,300 - Capital receipt |

| | | | |
|--|---------------------------------------|--|--|
| One off cost <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Ongoing cost <input type="checkbox"/> | Saving Proposal <input type="checkbox"/> | If yes - existing or new saving? Choose an item. |
| | | OR Income generation proposal <input type="checkbox"/> | |

Professional comments section:

1. Finance Advice:

The report is seeking agreement to allocate £2.3m of funding, procure contractors and spend capital allocations on a variety of initiatives, including investing in increasing the number of allotment plots, converting land for food growing and allotment repairs. The request supports the newly adopted Food Growing and Allotment Strategy approved in March 2024.

The report sets out a package of repair and maintenance planned and expenditure to create new allotment plots at sites already identified, but further feasibility work is needed to identify other suitable land from green space mapping exercises.

Funding these costs is £1.2m of Section 106 funding from new housing developments at Bonnington Walk and Hengrove Park and a capital receipt of £1.1m from the sale of land at Brislington Meadows. The use of this capital receipt will need to be applied in accordance with the legal agreement following the allotment land sale and the Section 106 funds will need to adhere to timescales and any usage regulations.

To limit timescale risks, the Parks team will ensure funds are profiled, and the earliest usage allocated first. To further mitigate risks, comprehensive project planning is required to manage procurement, cost, and time management of the capital programme, ensuring it remains on schedule, provides value for money, and achieves the objectives of the report. Any potential increases would need to be found from funding within the Parks capital programme and ongoing revenue implications will be funded from allotment fees.

Finance Business Partner: Ben Hegarty, Finance Business Partner Growth and Regeneration, 27 June 2024.

2. Legal Advice:

The procurement process must be conducted in line with the 2015 Procurement Regulations/Procurement Act 2023 and the Councils own procurement rules. Legal services will advise and assist officers with regard to the conduct of the procurement process and the resulting contractual arrangements.

Legal Team Leader: Husinara Jones, Team Manager/Solicitor 26 June 2024

3. Implications on IT: I can see no implications on IT regarding this.

IT Team Leader: Alex Simpson – Lead Enterprise Architect, 4 July 2024.

4. HR Advice:

There are no HR implications evident

HR Partner: Celia Williams, HR Business Partner 25 June 2024.

APPENDICES

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| Appendix A – Further essential background / detail on the proposal | NO |
| Appendix B – Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) | YES |
| Appendix C – Environmental Impact Assessment | YES |
| Appendix D – Decision Risk Assessment | YES |
| Appendix E – Exempt Information | NO |
| Appendix F – Details of consultation carried out - internal and external | NO |
| Appendix G – Options appraisal matrix | NO |
| Appendix H – Business case / financial analysis | NO |