

ALLOTMENTS

Head of Service:	Ian Dyer, Head of Operational Services
Wards affected:	(All Wards);
Urgent Decision?(yes/no)	No
If yes, reason urgent decision required:	N/A
Appendices (attached):	None

Summary

To report to the Committee the results of the self-managed allotments consultation.

Recommendation (s)

The Committee is asked to:

- (1) **Note the outcome of the self-managed consultation**
- (2) **Agree not to progress with options of self-management with all existing Council managed allotment site holders except for those who occupy plots at Epsom Common.**
- (3) **Agree a further consultation with Epsom Common allotment tenants to include a copy of the terms and conditions of the self-managed scheme, this will be actioned once the current allotment database has been subject to data cleanse to ensure integrity of information stored.**
- (4) **Agree to a change in the self-management criteria to read: "At least 65% of the current plot holders support the application to join the self-managed scheme, non-responders will be treated as a vote to remain council managed"**

1 Reason for Recommendation

- 1.1 The results of the initial consultation on the self-management of existing council managed allotment sites indicate that most plot holders wish to continue with the current management arrangements except for the Epsom Common site.

Environment and Safe Communities Committee

27 July 2022

- 1.2 Most responses received from Epsom Common Allotment Society plot holders indicated that they would like further information on the terms and conditions of becoming self-managed and they have formally requested that the criteria for a vote for self-management is lowered to increase the chance of becoming self-managed in the future.
- 1.3 To address the issue of some tenants not receiving personal notification of the previous consultation, it is proposed to carry out a data cleanse of the allotment database prior to any further consultations.

2 Background

- 2.1 At the meeting in March 2022, the Community and Wellbeing Committee resolved to consult with the Allotment Forum site representatives of all existing council managed sites to gauge their interest in the sites remaining council-managed or becoming self-managed as set out in section 4 of the report.
- 2.2 On 24 March, officers met with site representatives from all allotment sites and discussed the matter of self-management. The representatives agreed that as they were not elected to speak on behalf of all tenants, a wider consultation of all plot holders should be undertaken to gauge interest in self-management.
- 2.3 On 16 June, a consultation letter was sent to allotment holders by email and an A3 poster of the same letter was attached to all allotment site gates.
- 2.4 However, due to a system error with the allotment database, we are aware that not everyone received a personal communication. Upon investigation into this matter, we know that 369 emails were successfully sent, and that the notice of the consultation was attached to the gates at all allotment sites. However, the site notice method of communication relied on plot holders visiting their allotment during the consultation period which finished on the 3 July 2022. Consequently, some plot holders may not have been aware of the consultation.
- 2.5 The table below outlines the responses received, with the largest number of responses coming from Epsom Common Allotments, which was unsurprising as Epsom Common Allotment Society have previously shown interest in becoming self-managed.

Environment and Safe Communities Committee

27 July 2022

Vote	Alex	Barn Elms	Eleanor Avenue	Elmstead	Epsom Common	Lane End	West Ewell	Grand Total
Council Managed	9	4	2	2	4	2	8	31
Self-Managed	4			1	4		1	10
Requested more information	4			2			1	7
Group Response Epsom Common Allotment Society					22			22
Grand Total	17	4	2	5	30	2	10	70

- 2.6 Of the 30 responses received from Epsom Common, 22 of these were in the form of a group response, which highlighted that not all allotment holders had received a personal consultation letter and that the consultation did not provide enough information around the terms and conditions of becoming self-managed. The group response also called for the voting threshold to be lowered to give those interested in becoming self-managed a better chance of success.
- 2.7 As Epsom Common is the only allotment site to still show an interest in self-management it is proposed to re-run the consultation exercise with the allotment holders of this site.
- 2.8 The timescale for a further consultation will be agreed with the Epsom Common Allotment Society once the Council's allotment database has been subject to a full data cleanse to ensure that the system error which occurred during the previous consultation exercise is resolved.
- 2.9 Further details around the terms and conditions regarding self-management will be provided and the consultation will be sent to all plot holders by post and email (where email addresses are available).
- 2.10 It is also recommended that in view of the difficulty for allotment societies to achieve the threshold of 75% of all current plot holders supporting the application to become self-managed, that the threshold is lowered to 65% with non-responders counting as a 'no' vote, as it is at present.
- 2.11 Once we have the outcome of this second consultation exercise, we will present the findings to the Environment and Safe Communities Committee at their meeting in January 2023.

Environment and Safe Communities Committee

27 July 2022

3 Leases for Existing Self-managed Sites

- 3.1 It is proposed that the leases for the existing self-managed sites, which are due to expire in December 2022, are progressed with support from the Council's legal team.

4 Legal or other duties

4.1 Equality Impact Assessment

- None for the purpose of this report

4.2 Crime & Disorder

- None for the purpose of this report

4.3 Safeguarding

- None for the purpose of this report

4.4 Dependencies

- The second consultation with Epsom Common Allotments will be dependent on a full data cleanse and rectification of the council's allotment database.

4.5 Other

- None for the purpose of this report

5 Financial Implications

- 5.1 If the second round of consultation with Epsom Common Allotments is in favour of self-management, then the council will endure a loss of income in the region of £11,000 which will have to be found by this committee.

- 5.2 **Section 151 Officer's comments:** Any decision to agree to an allotment site becoming self-managed will require a detailed analysis of the capital and revenue costs to the Council and budgets identified to cover any net cost as a result of the proposal.

6 Legal Implications

- 6.1 Legal support will be required to progress the existing self-managed allotment leases.

- 6.2 **Legal Officer's comments:** None for the purposes of this report.

7 Policies, Plans & Partnerships

- 7.1 **Council's Key Priorities:** The following Key Priorities are engaged:

Environment and Safe Communities Committee

27 July 2022

- Green and Vibrant
- Safe and Well
- Effective Council

7.2 **Service Plans:** The matter is not included within the current Service Delivery Plan.

7.3 **Climate & Environmental Impact of recommendations:** Well managed allotment sites have a positive impact on the Environment

7.4 **Sustainability Policy & Community Safety Implications:** None for the purpose of this report

7.5 **Partnerships:** Allotment societies across the borough

8 Background papers

8.1 The documents referred to in compiling this report are as follows:

Previous reports:

- Allotments Review - Community and Wellbeing Committee 17 March 2022
- Self-Managed Allotments – Community and Wellbeing Committee 19 October 2017
- Update on Allotment Services and Future Options – Leisure Committee 28 March 2011

Other papers:

- None