
**ALLOTMENTS: PROPOSAL FOR COCKERTON ASSOCIATION TO BE GRANTED
“SELF-MANAGED” STATUS AND SURRENDER AND RE-GRANT OF LONG
LEASES TO 6 OTHER ALLOTMENT ASSOCIATIONS**

**Responsible Cabinet Member –
Councillor Stephen Harker – Efficiency and Resources**

**Responsible Directors – Ian Williams, Director of Economic Growth
Paul Wildsmith, Director of Neighbourhood Services and Resources**

SUMMARY REPORT

Purpose of the Report

1. To seek the approval of Members to allow Cockerton Allotment Association to become self-managed and to grant that association a new, 20 year lease.
2. To seek the approval of Members to accept the surrender of 6 existing self-managed allotment leases and grant new long-term leases to those associations.

Summary

3. The principle of the Council agreeing to allotment associations becoming self-managed was accepted in the Allotments Strategy for Darlington 2009-2019. Cabinet of 9 May 2006 referred to a review of the allotments service by the Resources Scrutiny Committee during 2001 and their report and action plan was approved by Cabinet on 18 January 2002.
4. Cockerton Allotments were previously spread over three separate sites, but have remained under the management of the Council. They now wish to become self-managed under one association and have requested the grant of a 20 year lease.
5. The self-managed allotment sites at Barmpton, Bellburn, Glebe, Dodmire, Hummersknott and Smithfield Road all have leases which expire in 2020 and the relevant associations have requested the Council accept a surrender of their existing leases and grant them new 20 year leases, to enable them to have better access to external funding opportunities.

Recommendations

6. It is recommended that Cabinet :-
 - (a) Reaffirm its commitment to the principle of allotment sites achieving self-managed status.
 - (b) Authorise the relevant Director to negotiate and conclude the terms of an appropriate 20 year self-managed lease with Cockerton Allotment Association.
 - (c) Accept the surrender of leases from those allotment associations who require longer lease terms and grant replacement 20 year leases to those associations.
 - (d) The Borough Solicitor be authorised to complete the necessary legal documentation

Reasons

7. The recommendations are supported by the following reasons :-
 - (a) There is a financial deficit in respect of managing allotment sites which remain under the direct control of the Council. This should be reduced if Cockerton Allotment Association becomes self-managed. The loss of rent from the Cockerton site is small.
 - (b) There should be a reduction in the call on officer time if Cockerton Allotment Association becomes self-managed.
 - (c) The granting of new, longer leases to the six existing self-managed associations will enable them to seek more external funding, which, if received, should result in improvements to the allotments.

Ian Williams
Director of Economic Growth

Background Papers

No background papers were used in the preparation of this report

Robert Young: 6317

S17 Crime and Disorder	There are no crime and disorder implications in this report
Health and Well Being	There are no health and well being implications of this report
Carbon Impact	There are no carbon impact implications in this report
Diversity	There are no diversity issues
Wards Affected	All
Groups Affected	All relevant allotment associations
Budget and Policy Framework	This report does not represent a change to the existing budgetary framework.
Key Decision	No
Urgent Decision	This is not an urgent decision
One Darlington: Perfectly Placed	There are no issues adversely affecting the delivery of the Community Strategy.
Efficiency	The efficiency savings which may be achieved are set out in this report.

MAIN REPORT

Background

8. The Cockerton allotment sites comprise three separate areas which have now decided to combine to form one association. That association has effectively taken over the management of the sites in anticipation of being able to reach agreement with the Council regarding the terms of a self-managed lease.
9. Upon achieving self-managed status, no further rents from individual allotment holders would be receivable by the Council. This loss in income is more than offset by the reduction in maintenance, water charges and officer time which the directly managed sites incur.
10. Cockerton Allotment Association is seeking a new, 20 year self-managed lease from the Council, to enable them to seek external sources of funding.
11. There are currently six self-managed allotment associations who currently would benefit from the Council accepting a surrender of their existing lease (which has approximately five years before expiry) and then receiving a new 20 year lease. These associations are Barmpton, Bellburn, Dodmire, Glebe, Hummersknott and Smithfield Road.
12. The relevant funding organisations who consider grant awards to the likes of self-managed allotment associations look closely at the tenure by which the association occupy the land. The relatively short period of time before the expiry of the leases held by the six named associations means they are at a disadvantage in terms of being able to obtain external funding.
13. The surrender to the Council of the 6 existing leases and the grant of new leases with a term of 20 years would put the relevant associations in a much better position in terms of being able to apply for external funding.

Legal Implications

14. There are no legal implications in respect of either the proposal to grant a self-managed lease to Cockerton Allotment Association or the surrender and grant of new longer self-managed leases to those associations who already have them.

Outcome of Consultation

15. Consultation has been done previously regarding the move towards allotment associations becoming self-managed and the outcome formed the basis of the Allotments Strategy for Darlington 2009-2019.

Asset Management

16. It is intended that the proposed lease with Cockerton Allotments Association will contain adequate protection for the re-provision of the allotments, should the land be accepted as being capable of alternative use.

Conclusion

17. Following the recommendations contained in the Allotments Strategy for Darlington 2009-2019, it is recommended that authority is given to the relevant Director to negotiate and conclude a self-managed lease with Cockerton Allotments Association as outlined in the terms of this report.
18. Additionally, the surrender of the six self-managed leases which have about five years remaining on the term is appropriate, and at the same time grant new 20 year leases on basically the same terms, in order to facilitate better access to external funding for the individual associations.