

Report to: EXECUTIVE BOARD - 17th June 2002

RE-INTRODUCTION OF THE GARDEN SCHEME FOR COUNCIL TENANTS - MINOR PROJECT REPORT

<p>Report of: <i>Housing Management Business Unit</i></p> <p>Report Author: <i>Karen Turner Housing Management Business Manager - Ext 2329 kturner@oxford.gov.uk</i></p> <p>Lead Member Responsible: <i>Cllr Val Smith</i></p> <p>Overview and Scrutiny Committee Responsibility: <i>Housing Scrutiny Committee</i></p> <p>Key Decision <i>Yes</i></p>	<p>WARDS AFFECTED</p> <p>ALL</p>
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SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This report asks Executive Board:

- to agree the re-introduction of the Garden Scheme for Council tenants
- to agree the virement of £80k from within the HRA to fund the scheme
- to agree the stricter application of eligibility for the scheme
- to note the possible need to “employ” someone to carry out several hundred home visits to confirm an applicants eligibility
- to note the intention to start the scheme in early July - this is subject to the Parks & Green Spaces Business Unit being able to employ the adequate labour in time, put into place the necessary equipment & to confirm the final list of 400 eligible tenants

1. Introduction

1.1 The new administration has decided to reintroduce the Garden Scheme for one year to benefit up to 400 Council tenants who need help with basic maintenance of their gardens. The new scheme will have much tighter eligibility criteria to ensure only those with the most need benefit

from the scheme. Application forms have already been issued to tenants, a copy is at appendix one.

2. Funding the Scheme

2.1 The scheme is to be funded by a virement of £80k from within the HRA as follows:

- £20k from the Council shop maintenance budget (there was an underspend of £30k on the budget in 01/02)
- £30k from the Tenants Forum Community Garden budget (a new budget for 02/03 and not yet used or distributed)
- £30k from the overall budget granted to Tenants Forum to fund projects in their area (which brings their funding down to prior years level)

2.2 Executive Board are asked to note that it may be necessary to “employ” someone (an agency temp) to spend up to 2 weeks visiting some applicants to confirm their eligibility for the scheme. The cost of this is not yet known, the expenditure will come from within an HRA budget for temporary staff.

3. Practicalities

3.1 The Parks and Green Spaces Business Unit will advertise for adequate replacement labour to cover the garden maintenance tasks as soon as Executive Board have confirmed a decision to re-introduce the garden scheme. There is also a need to sort out vehicles and kit.

3.2 The application forms were issued in advance of Executive Board's decision to allow the maximum time possible for tenants to return their applications and for officers to confirm which tenants were eligible to benefit from the scheme. It is not known at this point what number of applications will be made by the deadline and therefore the cost & time needed to administer the process. Only 400 places on the scheme can be funded, therefore, any late applications cannot be considered unless there is an overall under subscription.

3.3 It is hoped that the scheme can start again in early July.

THIS REPORT HAS BEEN SEEN AND APPROVED BY: The Strategic Director, the Portfolio Holder & the Group Accountant.

Background Papers: None

OXFORD CITY COUNCIL

HELP WITH YOUR GARDEN - 2002

The garden scheme* has been re-introduced, initially for **ONE** year. It will begin early July 2002. There was not a budget for the scheme this year and new funding has had to be found. The scheme will only be available to a maximum of **400** tenants who are in the most **severe** need. Accordingly, where necessary, we will visit a tenant to confirm that they are eligible to receive help with their garden, we may also ask you to provide documentary proof. You will **not** be eligible if you have someone living with you who is capable of maintaining your garden.

Please complete the form below and return to your local Housing Office by **17th June 2002**.

* The garden scheme entitles you to one hour's work each month to cut lawns, prune & cut hedges & borders. It is **not** for gardens that are excessively overgrown - if this is what your garden is like, please let us know.

1. NAME:

2. ADDRESS:

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3. TEL:

4. I am an OAP who is physically unable to cope with my garden.

5. I have a disability which prevents me from doing my garden

6. I have **no-one** living with me or near me who is physically capable of maintaining my garden.

7. I have **not** applied to buy my Council home

8. I do not object to checks on my eligibility for help with my garden which may include being visited.

9. TENANTS SIGNATURE:

10. DATE:

If you want to add any comments please use the space below:

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