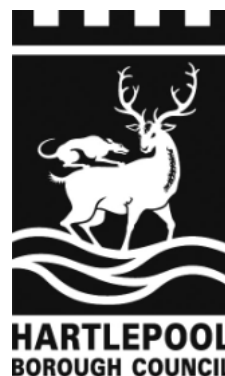


ADULT AND COMMUNITY SERVICES SCRUTINY FORUM AGENDA



Wednesday 24th February 2010

at 4.30 pm

**in the Council Chamber,
Civic Centre, Victoria Road, Hartlepool**

MEMBERS: ADULT AND COMMUNITY SERVICES SCRUTINY FORUM

Councillors Atkinson, Coward, Cranney, A Marshall, Preece, Richardson, Simmons, Worthy and Young.

Resident Representatives: Evelyn Leck and Mary Power

- 1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**
- 2. TO RECEIVE ANY DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST BY MEMBERS**
- 3. MINUTES**
 - 3.1 To confirm the minutes of the meeting held on 8th February 2010 (*to follow*)
- 4. RESPONSES FROM THE COUNCIL, THE EXECUTIVE OR COMMITTEES OF THE COUNCIL TO FINAL REPORTS OF THIS FORUM**

No items.
- 5. CONSIDERATION OF REQUEST FOR SCRUTINY REVIEWS REFERRED VIA SCRUTINY CO-ORDINATING COMMITTEE**

No items.

6. CONSIDERATION OF PROGRESS REPORTS / BUDGET AND POLICY FRAMEWORK DOCUMENTS

No items

7. ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION

7.1 Revised Draft Allotments Development Strategy 2010 – 2015:-

- (a) Covering Report – *Scrutiny Support Officer*;
- (b) Verbal evidence on the town wide approach to the safety and security of allotment sites – *Representative from Cleveland Police*;
- (c) Presentation on the revised Draft Allotments Development Strategy and the feedback received from the Consultation – *Parks and Countryside Manager*; and
- (d) Views / comments from Allotment Holders on the Draft Strategy proposals

8. ISSUES IDENTIFIED FROM FORWARD PLAN

9. ANY OTHER ITEMS WHICH THE CHAIRMAN CONSIDERS ARE URGENT

ITEMS FOR INFORMATION

Date of next meeting – Wednesday 24th March 2010 at 4.30pm in the Council Chamber, Civic Centre, Hartlepool

ADULT AND COMMUNITY SERVICES SCRUTINY FORUM MINUTES

The meeting commenced at 4.30 pm in the Civic Centre, Hartlepool

Present:

Councillor: Chris Simmons (In the Chair)

Councillors: John Coward, Ann Marshall, Arthur Preece,
Carl Richardson and Gladys Worthy

Resident Representatives: Evelyn Leck and Mary Power

Officers: Jeanette Willis, Principal Finance Manager
Laura Starrs, Scrutiny Support Officer
Sarah Bird, Democratic Services Officer

Also Present:: Justine Harper and Michael Slimmings

62. Apologies for Absence

Councillors Atkinson and Cranney.

63. Declarations of interest by Members

None.

64. Minutes of the meeting held on 13 January 2010 and 25 January 2010

The minutes of the meetings held on 13 January 2010 and 25 February 2010 were confirmed.

65. Responses from the Council, the Executive or Committees of the Council to Final Reports of this Forum

No items

66. Consideration of request for scrutiny reviews referred via Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee

No items

67. Consideration of progress reports/budget and policy framework documents

No items

68. Investigation into Putting People First – The Delivery of Personalised Adult Social Care Services – Members of the Forum and people who have experience of directing their own support *(Scrutiny Support Officer)*

The Chair expressed disappointment that there were not more members of the public at the meeting as he had hoped to obtain their input especially from those who had experience of directing their own support. At the request of a Member, he highlighted an article which had been in the local press the previous week publicising this meeting and the work of the Authority in relation to personal budgets.

A Resident Representative queried what help was available for disabled adults and the Chair outlined how the Authority was able to allow those needing social care to manage their own budget to best suit their individual needs and requirements. Responses received at a previous meeting indicated that it made an improvement to quality of life as individuals were in control of their own affairs and could make their own care choices. The Principal Finance Manager said that the system had changed the way that people interacted with Social Services as they now receive a personal budget and they could with assistance, if required, work out their personal choice and method of care or could continue with services how they had received them in the past. The Direct Payment system had facilitated smaller organisations entering the care arena because previously the Authority had had block contracts with larger organisations. A Resident Representative asked how the Authority publicised the personal budget system and was informed that if an individual required an assessment they could visit or telephone the Contact Centre in the Civic Centre. It was also to be publicised on the Hartlepool Now website. The Authority also intended to publicise the system through libraries, community and leisure centres in order to reach those individuals who were not already aware of it.

A Member commented that until there was a need for the services, people were unlikely to be aware of the personal budget system. Following a Member's question, the Principal Finance Manager said that there were excellent links between the Authority and the Primary Care Trust although there were still individuals slipping through the net and therefore awareness of

the system had to be raised. Some referrals were made by health care professionals. At the Older Person's Local Implementation Team (LIT) it had come to light that a lot of older people would prefer not to manage their personal budget. One factor affecting attitudes was the implementation of contributions being required from individuals for some aspects of care and many did not wish to pay for services which had previously been provided freely. Many had expressed surprise at the high cost of services which the Council were obliged to provide. A suggestion had been made that the Authority break down the costs of care provision when sending out notification of Council Tax so that taxpayers were aware of the costs.

Concern was expressed that the personal budget system could be open to fraud and the Forum was informed that accounts would be reviewed on at least an annual basis, with appropriate support offered to those taking up the service. The Authority was ultimately accountable for this money as it was public funds. A person who received a personal budget reiterated that support was available and said that he would expect his budget to be reviewed and monitored.

A Member queried whether Direct Payments could be used to pay for home care from non agency staff as this may be cheaper than using agency staff and was informed that this was acceptable although employment legislation should be adhered to. Individuals would make a contribution to the cost of their care depending on their ability to pay (in line with the Council's Contribution Policy). A Member also said that older people may have concerns about the cost of overnight stays and the Principal Finance Manager highlighted other facilities available such as telecare and bed sensors but the system was flexible in that it could be tailored to the needs of the individual if changes were necessary.

Suggestions as to publicising the system were offered including a column in the Hartlepool Mail and speaking at the Over 50s Forum. Details had already been given in Hartbeat.

The Chair asked whether there was any monitoring of whether the services were being delivered to the satisfaction of the individual. The Principal Finance Manager said that now questions put to the individual elicited what outcomes were important to them e.g. cleaning the house, doing laundry. If, when the services were reviewed by a care manager, these outcomes were not being delivered, then the Department could take steps to rectify this. However this was more complex if an individual had employed a carer using a direct payment rather than a contractor but there were mechanisms in place to support vulnerable people in handling this. A person who received a personal budget reminded the meeting that he had set up a business which provided a link between those needing care and carers to assist vulnerable people who were employers.

The Chair commended staff who over the last three years had made a change in culture and attitude. He said that the Hartlepool approach in conjunction with In Control was a success story.

Recommended

Members noted the comments made.

69. Investigation into Putting People First – The Delivery of Personalised Adult Social Care Services – Representative from Manchester City Council *(Scrutiny Support Officer)*

The Scrutiny Support Officer informed Members of the Forum that the representative from Manchester City Council was unable to attend the meeting but a written submission would be sent and circulated to members of the Forum when received from Manchester City Council.

The Chair reminded members that the representative from Oldham Council who had attended the previous meeting had raised an important point. This was, that individuals were entitled to make the wrong choices in their care as well as the correct choices but should this happen, support should be given to ensure that better choices were made.

Recommended

Members noted the comments.

70. Investigation into Putting People First – The Delivery of Personalised Adult Social Care Services – Suggestions for improvement to the implementation of the ‘Putting People First’ agenda *(Scrutiny Support Officer)*

The Chair confirmed that a Resident Representative had suggested that there be improved publicity in relation to the ‘Putting People First’ agenda.

Recommended

Members of the Forum noted the suggestion.

71. Care Quality Commission *(Scrutiny Support Officer)*

The Scrutiny Support Officer outlined the information received from the Care Quality Commission (CQC) ‘Voices into Action’. The Authority had been asked for a statement on how well social care providers were doing in the town. The Health Scrutiny Forum had made a submission in relation to the Primary Care Trust and Foundation Trust.

The Chair suggested that a copy of this Forum’s reports on the Quality of Care Homes and Putting People First – The Delivery of Personal Adult Social Care

Services should be forwarded to the CQC. The Scrutiny Support Officer agreed to bring back to the Forum any further information which was received from the CQC.

Recommended

Copies of the reports on the Quality of Care Homes and Putting People First – The Delivery of Personalised Adult Social Care Services be forwarded to the CQC.

72. Issues Identified from Forward Plan

No items.

73. Any Other Items Which the Chairman Considers Are Urgent

Allotments Development Strategy

It was suggested that all allotment holders in the town be invited to the next meeting of the Forum. The Scrutiny Support Officer agreed to ensure that they were.

A Member stated that she was unable to find the current Allotment Strategy on the Council's website. The Scrutiny Support Officer agreed to liaise with the relevant officer in relation to this.

As some revisions had been made to the existing strategy following suggestions from allotment holders, it was agreed that this be circulated prior to the next meeting.

Recommended

Members comments be noted.

The meeting concluded at 5.25 pm

C SIMMONS
CHAIR

ADULT AND COMMUNITY SERVICES SCRUTINY FORUM

24 February 2010



Report of: Scrutiny Support Officer

Subject: REVISED DRAFT ALLOTMENTS DEVELOPMENT
STRATEGY 2010 – 2015 - COVERING REPORT

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 To provide Members with the opportunity to consider the revised draft Allotments Development Strategy 2010 - 2015 and the feedback received from the extended consultation recently undertaken by the Council's Community Services Department.

2. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 2.1 At the meeting of the Forum held on 11 November 2009, Members deferred the consideration of the Strategy to a future meeting of the Forum to allow for further consultation of the Strategy to be undertaken by the Council's Community Services Department. The draft Strategy has been revised in light of the Feedback received from the consultation.
- 2.2 At this meeting today the Council's Departmental Officers will be presenting an overview of the consultation feedback received and also inviting comments from the Forum on the revised Strategy as part of their consultation process.
- 2.3 A representative from Cleveland Police will also be in attendance at this meeting to provide the Forum with information on the town wide approach to the safety and security of allotment sites.
- 2.4 The revised draft Strategy will be circulated for Members consideration, under separate cover, prior to this meeting.

3. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 That Members of the Forum consider the revised draft Allotments Development Strategy 2010 – 2015 along with the consultation feedback,

seeking clarification on any relevant issues from the officers where felt appropriate.

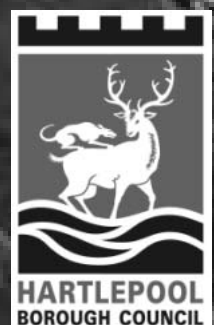
Contact Officer:- Laura Starrs – Scrutiny Support Officer
Chief Executive's Department - Corporate Strategy
Hartlepool Borough Council
Tel: 01429 523 647
Email: laura.starrs@hartlepool.gov.uk

BACKGROUND PAPERS

The following background papers were referred to in preparation of this report:

- (i) Draft Allotments Development Strategy 2010 – 2015
- (ii) Minutes of the meeting held on 11 November 2009

Parks and Countryside *Hartlepool*
Allotment Development Strategy 2010 - 2015



Parks and Countryside *Hartlepool*

Allotments Development Strategy 2010 - 2015



Parks and Countryside *Hartlepool*

Responsible for the care, development and promotion of:

- Public Rights of Way and Access Network,
 - Formal parks and Country Park areas,
- Countryside and Nature Conservation areas,
- Coast and associated Beach Safety provision,
- Town wide Horticulture and Stranton Nursery,
 - Cemeteries and the Crematoria,
 - Allotments,
 - Children's fixed play equipment,
- Football pitches, Games spaces and Bowling Greens

- Within the borough of Hartlepool.



Parks and Countryside *Hartlepool* Caring for, developing and promoting *Green Space* in Hartlepool.

Parks and Countryside *Hartlepool*
Allotments Development Strategy 2010 - 2015



Parks and Countryside *Hartlepool*
Allotments Development Strategy 2010 - 2015

February 2010

Parks and Countryside *Hartlepool*

Allotments Development Strategy 2010 - 2015



'Stop thinking in terms of limitations and start thinking in terms of possibilities'

Forward

Welcome to the proposed Allotments Development Strategy 2010 – 2015. In this document we consider the challenges currently facing the allotments service. Over a long period of time there has been a general deterioration in the condition of allotment sites in Hartlepool as a consequence of the volatile nature of funding and resource availability. Consequently the services limited staff base, without the general support of strong partnerships with allotment associations, has struggled to police inappropriate activity on some allotments and on occasion misuse by service users and neighbouring communities.

Historically a large amount of senior manager, director level and even Elected Member time has been drawn into addressing or inputting into low level issues resulting from a minority of allotment plots and holders. This misdirection of resources has contributed to the inability of the service to adopt a more proactive and constructive stance where we develop greater partnership working and jointly seek more outside investment. A service stance that would really meet the needs of the majority of plot holders; and those truly representative, democratic, inclusive, welcoming and forward thinking allotment associations; who jointly want to quietly get on with the business of allotment gardening.

The Development Strategy offers a series of possibilities, or developmental avenues, from which a new vision for the protection, promotion and management of Hartlepool's allotment resource can be built and sustained. This document needs support from all levels including Elected Members, Officers, plot holders, neighbouring communities, partner departments and outside bodies. Only working together will it be possible to see the improvements and positive changes, this strategy offers, become reality.

Over the years I have been fortunate to meet a number of good people who shared a common passion for delivering public services, helping the communities' in which we work and live to value and care for the natural environment around them. These people have been willing to share with me their knowledge and experience and I am forever in their debt. Amongst the many things I have learnt the value of patience, the art of listening, and the importance of applying common sense stand out. These virtues will be needed by all parties if this development strategy is to have any success over the coming years.

I continue to be fortunate in inheriting a wealth of knowledge, experience and enthusiasm in the Parks and Countryside team. Together we have begun to challenge ingrained practices, and debated approaches to formulate the proposed strategy before you. I would like to thank the following people for their valuable insight, help and support given in the preparation of this document: John Mennear, Richard Harlanderson, Jim Wilson, Janette Davison, Chris Scaife, Pat Wormald, Steve Robbins and Deborah Jefferson.

Chris Wenlock
Parks and Countryside Manager
Hartlepool Borough Council (May 2009)

Parks and Countryside *Hartlepool* Allotments Development Strategy 2010 - 2015



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Parks and Countryside *Hartlepool*

Allotments Development Strategy 2010 - 2015



Section 1 - Statement of intent

“Our vision is to work with allotment holders and surrounding communities to encourage through partnership working the growth of vibrant, supportive and inclusive allotment groups. Help identify through these partnerships the means and support necessary to take forward works to improve the quality, appearance and environmental value of allotments and promote greater community participation. Through these actions make a positive contribution to a greener and healthier future for the people of Hartlepool.”

In implementing the Allotment Development Strategy the intention is to develop positive partnerships, co-operation and a service area in which people can expect:

- **Secure sites with tidy and practical allotments; giving plot holders the opportunity for healthy relaxation, pleasure and social contact.**
- **Opportunities and encouragement to individuals and communities, including children and young people, wishing to be involved in the cultivation of allotments.**
- **A willingness to build friendly and co-operative relationships with plot holders, neighbourhood groups, voluntary organisations, children and young people, police and other community agencies to help improve and develop allotment sites through partnership.**
- **Encouragement to sites and associations to develop self management.**
- **To encounter, as a result of open and positive communication, a relationship whereby plot holders, allotment associations, members and officers share realistic expectations. Where we work in partnership to develop and support procedures that promote efficient and effective allotment administration.**
- **Effective and appropriate allocation of resources that become available to achieve prioritised, realistic and shared expectations for allotment sites.**
- **Fair open and equitable treatment and safe tenure.**
- **Opportunities for developing gardening skills.**
- **Fair charges and rents.**

Parks and Countryside *Hartlepool*

Allotments Development Strategy 2010 - 2015



Section 2 – Introduction to the production of the Strategy

Introduction

Parks and Countryside Hartlepool is responsible for the care, development and promotion of: the public rights of way and access network, formal parks and country park areas, countryside and nature conservation areas, coast and associated beach safety provision, allotments, children's fixed play equipment, football pitches, games spaces and bowling greens within the borough of Hartlepool.

In partnership with the communities it serves, members, partner organisations, other departments and officers, the unit wishes to build a clear vision through its development strategies for the continued improvement of its service areas. The service development strategies will help shape a *Green Spaces & Natural Environment Strategy for Hartlepool*.

This development strategy has been drafted for allotments held by the Parks and Countryside Hartlepool Section – directly managed sites and those sites under self management by allotment associations, but not for the small area of privately owned allotments.

Allotment overview

An allotment is an area of land in, or on the edge of, a developed area which can be rented by local people for the growing of vegetables, flowers or fruit. Allotments provide opportunities for those who wish to grow their own produce and support health, sustainability and social inclusion; they also provide garden space for those with no gardens, such as flat dwellers (Capita Symonds, 2007).

Background to the creation of the Allotments Development Strategy

Consider for a moment what do Hartlepool's allotments look like?

- They can look like this:



- Or you might be unlucky enough to see one like this:



So why have an Allotments Development Strategy for Hartlepool?

General observations:

- Allotments are a major feature of Hartlepool's urban environment - how they look and how they are used, like it or not, influences the perception of the town we live in.

Parks and Countryside *Hartlepool*

Allotments Development Strategy 2010 - 2015



- The majority of Hartlepool's allotments are in public ownership (1012 plots) – they are a community resource.
- Allotment Tenants are service users just like visitors to the swimming baths, or local library and have a obligation to work with the Council to ensure the service is used responsibly.
- Hartlepool Borough Council provides 1012 allotment plots across 16 sites. The sites range from large sites such as Stranton with 174 plots to small sites such as Greatham with 2 plots. In total, there are approximately 32 private allotment plots across the town.
- Allotment services in the Borough, like many nationally, have been subject to best value and efficiency targets over many years. As a consequence, many areas of allotment service delivery are regularly challenged to find innovative resourcing approaches to maintain and improve basic delivery requirements and infrastructure renewal.

Specific observations:

- Need clarity around what the 'Borough' wants from its allotment resource – a structure or vision is required to give direction to the service and importantly illustrate how plot holders and other partners can contribute.
- There is a wide gap between the 'aspirations' of plot holders and the wider community and the 'actual' resource capabilities of the Allotment Service e.g. enforcement, investment.
- Despite this there are some wonderful embryonic examples of good allotment tenancy and a growth in wider community participation in Hartlepool's allotment resource.

Desired outcomes

The strategy and the associated wide scale public and professional consultation that has gone into its production will it is hoped have the following outcomes:

- Understanding of the capabilities of all stakeholders; and set realistic but challenging aspirations for the future.
- Clarity about how plot holders and partners can contribute in bringing about real, positive and substantive change.
- Better relationships between allotment sites and the wider community.
- Positive, respectful and inclusive use of allotment plots and a genuine feeling of custodianship for the future.

Development of the Strategy

- The strategy is strongly influenced by the Local Government Association publication 'Growing in the Community'
- The document also draws on the experiences of other leading local authorities both locally and nationally.
- The strategy has been subject to wide scale public and professional consultation.



Parks and Countryside *Hartlepool*

Allotments Development Strategy 2010 - 2015



Who has been consulted on the draft document?

No consultation process can hope to contact 100% of the people but we can strive to achieve a representative sample of knowledge, experience and wisdom to inform the decision making process. To this end we have undertaken:

- June 2009 Internal professional consultation.
- July 2009 Members consultation and seminars.
- The member and associated internal consultation highlighted the soundness of the proposed strategy and included the observation *"If we can achieve half of what is outlined in the strategy we will dramatically change allotments in Hartlepool for the better"*.
- Autumn 2009 Allotment Associations, general community and public consultation.
- Comprehensive feedback was received from a series of Hartlepool Allotment Associations who have canvassed the opinions of their members. Comments such as *"overall impression is of a most valuable document for which an enormous amount of work has been done and a very wide range of sources consulted"* seem to reflect that the draft document had substantial merit and was a positive step forward.
- The Allotments team also sent a letter to every registered tenant, over 1000 people, notifying them personally that the draft document is available online, in all the local libraries and on loan from their Allotment Associations.

- The online draft version has been accessed over 550 times. This builds upon the wide press coverage the launch of the document received and an article in the 'Hartbeat' magazine distributed free to homes in Hartlepool.
- Staff also attended meetings with a variety of allotment holders and discussed the draft strategy.

What were we consulting upon?

Throughout the consultation we have been asking these questions:

1. Have we got it right? - Does this development strategy contain an appropriate 'Vision' for Hartlepool's allotment resource?
2. Have we missed any Aims or Aspirations out?
3. Do we need to re-think any of the objectives?
4. Can you think of better solutions to the problems faced?
5. Can you see a way in which you might be able to help contribute to making the aspirations become a reality?

Review process for feedback received as part of the consultation

Comments received as part of the public consultation have been considered, and incorporated where appropriate, as the final draft of the Allotments Development Strategy was drafted.

The finalised Allotment Development Strategy will be submitted for adoption by the Council in 2010.

Parks and Countryside *Hartlepool*

Allotments Development Strategy 2010 - 2015



Section 3 – How to read and use the Strategy

What is in the Strategy?

The strategy has a vision:

“Our vision is to work with allotment holders and surrounding communities to encourage through partnership working the growth of vibrant, supportive and inclusive allotment groups.

Help identify through these partnerships the means and support necessary to take forward works to improve the quality, appearance and environmental value of allotments and promote greater community participation.

Through these actions make a positive contribution to a greener and healthier future for the people of Hartlepool.”

The strategy tells you:

- What we know at the moment about Hartlepool's allotments.
- What resources are currently available and how they are used.
- About the service and resource challenges we have.

Most importantly the Strategy suggests what we can do together in partnership to help allotments be an asset to Hartlepool:

- And we call these suggestions the 'Proposals'.

The 'Proposals'

The Allotment Development Strategy contains seven broad “work areas” which are as follows:

- Promotion of allotment use and food growing
- Appropriate allotment provision
- Good administration
- Localised Allotment Management
- Allotment Crime Prevention
- Environmental sustainability
- Appropriate service resourcing

Aims – Aspirations

Each “work area” has a series of individual Aims or ‘aspirations’ underneath it.

Three different levels of Objectives can exist for each aim. These Objectives state the work proposed, resources permitting, to achieve the stated Aim.

Level One objective

Prioritise for delivery resources permitting as part of basic annual service package

Level Two objective

Will consider next priority for delivery if resources allow

Level Three objective

Would like to deliver but only if suitable opportunities and resources can be identified

Parks and Countryside *Hartlepool*

Allotments Development Strategy 2010 - 2015



- Level 1 objectives are considered to be the backbone of an effective allotment service offering and will be prioritised for delivery, resources permitting, each year.
- The level 2 and to a certain extent level 3 objectives will be reviewed for continued relevance and practicality of delivery in light of forecasted resource availability each year as the budgets are drawn up.
- Every 5 years level 2 and 3 operations will be reviewed, some may be deleted, others added in light of the strategic operational and funding environment. These 5 yearly reviews will be subject to a public consultation process.

producing low cost locally produced food in a sustainable way

Other potential opportunities and issues will present themselves during the initial 5 year review period of this strategy that have not been identified during its preparation but which are relevant to the Parks and Countryside Hartlepool Section's objectives for overall service delivery. When such opportunities or issues arise, officers and as appropriate members, will carefully judge each case on its merit, consider the opportunities offered in relation to the section's service objectives and the wider Council portfolio and policies and the effect it will have on implementing this Development Strategy.

Progress in achieving aims and objectives

How quickly progress can be made on individual Aims and Objectives contained in the document will be dependent upon the staff resources made available, and equally the help and support that is received from plot holders, allotment associations and other partnerships.

The strategy recognises the volatile nature of funding and resource availability. It should be remembered that the Allotments Development Strategy is a snap shot of a dynamic project planning and delivery process. The Aims and their respective Objectives do not have any 'valid till date'.

The Strategy recognises the importance of allotments as a leisure and recreational facility and for their benefits to communities, green spaces, health and well-being and wildlife, as well as in

Parks and Countryside *Hartlepool*

Allotments Development Strategy 2010 - 2015



Section 4 - Review of the current allotment service and available resources

Staff

Parks and Countryside Hartlepool have one Technical Officer whose primary responsibilities lie with Allotments and, when required, in supporting Play demands held by the section. This Technical Officer role is, as a direct consequence of the volume of issues arising from deteriorating infrastructure and inappropriate use of plots, principally reactive in nature.

The officer investigates issues that arise and where appropriate using the resources available co-ordinates a response using HBC Neighbourhood Services and outside contractors. These responses are often mend-and-make-do to tackle immediate issues or problems as the root cause is often symptomatic of the lack of external capital investment opportunities for allotments, a situation that has persisted over many decades.

Parks and Countryside Hartlepool also recognise the very high administrative workload associated with managing 1012 individual allotment plots over 16 diverse sites. One member of the administrative unit delivers an absolutely critical role for the section administering all of the allotment plots. This is a time consuming role and includes being the first point of contact for all enquiries, logging and filtering enquiries, and then passing them on if necessary to the technical officer for further action.

The administrative unit has also developed and refined the processes and systems needed to manage the vast amount of data required to effectively administer the allotment plots. The

section currently uses the specialist allotment management software package 'Clear advantage' to assist in this process.

The human resource challenge :

'Acting-down' resource wastage

Historically a large amount of senior manager and director level time has been inappropriately redirected into addressing or inputting into low level issues with allotment plots and holders. This misdirection of resources is compromising the adoption of a more proactive stance in relation to the allotment service provision.

Empowerment

The one member of administrative staff who administers all the allotment plots plays a vital role in the day-to-day management of allotment issues. Unfortunately the level of empowerment that could effectively exist with this highly competent and experienced Allotment Administrator is stifled and would be helped by the revision of some procedures.

Secondary to this is a need for plot holders, allotment associations, officers, council members and senior managers to address issues, or redirect them if necessary, to the appropriate level for resolution and thus reinforce and respect the procedures put in place to maintain and develop a cost effective service.

Parks and Countryside *Hartlepool*

Allotments Development Strategy 2010 - 2015



Enforceable guidance

The challenging situation described previously is compounded by the need to develop clear, accessible, friendly and enforceable guidance documentation for plot holders. Making clear what activities are not acceptable; and the authority's objectives in relation to the plot.

The move to a proactive stance

Consideration of the points made above and implementation of the suggested actions should, if applied well and supported at all levels, begin to reinforce weak areas of the current limited allotment service delivery package. A case can be put forward though for the Authority to move from this position of simply policing the status-quo and continuing to watch infrastructure decline.

This case sees the Authority adopt a clear proactive service delivery stance. In order to achieve this though it is necessary to consider ways of building in capacity for an 'allotments development' element to the work of the allotment team. A series of options are presented in this strategy.

Partnership challenge:

Being a good neighbour

The Parks and Countryside section has received a great deal of support from allotment holders and through its work with groups interested in working allotment sites. Unfortunately many issues still arise through some allotment holders failing to abide by the rules of tenancy to which they have signed up to, or as a result of unneighbourly actions. This has led in many cases to disruption and disturbance to neighbouring allotment holders and neighbouring home owners.

Clearly if the small allotment team is regularly engaged in dealing with issues arising from an inability to follow the rules and guidance put in place to ensure a pleasant and relaxing environment for plot holders and neighbouring landowners; then they cannot make the necessary headway in working with allotment holders and associations in finding investment to improve sites for all involved.

Service partnerships

For many years allotment service delivery has been perceived as a poisoned chalice with many inherited and generational challenges and an expected resistance to any change. Many Authorities have demonstrated though that it is possible to revitalise this most challenging of service areas.

The potential exists to use allotments as the vehicle for community based improvements in physical and mental health, fitness, and social wellbeing. There are enormous opportunities to improve community cohesion, citizenship, and community ownership of Hartlepool's green spaces through allotments.

In order to capitalise on these opportunities we need to invest energy and quality time to be able to harvest the benefits that are potentially available. Service partnership agreements with the health sector, regional bodies, businesses, local agencies, and local people are a realistic goal for a proactive Parks and Countryside allotment service.

Parks and Countryside *Hartlepool*

Allotments Development Strategy 2010 - 2015



The financial resource challenge:

Overview

Parks and Countryside Hartlepool has a budget allocation of approximately £90K for allotments which covers the cost of the Allotments Technical Officer, water supply costs and reactive maintenance costs for all the plots each year. In 2008 a further £28K approximately of additional one-off Capital monies were found and subsequently expended on works for the allotments.

In the 2008-09 financial year direct expenditure by the Parks and Countryside Section on allotments equated to approximately £116 per allotment plot. The rent levied on plot holders in 2008-09, a charge which is based primarily on size of plot, ranged from £14.78p to £64.62p per year.

The Allotment Administrator role is currently financed through Support Services and is an indirect cost not factored into the calculations above. The time expended by other Parks & Countryside Section staff, senior managers, and Assistant Directors on allotment issues amounts to a considerable additional resource expenditure which is also unaccounted for in the figures above.

Capital budget challenge

The following illustrates the capital investment challenge that faces the allotments section. Installation of modern coated metal external allotment fencing to replace dilapidated close board wooden fencing can, when demolition and disposal costs are factored in, cost between £75 - 150 per meter. A similar situation exists with internal track networks that fall under the Authorities care. The following table summarises the

approximate amount of external allotment fencing and internal track areas.

Estimated total external fencing lengths and internal track areas networks falling under the responsibility of the Authority.
- Derived from Hartlepool Borough Council Allotments Condition Surveys, June 1999

Site Name	Est. external fencing m	Est. track m ²
Briarfields	0	515
Brierton	100	1280
Burn Valley	3600	765
Catcote	1310	790
Chester Road	8581	6807
Greatham	551	571
Haswell Avenue	3841	484
Nicholsons Field	661	3220
Olive Street	31	231
Station Lane	340	2500
Stranton	6181	6903
Thompson Grove	0	332
Thornhill	492	1644
Throston	4362	3459
Waverley Terrace	315	408
Woodcroft	45	1614
Total:	30,410	31,523

Using today's costs external fencing replacement on the council's allotment sites represents a medium-term capital programme in the range of £2.28 million - £4.56 million. Renewal of internal track and haulage ways could represent a medium-term capital programme in the range of £4.72 million – £6.30 million.

Revenue budget challenge

A multitude of challenges face the annual revenue budget, abandoned plots, water charges, backlog of repairs, security and health and safety issues etc.; a selection of these are discussed below.

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The total annual water bill paid by Parks and Countryside Hartlepool for the allotments was budgeted at £10,436 in 2008-09 an average of £10.31p per plot. At present there is no incentive for plot holders to manage use and conserve water.

Another annual resource consideration is abandoned plots and the barrier they present to better allotment use and long-term retention of new plot holders. One of the consequences of the lowering of the profile and resources of the allotment service over the decades has been the gradual incipient decline in standards of allotment use in some areas.

It has been common to encounter buried gas canisters, animal carcasses, asbestos and other hazardous materials, glass from demolished green houses, caravans, fridges and freezers with CFC's present etc. The criminal element of society has also been found to have used hidden plots as 'chop-shops' for stolen vehicles and other goods. The resultant poisoning and contamination of allotment soil has left sites unusable without extensive topsoil removal and replacement. There have been circumstances where the clearance and disposal to registered facilities of fly tipping, hazardous waste, and polluted soil have cost the Section thousands of pounds per an incident.

The way forward

In recognition of all these challenges it is hoped that this Allotment Development Strategy:

- Raises awareness amongst all stakeholders of the issues surrounding allotments, their management and use.
- Encourages all parties to recognise the opportunities that could be developed with better understanding, support and commitment to the aims and objectives set out in the document.
- Leads to a renewed commitment by plot holders, allotment associations, council members and senior officers to support the allotment management, administration and enforcement procedures developed in partnership to minimise resource wastage.



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Section 5 – Proposals: The Aims and Objectives of the Strategy

Aim	Title
1	Promotion of allotment use and food growing

Level One objective

Prioritise for delivery resources permitting as part of basic annual service package

1.1 Ensure retention of new tenants

Work towards the long term retention of new tenants.

Tenants who leave after only a few months gain little benefit from their experience, as a previously neglected plot can often only really become productive in the second and subsequent years of cultivation. In addition, plots that have initially been cleared soon become overgrown again, the expense of clearing and rotovating the plot having been wasted, whilst the amount of administration work involved in constantly processing vacancies and new applications creates excessive workloads for allotment staff.

Research by other authorities indicates reasons for new tenants leaving can include the following:

- A lack of knowledge of how to grow food.
- Crops destroyed by pests and diseases.
- Difficulty in clearing and cultivating an overgrown plot.
- Security/vandalism.
- Lack of time.

- Attitude of some other tenants may be off-putting to younger tenants (particularly on some more traditional “older male” dominated sites).
- Cost of seeds, materials etc. needed.
- Service did not meet expectations.
- People may feel that they are made to feel unwelcome on a site or a part of a site because they are from an ethnic minority, a woman, because of their sexual orientation or because they are from a different age group to the majority of tenants.
- A person may feel unwelcome because they use different gardening methods to the majority of tenants.
- Access problems.
- Lack of a shed on the plot.
- Groups of Disabled people or people with mental health problems may be made to feel unwelcome because of the perceived fear or prejudice of other tenants.

Experiences in other authorities have shown that there are many cases where take up has improved dramatically on a site, to be followed by a spate of vandalism and anti-social behaviour, leading back to a rapid decline in tenancies. Bad experiences, particularly when someone is new to gardening can make them demoralised and consider it is not worth the effort.

Sometimes factions can develop on sites because of disputes; this can generate a “bad atmosphere” on a site. A consequence is tenants giving up because they do not wish to be involved in “allotment politics”.

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Although some of the above factors may be outside of the control of the council, the following are proposed ways, resources permitting, of improving the retention of tenants:

- **1.1.1** Phased introduction of clearing and rotovating overgrown vacant plots for new tenants.
- **1.1.2** Tendering of plots which are deemed to be unlettable due to their poor condition rather than offering individually to people on waiting list. Successful tenderers would be offered sites for extended rent free period in exchange for bringing 'problem' plots back into cultivation and ensuring they are secure.
- **1.1.3** Giving or directing new tenants to sources of allotment gardening support and advice. This could include encouraging allotment associations to produce a mail shot that can be sent out with the annual renewals and invoices to new and existing tenants of relevant allotment sites. Information included might be dates of future meetings, association contacts etc.
- **1.1.4** Working in partnership to ensure that all sites are secure – see 3.3.2
- **1.1.5** Having Site Representatives on as many sites as possible to provide help and advice.
- **1.1.6** Working in partnership to ensure good access – see 3.3.2
- **1.1.7** Making all tenants aware of their responsibilities towards others, including making it clear that those who harass others can face eviction.
- **1.1.8** Consider offering half or smaller plots on sites and publicise this fact.
- **1.1.9** Encourage the formation and development of allotments associations who can provide seeds, compost etc to members at discounted prices and provide advice and support – see 3.4
- **1.1.10** Work towards maintaining allotment tenancy rates at or above 95% through partnership working with allotment associations and use of the mass inspection programme.

Hartlepool enjoys a high level of occupancy across its sites and the Parks and Countryside section recognises the most valuable allotment resources are the tenants. The current rate of tenancy fluctuates around the 95% level. Mass inspection programmes since 2006 have resulted in better levels of cultivation across all sites and new tenants have replaced those tenants who were not utilising allotment sites for their primary purpose.

The healthy waiting list for most sites would suggest that a tenancy rate of 95% or above should be adopted as the norm for sites to ensure that high levels of cultivation are maintained and income into the service is maximised.

To date, there have been three mass inspection programmes undertaken. In October 2006, there were 269 plots that were classed as vacant or not being worked. A subsequent inspection in July 2007 found 187 plots either vacant or not being worked.

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Level Two objective
Will consider next priority for delivery if resources allow

1.2 Encourage diversity of tenants

Work towards the engagement of a diverse portfolio of allotment tenants and in doing so bring the health benefits of allotment based activity to all sections of the community.

The traditional image of allotment tenants is one of elderly white working class males. It is intended that we will seek to find initiatives to promote allotments, and work with:

- **1.2.1** More women, couples and families.
- **1.2.2** Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) communities.
- **1.2.3** Find innovative ways of promoting and advertising Allotments, especially in areas of poor uptake.
- **1.2.4** To promote the health benefits of Allotment Gardening.
- **1.2.5** Support opportunities to work in partnership with schools, Health Authorities, Doctors Surgeries etc. to promote and encourage allotments to be used as an educational resource.
- **1.2.6** To offer plots free of charge to schools and introduce a Best School Plot competition.
- **1.2.7** To continue to work with community groups, especially in areas of poor uptake to encourage food growing in areas where it is widely acknowledged that issues such as

poor diet, lack of exercise and obesity are most acute.

- **1.2.8** To support and attend events organised locally on allotments to promote the image of allotment gardening.

Research carried out by other authorities has indicated impairments such as arthritis and mobility problems are often cited as reasons for older tenants vacating plots.

The Disability Discrimination Act requires a body to make reasonable adjustments to improve access to its facilities by Disabled people. This includes considering the needs of disabled users when considering footpath improvements or vehicle access, but it can also involve simpler adjustments such as a gate that is easier to open, or better information for partially sighted people. Clearance of neglected plots can also help people with disabilities to get started on plots. It is intended, therefore, to address these issues in the following ways:

- **1.2.9** Seek funding and partnership opportunities to improve participation by disabled people through the creation of accessible plots, ideally with the following facilities:
 - raised beds;
 - wide paths;
 - water supply;
 - accessible shed;
 - vehicle access.
- **1.2.10** The above will be in addition to making sites more physically accessible generally as suitable capital investment, and maintenance opportunities present themselves.

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Aim	Title
2	Appropriate allotment provision

Level One objective

Prioritise for delivery resources permitting as part of basic annual service package

2.1 Ensure adequate provision of allotments.

Maintain an average level of allotment provision for the entire borough of Hartlepool of 26.1 plots per 1,000 households as per PPG17 recommendations

There are currently 16 Council allotment sites across the town they are described below:

North Area

Nicholson's Field
Chester Road
Olive Street
Thornhill
Throston
Thompson Grove

In the North area, there are 454 plots (including private provision) making 35.2 plots per 1,000 households available (above the level recommended by the National Society of Allotment and Leisure Gardeners target provision of 20 plots per 1,000 households).

Central Area

Briarfields
Burn Valley
Brierton/Rossmere
Stranton
Catcote

In the Central area, there are 377 plots (including private provision) making 24.5 plots per 1,000 households available (above the level recommended by the National Society of Allotment and Leisure Gardeners target provision of 20 plots per 1,000 households).

South Area

Station Lane
Woodcroft
Greatham
Haswell Avenue

In the South area, there are 213 plots (including private provision) making 19.3 plots per 1,000 households available (below the level recommended by the National Society of Allotment and Leisure Gardeners target provision of 20 plots per 1,000 households).

Whilst there is an apparent shortfall of allotment sites in the south area, the overall picture in Hartlepool shows an average of 26.1 plots per 1,000 households - above the level recommended by the NSALG – and also above the average allotment provision in England (currently 15 plots per 1,000 households).

- **2.1.1 Monitor level of available plots per 1,000 households in Borough.**

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Level Two objective
Will consider next priority for delivery if resources allow

2.2 Transfer under-utilised sites to alternative or temporary uses

Consider utilising vacant allotment land which is not defined as surplus for other revenue generating purposes permitted under the Allotments Acts, such as grazing or community uses, ensuring that it is held as a 'land bank' for potential future allotment use.

There may be opportunities to use underutilised areas of sites for alternative uses. In particular it may be appropriate for land to be taken out of allotment use that is not deemed suitable because of the following reasons:

- Flooding
- Poor soil
- Shade from trees
- Badger setts and other wildlife habitats

Alternative uses for such land could include:

- Wildlife/conservation areas
- Open space
- Rotation of playing fields
- Community plant and tree nurseries
- Grazing

Legal advice would need to be sought as to which of these uses will require Secretary of State consent and which will be deemed as temporary uses under the Allotments Acts, as it is intended that suitable vacant land will act as a potential land bank for future allotment growing.

When a site has 6 or more people on its waiting list for allotments, any allotment land in the area used for temporary uses would be transferred back to allotments if there is no alternative vacant land nearby (it is a requirement of the Allotments Acts 1908 that an allotment authority must consider providing allotments where there are 6 people or more requesting to rent allotments).

The issues to consider when considering a site for an alternative use include:

- Legal issues.
- Accessibility (especially general public access).
- Management responsibility.
- Funding.
- Reversibility of alternative uses (i.e. requirement for Secretary of State consent).
- Public desire for the alternative use versus need for allotments.

It is important to remember that some uses (e.g. open space or wildlife) may in theory be reversible, but in practice may not be so easy. Therefore Secretary of State consent should be sought to prevent future conflicts of interest from occurring.

- **2.2.1** Consider opportunities that arise to positively utilise vacant plots for the benefit of the neighbouring communities whilst ensuring they are held as a 'land bank' for potential future allotment use. Triggers to indicate areas should return to allotment use include a drop below the England average level of allotment provision (currently 15 plots per 1,000 households) for the entire borough of Hartlepool.

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Aim	Title
3	Good administration

Level One objective

Prioritise for delivery resources permitting as part of basic annual service package

3.1 Allotment procedures manual

An allotment procedure manual will be developed through an amalgamation and review process of all existing procedural information and documentation to ensure that the current procedures are correctly documented.

The development of this manual will be conducted with HBC legal department to ensure compliance with any statutory requirements. Allotment holders will be advised of proposed procedural changes before annual tenancy renewal. In particular, it is intended to update the following procedures:

- **3.1.1** Reduction of the time between reminder letters being sent out before issuing Notice to Quits for:
 - Non-payment of rent, to ensure that non-payers are evicted more quickly.
 - Non-cultivation of plots, to ensure that plots are utilised by those genuinely interested in growing vegetables, flowers or fruit.
- **3.1.2** Consider the introduction of a "Three Strikes and You Are Out" rule for tenants who persistently receive Notice to Remedy letters. Any tenant receiving in total 3 Notice to Remedy letters on one plot within a 3-year period will automatically

be given a Notice to Quit their allotment (subject to inspection of the plot by an HBC Technical Officer) which will not be rescinded other than in exceptional circumstances.

- **3.1.3** Introduction of a separate agreement for persistent problem tenants to sign (e.g. agreeing not to have bonfires, harass others or bring rubbish onto a site). Failure to abide by the agreement would lead to an **automatic** Notice to Quit.
- **3.1.4** Ensure that there are procedures for complaints, disputes and mediation e.g. an Allotments Appeals Panel.
- **3.1.5** Agree a recognised eviction methodology with the council's legal department and Police, and consult with allotment associations.
- **3.1.6** The procedure manual should also include any specific guidance that relates to agreements and procedural processes agreed with Associations undertaking certain activities on sites under a Devolved Management agreement.

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Level One objective

Prioritise for delivery resources permitting as part of basic annual service package

3.2 New tenancy agreement

Develop new tenancy agreement and code of conduct for plot holders to update the rules and make the tenancy agreement more relevant and easier to read and understand.

Many of the following clauses are included as the issues covered have been a substantial cause for complaint and disturbance over many years:

General:

- **3.2.1.1 Annual Tenancy Agreement.** Annually, to remain a plot holder, all existing and new tenants will be expected sign and return to the Council's Allotments Team one copy of the tenancy agreement; and adhere to the rules and conditions of tenancy in relation to - their use of Council owned allotment land; and their interaction with other plot holders and the Council's Allotments Team. The Council as Landlord retains all rights and powers over the land.

The Hartlepool Borough Council Allotment Tenancy Agreement applies to all tenants be they existing or new. Where devolved management agreements exist some of the Rules and Conditions of Tenancy e.g. permitted activities may be further refined or restricted by the particular allotment site management body.

- **3.2.1.2 Plot ID Numbers.** All plots must display clearly on site the identification number in a position that

can be read easily by all interested parties in a prominent position at the front of the allotment plot on a board no larger than 30cm x 10cm or 12"x4".

- **3.2.1.3 Primary user.** The Tenant will be expected to be the primary user of the plot and responsible for the activities of all registered partners and visitors to the plot.
- **3.2.1.4 Sub-letting.** The tenant shall not enter into any agreement, verbal or written, to sub-let, assign or part with possession of the allotment plot or any part of it under any circumstances.
- **3.2.1.5 Use of plot.** The tenant shall use the allotment plot only for the purpose of growing vegetables, fruit, flowers or lawn for the tenant and their immediate family's domestic use.

Where permission has been sought for them, and subsequently granted by the Council's Allotment Team, limited numbers of certain specific animals may be allowed to be kept upon plot at specific allotment sites. The Council as Landlord reserves the right to amend or repeal permissions to keep animals on plots.
- **3.2.1.6 Unauthorised or illegal use of plot.** The tenant shall not use the allotment plot, or allow it to be used, for the purposes of any trade and business.

The operation of a business from the plot is banned and the bringing on to a plot of produce for the purpose of selling on is not permitted.

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The storage of goods or disposal of business waste on plots is not permitted. Should it become necessary to take enforcement action Trading Standards, the Environmental Enforcement Unit and the Police will be notified as appropriate.

- **3.2.1.7 Cultivation levels.** The Government's guide for plot holders states that tenants must keep plots clean and maintained in a good state of cultivation. The plot should be mainly used for the growing of vegetables and fruit.

As a guide the Allotment Team advises new tenants that ideally two thirds of the total plot area should be under cultivation.

The tenant will keep the allotment plot free from weeds, well manured and maintained in a proper state of cultivation. If for any reason the tenant is unable to maintain the garden for a prolonged period of time, for example, due to illness, the tenant or a relative should notify the Council's Allotment Team in writing.

- **3.2.1.8 Internal paths.** Where present the tenant shall keep paths adjoining the allotment plot clean and in good repair. The tenant shall not obstruct, or allow to be obstructed any path or road and soil must be kept clear of the edge to enable rainwater to drain away. A clear and unobstructed division path at least 45cm (18") wide should be at each side of the allotment plot.
- **3.2.1.9 Internal tracks.** In order to facilitate access by emergency and maintenance vehicles tenants of allotment plots adjacent to main

access tracks, shall ensure that the track is kept free of obstructions and hazards at all times and shall ensure that the width of the track is retained at all times. Tenants must not reduce the track width by encroachment, or depositing soil, or any other material or debris on the track surface.

- **3.2.1.10 Vehicles on allotment sites.** Vehicles brought onto allotment sites are the responsibility of their owners; the Council will not be responsible for any damage, injury or theft associated with the use of such, and owners of vehicles used in this manner should ensure they have adequate motor insurance including third party cover for this type of use.

It is not permitted to use allotment plots for parking or garaging of vehicles.

Plot users are requested to park considerately and not block access ways to adjacent properties or routes that might be required by emergency vehicles.

Allotment tracks and pathways are generally not suitable for motor vehicle traffic. Access to many allotment tracks is barred to plot holders vehicles with pedestrian access only allowed. The exception is emergency vehicles or vehicles required for site maintenance and the emergency services are provided with keys to open these gates if necessary.

Should plot holders bring a motor vehicle on to an allotment site for any reason they should limit their speed to 5mph and drive with due care and consideration stopping to allow

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pedestrians and other users to pass safely where necessary.

- **3.2.1.11 Trees.** The tenant shall not, without prior written consent of the Council's Allotment Team, cut, prune, remove or interfere with any timber or trees outside the boundaries of their plot.
- **3.2.1.12 Minerals.** The tenant shall not or permit to take, sell or carry away any mineral, soil, stone, gravel, sand, slate, chalk, flints, clay or sub-strata or allow any other person to do so.
- **3.2.1.13 Damage.** The tenant shall not cause damage, or allow damage to be caused, to any roads, paths, gates, fences etc. or any other Council property. The Council is entitled to require any tenant who has caused or is causing damage to repair such damage. If the tenant fails, refuses or neglects to repair such damage within 28 days of the Council requiring him/her to do so, the Council may undertake the work and charge the cost of such works to the tenant. Non-payment of these rent arrears will result in termination of tenancy.

Allotment Security:

- **3.2.2.1 Allotment Security.** The Council's Allotment Team work in close partnership with the police, Neighbourhood Forums and other agencies to help allotment tenants reduce their vulnerability to incidents of crime and antisocial behaviour.
- **3.2.2.2 Security Gates.** In partnership, the Council has secured funding over recent years to install locked access gates to allotment sites across the

borough to which tenants are issued keys. These gates should be closed and secured immediately after passing through them, either when entering or exiting the site.

- **3.2.2.3 Reporting crime and antisocial behaviour.** Allotment tenants are encouraged to report any instances of crime or antisocial behaviour on allotments to the police. Under reporting can affect the ability to task police resources to any new issues.

Tenants have a significant role to play in reducing the chance of becoming a target for crime e.g. thinking carefully about what equipment/ machinery is brought on to sites, how sites are used - locking security gates, development of sites to assist natural surveillance, early and accurate crime logging/ reporting to the police etc..

- **3.2.2.4 Keys.** For many years now the Allotment's Team has provided Police and PCSOs with keys to access allotment sites and the initiative is seeing regular patrols of sites being initiated where a concentration of incidents have been reported.

Locked security gates are a front line defence against criminal activity and plot holders are asked to keep keys safe and secure. The Tenant is responsible for the activities of all registered partners and visitors to the plot.

- **3.2.2.5 Property marking.** Hartlepool's allotments are not very different, in both layout and crime issues, from many local authority sites in the north east and the police have

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done research looking at how other districts are addressing the perceived crime issues. Out of this process was highlighted the importance of using micro-dot marking of property on allotment sites – the modern equivalent of property marking pen. Just as important is the prominent signage on those sites by tenants e.g. stickers on sheds, greenhouses, gates etc., to warn potential thieves of the preventative actions that have been taken by plot holders.

- **3.2.2.6 Personal safety.** Tenants and visitors to allotment sites are reminded to pay due regard to their own personal health and safety and others who may be around them.

- **3.2.2.7 Access.** The tenant, registered partners or visitors shall not enter the allotment site except by the provided tracks, paths and associated gates. Tenants are not allowed to install additional entrances or gates without prior written permission of the Council's Allotment Team. Tenants are also not allowed to modify or interfere with the padlocks, fences, gates or any other security provision made by the Council.

- **3.2.2.8 Hours of Use.** The Council reserves the right to delegate authority to any appropriate policing or security body to challenge the activities of any person found on any allotment site at any hour of the day.

To help combat crime and antisocial behaviour persons found on an allotment site or plot outside of those times normal for the maintenance of an allotment can expect to be challenged. As a general guide in the summer this

would be between the hours of 5.00am and 10.00pm daily. During the winter months due to reduced daylight these 'normal' hours might be considerably shortened.

This particular area of the rules and guidance acknowledges that some tenants may have animal welfare duties and these may extend beyond the 'normal hours'. In these particular circumstances tenants can access their plots outside these hours but they should expect occasionally to be asked to explain their presence to police officers, PCSO's and other authorised security personnel that should encounter them on site in the hours of darkness.

Fire Safety- Storage and handling of fuel for heating and machinery:

Fire and explosions are a real risk on plots and pose specific dangers to the emergency services tasked to deal with them. In order to reduce risk to the public and emergency services the following restrictions will be operating:

- **3.2.3.1 Restriction on gas cylinders.** Only canisters containing LPG are to be used on plots for heating and lighting. No other type of gas cylinder is permitted. The maximum canister size is 15kg of which only two canisters (be they full or empty or any stage between) are permitted on a plot at any one time. All tenants with pressurised gas cylinders on plots are required to:
 - Register them with the Council;
 - Ensure they are stored correctly and securely;

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- Ensure they as plot holder have relevant third party insurance to cover their presence on site.

- **3.2.3.2 Restriction on inflammable liquids.** Maximum inclusive total of 20 litres of inflammable liquid (paraffin, petrol, diesel, methylated spirits etc.) can be stored by tenants on plots. All inflammable liquids must be in containers specifically designed for their storage with appropriate, visible and readable safety warnings on the outside of the container. Containers to be kept in adequately secure and ventilated circumstances. Fuel in machinery or heaters is not included in this storage total but should not exceed an additional inclusive total of 10 litres for the plot.

Being Considerate Neighbours:

The Council as Landlord expects all its tenants to act in a considerate and responsible manner to all neighbours both plot holders and the neighbouring public. The following areas have persistently generated complaints and the following restrictions will be in force:

- **3.2.4.1 Restriction on bonfires.** Bonfires only allowed during the last week in March; and first and second week in November each year. As a general rule all suitable materials to be composted or in exceptional circumstances after agreement with Council's Allotment Team disposed of by green waste skip.

When burning rubbish on the allotment plot, the tenant must consider the

effect of the smoke on other tenants and occupiers of neighbouring premises.

Tenants should not light any bonfires or cause any smoke nuisance as defined by the Environmental Protection Act 1990, section 80. The tenant may be subject to independent enforcement action under the terms of this Act if they disregard this condition. If the tenant is found guilty they could in addition have their tenancy terminated.

The tenant must not burn the following materials on the allotment plot:

- Rubber/Plastics/Foam/Paint;
- Any material originating outside of the allotment site/plot;
- Any material producing black smoke;
- Any other hazardous material that could cause environmental damage.
- The tenant must not use any flammable material, for example petrol, to assist burning.

Where requested by a Council Officer, the tenant must stop burning immediately.

- **3.2.4.2 Dogs – Rules pertaining to tenants, registered partners and visitors bringing dogs on allotments when they visit plots.** It is a requirement to keep dogs on a lead or under close control so they do not stray onto other plots or disrupt other site users.

Tenants must ensure the responsible removal and appropriate disposal of dog faeces.

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Visiting dogs should not be a source of nuisance (barking/ howling etc.) whilst on site.

- **3.2.4.3 Nuisance and Anti-Social Behaviour.** The tenant shall not cause or permit to be caused any of the following:

- A gathering on the allotment plot or site to consume alcohol or facilitate drug use.
- Use any building or shed on the allotment plot for residential or sleeping purposes;
- Bring firearms or air rifles onto the allotments;

If a tenant is found to be connected with any of these above activities on an allotment plot it will result in their tenancy being terminated.

Similarly if substantive evidence is presented that a tenant or persons invited on to a site by the tenant have been involved in anti-social behaviour the Council may refuse to provide them with an allotment plot. These activities might include:

- Nuisance, annoyance or damage to the allotment plot or to the tenant or owner of any adjoining or neighbouring premises.
- The depositing of any refuse on or obstructing any path set out for the use of allotment plot holders;
- Trespass on other tenants' allotments.

- **3.2.4.4 Children.** The tenant shall ensure that any children brought on to the allotment site are accompanied and supervised by the tenant or other responsible adult.

- **3.2.4.5 Harassment and threatening behaviour.** Tenants who harass or threaten neighbours, officers or the public can be evicted. Tenants are reminded they are responsible for the activities of all registered partners and visitors to the plot.

All issues should be documented/ recorded (date, time, description of persons/ vehicles present, description of incident) by those affected and reported promptly to the police.

Animals on Allotments:

- **3.2.5.1 Compulsory registration of all livestock/ animals on the allotment plot:** Tenants wishing to keep animals on their allotment plot must first submit to the Allotments Administrator at Hartlepool Borough Council full details of the type and number of animals they would like permission to keep on the plot.

The Allotment Team will consider the request and may decline applications to keep certain animals or request a revision of numbers of animals kept on the plot where it is felt inappropriate.

Only when Tenants have fully satisfied the requirements and conditions deemed necessary by the Allotment Team will they be provided with written permission to keep the agreed animals on the plot.

Requests for amendments to written permissions that have previously been given will require submission of a written request to the Allotments Administrator at Hartlepool Borough

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Council for consideration by the Allotments Team.

Specifically, the Allotment Team requires all tenants to submit the following information:

- Complete details of the numbers and type of animals the Tenant is requesting permission to house on the allotment plot.
- If Tenants cannot be clear precise about the exact number of each type of animals, they are requested to indicate a maximum number of each type of animal proposed to be kept on the allotment plot.

3.2.5.2 Dogs on allotments. Tenants are advised that the overnight kennelling of dogs on allotments is to be gradually phased out. Initially this is likely to take the form of no further tenants being given permission to keep dogs overnight on plots. Existing tenants with permission are likely not to see this permission renewed upon natural death, or permanent removal by the tenant, of any existing dogs which currently have permission. In all cases the Council reserves the right to revise any existing permissions and the gradual phasing out of permissions should circumstances require it.

Dogs should not be a source of nuisance (barking/ howling etc.). Minimum enforcement practice in cases of nuisance usually rescinds any existing permission to keep the problem dog on the allotment.

The use of allotments for the purpose of dog breeding is not acceptable and any reported cases will be referred to

the Animal Welfare team of the Environmental Health unit.

It is a requirement to keep dogs on a lead or under close control so they do not stray onto other plots. No guard dogs are permitted on allotment plots. Tenants must ensure the responsible removal and appropriate disposal of dog faeces.

- **3.2.5.3 Fully Restricted Sites.** No animals (with the exception of registered bee hives) are to be kept on the following sites:

- Briarfields
- Haswell Avenue
- Olive Street
- Thompson Grove
- Waverly Terrace
- Woodcroft

All other sites will be kept under review to ensure the presence of livestock does not become a nuisance.

- **3.2.5.4 Types of Animals.** On those allotment sites where animals are currently allowed the following restrictions apply:

(a) Permitted animals:

- Chickens (although cockerels are restricted to certain sites).
- Rabbits
- Pigeons
- Bees (only registered hives)

(b) Cockerels are banned from the following sites:

- Brierton
- Chester Road
- Greatham
- Station Lane

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All other sites will be kept under review to ensure the presence of cockerels does not become a nuisance to neighbouring properties.

No other animals are permitted to be kept, housed or stabled on allotment sites. It is the duty of the plot holder to ensure:

- the animals are pre-registered with the Council,
- that numbers of animals kept do not exceed those agreed by the Council,
- the animals are kept in good health and welfare conditions, and;
- that the animals do not cause a danger or nuisance to others.

Promotion of good allotment care:

- **3.2.6.1 Contamination from carpets.** The use of carpets as a weed suppressant on sites is banned.
- **3.2.6.2 Contamination of plots.** It is not permitted to bring rubbish, hazardous materials or problematic disposal items onto plots for storage or burial. *The following list is not exhaustive but illustrates items that are not acceptable: asbestos, animal carcasses, broken panes of glass, white goods: fridges, freezers, washing machines, dryers, cookers, TV's etc., mattresses, scrap metal, scrap plastic, carpets, household and commercial waste; items such as motor vehicles or parts there-of, waste oil containers and other liquids and canisters that are not expressly for use in growing*

vegetables, fruit or flowers. If in doubt do not bring it onto site.

- **3.2.6.3 Re-cycling/ Rubbish.** The tenant shall keep the allotment plot and the surrounding area clear of litter, refuse, or other rubbish.

Tenants are encouraged to recycle and/or re-use material in an environmentally friendly manner but only strictly for the purposes of direct horticultural care of their plot. Waste recycling centres are not permitted on allotment plots. Tenants are not allowed to bring onto the allotment plot general rubbish for the purposes of disposal. Any non-recyclable items generated by an allotment plot should be taken to the nearest appropriate local amenity site.

The tenant shall not deposit or permit to be deposited on the allotment plot, any refuse or decaying matter (except manure and compost in such quantities as may reasonably be required for the use in the cultivation of the allotment plot) or place any refuse or matter elsewhere on any adjoining allotment plot or site.

- **3.2.6.4 Composting.** The tenant shall maintain compost heaps in a tidy condition and they must be in proportion to the size of plot, for example, for a 10 pole plot (250 square metres) the heap should not exceed 5 cubic metres in size.
- **3.2.6.5 Water Supply.** The tenant shall not waste or contaminate the water supply.

The tenant must not interfere with any water supply for the use of all tenants.

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The Council may shut off the water supply when it deems necessary, including for the purposes of emptying the pipes owing to frost or any other cause.

■ **3.2.6.6 Chemicals/ Pesticides.**

Tenants should ensure that any chemicals and or pesticides are applied in accordance with the manufacturer's guidelines and be approved products. Tenants should ensure that when spraying it is not allowed to drift onto paths or other tenant's allotment plots.

Improving the visual impact of allotment plots:

- **3.2.7.1 External fence.** No structures to be attached or supported by external fencing. Where this is currently the case plot holders will be expected to make arrangements to rectify the situation when external fencing replacement or maintenance is undertaken.

- **3.2.7.2 Building Control in relation to structures on allotment plots.** The tenant shall not, without prior written consent of the Council's Allotment Team, erect on the allotment plot any dwelling house, chalet, tool house, shed, greenhouse, summer house, fences, compost bays, gates or any other building or structure whatsoever. This directive includes replacement or renewals of existing structures on plots.

If the Council's Allotment Team gives consent to any building or structure, it may be subject to additional conditions, materials or position as

imposed by the Council's Planning Department.

- **3.2.7.3 Responsibility for structures.** Structures (and their foundations) need to be capable of being removed from the plot before the tenancy is surrendered.

The Council will, if sufficient notice is given, endeavour at the request of a departing tenant to secure a new tenant and offer the prospective tenant responsibility for taking over any existing structures on a plot.

If a structure is not removed by the tenant surrendering the plot they may be subject to pay for costs incurred in safely removing the structure.

Any structures erected on an allotment plot by the tenant (or previous tenants in the case of structures passed on to new tenants) are the responsibility of the current tenant. They should be well maintained and in a safe and serviceable condition that does not pose a danger themselves, other users or visitors of the allotment site, the public or neighbouring land owners.

- **3.2.7.4 The process, which must be completed BEFORE starting any construction, for requesting permission to erect a structure on an allotment plot.** Tenants wishing to erect any structure must first submit to the Allotments Administrator at Hartlepool Borough Council full details of the proposed structure.

The Allotment Team will consider the request and may decline applications to erect structure which would not be suitable or request a revision of

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proposals where it is felt inappropriate as it does not follow the guidance provided.

Only when Tenants have fully satisfied the requirements and conditions deemed necessary by the Allotment Team will they be provided with written permission to erect a particular structure on the allotment plot. This written approval may stipulate the structures removal by tenant at end of agreement.

The written approval could also in some circumstances require a refundable non-removal payment guarantee to be paid to the Council for example when a disproportionately large structure is proposed that would make substantial areas of the plot difficult to bring back into cultivation.

Specifically, the Allotment Team requires all tenants to consider the following criteria that must be met for any proposed structure and submit relevant information in their application to the Council's Allotment Team.

Structure criteria:

The structure must meet the following criteria:

■ 3.2.7.5 Area of plot occupied by structures.

- Ideally a minimum of two thirds of plot should be available for open land cultivation.
- Proportion of remaining third would include - compost, paths structures (greenhouses/ sheds), storage, pigeon coups, animal runs etc.
- No individual structure can exceed 30m². Building with less than 2m

gaps between them would be considered as one structure.

■ 3.2.7.6 Height.

- Ground based single storey structure.
- Maximum height to eaves 6ft.
- Maximum height at ridge from ground level 9ft.

■ 3.2.7.7 Foundations for proposed structures.

As with other aspects of the proposed structure a tenant may be required to remove (or pay for the removal of) foundations at the end of a tenancy. For this reason concrete foundations should not be used; wood or paving slabs might be a more appropriate alternative.

■ 3.2.7.8 Materials.

- **Reclaimed or recycled materials:** The Allotments Team will need detailed information about what will be used and how it will affect external appearance. For example old doors used as external walls are likely to be unacceptable.
- **New materials.** In the case of wood for example these are likely to be acceptable but again some details about the external appearance of the finished structure will be required by the Allotment Team.
- **Brick and block work.** All structures need to be easily removable at end of tenancy and for this reason, brick and block work is not acceptable.

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- **3.2.7.9 Roofing.** The roof of a structure tends to have the largest visual impact outside of allotment site. As a consequence particular emphasis is put on achieving a visually sensitive roofing solution. For example a felted wooden roof would be generally acceptable. Metal sheeting might be considered as long as painted for example green/ black/ dark colours.

- **3.2.7.10 Internal fencing where new external fencing has been installed to the allotment site.** The following rules and guidance applies to allotment sites which have received new external fencing e.g. Waverly Terrace. It looks to support the Police's principle of 'natural surveillance' whereby there are less places for those intent on criminal activity to hide and sites are easier to patrol and police.

In order to promote natural surveillance the following guidance will apply on these types of allotment site to plot holders considering new and replacement internal fencing:

- Internal fencing if utilised to be no higher than 4ft high from mean allotment ground level.
- Barbed or razor wire must not be used anywhere on or around the allotment plot.
- Examples of potentially acceptable materials:
 - Wooden post, rail;
 - Wooden post, rail and pales;
 - Wooden post and four strands of galvanised 4mm diameter plain wire equally spaced up posts.
 - Wooden post and four strands of galvanised 4mm diameter plain

wire equally spaced up posts with rabbit netting.

- Post and woven hazel/willow hurdles.

- **3.2.7.11 Use of structure.** Any proposed structure for an allotment plot must have a clear horticultural purpose in relation to the cultivation, maintenance of the plot, or welfare of permitted animals (for which separate permission to keep animals on the plot must be obtained from the Council's Allotment Team).

The Council's Allotment Team will require details from the applicant about why the structure is required and what it will be used for, specifically:

- **Detailed of proposed use, what materials will potentially be stored within structure.** For example is the structure potentially for use to store:
 - Essential low risk garden tools/ materials for use on the plot only – This should be generally acceptable.
 - Potentially hazardous liquids and gas containers – These materials have restricted levels and must be for use in cultivation of plot. The proposed structure will need to reflect the safe storage requirements of these substances. Separate registration of the substances with the Council's Allotment Team will be required for fire risk management purposes.
- **Storage of small trailers.** These can only be housed with written permission from the Council's

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Allotment Team and will, if permission granted, will form part of third non cultivated area.

- **Heating of structures.** Fires are strictly restricted on plots, if the applicant has the intention of using solid fuel heating within structure this would need to be identified in the application to the Council's Allotment Team with details of proposed fuel and stove/ chimney structure.

It should be noted that Hartlepool is a smokeless zone and that only smokeless fuels would be permissible for use in stoves.

- **Restriction prohibiting connection to mains gas or electricity services.** All structures on allotments have general restrictions prohibiting connection to mains gas or electricity services.

Enforcement:

- **3.2.8.1 Power to inspect plots:** The allotments are Council land and any officer of the Council is entitled at any time when directed by the Allotment Team to enter and inspect an allotment garden and ensure compliance with rules and conditions of tenancy. In this, the Council complies with the requirements of the Data Protection Act 1998.

Hindrance or harassment of a duly appointed officer in carrying out inspections of the plot could result in an immediate Notice to Quit the plot being issued.

- **3.2.8.2 Removal of property.** Where a notice to quit has been issued by the Council, and structures on the plot are allowed to remain, the tenant must ensure that any structures on the plot are emptied of all contents and any padlocks removed. Failure to do so may result in the Council removing and destroying any padlock and contents.

Tenancy:

- **3.2.9.1 Termination by Tenant.** The tenant may give up the allotment plot by giving 28 days' notice in writing to the Council's Allotment Team (or less if agreed). Where a deposit has been paid it will be refunded upon receipt of a request in writing from the tenant to the Council's Allotment Team. Refund of the deposit is dependent upon satisfactory inspection of the plot demonstrating that the tenant has not breached the terms and conditions.

Where the Tenant gives up the allotment plot in accordance with clause above he/she must ensure that any shed on the allotment plot, for which permission to remain has been granted, is vacated and emptied of all contents and any padlock(s) removed. Where the shed is vacated before the expiry of 28 days' notice, the tenant must notify the Council's Allotment Team immediately. Should the Tenant fail to vacate and empty the shed as directed, the Council shall remove and destroy any padlock(s) and any items left by the tenant.

- **3.2.9.2 Termination by the Council.** Where there is a proven breach of tenancy agreement, the Council has the option to, but is not obliged to, issue a warning in the first instance to a tenant. It may be that the Council

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elects to forego a warning and immediately issue a notice to quit for certain breaches or repeated breaches of tenancy.

The Council may require the tenant to vacate the allotment site by:

- Re-entering the allotment site after providing a Notice to Quit with 28 days' notice in writing to the tenant if the tenant has not paid rent, has not maintained the garden in a proper state of cultivation or has breached any term or condition of the tenancy or has become bankrupt or entered in to an arrangement or agreement with his/her creditors.
- Re-entering the allotment site after providing three months notice in writing to the tenant if the land is required for building, mining or any other industrial purpose (or for roads or sewers necessary in connection with any of those purposes) or if the land is required by Council for the purpose (other than agriculture) for which the land was acquired by the Council or has been appropriated under any statutory provision; or
- Providing a notice in writing with twelve months or longer notice expiring on or before the 6 April or on or after 29 September in any year.
- Where the Council holds an allotment site under a lease, on determination of that lease arrangement, the tenancy of the allotment plot will be terminated.

The Council is not obliged to issue a Notice to Quit.

- Where a notice to quit has been issued by the Council, the Tenant must ensure that any shed on the allotment plot is vacated and emptied of all contents and any padlock(s) removed. The Tenant must immediately notify the Council's Allotment Team when the shed has been vacated and padlock(s) removed. If the Tenant fails to vacate and empty the shed the Council shall remove and destroy any padlock(s) and contents.

■ 3.2.9.3 Apportionment of Rent.

In the event of the termination of the tenancy by the Council for whatever reason, the tenant shall be liable to pay rent up to the date of such termination or re-entry.

■ 3.2.9.4 Written Correspondence.

Any written correspondence, for example, letters, notices, forms etc., from the Council to the tenant, shall be sent by post to the tenant at his/her last known address or left in a conspicuous place on the allotment plot.

Any written correspondence from the tenant to the Council must be delivered or sent by post to the Council's **Allotment Team** at **Hartlepool Borough Council**.

- 3.2.9.5 Change of Address. The tenant must give written notice of any change of address within one month of such change. If the Council does not receive notification from the Tenant and

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any correspondence to the Tenant's address is returned undelivered, the Council may terminate the Allotment tenancy.

- **3.2.9.6 Death of Tenant.** The tenancy of the Allotment shall terminate one month after notification of the death of the tenant. The tenancy will not automatically transfer to a next-of-kin; a request for a transfer will have to be made in writing to the Council's Allotments Team.

Tenants are advised that no human or animal ashes should be scattered on the allotment plot/site.

- **3.2.9.7 Disputes between tenants.** In the event of any dispute between tenants the decision of the authorised Council Officer shall be final.
- **3.2.9.8 Address for Correspondence.**



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Level Two objective

Will consider next priority for delivery if resources allow

3.3 Health and Safety

Review risk management procedures for allotments.

It is proposed to continue to improve Health and Safety, both for tenants, volunteers and staff by carrying out the following:

- **3.3.1** Risk assessments for allotment hazards and activities as necessary.
- **3.3.2** Work in partnership towards further investment on sites where it is most needed to improve security, paths, etc and removal of hazardous rubbish (and take action against those who dump it) – see 3.3
- **3.3.3** Health and safety training and advice will be delivered when need is identified for individuals (including Site Representatives) who carry out maintenance work on allotments and who work with volunteers.

Level Two objectives

Will consider next priority for delivery if resources allow

3.4 Quality Assurance

Improve Allotment Infrastructure to achieve Quality Mark of 79% across all sites.

The PPG17 assessment of all sites in 2007 identified a number of sites that did not meet the proposed standard of 79%.

The sites identified in the 2007 assessment were:

- Station Lane.
- Brierton.
- Greatham.
- Nicholson's Field,
- Waverley Terrace.
- Briarfields.

- **3.4.1** Priority should be given to these sites to improve the quality marks in order for them to meet the standard of 79%. Key areas for improvement include:

- Improving Security of Sites: 3 Sites
- Cultivation Level of Site 2 Sites
- Number of neglected sites 2 Sites
- Car Parking Provision 2 Sites

The standards will be assessed on a yearly basis as part of the mass inspection programme and reported to the Portfolio Holder and allotment associations

- **3.4.2** Other sites will be maintained at a level to keep them at or above 2007 standards.

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Level Three objective

Would like to deliver but only if suitable opportunities and resources can be identified

3.5 Tenant Surveys

Undertake surveys of existing tenants, future tenants on waiting list, and exit surveys of tenant relinquishing their plots.

Tenant surveys are a valuable tool to find out where the allotment service is improving and where the service is still in need of improvement.

- **3.5.1** Develop a suitable, accessible survey form to gather feedback on the allotment service.
- **3.5.2** Instigate exit surveys of tenants relinquishing their plots. Expand to include existing tenants when resources allow, and then ultimately investigate the desires and expectations of future tenants on waiting list.

Level Three objective

Would like to deliver but only if suitable opportunities and resources can be identified

3.6 Allotments Online

Make allotment documentation available online.

It is hoped to develop an online allotment resource for tenants with such things as: FAQ's, Good allotment guide, tenancy documentation.

- **3.6.1** Provide access to tenancy documentation online.
- **3.6.2** Develop in partnership with local allotment associations and input from national bodies a 'Good allotment guide' and provide access to it online.
- **3.6.3** Help facilitate in partnership with local allotment associations and national bodies an online Hartlepool Allotment Gardeners FAQ's forum.

As part of the wider Hartlepool Borough Council web site review and development of central corporate booking system consider the following developments.

- **3.6.4** Development of an online allotment plot payments and administration process.

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Aim	Title
4	Allotment Crime Prevention

The Council's Allotment Team work in close partnership with the Police, Neighbourhood Managers and other agencies to help allotment tenants reduce their vulnerability to incidents of crime and antisocial behaviour.

The Police and the Council encourage allotment tenants to report any instances of crime or antisocial behaviour to the Police. Unfortunately both seem traditionally to be significantly under reported to the police by allotment tenants which can consequently affect the ability to task police resources.

Hartlepool's allotments are not very different, in both layout and crime issues, from many local authority sites in the north east and the police have researched how other districts are addressing the perceived crime issues. As a consequence many of the following objectives reflect the advice and guidance this research has provided.

The following section brings together as a summary elements of the Allotment Development Strategy, which are discussed in detail elsewhere in the document, but which have a bearing on allotment crime prevention.

Level One objective

Prioritise for delivery resources permitting as part of basic annual service package

4.1 Rules and guidance on being a Hartlepool Allotment Tenant that assist in reducing the vulnerability of allotments to incidents of crime and antisocial behaviour.

The new tenancy agreement is the principle tool to help and encourage tenants to support the Police, Council and other agencies reduce the vulnerability of allotments to incidents of crime and antisocial behaviour.

The tenancy agreement is discussed in 3.2 with the following clauses specifically included to address allotment crime prevention:

General:

- **3.2.1.6 Unauthorised or illegal use of plot.** The tenant shall not use the allotment plot, or allow it to be used, for the purposes of any trade and business.

The operation of a business from the plot is banned and the bringing on to a plot of produce for the purpose of selling on is not permitted.

The storage of goods or disposal of business waste on plots is not permitted. Should it become necessary to take enforcement action Trading Standards, the Environmental Enforcement Unit and the Police will be notified as appropriate.

- **3.2.1.10 Vehicles on allotment sites.** Vehicles brought onto allotment sites are the responsibility of their owners; the Council will not be responsible for

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any damage, injury or theft associated with the use of such, and owners of vehicles used in this manner should ensure they have adequate motor insurance including third party cover for this type of use.

It is not permitted to use allotment plots for parking or garaging of vehicles.

Plot users are requested to park considerately and not block access ways to adjacent properties or routes that might be required by emergency vehicles.

Allotment tracks and pathways are generally not suitable for motor vehicle traffic. Access to many allotment tracks is barred to plot holders vehicles with pedestrian access only allowed. The exception is emergency vehicles or vehicles required for site maintenance and the emergency services are provided with keys to open these gates if necessary.

Should plot holders bring a motor vehicle on to an allotment site for any reason they should limit their speed to 5mph and drive with due care and consideration stopping to allow pedestrians and other users to pass safely where necessary.

Allotment Security:

- **3.2.2.1 Allotment Security.** The Council's Allotment Team work in close partnership with the police, Neighbourhood Forums and other agencies to help allotment tenants reduce their vulnerability to incidents of crime and antisocial behaviour.

- **3.2.2.2 Security Gates.** In partnership, the Council has secured funding over recent years to install locked access gates to allotment sites across the borough to which tenants are issued keys. These gates should be closed and secured immediately after passing through them, either when entering or exiting the site.

- **3.2.2.3 Reporting crime and antisocial behaviour.** Allotment tenants are encouraged to report any instances of crime or antisocial behaviour on allotments to the police. Under reporting can affect the ability to task police resources to any new issues.

Tenants have a significant role to play in reducing the chance of becoming a target for crime e.g. thinking carefully about what equipment/ machinery is brought on to sites, how sites are used - locking security gates, development of sites to assist natural surveillance, early and accurate crime logging/ reporting to the police etc..

- **3.2.2.4 Keys.** For many years now the Allotment's Team has provided Police and PCSO's with keys to access allotment sites and the initiative is seeing regular patrols of sites being initiated where a concentration of incidents have been reported.

Locked security gates are a front line defence against criminal activity and plot holders are asked to keep keys safe and secure. The Tenant is responsible for the activities of all registered partners and visitors to the plot.

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■ 3.2.2.5 Property marking.

Hartlepool's allotments are not very different, in both layout and crime issues, from many local authority sites in the north east and the police have done research looking at how other districts are addressing the perceived crime issues. Out of this process was highlighted the importance of using micro-dot marking of property on allotment sites – the modern equivalent of property marking pen. Just as important is the prominent signage on those sites by tenants e.g. stickers on sheds, greenhouses, gates etc., to warn potential thieves of the preventative actions that have been taken by plot holders.

■ 3.2.2.6 Personal safety. Tenants and visitors to allotment sites are reminded to pay due regard to their own personal health and safety and others who may be around them.

■ 3.2.2.7 Access. The tenant, registered partners or visitors shall not enter the allotment site except by the provided tracks, paths and associated gates. Tenants are not allowed to install additional entrances or gates without prior written permission of the Council's Allotment Team. Tenants are also not allowed to modify or interfere with the padlocks, fences, gates or any other security provision made by the Council.

■ 3.2.2.8 Hours of Use. The Council reserves the right to delegate authority to any appropriate policing or security body to challenge the activities of any person found on any allotment site at any hour of the day.

To help combat crime and antisocial behaviour persons found on an allotment site or plot outside of those times normal for the maintenance of an allotment can expect to be challenged. As a general guide in the summer this would be between the hours of 5.00am and 10.00pm daily. During the winter months due to reduced daylight these 'normal' hours might be considerably shortened.

This particular area of the rules and guidance acknowledges that some tenants may have animal welfare duties and these may extend beyond the 'normal hours'. In these particular circumstances tenants can access their plots outside these hours but they should expect occasionally to be asked to explain their presence to police officers, PCSO's and other authorised security personnel that should encounter them on site in the hours of darkness.

Fire Safety- Storage and handling of fuel for heating and machinery:

Fire and explosions are a real risk on plots and pose specific dangers to the emergency services tasked to deal with them. In order to reduce risk to the public and emergency services the following restrictions will be operating:

■ 3.2.3.1 Restriction on gas cylinders. Only canisters containing LPG are to be used on plots for heating and lighting. No other type of gas cylinder is permitted. The maximum canister size is 15kg of which only two canisters (be they full or empty or any stage between) are permitted on a plot at any

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one time. All tenants with pressurised gas cylinders on plots are required to:

- Register them with the Council;
- Ensure they are stored correctly and securely;
- Ensure they as plot holder have relevant third party insurance to cover their presence on site.

- **3.2.3.2 Restriction on inflammable liquids.** Maximum inclusive total of 20 litres of inflammable liquid (paraffin, petrol, diesel, methylated spirits etc.) can be stored by tenants on plots. All inflammable liquids must be in containers specifically designed for their storage with appropriate, visible and readable safety warnings on the outside of the container. Containers to be kept in adequately secure and ventilated circumstances. Fuel in machinery or heaters is not included in this storage total but should not exceed an additional inclusive total of 10 litres for the plot.

Being Considerate Neighbours:

The Council as Landlord expects all its tenants to act in a considerate and responsible manner to all neighbours both plot holders and the neighbouring public. The following areas have persistently generated complaints and the following restrictions will be in force:

- **3.2.4.1 Restriction on bonfires.** Bonfires only allowed during the last week in March; and first and second week in November each year. As a general rule all suitable materials to be composted or in exceptional

circumstances after agreement with Council's Allotment Team disposed of by green waste skip.

When burning rubbish on the allotment plot, the tenant must consider the effect of the smoke on other tenants and occupiers of neighbouring premises.

Tenants should not light any bonfires or cause any smoke nuisance as defined by the Environmental Protection Act 1990, section 80. The tenant may be subject to independent enforcement action under the terms of this Act if they disregard this condition. If the tenant is found guilty they could in addition have their tenancy terminated.

The tenant must not burn the following materials on the allotment plot:

- Rubber/Plastics/Foam/Paint;
- Any material originating outside of the allotment site/plot;
- Any material producing black smoke;
- Any other hazardous material that could cause environmental damage.
- The tenant must not use any flammable material, for example petrol, to assist burning.

Where requested by a Council Officer, the tenant must stop burning immediately.

- **3.2.4.2 Dogs – Rules pertaining to tenants, registered partners and visitors bringing dogs on allotments when they visit plots.** It is a requirement to keep dogs on a lead or under close control so they do not

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stray onto other plots or disrupt other site users.

Tenants must ensure the responsible removal and appropriate disposal of dog faeces.

Visiting dogs should not be a source of nuisance (barking/ howling etc.) whilst on site.

- **3.2.4.3 Nuisance and Anti-Social Behaviour.** The tenant shall not cause or permit to be caused any of the following:

- A gathering on the allotment plot or site to consume alcohol or facilitate drug use.
- Use any building or shed on the allotment plot for residential or sleeping purposes;
- Bring firearms or air rifles onto the allotments;

If a tenant is found to be connected with any of these above activities on an allotment plot it will result in their tenancy being terminated.

Similarly if substantive evidence is presented that a tenant or persons invited on to a site by the tenant have been involved in anti-social behaviour the Council may refuse to provide them with an allotment plot. These activities might include:

- Nuisance, annoyance or damage to the allotment plot or to the tenant or owner of any adjoining or neighbouring premises.
- The depositing of any refuse on or obstructing any path set out for the use of allotment plot holders;

- Trespass on other tenants' allotments.

- **3.2.4.4 Children.** The tenant shall ensure that any children brought on to the allotment site are accompanied and supervised by the tenant or other responsible adult.

- **3.2.4.5 Harassment and threatening behaviour.** Tenants who harass or threaten neighbours, officers or the public can be evicted. Tenants are reminded they are responsible for the activities of all registered partners and visitors to the plot.

All issues should be documented/ recorded (date, time, description of persons/ vehicles present, description of incident) by those affected and reported promptly to the police.

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Level Two objectives

Will consider next priority for delivery if resources allow

for sites that will support a rich diversity of wildlife.

4.2 Development objectives that assist in reducing the vulnerability of allotments to incidents of crime and antisocial behaviour.

The strategy recognises that many of Hartlepool's allotment sites would benefit from physical changes to help reduce further their potential vulnerability to incidents of crime and antisocial behaviour. This work will need to be done in partnership with Associations and outside agencies to access and attract appropriate resources and support.

The following objectives contained within the Allotment Development Strategy under the aims of 'Good Administration' (objective 3.6.2); and 'Environmental Sustainability' (objective 6.4.1) have the potential to contribute to crime prevention on allotments:

- **3.6.2** Work in partnership towards further investment on sites where it is most needed to improve security, paths, etc and removal of hazardous rubbish (and take action against those who dump it) – see 3.3
- **6.4.1 Planting green boundaries.** The Allotments team will work in partnership with allotment associations to establish more sustainable approaches to allotment security through the planting of native hedgerow external boundaries to allotment sites. These planted hedgerows can be managed by trimming and hedgelaying to gradually provide a dense, secure natural barrier

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Aim	Title
5	Localised Allotment Management

The Allotment Development Strategy recognises the importance of community prioritisation, or neighbourhood based management. It is for this reason that for example Allotment Associations would be asked to contribute to the decision making process that identified priorities for investment on each particular site.

To support this concept many of the possible longer-term developmental avenues proposals put forward in the strategy look to support the devolution of day-to-day management to strong, inclusive, forward thinking Associations so that local needs can be better met.

Later in the strategy service resourcing is discussed and one way of facilitating the funding aspirations of sites proposes that Associations could chose at some point in the future to raise greater funds from allotment rents and reinvest it on their sites; at present approximately two thirds of their running costs come from Council budgets with the remainder being rent.

The following objectives look at how the relationships between Allotment Associations, the Council, and other agencies can be sustained. It is recognised that no one partner, including the Council, is able to undertake or resource all aspirations for allotments. It is hoped though that by working together with Associations and other agencies, and them taking a lead in some circumstances, the Council can continue to target its limited resources to support initiatives where it is most needed.

Level One objective

Prioritise for delivery resources permitting as part of basic annual service package

5.1 In partnership with representative Allotment Associations work to improve the visual appearance and perception of sites.

Support should be given to associations who are attempting to improve sites through external funding. Policing of allotment activities should be undertaken wherever possible in partnership with allotment associations.

There are many advantages in having a single, representative (i.e. the large percentage of plot holders on a site are members), democratic and inclusive allotment association representing a site.

Associations are involved in sites on a day to day basis and have a desire to make their sites secure, functional and attractive places for people to come and enjoy their pastime. They are also well placed to attract funding into the site through grants or neighbourhood funding.

Many sites suffer from poor relationships with local residents, due to unsightly fencing, buildings or issues of anti social behaviour, such as barking dogs, noisy cockerels or fly tipping. Many of these issues can lead to complaints to the Council. This is particularly prevalent in the sites that are on railway approaches (Nicholson's Field and Station lane) where people travelling into Hartlepool are faced with unsightly allotments as they approach the town.

It is proposed to support this objective by:

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■ 5.1.1 Regular liaison between the Authority and Allotment Associations.

Encouraging the sharing of knowledge about opportunities for funding or in-kind support to achieve improvements.

■ 5.1.2 Development in partnership of prioritised site specific improvement wish-lists.

Supporting allotment associations in the development of prioritised, realistic action plans for site improvement that can be used in targeting outside funding and resource opportunities. Suggested format is a photographic audit and map based site action plan. Targets for action would include:

- investment in secure fencing,
- removal and replacement where necessary of:
 - inappropriate internal fences,
 - buildings and storage structures.

■ 5.1.3 Supporting associations in applications and improvements delivery.

When available providing targeted assistance in application development and if successful assistance in project management and delivery on site of improvements. Taking account of, and where possible modifying, pre-planned annual work delivery demands to accommodate 'new' work load on officers.

■ 5.1.4 Mass inspection programme.

Undertake a yearly mass inspection programme of allotment sites and plots to assist in the identification of issues and provide opportunities for co-ordinated responses, in partnership with allotment associations, to uphold and maintain appropriate standards.

Level Two objective

Will consider next priority for delivery if resources allow

5.2 Explore Devolved Management arrangements in sites with active and well established Associations.

Support and encourage a movement towards greater devolved management; and continue to support those Associations who already have devolved management arrangements in place. Recognising in doing so there is likely to be a gradual progression over time for allotment sites from a position of dependence on the council to one of semi-autonomy. This process will likely require a considerable investment in time by council officers to facilitate.

During 2007, four new allotment associations were formed in sites where no such associations existed. These were Chester Road, Haswell Avenue, Nicholson's Field and Brierton (known as Rossmere Allotment Association). Throston was created in 2008. There are, however, sites where no such association exist namely Station Lane, Waverley Terrace as well as the three smaller sites Greatham, Olive Street and Thompson Grove.

The experience of Woodcroft Allotments undertaking devolved management of the site has been very successful. Woodcroft Allotments is a thriving association led site, which is very well managed and popular. The success of this pilot project and the positive impact that this has had on allotment gardening in the town has led to an interest in pursuing this form of management across other sites.

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It is important that once an association is managing a site under devolved management arrangements, that support is given to the committee in their development of the site. The Council will continue to act as a landlord to tenants and collect rent, issue warnings and notices as well as maintaining a waiting list. However, consideration and support will be given to those associations who wish to further increase the level of independence from the Council and become independent allotment providers, managing waiting lists, collecting rents and issuing notices etc.

It is proposed to support this objective by:

- **5.2.1 Gatekeepers.** Encouraging allotment sites to nominate a person, or series of persons, to act as 'Gatekeepers' for information. These gatekeepers would be the principle point of contact that the council would approach as a first point of contact to disseminate consultation information relating to the site. These gatekeepers could also informally feedback to the allotments section.
- **5.2.2 Allotment Forums.** For those sites without an allotment association it is proposed to convene a 'special' allotment forum when circumstances require canvassing the views of plot holders or site representatives on proposed substantial capital expenditure and changes to a site.
- **5.2.3 Allotment Associations.** Provide advice and support to those sites interested in the setting up an allotment association. Foster a supportive environment which gradually allows those associations

who are interested to adopt responsibility for a range of duties under licence from the authority, under financial arrangements that release a proportion of rental income for this purpose.

- **5.2.4 Semi-autonomy.** If circumstances arise that are suitably robust support suitably experienced allotment associations in leasing sites from the authority. The association would have the flexibility to arrange tenancy agreements and reinvest revenue, which it would manage, on maintenance, repair and capital items.

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Level Two objective
Will consider next priority for delivery if resources allow

5.3 Improve relationships

Continue to improve the relationship between the Parks and Countryside Hartlepool Allotments Team and Site Representatives and Associations.

Achieved by carrying out the following:

- **5.3.1** Attend the allotment association's annual General Meeting once a year.
- **5.3.2** Hold one Site Representatives Forum meeting per annum for all of those allotment sites without an association. This will be held at a different location each year.
- **5.3.3** Self-managing Allotment Association Site Representatives will continue to be encouraged to carry out maintenance on our behalf.
- **5.3.4** Tenants will be encouraged to become 'Gatekeepers' that can begin to represent site interests on sites where there are currently no formal Site Representatives.
- **5.3.5** A Site Representatives Code of Conduct will be developed that incorporates issues such as health and safety, their duties etc.
- **5.3.6** Any future Capital Investment Programme will include leasing allotment association sites, and will involve detailed consultation with the associations on the requirements of their sites – see 3.3.2

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Aim	Title
6	Environmental sustainability

Level One objective

Prioritise for delivery resources permitting as part of basic annual service package

6.1 Encourage composting and recycling on allotments

Allotments need to make a positive contribution towards environmental sustainability targets for Hartlepool. Activities that contribute to air pollution and damage fragile soil structures need to be replaced by appropriate composting and recycling.

As discussed earlier it has been common to encounter buried gas canisters, animal carcasses, asbestos and other hazardous materials, glass from demolished green houses, caravans, fridges and freezers with CFC's present etc. The criminal element of society has also been found to have used hidden plots as 'chop-shops' for stolen vehicles and other goods. The resultant contamination of allotment soil has left sites unusable without extensive topsoil removal and replacement.

Bonfires in light of the disproportionate levels of complaints they generate from site neighbours, and the environmental and local atmospheric pollution issues that surround them, should no longer be considered an acceptable practice on Hartlepool allotments. Although in the past bonfires were seen as a valuable control measure for diseased plant material it is now widely accepted that this type of activity is not necessary if appropriate temperatures are achieved during the composting process. A great

deal of research on plant disease control and composting has been carried out by the Henry Doubleday Research Association (which now operates under the title Garden Organic).

■ 6.1.1 Plot Level Composting.

Allotment holders to make provision on plots to compost green waste - see 3.2.4. for restrictions on bonfires.

■ 6.1.2 Site Level Composting. On

larger sites allotment section work with allotment associations and HBC Neighbourhood Services to investigate to practically of setting up on vacant allotment plots or in dedicated bays larger site composting facilities.

It is envisaged that these facilities could be used to compost municipal green wastes in addition to allotment material. Management of the composting process would be undertaken by HBC contractor – shredding material on an industrial scale with hired machinery, rowing up and turning to aerate as appropriate using tractor with frontend loader. This process would enable plot holders to improve the soil quality of their plots by the use of leaves and organic matter provided from council parks and other areas.

■ 6.1.3 Site Level Compost Deliveries utilising town-wide green waste resource.

The Council's domestic green waste is collected and processed in to a soil improver locally by an outside contractor. In the past the Allotments Team has brought and supplied topsoil to some problem plots. The intension is to only use composted soil improver in the future with the added benefits this can potentially

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provide to soil drainage and organic improvement of allotment soils. This soil improver resource is also available to Allotment Associations and individuals who may wish to purchase directly.

- **6.1.4 Encourage plot holders to bring onto site only those items that are of use in allotment gardening.** Through good administration, support and advice discourage hoarding, and to invite plot holders to think about how they will dispose of items before they bring them onto the allotments –see 3.2.11. and 3.2.12
- **6.1.5 Pride in Hartlepool – Allotments Amnesty.** In support of the work described in 4.1.3 organise in conjunction with an appropriate recycling contractor the provision of strictly controlled and manned skips and collection facilities on allotment sites to remove non-compostable materials such as glass, metal, wood, plastics and gas canisters.

Care must be taken to ensure that skips do not become a repository for hazardous wastes such as asbestos, garden chemicals and gas canisters.

After an appropriate period this facility would be phased out and strict enforcement of allotment tenancy agreements applied as proposed in 3.2.9.

- **6.1.6 Fly tipping.** Respond quickly to acts of fly-tipping to ensure they do not propagate. Work with plot holders and police authority to ensure a watchful eye is kept on sites and wherever possible work with responsible

agencies to secure prosecutions of offenders.

- **6.1.7 Support recycling opportunities.** The Allotment team in partnership with allotment associations will look for, and when financially possible support, other sustainable recycling opportunities e.g. the provision of old wooden allotment site fencing for the creation of compost bins, and containers suitable for water collection.
- **6.1.8 Support the improvement of the visual appearance and aesthetics of allotment structures on plots.** Look for opportunities, in partnership with Allotment Associations, to work with agencies such as colleges, centres for adults with special needs, skills development programmes, probation services, etc to utilise recycled materials such as liberated external allotment fencing. Set up programmes with such partners that would see them manufacture new shed and cold frame designs discussed in 3.2.12 for use on plots.



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Level One objective

Prioritise for delivery resources permitting as part of basic annual service package

6.2 Encourage social and environmental responsibility.

Allotments need to make a positive contribution towards improved social and environmental responsibility targets for Hartlepool.

Allotments are a valuable tool in reducing carbon emissions for Hartlepool. Allotment growing reduces food transport costs - food miles; and encourages sustainable transport use like cycling and walking.

- **6.2.1 Gardening for health.** Work in partnership to develop and support initiatives that encourage greater community engagement in allotment gardening and the environmental and health benefits that can result.
- **6.2.2 Gardening courses for allotment tenants.** In partnership research funding opportunities to run gardening courses on allotments to assist new and existing gardeners.
- **6.2.3 Promote organic gardening methods.** It is recognised that methods of gardening should be a matter of choice for individuals. The allotments team in partnership with sympathetic local Allotment Associations will look to grow awareness of organic gardening methods through visiting speakers and short courses on allotments when opportunities arise and resources are available.

Level Two objective

Will consider next priority for delivery if resources allow

6.3 Water conservation.

Allotments need to make a positive contribution to water conservation.

The annual water bill paid by Parks and Countryside Hartlepool for the allotments was budgeted at £10,436 in 2008-09 an average of £10.31p per plot. At present there is no incentive for plot holders to manage use and conserve water.

- **6.3.1 Water charging.** Investigate the feasibility of installing a network of internal water meters on larger allotment sites to sub-divide usage. The idea being to charge localised groups of plot holders an equal percentage of total water bill for that particular area. This measure would ideally be part of greater localised site management possibly via a level of devolved management to allotment associations. Potential exists to foster a group awareness of water usage, conservation measures and reinforce the importance of rapid leak reporting.
- **6.3.2 Support water conservation opportunities.** In partnership with allotment associations will look for, and when financially possible support, other water conservation opportunities e.g. the provision of guttering and containers suitable for water collection.
- **6.3.3 Encourage the adoption of cultivation techniques that maximise water conservation.** Where feasible provide guidance and training – see 4.2.3

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Level Two objective

Will consider next priority for delivery if resources allow

6.4 Identify and manage areas for wildlife and conservation.

Allotments need to make a positive contribution to Hartlepool's Green Spaces by providing valuable wildlife corridors to link isolated areas and provide wildlife refuges in their own right.

The patchwork of uses that exists on allotment sites ensures that working allotments are valuable wildlife habitats. Allotments are an important urban habitat for species such as slow worms, badgers, foxes, amphibians, snakes, lizards, bats and a wide variety of birds.

- **6.4.1 Planting green boundaries.** The Allotments team will work in partnership with allotment associations to establish more sustainable approaches to allotment security through the planting of native hedgerow external boundaries to allotment sites. These planted hedgerows can be managed by trimming and hedgelaying to gradually provide a dense, secure natural barrier for sites that will support a rich diversity of wildlife.
- **6.4.2 Gardening with nature.** The allotments team will work in partnership with allotment associations, the Authorities ecologist and Countryside Wardens to support the integration wildlife friendly approaches in allotment gardening.

Level Two objective

Will consider next priority for delivery if resources allow

6.5 Neighbourhood Renewal and Planning Gain.

Regeneration of existing or creation of new allotment sites is allowed for in neighbourhood renewal schemes and new developments.

With the move towards smaller garden plots in new housing developments allotment renewal, and in some cases new allotments, need to be considered as part of improved green space provision in development proposals for Hartlepool.

- **6.5.1 Green Spaces Hartlepool.** The Parks and Countryside Hartlepool Section will continue to work with external organisations and other council departments working towards creating a greener and more sustainable Hartlepool. To ensure that allotments remain an integral part of this vision it is intended intend to work more closely with the council's Neighbourhood Renewal Team to ensure that the regeneration of existing or creation of new allotment sites is allowed for in neighbourhood renewal schemes and new developments.

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Level Three objective

Would like to deliver but only if suitable opportunities and resources can be identified

6.6 Toilets.

A lack of toilet facilities is an issue on allotments, particularly when encouraging women, families and Disabled people to use allotments.

Toilet supplied by mains water and sewage connections are not considered to be a sustainable way of addressing this issue, and would exert a considerable pressure on revenue budgets. Compost toilets have been successfully utilised by some Authorities and pioneered at Briarfields Allotments during 2008-09.

- **6.6.1 Research and investigate the feasibility of using composting toilets on allotment sites.** Provide information and support to sites where there is an allotment association which is willing to maintain them.

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Aim	Title
7	Appropriate service resourcing

Level One objective

Prioritise for delivery resources permitting as part of basic annual service package

7.1 Building proactive Allotment Team.

Create a dynamic, flexible and proactive core allotments team with a Service Development component.

The strategy offers the Authority and potential partners a core sustainable vision for the service provision. This vision is tempered by resourcing issues, some of which have the potential to be lessened through partnership.

The strategy firstly needs the allotment team to move to a **defensible service position** where the service can effectively police the status-quo, unfortunately if it stays at this position it will likely continue to see overall infrastructure decline. This move to a defensible service position will require:

- **7.1.1 Allotment Administrator.** The Parks and Countryside Section needs to secure through the Business Transformation Process the continued services of the highly experienced Allotment Administrator from the Admin Support Services Department.

The Allotment Development Strategy provides a case for the adoption of a proactive service delivery stance by the Authority. A more **proactive service delivery** stance would require extra human resource input **for example**:

- **7.1.2 A second Allotment Technical Officer appointment.** The Allotment Development Strategy Progression Table outlines the service improvements that would be possible with a 2nd Technical Officer.

In order for the allotments service to reach the higher aspirations of the Strategy it is necessary to consider ways of building in capacity for '**allotments service growth/development**' within the team. The Parks and Countryside Section provides a model example of how this developmental element can be built into a staffing structure. Front line Technical Officers are supported by a single service area Development Officer who oversees service implementation and development through partnerships. Two **example options** are presented as a way forward:

- **7.1.3.1 Option 1: Allotments Development Officer appointment.** For filling much the same role as the Parks Development Officer this post would aim to maintain and grow service quality through partnership and synergies with the work of other agencies; whilst overseeing and co-ordinating service implementation.
- **7.1.3.2 Option 2: Parks Development Officer role expansion with associated appointment of 2nd Parks and Games Spaces Technical Officer.** This option would meet the aims of role expansion and also provide more appropriate front line service level staffing. It would mean the Parks Development Officer post holder was required to act-down less and could concentrate more on service development, partnership opportunities and sourcing of outside funding.

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Level One objective

Prioritise for delivery resources permitting as part of basic annual service package

7.2 Resourcing a proactive Allotment Team.

Resource the allotments team to achieve a Service Development component within the Allotment Team.

The Allotment Development Strategy recognises the financial challenge the Authority faces in delivering its services. The strategy has outlined current resource considerations. It emphasises how through proactive support of the allotment team and the policies and procedures it has, and will develop in the future, we can all work to ensure the finite resources, both human and financial, are better used to achieve 'best value'.

To achieve a defensible service provision where it is accepted that we are likely to continue to see overall infrastructure decline and the allotments team is for all intensive purposes policing the status-quo, the following would be required:

- **7.2.1 Financial support for the embedding of a full-time Allotment Administrator within the Parks and Countryside section.** The Section needs to secure through the Business Transformation Process the continued services of the highly experienced Allotment Administrator from the Admin Support Services Department.

The Allotment Development Strategy provides a case for the adoption of a proactive service delivery stance by the Authority. A more proactive service delivery stance would require extra human resource input **for example**:

- **7.1.2 Financial support for the embedding of a second Allotment Technical Officer.** The Allotment Development Strategy: Objective Delivery Table outlines the service improvements that would be possible.

In order for the allotments service to reach the higher aspirations of the Strategy it is necessary to consider ways of building in capacity for 'allotments service development' within the team. The Parks and Countryside Section provides a model example of how this developmental element can be built into a staffing structure. Front line Technical Officers are supported by a single service area Development Officer who oversees service implementation and development through partnerships. Two **example options** are presented as a way forward:

- **7.2.3.1 Option 1: Financial support for Allotments Development Officer.** This post would aim to maintain and grow service quality through partnership and synergies with the work of other agencies; whilst overseeing and co-ordinating service implementation.
- **7.2.3.2 Option 2: Financial support for Parks Development Officer role expansion with associated appointment of 2nd Parks and Games Spaces Technical Officer.** This option would meet the aims of role expansion and also provide more appropriate front line service level staffing. It would mean the Parks Development Officer post holder was required to act-down less and could concentrate more on service development, partnership opportunities and sourcing of outside funding.

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It may well be that these higher aspirations of the Strategy could also be partially achieved through the use of staff resources in other areas. An example might be Neighbourhood Management Teams who might be in a position to use existing skills and technical knowledge bases to support/ teach Allotment Associations how to apply and develop support for site projects through successful fundraising and grant seeking strategies.

Obviously this assumes the staff resources are not already being used to capacity on other projects. It also should be pointed out that these relationships and use of existing resources from other areas of the Authority would by their very nature be of a temporary nature. The idea would be to enable a skills and knowledge transfer to take place 'up-skilling' for example representatives from Associations so they could hopefully take a greater leading role in achieving aspirations for their sites by fundraising and making grant applications.

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Level Two objective
Will consider next priority for delivery if resources allow

7.3 Revising plot charges to support sustainable growth.

Foster greater allotment community ownership and support for site improvement, development and growth through appropriate contributions to future investment.

Allotment plots are a valuable community resource that deserves appropriate care and investment.

The scale of investment was illustrated earlier by the following stark figures: using today's costs external fencing replacement on the council's allotment sites represents a medium-term capital programme in the range of £2.28 million - £4.56 million. Renewal of internal track and haulage ways could represent a medium-term capital programme in the range of £4.72 million – £6.30 million.

Many of the aspirations contained in this development strategy, if adopted for implementation, would further challenge those who care for and use allotments to find outside investment. It is likely to become more important to find contributions and match funding to support bids for outside money and in doing so it will be necessary to demonstrate commitment and support from plot holders.

The following **is only an example** of one way in which it might be possible to focus investment on those sites where there is a real willingness to support better allotment provision from plot holders.

- **7.3.1 Tiered rent charges.** Tiered rent charge for sites at different stages of partnership working development (allotment association, devolved management) and subsequent renewal and investment in facilities.

Charges would comprise the current '**area of plot**' charge, '**water charge**' - if water conservation measure described in 4.3.1 achieved for site, and a '**site investment**' charge.

Site investment charge classifications:

- '**Dandelion Sites**'. These are sites where plot holders chose not to form an over arching group to represent their interests and do not wish to actively contribute to site improvement.

Site Investment Charge: **low**
(Held by Council Allotments Team as a small war chest to lever outside funding opportunities for site)

- '**Tulip Sites**'. These are sites where plot holders as a group work towards forming a positive and constructive relationship with Allotment Team with the medium term of aim of facilitating site improvements through outside investment. The object would be to build a 'war chest' for match funding purposes.

Site Investment Charge: **Medium**
(Held by Council's Allotments Team as a war chest to support growth of an Allotment Association and at the same time *proactively* lever outside funding opportunities for site).

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- **‘Carnation Sites’.** These are sites where plot holders have formed a strong, inclusive, vibrant and diverse Allotment Association. The Association has a history of working in a positive and constructive way with the Allotments Team to secure investment and improvements.

Site Investment Charge: **High**
(Collected by Council’s Allotments Team and *returned* to Allotment Association to act as a war chest to *proactively* lever, in partnership, outside funding opportunities for site).

Site investment charges would not be seen as an option for plot holders. In order to ensure the allotment resource is available for future generations a commitment by all users to care and maintenance of sites is a necessity not an option.

Individuals on the waiting list would be able to indicate their desire to garden on either Dandelion, Tulip or Carnation sites. There would be a gradual encouragement for all sites to: work towards collective representation in some form, and develop a positive and constructive working relationship with the Allotments Team.

Level Two objective

Will consider next priority for delivery if resources allow

7.4 Propagating service partnerships.

The key to allotment service development is partnership be it with plot holders, Allotment Associations’, local communities, members, officers; or organisational partners including businesses, industry, and voluntary or health sectors.

Healthy partnerships have their foundations in good working relationships where a common need exists and all parties are willing to invest time, energy and resources into achieving a shared outcome.

The adoption of a proactive delivery stance within the Allotments Team will propagate opportunities to develop service partnerships.

- **7.4.1 Develop Service Partnerships.** Promote Allotment Development Strategy to potential organisational partners including businesses, industry, and voluntary or health sectors.



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Section 6 - Summary Table of proposed Aims and Objectives

Allotment Development Strategy - Summary table		Service Review key:		
The Allotment Development Strategy contains five broad headings or Aims.		The three different highlighted colours denote which proposed objectives would be attainable under the three different Allotment Service resourcing positions described in the Allotment Development Strategy – See 5.1 for further details.		
This table lists the individual Aims of the development strategy underneath which <i>three</i> levels of Objectives can exist. These Objectives state the work that the section has proposed to undertake, resources permitting, to achieve the stated Aim.		Defensible Position	Proactive Position	Service Growth Position
Aim	Title			
1	Promotion of allotment use and food growing			
	Level One objective			
	Prioritise for delivery resources permitting as part of basic annual service package			
	1.1 Ensure retention of new tenants			
	1.1.1 Phased introduction of clearing and rotovating overgrown vacant plots for new tenants.			
	1.1.2 Tendering of plots which are deemed to be unlettable due to their poor condition rather than offering individually to people on waiting list. Successful tenderers would be offered sites for extended rent free period in exchange for bringing 'problem' plots back into cultivation and ensuring they are secure.			
	1.1.3 Giving or directing new tenants to sources of allotment gardening support and advice.			
	1.1.4 Working in partnership to ensure that all sites are secure – see 3.3.2			
	1.1.5 Having Site Representatives on as many sites as possible to provide help and advice.			
	1.1.6 Working in partnership to ensure good access – see 3.3.2			
	1.1.7 Making all tenants aware of their responsibilities towards others, including making it clear that those who harass others can face eviction.			
	1.1.8 Consider offering half or smaller plots on sites and publicise this fact.			
	1.1.9 Encourage the formation and development of allotments associations who can provide seeds, compost etc to members at discounted prices and provide advice and support – see 3.4			
	1.1.10 Work towards maintaining allotment tenancy rates at or above 95% through partnership working with allotment associations and use of the mass inspection programme.			

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Level Two objective Will consider next priority for delivery if resources allow				
1.2 Encourage diversity of tenants				
1.2.1 More women, couples and families.				
1.2.2 Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) communities.				
1.2.3 Find innovative ways of promoting and advertising Allotments, especially in areas of poor uptake.				
1.2.4 To promote the health benefits of Allotment Gardening.				
1.2.5 Support opportunities to work in partnership with schools, Health Authorities, Doctors Surgeries etc. to promote and encourage allotments to be used as an educational resource.				
1.2.6 To offer plots free of charge to schools and introduce a Best School Plot competition.				
1.2.7 To continue to work with community groups, especially in areas of poor uptake to encourage food growing in areas where it is widely acknowledged that issues such as poor diet, lack of exercise and obesity are most acute.				
1.2.8 To support and attend events organised locally on allotments to promote the image of allotment gardening.				
1.2.9 Seek funding and partnership opportunities to improve participation by disabled people through the creation of accessible plots.				
1.2.10 The above will be in addition to making sites more physically accessible generally as suitable capital investment, and maintenance opportunities present themselves.				
Aim	Title			
2	Appropriate allotment provision			
Level One objective Prioritise for delivery resources permitting as part of basic annual service package				
2.1 Ensure adequate provision of allotments.				
2.1.1 Monitor level of available plots per 1,000 households in Borough.				
Level Two objective Will consider next priority for delivery if resources allow				
2.2 Transfer under-utilised sites to alternative or temporary uses				
2.2.1 Consider opportunities that arise to positively utilise vacant plots for the benefit of the neighbouring communities whilst ensuring they are held as a 'land bank' for potential future allotment use. Triggers to indicate areas should return to allotment use include a drop below the England average level of allotment provision (currently 15 plots per 1,000 households) for the entire borough of Hartlepool.				

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Aim	Title		
3	Good administration		
	Level One objective		
	Prioritise for delivery resources permitting as part of basic annual service package		
	3.1 Allotment procedures manual		
	3.1.1 Reduction of the time between reminder letters being sent out before issuing Notice to Quits		
	3.1.2 Consider introduction of a "Three Strikes and You Are Out" rule for tenants who persistently receive Notice to Remedy letters.		
	3.1.3 Introduction of a separate agreement for persistent problem tenants to sign (e.g. agreeing not to have bonfires, harass others or bring rubbish onto a site). Failure to abide by the agreement would lead to an automatic Notice to Quit.		
	3.1.4 Ensure that there is a procedure for complaints, disputes and mediation e.g. Allotments Appeals Panel.		
	3.1.5 Agree a recognised eviction methodology with the council's legal department and Police, and consult with allotment associations.		
	3.1.6 The procedure manual should also include any specific guidance that relates to agreements and procedural processes agreed with Associations undertaking certain activities on sites under a Devolved Management agreement.		
	Level One objective		
	Prioritise for delivery resources permitting as part of basic annual service package		
	3.2 New tenancy agreement		
	<p>General:</p> <p>3.2.1.1 Annual Tenancy Agreement.</p> <p>3.2.1.2 Plot ID Numbers.</p> <p>3.2.1.3 Primary user.</p> <p>3.2.1.4 Sub-letting.</p> <p>3.2.1.5 Use of plot.</p> <p>3.2.1.6 Unauthorised or illegal use of plot.</p> <p>3.2.1.7 Cultivation levels.</p> <p>3.2.1.8 Internal paths.</p> <p>3.2.1.9 Internal tracks.</p> <p>3.2.1.10 Vehicles on allotment sites.</p> <p>3.2.1.11 Trees.</p> <p>3.2.1.12 Minerals.</p> <p>3.2.1.13 Damage.</p> <p>Allotment Security:</p> <p>3.2.2.1 Allotment Security.</p> <p>3.2.2.2 Security Gates.</p> <p>3.2.2.3 Reporting crime and antisocial behaviour.</p> <p>3.2.2.4 Keys.</p> <p>3.2.2.5 Property marking.</p>		

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<p>3.2.2.6 Personal safety. 3.2.2.7 Access. 3.2.2.8 Hours of Use.</p> <p>Fire Safety- Storage and handling of fuel for heating and machinery: 3.2.3.1 Restriction on gas cylinders. 3.2.3.2 Restriction on inflammable liquids.</p> <p>Being Considerate Neighbours: 3.2.4.1 Restriction on bonfires. 3.2.4.2 Dogs – Rules pertaining to tenants, registered partners and visitors bringing dogs on allotments when they visit plots. 3.2.4.3 Nuisance and Anti-Social Behaviour. 3.2.4.4 Children. 3.2.4.5 Harassment and threatening behaviour.</p> <p>Animals on Allotments: 3.2.5.1 Compulsory registration of all livestock/ animals on the allotment plot. 3.2.5.2 Dogs on allotments. 3.2.5.3 Fully Restricted Sites. 3.2.5.4 Types of Animals.</p> <p>Promotion of good allotment care: 3.2.6.1 Contamination from carpets. 3.2.6.2 Contamination of plots. 3.2.6.3 Re-cycling/ Rubbish. 3.2.6.4 Composting. 3.2.6.5 Water Supply. 3.2.6.6 Chemicals/ Pesticides.</p> <p>Improving the visual impact of allotment plots: 3.2.7.1 External fence. 3.2.7.2 Building Control in relation to structures on allotment plots. 3.2.7.3 Responsibility for structures. 3.2.7.4 The process, which must be completed BEFORE starting any construction, for requesting permission to erect a structure on an allotment plot.</p> <p>Structure criteria: 3.2.7.5 Area of plot occupied by structures. 3.2.7.6 Height. 3.2.7.7 Foundations for proposed structures. 3.2.7.8 Materials. 3.2.7.9 Roofing. 3.2.7.10 Internal fencing where new external fencing has been installed to the allotment site. 3.2.7.11 Use of structure.</p> <p>Enforcement: 3.2.8.1 Power to inspect plots. 3.2.8.2 Removal of property.</p>			
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<p>Tenancy:</p> <p>3.2.9.1 Termination by Tenant.</p> <p>3.2.9.2 Termination by the Council.</p> <p>3.2.9.3 Apportionment of Rent.</p> <p>3.2.9.4 Written Correspondence.</p> <p>3.2.9.5 Change of Address.</p> <p>3.2.9.6 Death of Tenant.</p> <p>3.2.9.7 Disputes between tenants.</p> <p>3.2.9.8 Address for Correspondence.</p>			
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Level Two objective			
Will consider next priority for delivery if resources allow			
3.3 Health and Safety			
3.3.1 Risk assessments for allotment hazards and activities as necessary.			
3.3.2 Work in partnership towards further investment on sites where it is most needed to improve security, paths, etc and removal of hazardous rubbish (and take action against those who dump it) – see 3.3			
3.3.3 Health and safety training and advice will be delivered when need is identified for individuals (including Site Representatives) who carry out maintenance work on allotments and who work with volunteers.			
Level Two objective			
Will consider next priority for delivery if resources allow			
3.4 Quality Assurance			
3.4.1 Priority should be given to these sites to improve the quality marks in order for them to meet the standard of 79%. Key areas for improvement include: Improving Security of Sites - 3 Sites; Cultivation Level of Sites - 2 Sites; Number of neglected sites - 2 Sites; Car Parking Provision - 2 Sites. The standards will be assessed on a yearly basis as part of the mass inspection programme and reported to the Portfolio Holder and allotment associations			
3.4.2 Other sites will be maintained at a level to keep them at or above 2007 standards.			
Level Three objective			
Would like to deliver but only if suitable opportunities and resources can be identified			
3.5 Tenant Surveys			
3.5.1 Develop a suitable, accessible survey form to gather feedback on the allotment service.			
3.5.2 Instigate exit surveys of tenants relinquishing their plots. Expand to include existing tenants when resources allow, and then ultimately investigate the desires and expectations of future tenants on waiting list.			
Level Three objective			
Would like to deliver but only if suitable opportunities and resources can be identified			
3.6 Allotments Online			
3.6.1 Provide access to tenancy documentation online.			
3.6.2 Develop in partnership with local allotment associations and input from national bodies a 'Good allotment guide' and provide access to it online.			
3.6.3 Help facilitate in partnership with local allotment associations and national bodies an online Hartlepool Allotment Gardeners FAQ's forum.			
3.6.4 Development of an online allotment plot payments and administration process.			

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Aim	Title		
4	Allotment Crime Prevention		
	Level One objective		
	Prioritise for delivery resources permitting as part of basic annual service package		
4.1	Rules and guidance on being a Hartlepool Allotment Tenant that assist in reducing the vulnerability of allotments to incidents of crime and antisocial behaviour.		
	Level Two objective		
	Will consider next priority for delivery if resources allow		
4.2	Development objectives that assist in reducing the vulnerability of allotments to incidents of crime and antisocial behaviour.		

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Aim	Title		
5	Localised Allotment Management		
	Level One objective		
	Prioritise for delivery resources permitting as part of basic annual service package		
	5.1 In partnership with representative Allotment Associations work to improve the visual appearance and perception of sites.		
	5.1.1 Regular liaison between the Authority and Allotment Associations. Encouraging the sharing of knowledge about opportunities for funding or in-kind support to achieve improvements.		
	5.1.2 Development in partnership of prioritised site specific improvement wish-lists. Supporting allotment associations in the development of prioritised, realistic action plans for site improvement that can be used in targeting outside funding and resource opportunities. Suggested format is a photographic audit and map based site action plan. Targets for action would include: investment in secure fencing; and removal and replacement where necessary of: inappropriate internal fences, buildings and storage structures.		
	5.1.3 Supporting associations in applications and improvements delivery. When available providing targeted assistance in application development and if successful assistance in project management and delivery on site of improvements. Taking account of, and where possible modifying, pre-planned annual work delivery demands to accommodate 'new' work load on officers.		
	5.1.4 Mass inspection programme. Undertake a yearly mass inspection programme of allotment sites and plots to assist in the identification of issues and provide opportunities for co-ordinated responses, in partnership with allotment associations, to uphold and maintain appropriate standards.		

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Level Two objective Will consider next priority for delivery if resources allow			
5.2 Explore Devolved Management arrangements in sites with active and well established Associations.			
5.2.1 Gatekeepers. Encouraging allotment sites to nominate a person, or series of persons, to act as 'Gatekeepers' for information. These gatekeepers would be the principle point of contact that the council would approach as a first point of contact to disseminate consultation information relating to the site. These gatekeepers could also informally feedback to the allotments section.			
5.2.2 Allotment Forums. For those sites without an allotment association it is proposed to convene a 'special' allotment forum when circumstances require canvassing the views of plot holders or site representatives on proposed substantial capital expenditure and changes to a site.			
5.2.3 Allotment Associations. Provide advice and support to those sites interested in the setting up an allotment association. Foster a supportive environment which gradually allows those associations who are interested to adopt responsibility for a range of duties under licence from the authority, under financial arrangements that release a proportion of rental income for this purpose.			
5.2.4 Semi-autonomy. If circumstances arise that are suitably robust support suitably experienced allotment associations in leasing sites from the authority. The association would have the flexibility to arrange tenancy agreements and reinvest revenue, which it would manage, on maintenance, repair and capital items.			
Level Two objective Will consider next priority for delivery if resources allow			
5.3 Improve relationships			
5.3.1 Attend the allotment association's annual General Meeting once a year.			
5.3.2 Hold one Site Representatives Forum meeting per annum for all of those allotment sites without an association. This will be held at a different location each year.			
5.3.3 Self-managing Allotment Association Site Representatives will continue to be encouraged to carry out maintenance on our behalf.			
5.3.4 Tenants will be encouraged to become 'Gatekeepers' that can begin to represent site interests on sites where there are currently no formal Site Representatives.			
5.3.5 A Site Representatives Code of Conduct will be developed that incorporates issues such as health and safety, their duties, harassment, anti-racism etc.			
5.3.6 Any future Capital Investment Programme will include leasing allotment association sites, and will involve detailed consultation with the associations on the requirements of their sites – see 3.3.2			

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Aim	Title		
6	Environmental sustainability		
	Level One objective		
	Prioritise for delivery resources permitting as part of basic annual service package		
	6.1 Encourage composting and recycling on allotments		
	6.1.1 Plot Level Composting. Allotment holders to make provision on plots to compost green waste - see 3.2.4. for restrictions on bonfires.		
	6.1.2 Site Level Composting. On larger sites allotment section work with allotment associations and HBC Neighbourhood Services to investigate to practically of setting up on vacant allotment plots or in dedicated bays larger site composting facilities. It is envisaged that these facilities would be used to compost municipal green wastes in addition to allotment material. Management of the composting process would be undertaken by HBC contractor – shredding material on an industrial scale with hired machinery, rowing up and turning to aerate as appropriate using tractor with frontend loader. This process would enable plot holders to improve the soil quality of their plots by the use of leaves and organic matter provided from council parks and other areas.		
	6.1.3 Site Level Compost Deliveries utilising town-wide green waste resource. The Council's domestic green waste is collected and processed in to a soil improver locally by an outside contractor. In the past the Allotments Team has brought and supplied topsoil to some problem plots. The intension is to only use composted soil improver in the future with the added benefits this can potentially provide to soil drainage and organic improvement of allotment soils. This soil improver resource is also available to Allotment Associations and individuals who may wish to purchase directly.		
	6.1.4 Encourage plot holders to bring onto site only those items that are of use in allotment gardening. Through good administration, support and advice discourage hoarding, and to invite plot holders to think about how they will dispose of items before they bring them onto the allotments –see 3.2.11. and 3.2.12		
	6.1.5 Pride in Hartlepool – Allotments Amnesty. In support of the work described in 4.1.3 organise in conjunction with an appropriate recycling contractor the provision of strictly controlled and manned skips and collection facilities on allotment sites to remove non-compostable materials such as glass, metal, wood, plastics and gas canisters. Care must be taken to ensure that skips do not become a repository for hazardous wastes such as asbestos, garden chemicals and gas canisters. After an appropriate period this facility would be phased out and strict enforcement of allotment tenancy agreements applied as proposed in 3.2.9.		
	6.1.6 Fly tipping. Respond quickly to acts of fly-tipping to ensure they do not propagate. Work with plot holders and police authority to ensure a watchful eye is kept on sites and wherever possible work with responsible agencies to secure prosecutions of offenders.		

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<p>6.1.7 Support recycling opportunities. The Allotment team in partnership with allotment associations will look for, and when financially possible support, other sustainable recycling opportunities e.g. the provision of old wooden allotment site fencing for the creation of compost bins, and containers suitable for water collection.</p>			
<p>6.1.8 Support the improvement of the visual appearance and aesthetics of allotment structures on plots. Look for opportunities, in partnership with Allotment Associations, to work with agencies such as colleges, centres for adults with special needs, skills development programmes, probation services, etc to utilise recycled materials such as liberated external allotment fencing. Set up programmes with such partners that would see them manufacture new shed and cold frame designs discussed in 3.2.12 for use on plots.</p>			

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Level One objective			
Prioritise for delivery resources permitting as part of basic annual service package			
6.2 Encourage social and environmental responsibility.			
6.2.1 Gardening for health. Work in partnership to develop and support initiatives that encourage greater community engagement in allotment gardening and the environmental and health benefits that can result.			
6.2.2 Gardening courses for allotment tenants. In partnership research funding opportunities to run gardening courses on allotments to assist new and existing gardeners.			
6.2.3 Promote organic gardening methods. It is recognised that methods of gardening should be a matter of choice for individuals. The allotments team in partnership with sympathetic local Allotment Associations will look to grow awareness of organic gardening methods through visiting speakers and short courses on allotments when opportunities arise and resources are available.			
Level Two objective			
Will consider next priority for delivery if resources allow			
6.3 Water conservation.			
6.3.1 Water charging. Investigate the feasibility of installing a network of internal water meters on larger allotment sites to sub-divide usage. The idea being to charge localised groups of plot holders an equal percentage of total water bill for that particular area. Such a measure would encourage a group policing of water usage, water conservation measures and rapid leak reporting.			
6.3.2 Support water conservation opportunities. The Allotment team in partnership with allotment associations will look for, and when financially possible support, other water conservation opportunities e.g. the provision of guttering and containers suitable for water collection.			
6.3.3 Encourage the adoption of cultivation techniques that maximise water conservation. Where feasible provide guidance and training – see 4.2.3			
Level Two objective			
Will consider next priority for delivery if resources allow			
6.4 Identify and manage areas for wildlife and conservation.			
6.4.1 Planting green boundaries. The Allotments team will work in partnership with allotment associations to establish more sustainable approaches to allotment security through the planting of native hedgerow external boundaries to allotment sites. These planted hedgerows can be managed by trimming and hedgelaying to gradually provide a dense, secure natural barrier for sites that will support a rich diversity of wildlife.			
6.4.2 Gardening with nature. The allotments team will work in partnership with allotment associations, the Authorities ecologist and Countryside Wardens to support the integration wildlife friendly approaches in allotment gardening.			

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Level Two objective Will consider next priority for delivery if resources allow			
6.5 Neighbourhood Renewal and Planning Gain.			
6.5.1 Green Spaces Hartlepool. The Parks and Countryside Hartlepool Section will continue to work with external organisations and other council departments working towards creating a greener and more sustainable Hartlepool. To ensure that allotments remain an integral part of this vision it is intended to work more closely with the council's Neighbourhood Renewal Team to ensure that the regeneration of existing or creation of new allotment sites is allowed for in neighbourhood renewal schemes.			
Level Three objective Would like to deliver but only if suitable opportunities and resources can be identified			
6.6 Toilets.			
6.6.1 Research and investigate the feasibility of using composting toilets on allotment sites. Provide information and support to sites where there is an allotment association which is willing to maintain them.			

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Aim	Title		
7	Appropriate service resourcing		
	Level One objective		
	Prioritise for delivery resources permitting as part of basic annual service package		
	7.1 Building proactive Allotment Team.		
	7.1.1 Allotment Administrator. The Parks and Countryside Section needs to secure through the Business Transformation Process the continued services of the highly experienced Allotment Administrator from the Admin Support Services Department.		
	7.1.2 A second Allotment Technical Officer appointment. The Allotment Development Strategy Progression Table outlines the service improvements that would be possible with a 2 nd Technical Officer.		
	7.1.3.1 Option 1: Allotments Development Officer appointment. For filling much the same role as the Parks Development Officer this post would aim to maintain and grow service quality through partnership and synergies with the work of other agencies; whilst overseeing and co-ordinating service implementation.		
	7.1.3.2 Option 2: Parks Development Officer role expansion with associated appointment of 2nd Parks and Games Spaces Technical Officer. This option would meet the aims of role expansion and also provide more appropriate front line service level staffing. It would mean the Parks Development Officer post holder was required to act-down less and could concentrate more on service development, partnership opportunities and sourcing of outside funding.		
	Level One objective		
	Prioritise for delivery resources permitting as part of basic annual service package		
	7.2 Resourcing a proactive Allotment Team.		
	7.2.1 Financial support for the embedding of a full-time Allotment Administrator within the Parks and Countryside section. The Section needs to secure through the Business Transformation Process the continued services of the highly experienced Allotment Administrator from the Admin Support Services Department.		
	7.1.2 Financial support for the embedding of a second Allotment Technical Officer. The Allotment Development Strategy: Objective Delivery Table outlines the service improvements possible.		
	7.2.3.1 Option 1: Financial support for Allotments Development Officer. This post would aim to maintain and grow service quality through partnership and synergies with the work of other agencies; whilst overseeing and co-ordinating service implementation.		
	7.2.3.2 Option 2: Financial support for Parks Development Officer role expansion with associated appointment of 2nd Parks and Games Spaces Technical Officer. This option would meet the aims of role expansion and also provide more appropriate front line service level staffing. It would mean the Parks Development Officer post holder was required to act-down less and could concentrate more on service development, partnership opportunities and sourcing of outside funding.		

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Level Two objective			
Will consider next priority for delivery if resources allow			
7.3 Revising plot charges to support sustainable growth.			
<p>7.3.1 Tiered rent charges. Tiered rent charge for sites at different stages of partnership working development (allotment association, devolved management) and subsequent renewal and investment in facilities. Charges would comprise the current 'area of plot' charge, 'water charge' - if water conservation measure described in 4.3.1 achieved for site, and a 'site investment' charge. Site investment charge classifications: 'Dandelion Sites'. These are sites where plot holders chose not to form an over arching group to represent their interests and do not wish to actively contribute to site improvement. Site Investment Charge: low (Held by Council Allotments Team as a small war chest to lever outside funding opportunities for site). 'Tulip Sites'. These are sites where plot holders as a group work towards forming a positive and constructive relationship with Allotment Team with the medium term of aim of facilitating site improvements through outside investment. The object would be to build a 'war chest' for match funding purposes. Site Investment Charge: Medium (Held by Council's Allotments Team as a war chest to support growth of an Allotment Association and at the same time proactively lever outside funding opportunities for site). 'Carnation Sites'. These are sites where plot holders have formed a strong, inclusive, vibrant and diverse Allotment Association. The Association has a history of working in a positive and constructive way with the Allotments Team to secure investment and improvements. Site Investment Charge: High (Collected by Council's Allotments Team and returned to Allotment Association to act as a war chest to proactively lever, in partnership, outside funding opportunities for site).</p>			
Level Two objective			
Will consider next priority for delivery if resources allow			
7.4 Propagating service partnerships.			
<p>7.4.1 Develop Service Partnerships. Promote Allotment Development Strategy to potential organisational partners including businesses, industry, and voluntary or health sectors.</p>			



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Section 7 – Previous studies that have looked at Hartlepool's allotments

Previous studies into Hartlepool's allotments and service provision

The Best Value Review into Allotments undertaken in October 1999 made a number of recommendations, namely:-

- That devolved management be explored with allotment tenants and negotiated where there is demonstrable local interest.
There are two sites currently undertaking self management - Woodcroft Allotment Association have successfully managed the site since 2003, while Briarfields are in the process of becoming a devolved management site.
- Allotment budgets are centrally located in Community Services Department with effect from 1st April 2000.
This has been completed.
- Officers actively pursue grants and other sources that could increase the financial resources available for allotments.
Investment in sites such as Waverley Terrace and Briarfields have been completed, resulting in significant site improvements.
- Members give consideration to allotments as a priority for future funding.
Ongoing
- A concessionary scheme is not introduced as part of the review.
Noted - No concessionary scheme has been introduced.
- Some larger plots are subdivided to increase number of plots available and broaden appeal to those people wishing smaller plot sizes. This would be linked with promotion.
Burn Valley, Station Lane, Waverley Terrace and Briarfields all offer a smaller than average plot size.
- Procedural guidance is produced to cover pricing policy for rent rebate or reduction requests.
Rent reductions and waivers are utilised by Officers, as necessary, where situations arise.
- No further expansion in allotment provision is undertaken, unless additional funds become available.
This has been adhered to.

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Institute of Leisure and Amenity Management review

The Institute of Leisure and Amenity Management undertook a study of allotment provision in Hartlepool in May 2004. The suggested recommendations from this study short, medium and long term.

Short Term

- That the Briarfields site should be disposed of.
The site at Briarfields has been reduced in size and is now a 12 plot site with increased security and is working towards devolved management.
- An allotments charter be devised for plot holders, including simple and unambiguous standards.
Some work has been completed to simplify the rules and procedures, particularly in respect of the devolved management site at Woodcroft.
- Existing local performance indicators be revised to ensure continuous improvement of the service. The prime local PI seeks to minimise allotment vacancy levels.
Performance indicators to be reviewed for suitability in light of aims.
- Site security should be improved, in particular by raising the awareness of plot holders and introducing "Allotments Watch" programmes in conjunction with surrounding residents.
The Ringmaster 10000 programme part of the Safer Hartlepool Partnership offers updates on criminal activity taking place locally and crime prevention advice.

- A suitable information pack should be produced to promote allotment gardening.
Information pack requirements to be considered as part of development strategy.
- Plots at Waverley Terrace be aggregated to the eastern end of the site and the remaining land should be landscaped and added to the adjoining recreation ground.
Achieved – the land remains allotment land for allocation as resources permit
- A similar policy of plot aggregation should take place at Station Lane with redundant land used for recreational purposes or disposal.
Improvements at Station Lane to improve drainage and access has resulted in all available plots becoming tenanted (as at 14th January 2008).

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Institute of Leisure and Amenity Management review – continued:

Medium Term

- Self Management of Allotment Sites be actively pursued using sites such as Woodcroft as a blueprint.
Progress has been made in establishing Allotment Associations. Woodcroft continue to be self managed with Briarfields undergoing legal negotiations at present. Other Allotment Associations are developing strongly and are considering self management.
- Consideration should be given to increases in rents to carry out a range of physical improvements to allotment sites across the Borough.
A 22% average increase of rents in 2007/2008 has resulted in investment across a number of sites to improve access and has completed a drainage scheme at Station Lane.
- Action is taken to identify alternative sources of funding to fund a phased programme of improvements in addition to work already in hand.
A number of associations have accessed Awards for All and other community funds to improve sites.
- A phased programme of removal of unsafe and unsightly barriers within allotment sites be drafted, subject to resource availability at Brierton, Chester Road, Nicholsons Field, Haswell Avenue, Station Lane and Waverley.
Where the opportunity has existed (Briarfields and Waverley) internal fences have been restricted under legislation in the rules of tenancy.
- Disadvantaged and minority groups should be targeted to increase their usage of allotments and reduce under occupancy
The allotment site at Waverley Terrace has provision for groups to be part of a community allotment. This is currently occupied by Integrated Mental Health Services, Learning Disability Services, Mental Health Matters, MIND, DISC (Drug Services) and NACRO (Offenders)
- The welcoming aspects of sites should be improved by entrance improvements and in particular the provision of attractive and informative signs.
Not yet completed.

Long Term

- Consideration should be given to the provision of community buildings incorporating toilet facilities (subject to resources becoming available) at the larger sites such as Stranton, Throston, Thornhill, Chester Road and Nicholson's Field.
Not yet programmed.

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PPG17 Audit and Assessment Open Space, Sport and Recreation report (2007):

The PPG17 Audit and Assessment Open Space, Sport and Recreation was a technical study developed through community consultation and an audit of selected types of open space carried out in 2007. The PPG17 Audit and Assessment Open Space, Sport and Recreation set out to suggest standards for open space so that an assessment of current and future provision could be made.

The objectives of the study were:

- To provide information about existing community needs and aspirations
- To analyse how these results vary according to the different demographic characteristics of different groups and communities within Hartlepool
- To research the standards of provision
- To develop a set of appropriate standards for Hartlepool.

Open space in Hartlepool largely follows that defined in Planning Policy Guidance note 17 and its Companion Guide and includes:

- Urban parks and gardens
- Allotments
- Amenity green space
- Churchyards and cemeteries
- Play space for children and teenagers
- Common land
- Outdoor sports facilities
- Civic spaces
- Green corridors
- Indoor sports facilities
- Natural/semi-natural green spaces.

The audit of open spaces included each site being scored against a predetermined set of criteria relevant to that type of space, for quality and value assessments.

The community needs study comprised of a postal, self completion questionnaire sent to a random sample of local people, augmented by discussion groups with residents and extensive discussion with officers and other stakeholders. A separate self completion survey was also distributed to local sports clubs.

The analysis of the audit and the community consultation was undertaken at different geographic levels. The local authority area was split into North (5 wards), Central (7 wards) and South areas (5 wards).

Findings and standards proposed by the PPG17 report:

Quantity standard:

Current provision equates to 26.1 plots per 1000 households, compared to the National Society of Allotment and Leisure Gardeners target for provision of 20 allotment plots per 1000 households. There is an overall provision of 0.47 hectares per 1000 population, which is over double the level of 0.2 hectares per 1000 population recommended in the 1969 Thorpe report. There is an overall provision of 26.1 plots per 1000 households, compared to the England average of 15 plots per 1000 households.

The allotment standards proposed are:

- 0.47 hectares per 1000 population and
- 26.1 plots per 1000 households

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The quantity standard generates a surplus of over 0.15 hectares of allotment space across Hartlepool, with a deficit in two of the three sub areas. The deficit in the two areas is offset by the surplus of 4.55 hectares in the South area.

Turning to the standard based on plot provision per household, there is effectively a balance of provision. There is a deficit of 147.3 plots in the North area, although again this offset by surpluses in the South (105.7 plots) and Central areas (41.1 plots).

Accessibility Standard:

These accessibility criteria are considered to be the reasonable distances that people would expect to travel to an allotment site. The catchment areas for allotments in Hartlepool are based on the following criteria:

- Over 100 plots 1200 metres radius
- 50 to 100 plots 900 metres radius
- 10 to 49 plots 600 metres radius
- 1 to 9 plots 300 metres radius

The concentration of allotments in the North, Central and South Areas means that many of the catchment areas overlap. In effect only the sites in Greatham have discreet catchment areas that do not overlap. When the catchments are amalgamated the areas without reasonable access to an Allotments & Community Gardens can be identified. These are the wards of St Hilda's in the North Area; Stranton, Foggy Furze and Elwick in the Central Area and Fens in the South Area. The rural area of Elwick is largely unserved.

Quality standard:

A quality assessment was undertaken for the allotment sites. The quality score that was arrived at is based on an assessment of each allotment site using a scale of 0 to 3, 0 being very poor and 3 being good. The criteria used in the assessment are listed below.

- Access to site
- Security of site
- Provision of haulage ways & paths
- Water provision on site
- Cultivation level of site
- Quality of land/soil
- No. of Neglected plots
- Communal store/shed/shop
- Adequacy of car parking
- Fencing, gates & boundary hedges
- Range of plot sizes
- Evidence of vandalism
- Provision of individual sheds
- Provision of notice boards

The scores derived from this process are shown in the table that subsequently follows.

In terms of quality, the median quality score for the allotment sites was 78% and the agreed benchmark site was at Chester Road. The quality standard proposed for allotments was therefore set at 78%

Parks and Countryside *Hartlepool*

Allotments Development Strategy 2010 - 2015



PPG17 Open Spaces Assessment (2007)

Assessment of the quality of Hartlepool Borough Council allotment provision			
Site Name	Association Status	Quality Score from PPG17	Number of Plots (Size of Site)
Briarfields	Yes – (2007) looking to devolved managed	77% - Below median score (Priority 5)	12 (0.41 ha)
Brierton	New ly Formed in 2007	67% - Below median score (Joint Priority 2)	57 (2.51 ha)
Burn Valley	Yes	92% - above average	75 (3.53 ha)
Catcote	New ly Formed in 2006	83% - above average	56 (1.66 ha)
Chester Road	Yes. Formed in 2007	79% - Above Average	146 (6.48 ha)
Greatham	None	73% - Below median score (Priority 4)	3 (0.13 ha)
Haswell Avenue	New ly Formed in 2007	90% - above average	30 (0.80 ha)
Nicholsons Field	New ly Formed in 2007	67% - Below median score (Joint Priority 2)	164 (4.65ha)
Olive Street	None	100% - Above average	1 (0.03 ha)
Station Lane	None	61% - Below median score (Priority 1)	77 (0.71 ha)
Stranton	Yes	81% - above average	175 (7.69 ha)
Thompson Grove	None	85% - above average score	5 (0.16 ha)
Thornhill	Yes. Existing association previously w ith Chester Rd and Throston sites.	85% - Above average	86 (3.73 ha)
Throston	Yes. Formed in 2008	91% - above average	82 (2.86 ha)
Waverley Terrace	No	72% - below average	42 (1.22 ha)
Woodcroft	Devolved Management since 2003	100% - above average	30 (0.94 ha)

Notes:

- Total Number of Plots: 1012
- The quality score is based on an assessment of each allotment site using a scale of 0 to 3, 0 being very poor and 3 being good. The areas assessed were: access to site, security of site, provision of haulage ways and paths, water provision, cultivation level, number of neglected plots, quality of land/soil, communal plots, adequacy of car parking, fencing, gates and boundaries, range of plot sizes and evidence of vandalism



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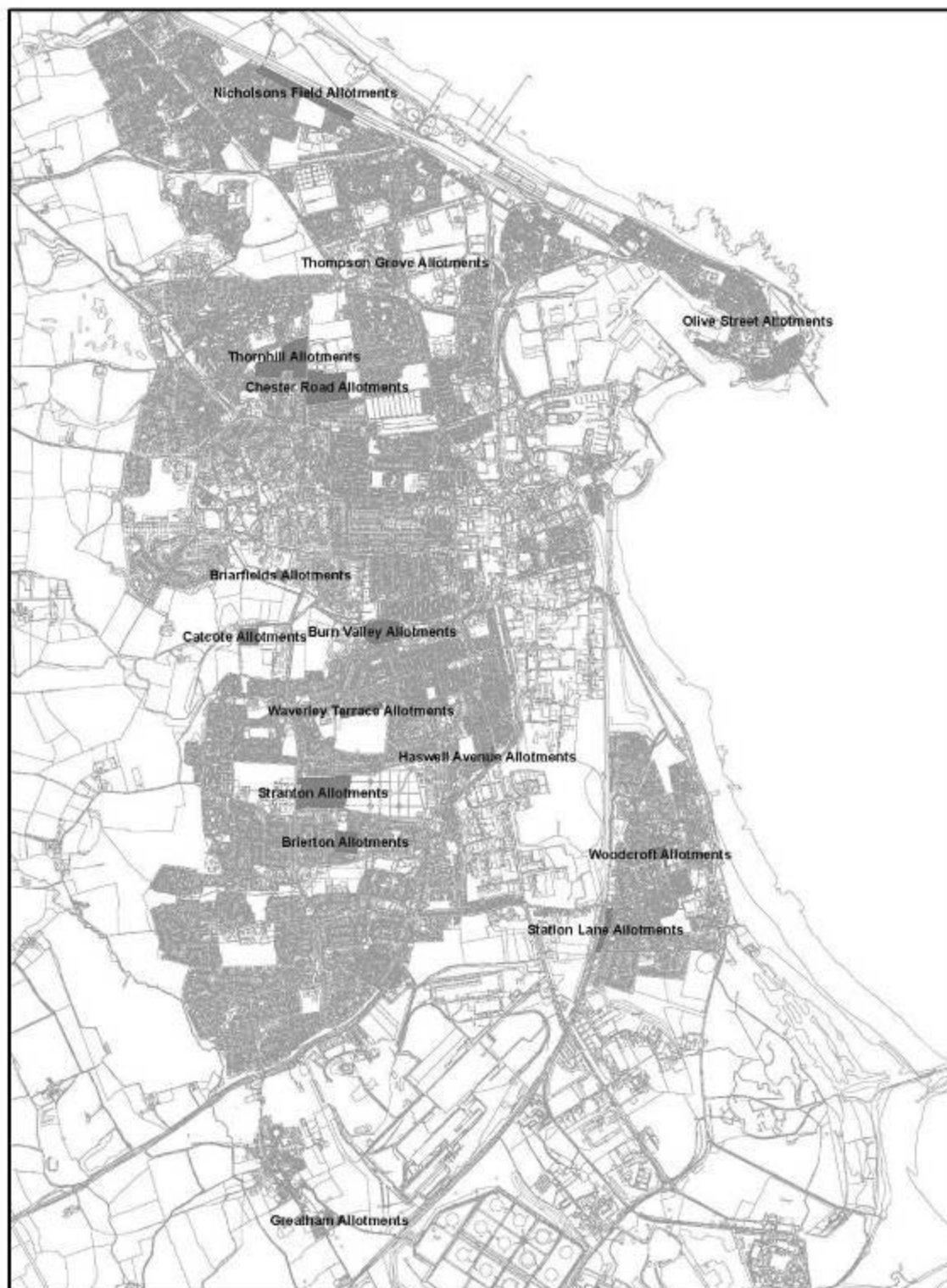


Section 8 - Allotment Site Maps

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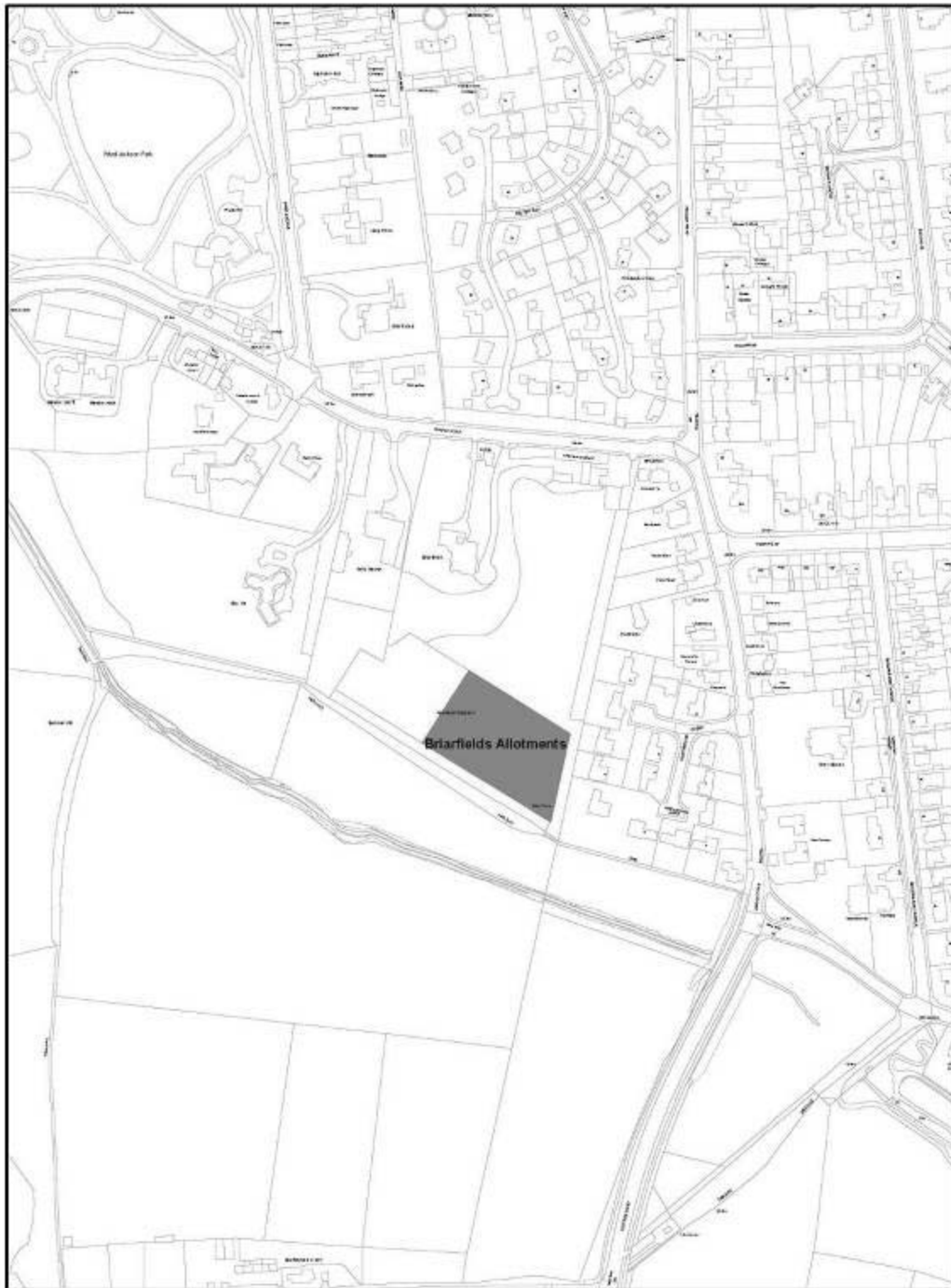


Map 1 Allotment Locations in Hartlepool

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Map 2 Allotment - Briarfields

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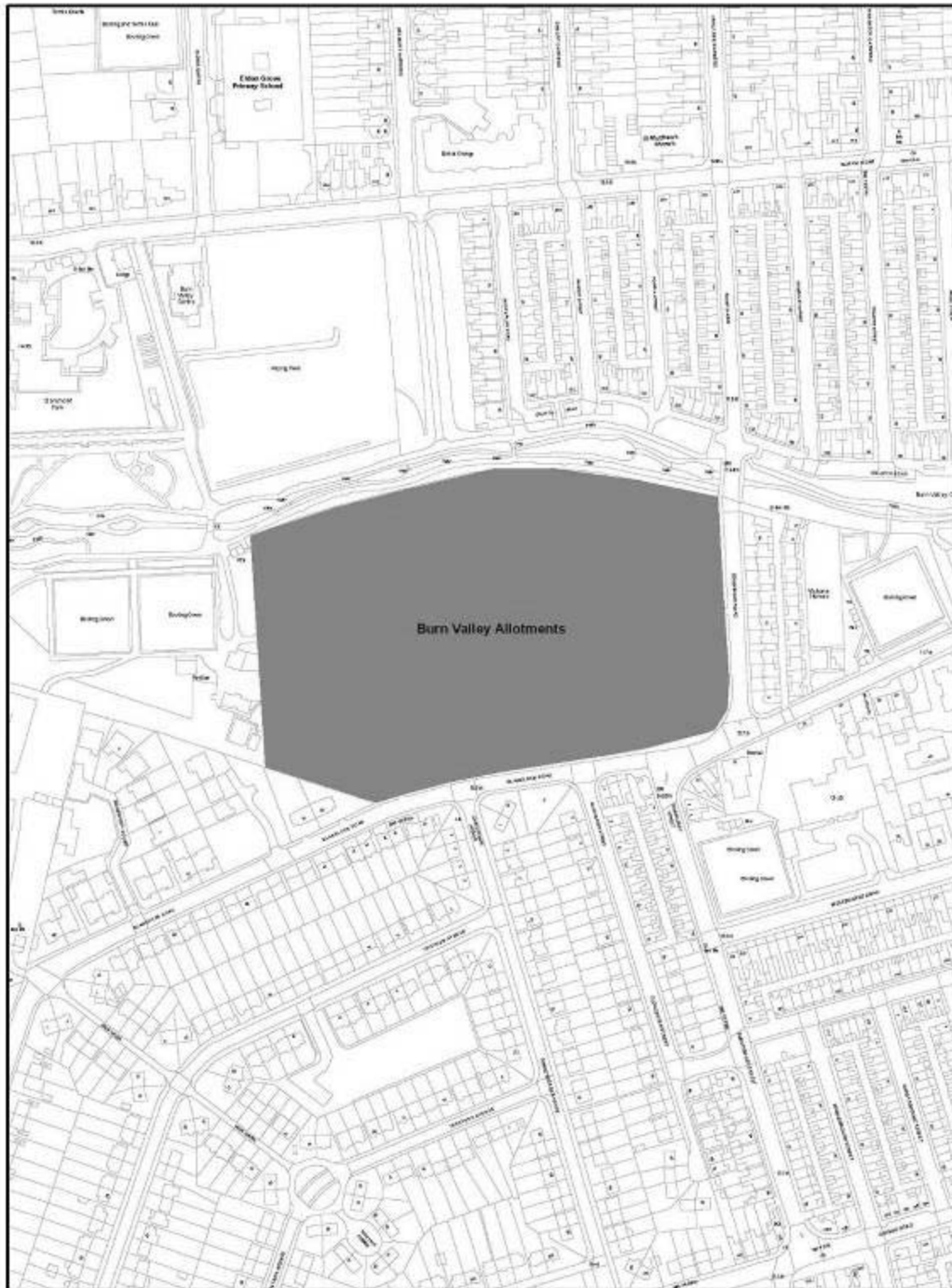
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Map 3 Allotment - Brierton

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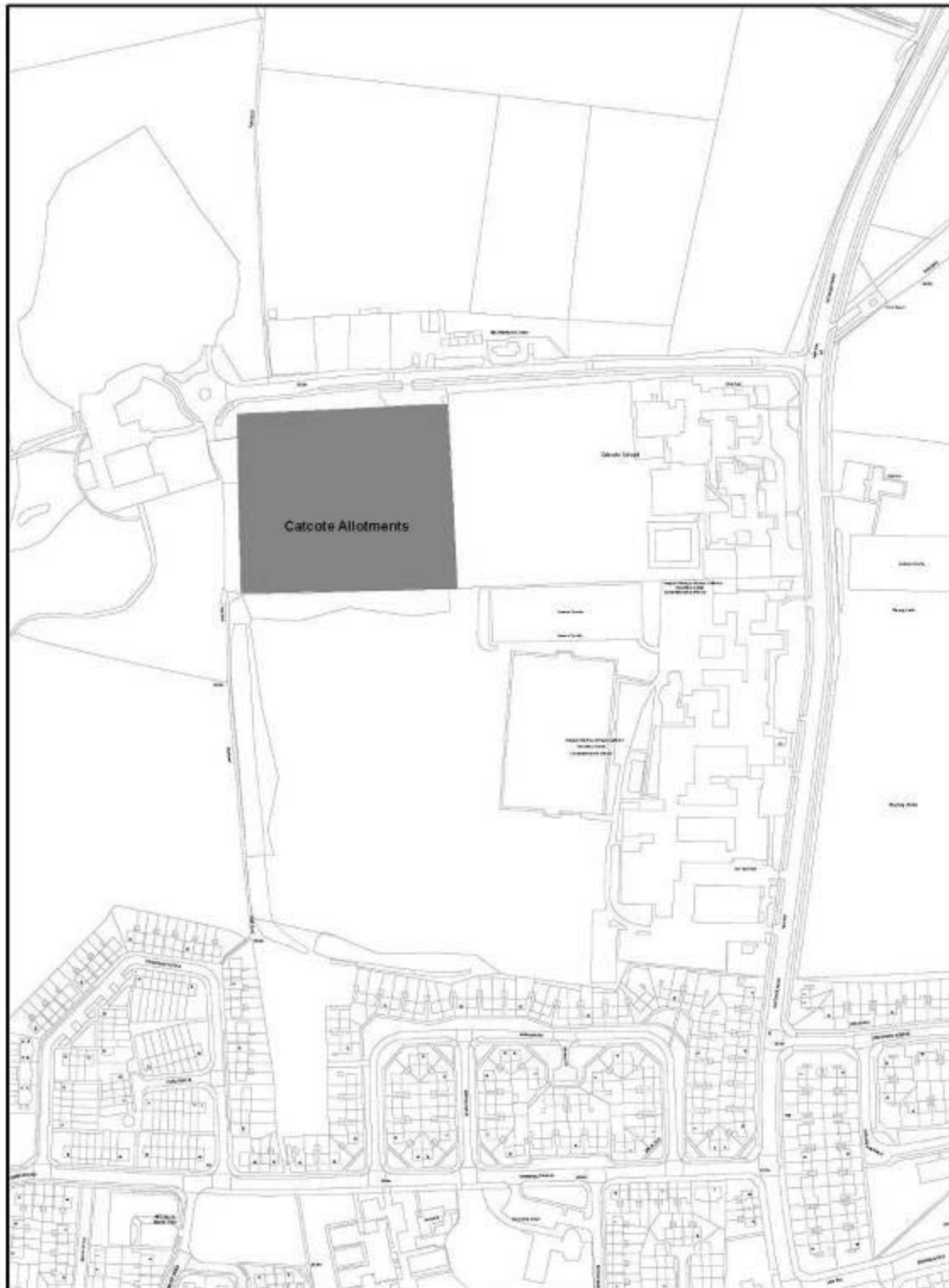


Map 4 Allotment - Burn Valley

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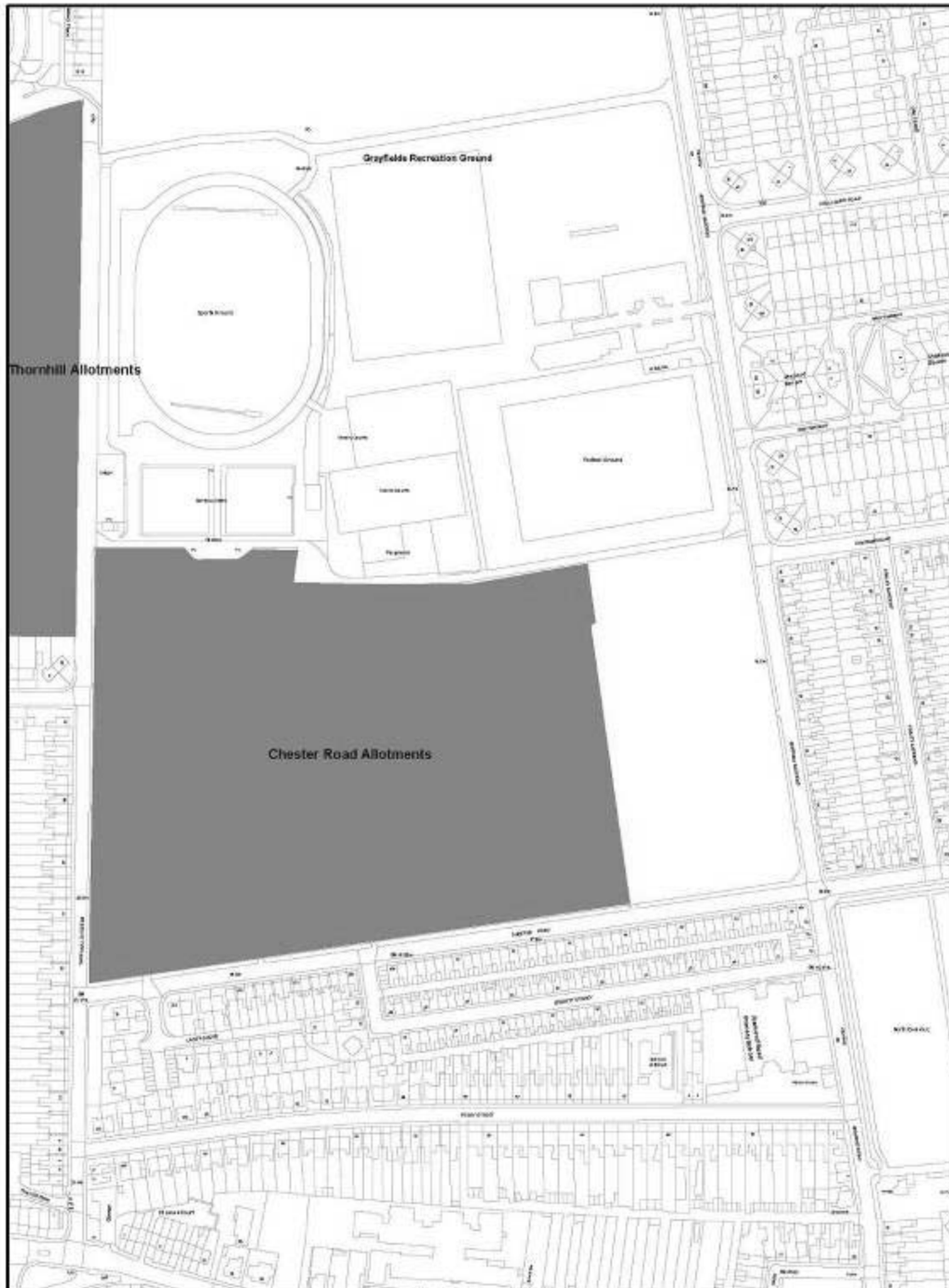


Map 5 Allotment - Catcote

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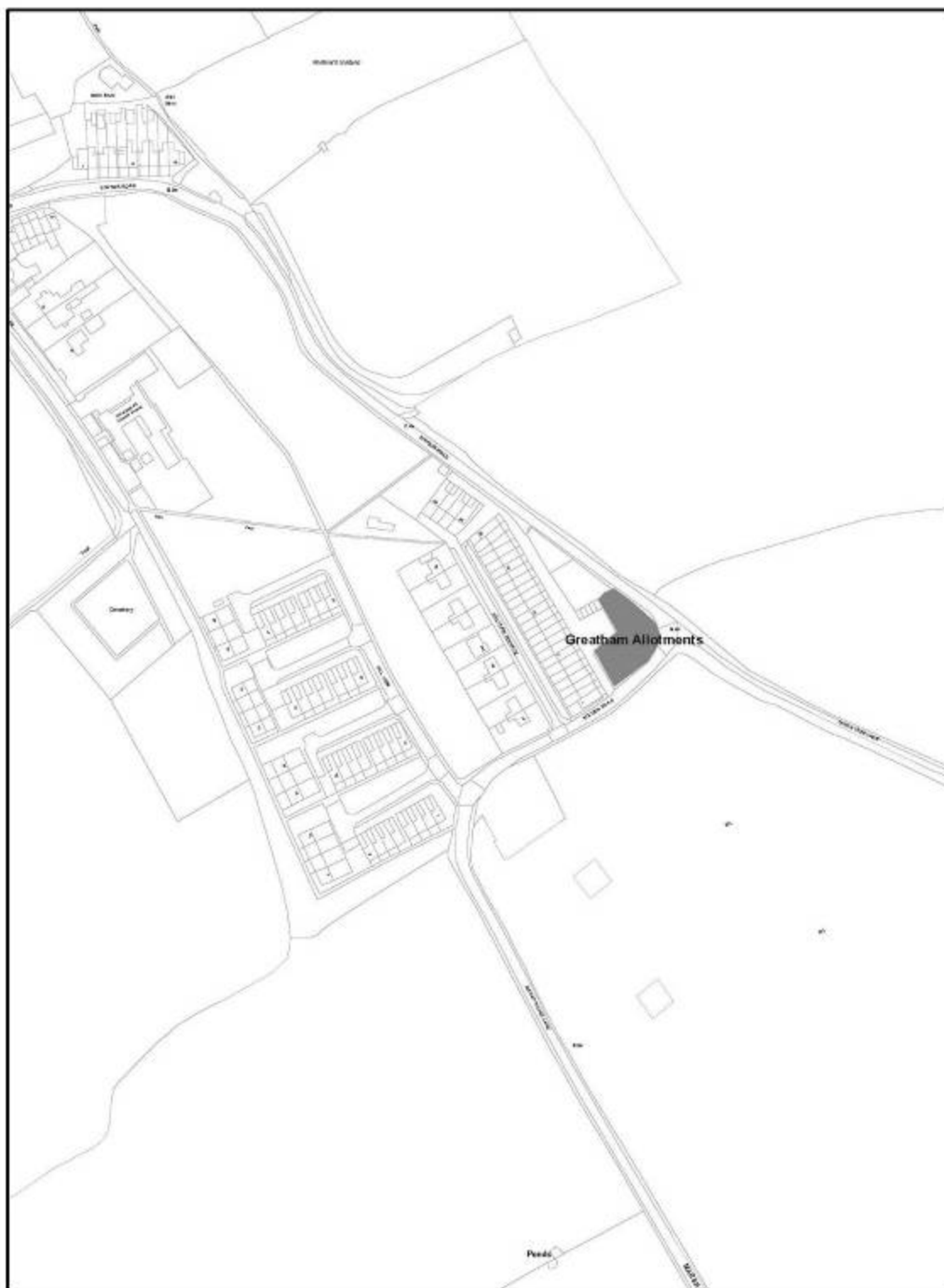


Map 6 Allotment - Chester Road

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Map 7 Allotment - Greatham

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Map 8 Allotment - Haswell Avenue

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Map 9 Allotment - Nicholson's Field

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Map 10 Allotment - Olive Street

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Map 11 Allotment - Station Lane

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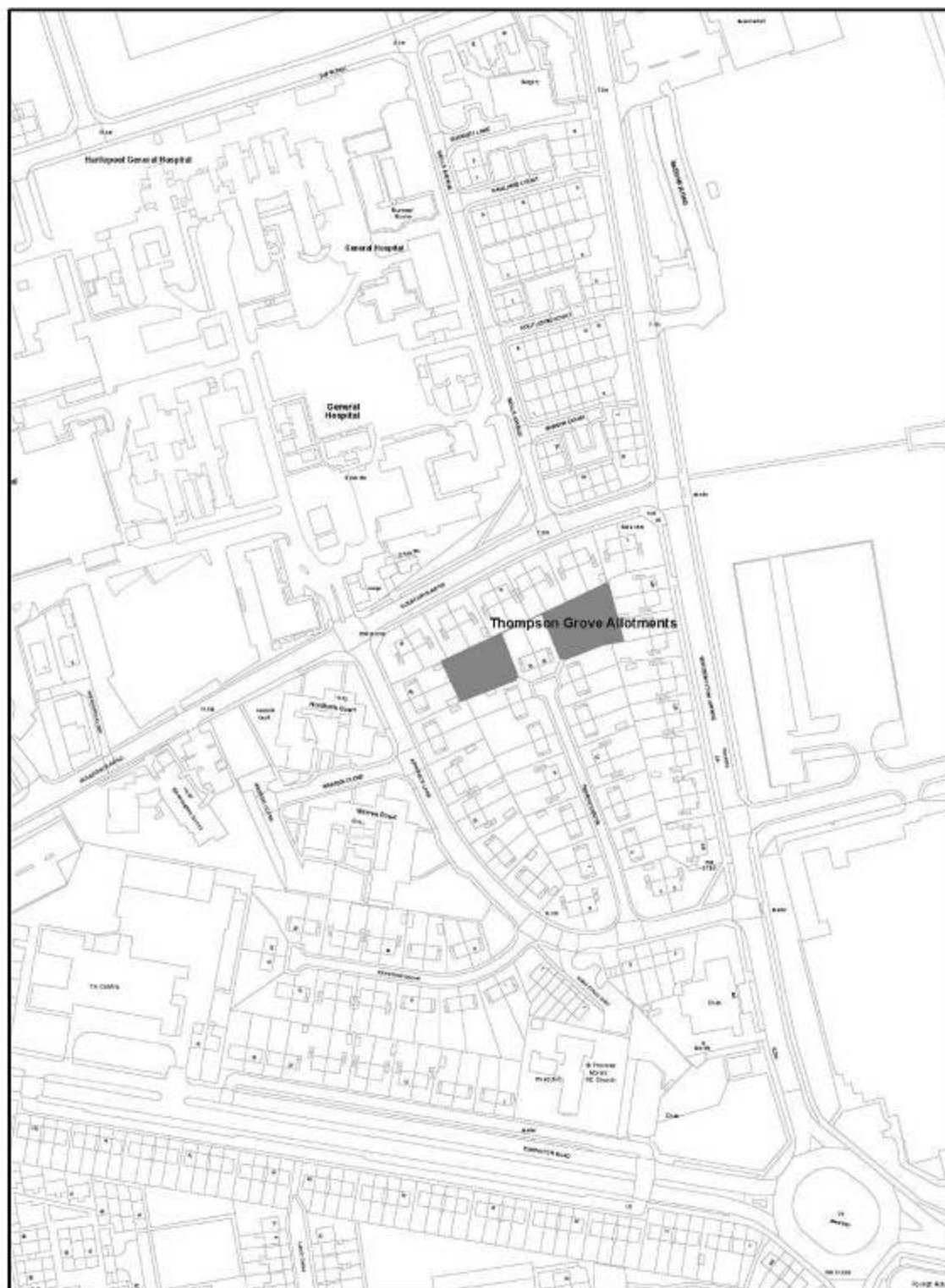


Map 12 Allotment - Stranton

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Map 13 Allotment - Thompson Grove

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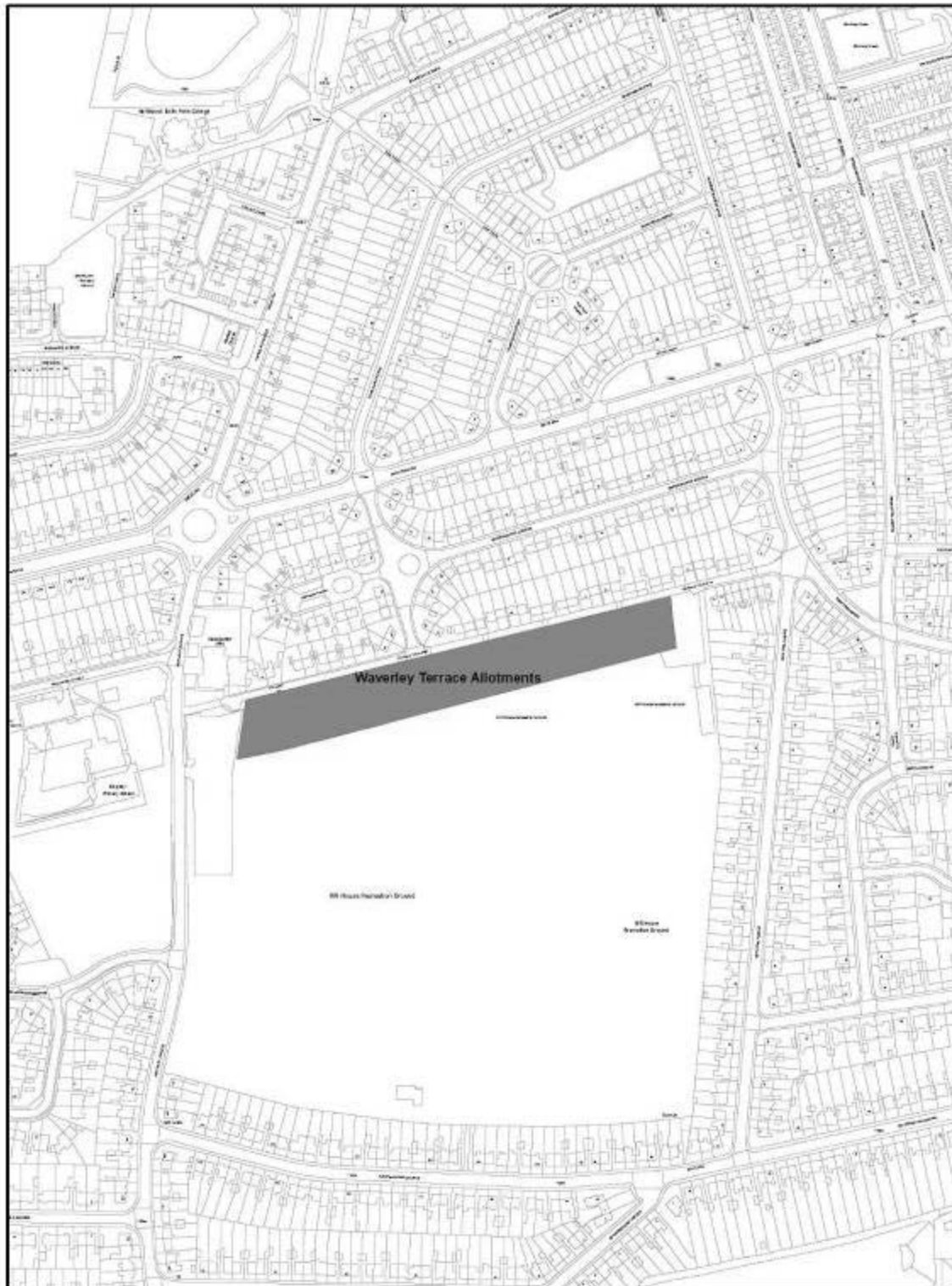


Map 14 Allotments - Thornhill and Throston

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Map 15 Allotment - Waverley Terrace

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Map 16 Allotment - Woodcraft

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Responsible for the care, development and promotion of:

- Public Rights of Way and Access Network,
 - Formal parks and Country Park areas,
 - Countryside and Nature Conservation areas,
 - Coast and associated Beach Safety provision,
 - Town wide Horticulture and Stranton Nursery,
 - Cemeteries and the Crematoria,
 - Allotments,
 - Children's fixed play equipment,
 - Football pitches, Games spaces and Bowling Greens
- Within the borough of Hartlepool.

