

**Report of: Leisure and Parks Business Unit Manager**

**To: Executive Board**

**Date: 16 January 2006**



**Item No:**

**Title of Report : Allotment Condition Survey**



### **Summary and Recommendations**



**Purpose of report:** To inform Executive Board of the condition of allotments  
 seek funding for the refurbishment of allotment sites. This report is  
 background information for a budget bid.



**Key decision:** Yes

**Portfolio Holder:** Councillor Mary Clarkson

**Scrutiny Responsibility:** Environment



**Ward(s) affected:** All

**Report Approved by:** Jeremy Thomas (Legal Services), Emma Burson  
 (Financial Services), Councillor Mary Clarkson (Portfolio Holder)



#### **Policy Framework:**

Improving environments where we live and work.



Making Oxford a safer city

Supports the evolving green spaces strategy



**Recommendation(s):** The Executive Board is recommended to agree to:

1. Note the contents of the report
2. Consider as part of the budget bid process to increase the revenue budget for allotment grants over a period of five years to the amounts illustrated in



 Appendix 1



## **1. Background**

### 1.1 Brief History

- 1.1.1 The Park Section is responsible for managing 30 allotments within the City.
- 1.1.2 The allotments are leased to individual allotment associations for a period of 20 years.
- 1.1.3 Each allotment association has entered into a lease which apportions responsibilities for the following:
  - a. Boundary/perimeter fences/walls
  - b. Access gates
  - c. Infrastructure e.g. paths, roads, streams
  - d. Grounds maintenance e.g. overgrown plots
  - e. Water supply
  - f. Buildings
  - g. Toilet provision
  - h. Litter/waste management
  - i. Signage
  - j. Composting facilities
- 1.1.4 The allotments associations are allocated small grants each year from the allotments revenue budget for which the allotment association can submit an application.

## **2. Current position**

2.1 The Park Section reinstated the allotment association meetings in January 2005. The meetings are held quarterly with Parks Officers present and the purpose of the meetings is to discuss allotment issues. Representatives from all allotment associations have attended the meetings.

2.2 The allotments have been under funded resulting in the infrastructure of the allotments deteriorating. As a result the allotment associations requested that a condition survey of the allotments be undertaken.

2.3 The allotment condition survey has been presented at all Area Committees and all endorsed a submission of a citywide revenue budget bid to the Executive Board. Area Committees also requested that consideration be given to using composting toilets.

2.4 As part of the lease the allotment associations are responsible for maintenance of infrastructure but have either inherited poor infrastructure or have no funds to replace deteriorating infrastructure.

2.5 The allotment associations were promised previously that a capital funding bid would be applied for but this never occurred.

2.6 The uptake of allotments has increased and there has also been an increase in the number of women working in allotments and also an increase in different ethnic groups using allotments. 40% of allotment holders are women. A reason for the increased uptake is because people feel that allotments are a way forward in improving lifestyles and healthy living.

2.7 The allotments are up to 30 years old and there has been very little capital investment during that time. As a result there are health and safety issues, for example lack of security for allotment holders because of the poor condition of fencing, lack of toilet facilities.

2.8 New boundary fencing was installed in Sorrell Road allotments in 2005 and within four months there has been an uptake of twelve additional plots.

2.9 The Parks Section holds an allotment competition every year and approximately 50% of allotment associations take part and this number is increasing.

2.10 Three allotment associations have allocated plots to local schools, which are used by the schools to run classes

### **3. Consultation**

3.1 It was agreed at the allotment association meeting that the allotments would be audited by the Parks Section to ascertain the condition of the sites and list priorities for investments

3.2 The meeting agreed that the audits would take account of the following:

- a. Boundary/perimeter fences/walls
- b. Access gates
- c. Infrastructure e.g. paths, roads, streams
- d. Grounds maintenance e.g. overgrown plots
- e. Water supply
- f. Buildings
- g. Toilet provision
- h. Litter/waste management
- i. Signage
- j. Composting facilities

3.3 The findings of the condition survey would be costed and presented to Committee and a budget bid would be made.

## **4. Proposals**

4.1 The condition survey of all the allotments has been completed and the work costed and prioritised according to risk.

4.2 It is proposed that a revenue bid be made to increase the revenue budget for grants for allotments.

4.3 It is suggested that a review of the grants scheme is undertaken which would allow criteria to be drawn up on the priorities for allotments, for example increase the community involvement of the allotment which would in turn be linked to the Council's vision

4.4 The Parks Section would like to work in partnership with the allotment associations, for example assisting the allotment associations in clearing overgrown plots to increase uptake. The Parks Section has worked with Cripsey Meadow Allotment Association to undertake work on the trees in the allotment.

4.5 Other sources of funding include Area Committees, increasing the revenue budget for grants or repairs/maintenance and Section 106 developer contributions.

4.6 There are very few sources of external funding and those that do exist only fund very small projects.

## **5. Financial Position**

5.1 The allotment revenue budget for grants for all allotment associations is £7500.

5.2 There is no allotment revenue budget for repairs and maintenance to infrastructure.

5.3 The condition survey has been prioritised in terms of risk over a period of five years and priced. (Appendix 1)

5.4 The income received from the allotment leases in 2004/05 was £15000.

### **Name and contact details of author:**

**John Wade**  
**Parks Manager**  
**01865 467255**

**Background papers: None**



Version number: 1.0

