



Belfast City Council

Report to:	Parks and Leisure Committee
Subject:	Draft Allotment Policy, Process and Procedure
Date:	16 October 2014
Reporting Officer:	Andrew Hassard, Director of Parks and Leisure
Contact Officer:	Caroline Wilson, Neighbourhood and Development Manager Karen Anderson-Gillespie, Policy and Business Development Manager – LTP

1	Relevant Background Information
	<p>Belfast City Council has a long history of designing, delivering, managing and facilitating allotment provision and currently provides 290 plots across seven sites in Belfast: Annadale, Ballysillan, Belmont, Blythefield, Musgrave, Whiterock and Woodvale allotments. However, demand for allotments in Belfast council areas outweighs supply with 373 people currently on site waiting lists and evidence from Local Government Reform (LGR) boundary extension indicates that this is likely to increase.</p> <p>The purpose of this report is to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Update members on improvements to the internal co-ordination, management and administration of allotments• Present updated draft policy, process and procedure for:<ul style="list-style-type: none">- allotment allocation;- reviewing and streamlining current allotment waiting list; and- the guidelines and requirements for use of allotments in Council property - code of conduct. <p>The draft policy, process and procedure have been developed in consultation with key officers from within the Parks and Leisure department and advice and assistance has been sought from other key sections across the council, including Health & Safety Unit and Legal services.</p>

2	Key Issues
	<p>An operational management working group was set up to review, recommend and implement improvements to the internal co-ordination, management and administration of current allotment processes, policies and procedures used. These will be subject to review and evaluation over time and as relevant criteria arise on a case by case basis.</p> <p>Allotment allocation process</p>

An effective and efficient process map has been developed that is focused on customer requirements and delivered via a single point of contact i.e. the Open Spaces and Active Living (OSAL) Unit, who will be responsible for the co-ordination and administration of this process, which was agreed by the Parks and Leisure Committee on the 13 September 2012.

The allotment allocation process has been broken down into three distinct processes: allotment request; recurring payments and review and inspection.

Operational on-site responsibility for allotments will still reside with the Community Parks Managers, including regular site inspection schedules. Initial and recurring payment for allotments will remain with business support. The allotment allocation process will rely on close liaison and communication between OSAL, Community Parks Managers and business support staff.

A detailed allotment allocation process map can be seen in Appendix 1.

As part of the allotment allocation process map new criteria for accepting applications for allotment plots has been introduced with applications accepted from Belfast residents only.

A standard application form has been developed with on-line capabilities.

Allotment waiting list procedure

In light of long waiting lists for allotments, with minimal turnover and the likely increase in demand for allotments from residents of incoming areas as part of Local Government Reform (LGR), to best meet the needs of the council an updated streamlined draft allotment waiting list procedure has been developed in Appendix 2.

Current allotment waiting lists have been reviewed and cleansed. Initial results reveal that as part of stage 1 of the allotment waiting list procedure in Appendix 2, the council is proposing to write out to potentially 35 people to inform them that they have been removed from our waiting list due to limited availability and increased demand.

Table 1: Allotment waiting lists

Site	Belfast	*LGR	Outside New Belfast	Total
<i>Annadale</i>	164	10	21	195
<i>Ballysillan</i>	9	0	1	10
<i>Belmont</i>	120	2	11	133
<i>Blythfield</i>	3	0	0	3
<i>Musgrave</i>	29	1	2	32
Total	325	13	35	373

**LGR extended boundary residents will be included in the final Belfast list.*

Guidelines and requirements for use of allotments – code of conduct

	<p>The council has no statutory duty to provide allotments. However, the Allotments Act (NI) 1932 does enable councils to provide, at its discretion, allotments for use by residents in their areas. Where the council does provide allotments it is required, under the legislation, to make regulations regarding their management and control.</p> <p>The current guidelines and requirements for use governing the operational management and control of allotments have been updated based on good practice research, legal and health & safety advice (see updated regulations in Appendix 3). Clause 3.7.1 and 3.7.2 of the new guidelines and requirements for use state that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pets (except for Guide Dogs) and livestock (Livestock refers to any breed or population of animal kept by humans for a useful, commercial purpose for example cattle, pigs, horse, poultry etc.) must not be brought/ kept on site; and • Beehives are not permitted on site. <p>This is something that will be reflected in the Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act 2011 in respect of dog control issues for the council. All current and new allotment ploholders will be asked to sign, date and return the guidelines and requirements for use of allotments and returns kept on file.</p>
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3	<p>Resource Implications</p> <p><u>Financial</u> No financial implications have been identified.</p> <p><u>Human Resources</u> Delivery of the improvement activities associated with allotments will require dedicated officer time which will be reflected within annual service plans, area plans and separate unit level plans.</p> <p><u>Asset and Other Implications</u> None.</p>
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4	<p>Equality and Good Relations Considerations</p> <p>The updated process, policies and procedure will be subject to the council's equality screening process.</p>
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5	<p>Recommendations</p> <p>Members are asked to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Note improvements to the internal co-ordination, management and administration of allotments; • Agree the updated draft process and procedure for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - allotment allocation; - reviewing and streamlining current allotment waiting list; and • Review and agree policy guidelines and requirements for allotment use.
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6	<p>Decision tracking</p> <p>Responsible Officer: Neighbourhood and Development Manager. The allotment policy, procedure and process will be implemented by January 2015.</p>
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7	Key to Abbreviations
	None

8	Documents Attached
	Appendix 1 – Allotment allocation process map Appendix 2 – Allotment waiting list procedure Appendix 3 – Guidelines and requirements for use of allotments