

Communities Scrutiny Commission

15 September 2022



Report of: Patsy Mellor

Title: Update report – new Allotments and Food Growing Strategy

Ward: City-wide

Officers Presenting Report: Richard Fletcher and Keith Chant

Contact Telephone Number: NA

Recommendation:

To note progress in developing a new Allotments and Food Growing strategy

The significant issues in the report are:

The Parks Service is drafting a new Allotments and Food Growing Strategy. The new Strategy extends its reach and land footprint in comparison to previous strategies to include the city's smallholdings and consider how food growing may be encouraged more widely including outside the allotment model.

Demand for allotments and land for growing food is increasing at a time when the demand for the functional and citizen benefits afforded by green spaces are also increasing. Understanding where and how supply could be increased and how sites may deliver multiple benefits will be important going forward.

Meeting changing service expectations and meeting customer demand will require an uplift in team resources.



1. Summary

A new Allotments and Food Growing Strategy is being developed. Communications with tenants and members of the Allotments Forum, feedback received from organisations with an interest in food growing and the registered uplift in demand for allotment space have helped identify common themes for the Strategy to address.

The Council's most recent strategy (2009) concentrated solely on allotments and largely focused on rationalizing provision, releasing new funds to invest in raising quality. However, over the past five years demand for allotments has increased three-fold. There are approximately 8,000 citizens on the allotment waiting list in addition to the 4,000 people who are already tenants. Currently supply is fixed at 96 allotment sites.

This uplift is set within the context of other pressures on land functions including the need for available public open space close to new housing developments, the need to manage land better for nature and to combat climate change, and the potential need for land to increase the city's tree canopy cover.

There is now a need and opportunity for a new Allotments Strategy to consider food growing and food growing locations more widely, with statutory allotments still providing the bulk of land supply available. Developing the Strategy in parallel with the council's new Parks and Green Spaces Strategy also allows a wider land use assessment to inform food growing opportunities and the Allotments Strategy will be extended to include smallholdings and to consider other land that may create opportunities – such as grazing land or public open spaces.

We know the primary purpose of allotments is for families, individuals and communities to grow food. However, growing public awareness of the health and wellbeing benefits of food-growing and spending time outdoors is changing the service's relationships with customers and the work required to manage allotments and tenant relationships. Within this is the need to reconcile some customer expectations with the purposes of allotments as set out in Allotment legislation.

The Allotment Service itself has reduced in recent years as budget cuts to Parks Services has affected the resources available. There are now insufficient resources to meet customer expectations and to enhance the service.

The Allotment Strategy needs to set out how we will meet these challenges in the next 10-15 years. It will need to do so within the context of other green space strategies including the revised Parks and Green Space Strategy and new Bristol Green Infrastructure Strategy as well as related wider city and council strategies and aspirations such as the One City Climate Strategy, One City Ecological Emergency Strategy, Bristol Good Food 2030 Framework (draft) and the Local Plan Review.

It is proposed that the Strategy will be structured using themes that reflect the range and nature of challenges faced and the need to change to meet these. See Appendix A for an overview of these themes and the proposed Strategy approach.

2. Purpose

As above and refer to slide deck Appendix A.

3. Policy

Policy is proposed to be set out under themes that address the key challenges the service faces. These are set out in more detail in Appendix A.

Themes:

Supply and demand	Managing for climate change
Investment and sustainable finances	Sustainable food production
Tenant and tenancy management	Health and wellbeing
Site management	Welcoming and accessible
Community management	Education and learning
Managing for nature	

4. Consultation

a) Internal

The development work has been informed by discussions primarily with the Sustainable City & Climate Change Service.

b) External

The development work has been informed by discussions with key stakeholders such as Bristol Food Producers and members of the Allotments Forum as well as a review of common customer enquiries.

5. Public Sector Equality Duties

- 5a) Before making a decision, section 149 Equality Act 2010 requires that each decision-maker considers the need to promote equality for persons with the following “protected characteristics”: age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation. Each decision-maker must, therefore, have due regard to the need to:
- i) Eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct prohibited under the Equality Act 2010.
 - ii) Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not share it. This involves having due regard, in particular, to the need to --
 - remove or minimise disadvantage suffered by persons who share a relevant protected characteristic;
 - take steps to meet the needs of persons who share a relevant protected characteristic that are different from the needs of people who do not share it (in relation to disabled people, this includes, in particular, steps to take account of disabled persons' disabilities);

- encourage persons who share a protected characteristic to participate in public life or in any other activity in which participation by such persons is disproportionately low.

- iii) Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not share it. This involves having due regard, in particular, to the need to –
 - tackle prejudice; and
 - promote understanding.

5b) The Equalities Impact Assessment for the Strategy is pending.

Appendices:

A: New Allotments and Food Growing Strategy – policy themes slide deck.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985

Background Papers:

None