
DARLINGTON'S ALLOTMENTS STRATEGY

**Responsible Cabinet Member – Councillor Nick Wallis,
Leisure and Local Environment Portfolio**

Responsible Director – Richard Alty, Director of Place

SUMMARY REPORT

Purpose of the Report

1. The purpose of this report is to recommend the adoption of Darlington's Allotments Strategy, the purpose of which is to provide guidance on how the Council's Allotments Service continues to be integrated within the framework of the town wide allotments provision, including self managed sites and private sites as well as into the wider local food movement.

Summary

2. An awareness of the need for an Allotments Strategy first arose in 2001 following an Allotments Service Review when a working party was set up to look at how the Council delivered its existing service and how this could be modernised to address a changing environment.
3. The main focus of the work plan that came out of the working party was to look at ways of increasing the occupancy rates of allotments and ways of providing higher quality allotment sites. (The existing suite of allotments at the time varied from poor to good with some sites with a very low occupancy levels which reflected the situation across the UK.)
4. In addition, the working party identified the need for a process whereby the Council managed sites were handed over to committees in order for them to become self managed associations who collected their own rents and managed most of their own affairs.
5. The production of the strategy that is now being put forward sees this work programme consolidated and expanded, and adapted for a rapidly changing market in terms of demand. This strategy will be delivered within existing resources, working closely with the allotments community.
6. The delivery of the action plan within the Allotments Strategy in these extremely difficult financial times will require resources to be available both financial and staff.

Recommendation

7. It is recommended that Members agree the attached Allotments Strategy.

Reasons

8. The recommendation is supported by the following reasons :-
- (a) That promoting the continued efficient use of Darlington's allotments provision is a valuable contribution to a number of the key agendas within the Sustainable Community Strategy, namely, health and well being, quality of life, educational achievement and carbon reduction.
 - (b) That the Allotments Strategy will facilitate a much more coordinated approach to providing this service that will see a continued increase in performance and effectiveness.

Richard Alty
Director of Place

Background Papers

Allotments Working Party's Allotments Service Review, 2001.

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S17 Crime and Disorder	Having well managed allotments sites helps reduce the amount of vandalism in allotments and reduces activities on allotments that are unlawful.
Health and Well Being	Running your own allotments or garden, growing your own food is well recognised as having significant long term benefits to physical and mental health.
Sustainability	Growing more food locally is a valuable contribution to reducing transport miles and reducing the outputs of other carbon thirsty industry's such as intensive agriculture.
Diversity	The allotments provision is open to all the public and frequently attracts new communities as growing food is a universal concept.
Wards Affected	All wards affected.
Groups Affected	All social groups are affected.
Budget and Policy Framework	This report does not recommend a change to the Council's budget or policy framework.
Key Decision	This is not a key decision.
Urgent Decision	This is not an urgent decision.
One Darlington: Perfectly Placed	A number of the key agendas within the Sustainable Community strategy are addressed, namely, health and well being, quality of life, educational achievement and carbon reduction.
Efficiency	The implementation of this strategy represents an improvement in efficiency as more sites become self managed.

MAIN REPORT

Information and Analysis

9. The details of how it is proposed the Council will run the Darlington's allotments service is contained within the Allotments Strategy. This falls into a number of key areas.
10. Firstly the strategy looks at the history of allotments and the part they play in the wider open space provision of the town. This analysis sees the service going from an essential part of certain people's livelihood in the years before the Second World War to a largely neglected service where wide spread dereliction characterised the provision across the UK.
11. Secondly, the strategy looks at the Darlington provision as it stands today with the total number of allotment sites set at 26 across the town and approximately 900 plots. This includes Council and private sites. It also looks at the trends that are apparent today in relation to the demand for allotments.
12. Next the strategy describes the process of consultation taken place that helped inform the content of this strategy and the conclusions that have been drawn.
13. Finally, the strategy draws together a set of conclusions from the data that has been assembled, seeking to address issues gleaned from the past eight years since the working group's paper and combine it with the findings from the consultation process. From this an action plan has been put together that should allow the Council and its partners the opportunity to address the key drivers in the service in the coming 10 years.

Outcome of Consultation

14. The Allotments Strategy has been produced following extensive consultation with all the main stakeholders and partners as well as Resources Scrutiny Committee; the outcome of which is included in the strategy.