

ADULT AND COMMUNITY BASED SERVICES COMMITTEE AGENDA



Thursday 7 September 2023

at 10.00 am

**in Council Chamber,
Civic Centre, Hartlepool**

MEMBERS: ADULT AND COMMUNITY BASED SERVICES COMMITTEE

Councillors Allen, Buchan, Darby, Hall, Little, Thompson and Young.

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

2. TO RECEIVE ANY DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST BY MEMBERS

3. MINUTES

- 3.1 To receive the Minutes and Decision Record in respect of the meeting held on 15 June 2023.

4. BUDGET AND POLICY FRAMEWORK ITEMS

No items

5. KEY DECISIONS

- 5.1 Carlton Adventure – Future Operation - *Assistant Director, Preventative and Community Based Services (to follow)*

6. OTHER ITEMS REQUIRING DECISION

- 6.1 Allotment Strategy – *Assistant Director, Preventative and Community Based Services*

CIVIC CENTRE EVACUATION AND ASSEMBLY PROCEDURE

In the event of a fire alarm or a bomb alarm, please leave by the nearest emergency exit as directed by Council Officers. A Fire Alarm is a continuous ringing. A Bomb Alarm is a continuous tone.

The Assembly Point for everyone is Victory Square by the Cenotaph. If the meeting has to be evacuated, please proceed to the Assembly Point so that you can be safely accounted for.

7. ITEMS FOR INFORMATION

- 7.1 *Levelling Up Parks Fund Update - Assistant Director, Preventative and Community Based Services*
- 7.2 *Jobs and Skills in the Community Hubs - Assistant Director, Preventative and Community Based Services*

8. ANY OTHER BUSINESS WHICH THE CHAIR CONSIDERS URGENT

FOR INFORMATION

Forthcoming meeting dates are set out below. All meetings will be held in the Civic Centre, Hartlepool.

Thursday 9 November, 2023 commencing at 10.00 am.

Thursday 7 December, 2023 commencing at 10.00 am.

Thursday 25 January, 2024 commencing at 10.00 am.



ADULT AND COMMUNITY BASED SERVICES COMMITTEE

MINUTES AND DECISION RECORD

15 JUNE 2023

The meeting commenced at 10.00 am in the Civic Centre, Hartlepool.

Present:

Councillor: Bob Buchan (In the Chair)

Councillors: Gary Allen, Rob Darby, Ged Hall, Sue Little, Carole Thompson and Mike Young.

Also present: Evelyn Leck, Stephen Thomas, HealthWatch

Officers: Jill Harrison, Executive Director of Adult and Community Based Services
Gemma Ptak, Assistant Director, Preventative and Community Based Services
Danielle Swainston, Assistant Director, Joint Commissioning
Sarah Scarr, Head of Service - Heritage and Open Spaces
David Cosgrove, Democratic Services Team

1. Apologies for Absence

None.

2. Declarations of Interest

None.

3. Minutes of the meeting held on 9 March 2023

Received.

4. The Role and Remit of the Adults and Community Based Services Committee *(Executive Director of Adult and Community Based Services)*

Type of decision

For information.

Purpose of report

To provide background on the Committee's role and remit to Committee Members.

Issue(s) for consideration

The Executive Director of Adult and Community Based Services gave a presentation to the Committee outlining the role and remit of the Adult and Community Based Services Committee as set out in the Council Constitution and the service areas that fell under its management. The presentation also included a brief overview of the Council's current budget position. The presentation outlined Members' role and the specific service issues for Adult Social Care, Preventative and Community Based Services, and Commissioned Services and the challenges and priorities the services faced in the immediate future.

The Vice-Chair commented that it was pleasing to hear that the services being provided by the department were being shortlisted for national awards which reflected the hard work of all the staff involved. The Chair echoed the comments.

Decision

That the presentation be noted.

5. Adult Social Care Quality Assurance Report – 2022/23 *(Executive Director of Adult and Community Based Services)*

Type of decision

Non-Key Decision.

Purpose of report

To present to members the first Annual Adult Social Care Quality Assurance Report covering the period 1 April 2022 to 31 March 2023.

Issue(s) for consideration

The Executive Director of Adult and Community Based Services reported that the recent White Paper: People at the Heart of Care introduced, along with a range of other measures, a duty for the Care Quality Commission (CQC) to independently review and assess local authority performance in respect of its duties under the Care Act. The assurance framework for adult social care was currently being used within a number of pilot sites nationally and would then be rolled out across all Councils from October 2023. It was anticipated that a baseline assessment of all Local Authorities would be completed within a two year period.

The Executive Director also indicated that there had been a significant amount of work undertaken regionally through the North East Branch of the Association of Directors of Adult Social Services (NE ADASS) to support preparation for assurance, as well as work within individual local authorities. The North East Association of Directors of Adult Social Services (NE ADASS) commissioned Dr Carol Tozer, a former DASS, to complete annual conversations with the 12 North East Local Authorities to support Councils in their preparation for CQC Assurance. Conversations took place between September 2022 and February 2023 and involved a significant amount of data being reviewed and triangulated prior to a half day conversation involving the adult social care senior management team. The process was very robust and challenging and produced feedback on areas of good practice and areas for further development.

The Adult Social Care Quality Assurance Report submitted to the Committee provided an overview of the work undertaken within adult social care during 2022/23 relating to quality assurance. Areas of work covered in the report included: feedback from carers and people who use services; case audits; peer review; and feedback from the workforce.

Members welcomed the report, in particular, how well Hartlepool had performed with 10 out of the 25 measures used being ranked in the top 10 local authorities nationally. A Member questioned how local authority social care was integrated with other social care providers, including the voluntary and not-for-profit sector, and the Community Hubs and how people were accessing services and how information was being shared.

The Executive Director commented that a presentation later on the agenda would highlight the services available to people accessing the Community Hubs with direct feedback from those people. There was a lot of joint working with the VCS sector and there was a clear information sharing policy to protect users. People often came into the Community Hubs looking for one particular service and ended up linking with a whole range of services they often didn't know were there.

The Executive Director reported that there was a lot of joint working with other agencies and groups and Mental Health Services, for example, held an online 'virtual huddle' with partner agencies when talking through which services were best placed to address a person's needs.

Members questioned the supervision of social workers and their workloads. The Executive Director stated that all staff and managers had regular supervision built into their working practices. Team Managers also regularly met to liaise. In terms of workloads, staff had reported in the recent 'assurance visit' that the number of cases each individual social worker managed was busy but manageable. The Executive Director commented that while there hadn't been a significant rise in the number of people being referred for support over the last five years, the complexity of

the issues Social Workers were dealing with had increased significantly which creates some challenges.

Members also commented on the administrative workload of social workers and if this could be alleviated. The Executive Director stated that one of the key deliverables of community led support was reduced bureaucracy; recording only what needed to be recorded. A lot of work had been undertaken to reduce administrative workloads and to ensure teams had an appropriate skill mix to function effectively. The department had also not made any cuts to the administrative support to social work teams.

Comment was also made by a member of the public at the withdrawal of the free tea and coffee at the Central Community Hub.

Decision

That the Adult Social Care Quality Assurance Report be approved and the work that had been undertaken to ensure the quality of practice and to understand the views of people with lived experience and the workforce be noted.

6. Parks and Open Spaces: Place-Based Plans *(Executive Director of Adult and Community Based Services)*

Type of decision

Non-key Decision.

Purpose of report

To provide the Committee with information on the management plans that have been developed for the four parks within the borough and to seek approval to consult with the public on those plans.

Issue(s) for consideration

The Head of Service - Heritage and Open Spaces gave a presentation to the Committee outlining the background to the development of the place-based management plans for Burn Valley Gardens, Rossmere Park, Seaton Park and Ward Jackson Park. The aim was that the plans would enable a more proactive approach to review the strengths, challenges, opportunities and risks within each site. Sitting alongside these documents was a summary document to provide strategic aims and objectives for all of the sites, which together with the plans for the four parks, was submitted as appendices to the report. The documents were in draft form and would be taken out to public consultation prior to their adoption.

The Head of Service reported that the public consultation would be carried out over the summer, with plans to host an online consultation via 'Your Say, Our Future', on-site drop in sessions at the parks, and engagement with active volunteers and residents groups. The consultation would ensure that the plans are reflective of the needs and aspirations of the wider community.

A Member referred to some of the other open spaces widely used by the public and commented on the facilities at the Rift House Recreation Ground. The Assistant Director, Preventative and Community Based Services commented that these facilities were covered by the Indoor Facilities & Playing Pitch Strategy and officers were aware of the issues.

A Member commented on the provision of waste bins in the parks, particularly Burn Valley Gardens which were often too small and emptied too infrequently. Larger bins would resolve the problem. The Head of Service stated she would pass the request on to the Cleansing Team, but it was this type of feedback that the team were looking to hear from park users.

A Member was concerned that the parks Green Flag award could be at jeopardy due to some of the issues of vandalism. The Head of Service commented that anti-social behaviour was an issue at all park sites and officers did liaise with Police regularly. Residents were also encouraged to report any anti-social behaviour to the Community Safety Team. The Assistant Director added that the Green Flag scheme was a national award scheme, so those undertaking the assessments knew the problems faced in managing parks and open spaces. Unfortunately anti-social behaviour and vandalism were widespread problems and it's important that we manage the risks as far as possible.

The Vice-Chair commented that many of the anti-social behaviour problems experienced in Seaton Park were resolved through bringing in volunteers and the sports participation team in during the school holidays to encourage young people to be involved in informal sport and play in the park but it did take time and effort to make that change.

In relation to a question around North Cemetery as a 'park space', the Head of Service stated that currently this was still a working cemetery. Members also referred to the use of CCTV in the parks. The Assistant Director assured Members that the cameras did work and were monitored.

Decision

That the proposal to engage in public consultation on the place based plans for parks be approved.

7. Community Hubs Update (*Executive Director of Adult and Community Based Services*)

Type of decision

For information.

Purpose of report

The purpose of the report was to update members on the development of Community Hubs following approval of the Community Hubs Strategy 2023 – 2028 in January 2023.

Issue(s) for consideration

The Executive Director gave a presentation and showed a video to the Committee outlining the services provided through the Community Hubs together with feedback from partner organisations and service users. Members welcomed the report and the services provided through the hubs that received such support from the public. In response to Members questions, the Executive Director stated that there had been a number of contacts from other authorities to view the model of community hubs here in Hartlepool.

Decision

That the report and the presentation be noted.

8. Tall Ships Races 2023 – Update (*Executive Director of Adult and Community Based Services*)

Type of decision

For Information.

Purpose of report

To update members regarding plans for the Tall Ships Races, which will be hosted in Hartlepool from 6 – 9 July 2023.

Issue(s) for consideration

The Assistant Director, Preventative and Community Based Services gave a presentation to the Committee updating Members on the final arrangements for the Tall Ships event. The presentation outlined the supporting entertainment and commercial events arranged for the event and the education work undertaken with local schools, many of which had adopted individual sails ships for the event. The Assistant Director also

highlighted the volunteering opportunities and the Sail Trainees involvement in the event.

Members welcomed the presentation and recorded their thanks to all the officers involved in the preparation for the event. Members also particularly noted the work undertaken to make the event as inclusive as possible including the provision of disabled changing facilities.

Decision

That the presentation and report be noted and the thanks of the Committee be shared with all those involved in the preparation for the event.

9. Any Other Items which the Chairman Considers are Urgent

None.

The Committee noted that the next meeting would be held on Thursday 7 September, 2023 commencing at 10.00 am in the Civic Centre.

The meeting concluded at 12.30 pm.

H MARTIN

CHIEF SOLICITOR

PUBLICATION DATE: 6 JULY 2023

ADULT AND COMMUNITY BASED SERVICES COMMITTEE

7th SEPTEMBER 2023



Subject: CARLTON ADVENTURE – FUTURE OPERATION
Report of: Assistant Director - Preventative and Community Based Services
Decision Type: Key Decision (General Exemption Applies)

1. COUNCIL PLAN PRIORITIES

Hartlepool will be a place:

- where people are enabled to live healthy, independent and prosperous lives.
- of resilient and resourceful communities with opportunities for all.

2. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 2.1 The purpose of this report is to provide the Adult and Community Based Services Committee with an update on the recent operational and financial performance of Carlton Adventure; to outline future lease options and the implications for the Council; and to seek a decision on whether to continue, modify or end the Council's interest in Carlton Adventure at the expiry of the current lease.

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 Carlton Camp was officially opened on 16th May 1932, founded by William Wilson Clark and supported by the Mayor of West Hartlepool for the all-time use for the children of West Hartlepool. Originally providing camping and activity experiences for schools there was further investment into the site in 1935 when the facility block was developed and further expansion again in 1958 when a substantial donation was made by Mrs Rosa Robson for the development of two dormitories. A further dormitory was added in the 1960s and improvements/modernisation completed in 2007 with grant funding. The heritage of Carlton has been associated with Hartlepool for 91 years and has provided educational visits for many generations within the town.
- 3.2 Hartlepool Borough Council has been the sole lease holder responsible for the management of Carlton Adventure since 2011 and prior to that the lead local

authority for the operation since 1996, in collaboration with other local authority partners. The current lease for the site, which also includes the former caretaker's bungalow, is due to expire on 31 March 2024.

- 3.2 The site is managed within the Active and Creative Hartlepool service and delivers a range of high quality residential and non-residential activities for schools and other community groups primarily from across Hartlepool, the Tees Valley and North Yorkshire.
- 3.3 Carlton Adventure delivers a wide range of activities including bouldering, climbing, canoeing, gorge walking, high ropes activities and forest-based challenges. The site holds a range of key, nationally recognised and stringent quality assurance “kite marks” with the Adventurous Activities Licencing Authority (AALA), The Association of Heads of Outdoor Education Centres (AHOEC), Learning Outside the Classroom (LoTC) and Adventure Mark.
- 3.4 The site is run by a team of 6 staff (5.62fte) and operates for up to 49 weeks of the year.
- 3.5 Although the day-to-day operation of Carlton Adventure remains the responsibility of the Council, officers continue to work closely and positively with Carlton Trustees, utilising their strong connections with schools across Hartlepool and / or as “critical friends” linked to service developments or improvements. Officers also welcome the involvement of the Friends of Carlton Camp, who continue to help maintain and improve facilities on site. Work undertaken recently includes:
 - Edging and re-gravelling paths and areas underneath the high ropes course.
 - Development of an accessible walkway and seating surrounding a newly designed and installed fire pit.
 - Construction of a fence to screen the bin store.

4. THE VALUE OF OUTDOOR EDUCATION

- 4.1 There is a wealth of evidence, from both academic studies and anecdotal feedback from local schools, which suggests that beyond being a “rite of passage” for young people, “outdoor residential learning can be a major contributor to good health and improved mental wellbeing for (our) children” (Headteacher Update 2022).

Following Covid lockdowns and with increasingly sedentary behaviour amongst young people, outdoor residential learning is known to play a huge and influential role in improving personal resilience, independence, self-confidence, self-reliance, communication and co-operation skills, team-building, problem solving, concentration and academic performance. On a broader level, residential activities also enhance children's understanding of nature, the environment and their surrounding communities.

A study of over 180,000 young peoples' experiences indicated that outdoor residential learning was "most beneficial for vulnerable pupils, including those from disadvantaged households. Compared to school-based activities for year 7 pupils, outdoor residencies which focussed on the skills needed for life in secondary school deliver the strongest scale of change in pupils psychological wellbeing" (Slee & Allan, 2019; Allan et al, 2014).

4.2 An indication of the value that schools and users of Carlton Adventure place on the experiences and activities provided are indicated in a small, representative sample of the feedback below:

- *"We had an amazing time - thanks again to you and all the staff! We would be interested in booking in around the same time in 2023".
Sarah Richardson, Greatham Primary School*
- *"Thank you for another AMAZING week at Carlton Adventure! 😊 The children have all had a wonderful time, and I have been blessed to spend another five days working with fantastic staff and brilliant people from Carlton. Thank you so much!"
Neil McAvoy, Deputy Head Teacher, Clavering Primary School*
- *"Thank you for an amazing visit at the start of this week - the children (and staff!) thoroughly enjoyed their time with you"
Vicky White, Headteacher, Sacred Heart Primary School*
- *"Fantastic stay here. The children have thoroughly enjoyed their stay. Thank you to the awesome team. Food and accommodation fantastic! Thank you all for a great stay. We will be back soon."
Kevin Durham, Under 12's Coach, Greatham FC*

5. CURRENT OPERATING ENVIRONMENT AND PERFORMANCE

5.1 Since 2019 there has been a commitment to improving the quality of services at Carlton Adventure; better meeting the needs of new and existing customers; reducing the site's net operating subsidy and improving its longer-term sustainability.

5.2 Operating Environment

Although the number of outdoor residential sites across England has declined in recent years, schools and community groups across Tees Valley and North Yorkshire do have a number of other outdoor residential centres available to them. Carlton Adventure's main competitors are:

- Bewerley Park Centre for Outdoor Education, Harrogate
- Carlton Lodge (North Yorkshire Youth), Thirsk
- Dukeshouse Wood, Hexham / Doncaster
- East Barnby Outdoor Education Centre, Whitby
- Peat Rigg, Pickering

As an overall assessment of Carlton's position in relation to other outdoor residential sites, the centre offers:

- Residential outdoor education for schools, colleges and community groups.
- Curriculum based day visits for educational establishments, and bespoke day visits for other community groups.
- Self-catering accommodation.
- Campsite for group bookings.
- Team development/building days tailored to the booking.
- Birthday parties.
- Short sessions.
- School holiday provision.
- Spaces for meetings and training.
- Emergency residential support and planned respite accommodation for HBC Children's Social Care Services.

Carlton Adventure is in a positive position in relation to its competitors and enhancing the residential offer has had a significant impact upon this.

5.3 Operating Improvements

At an operational level and in addition to the improvements highlighted in 3.5, a range of improvements have been made, including:

- New contractual arrangements with North Yorkshire County Council (NYCC) to provide catering and cleaning services until 31/3/24. The contracts have led to excellent service standards and outstanding customer feedback.
- A staff restructure to reduce net establishment costs.
- Increased specialised and experienced Outdoor Activities senior management support from internal colleague/s.
- Improved and dedicated site maintenance support.
- Implementation of an improved and focussed business development and relationship management approach to broaden the range of potential customers, translate potential bookings into firm commitments and to increase repeat custom.
- Simplified, more flexible and improved offer and options for schools, with clearer activity packages, shorter duration residential stays and clearer pricing.
- An improved understanding of our competitors and our unique selling points (i.e. cost; activity offers; quality of delivery; quality of catering).
- Extended delivery from 44 weeks per year to 49 weeks, enabling activities to be delivered to non-school organisations, for example, during school holidays.

As a consequence of the above, amongst many other improvements, Carlton Adventure is now able to deliver consistently high quality residential experiences for customers, whilst also broadening its reach and appeal to a wider range of organisations.

5.4 Usage and Throughput

- 5.4.1 The following table of indicators illustrates the progress made in recent years, despite the periods of closure due to the Covid pandemic. For simplicity, the figures compared are for 2019/20, 2022/23 and 2023/24.

TABLE 1

	2019/20	2022/23	2023/24
No. school customers	50	55	58
No. Hartlepool school customers	9	11	14
No. school visits	67	64	65
No. Hartlepool school visits	13	14	18
No. Hartlepool community (non-school) bookings	25	37	26
No. Hartlepool individual participants attending	826	1024	1106 (projection)
Participant throughput	9549	10,862	11,230 (projection)

In summary, since 2019, the centre has widened its customer base, increased the number of repeat visits from customers and consequently increased overall throughput.

5.4.2 Details of financial performance are shown at **Confidential Appendix A**.

This item contains exempt information under Schedule 12A Local Government Act 1972 (as amended by the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006) namely, (para 3), information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that in).

6. ADDITIONAL MATERIAL CONSIDERATIONS

6.1 Details of additional material considerations are shown at **Confidential Appendix C**.

This item contains exempt information under Schedule 12A Local Government Act 1972 (as amended by the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006) namely, (para 3), information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that in).

7. FUTURE DECISIONS, LEASE OPTIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

7.1 Details relating to the options and implications are shown at **Confidential Appendix E**.

This item contains exempt information under Schedule 12A Local Government Act 1972 (as amended by the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006) namely:
(para 3), information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that in); AND

(para 4), Information relating to any consultations or negotiations, or contemplated consultations or negotiations, in connection with any labour relations matter arising between the authority or a Minister of the Crown and employees of, or office holders under, the authority.

The purpose of this section is to present a number of options for consideration to support an informed decision on the future lease arrangements of Carlton Adventure.

An appraisal of all options has been considered against a range of objectives considering the contribution Carlton Adventure makes on a wider social and economic level as well as the financial and risk implications to Hartlepool Borough Council. Details are provided in **Confidential Appendix F**.

A weighting has been given to each option in line with each objective and rationale in relation to the scoring that has been assigned. Details of the full appraisal can be found in **Appendix G** and **Confidential Appendix H**.

7.2 Option 1: Vacation of the premises at the lease contractual end date of 31 March 2024

7.3 Option 2: Hold-over under the existing lease to 31 March 2025

7.4 Option 3: Establish a new medium term lease

8. OTHER CONSIDERATIONS/IMPLICATIONS

8.1 Details relating to the options and implications are shown at **confidential Appendix I**.

This item contains exempt information under Schedule 12A Local Government Act 1972 (as amended by the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006) namely:

(para 3), information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that in); AND (para 4), Information relating to any consultations or negotiations, or contemplated consultations or negotiations, in connection with any labour relations matter arising between the authority or a Minister of the Crown and employees of, or office holders under, the authority.

RISK IMPLICATIONS	There are ongoing operational risks linked to the potential loss of business to competing providers or associated with a down-turn in demand for residential learning experiences, however recent service improvements and feedback from customers suggests that there is a growing demand for the high quality opportunities the centre provides.
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	<p>Consequently, the risk is already being effectively managed and mitigated.</p> <p>With regard to lease options, options 1 and 2, based upon the Council ending its involvement in Carlton Adventure, offer the lowest level of general risk.</p>
FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS	<p>The key risk to the Council is associated with finance. In terms of revenue, the recent direction of travel to negligible levels of annual subsidy is positive.</p> <p>Although external grant opportunities via the Trust are and will continue to be explored, the remaining burden is likely to largely fall on the Council.</p> <p>With regard to lease options, options 1 and 2 based upon the Council ending its involvement in Carlton Adventure offer the lowest level of financial risk.</p> <p>Via option 3, the opportunity to terminate the lease at 3 or 6 years provides some assurance that the financial risks can be significantly minimised and mitigated.</p>
LEGAL CONSIDERATIONS	<p>There is currently uncertainty regarding the status of the existing tenancy of the caretaker's bungalow which will require a declaration from Court. The outcome of this legal process will allow for a more detailed analysis of any risks that the tenancy may present in terms of surrender or continuation of the lease.</p> <p>There is liability regarding dilapidations.</p> <p>Were the Council to enter into a medium-term lease, moving forward, then the necessary considerations would need to be addressed, both in relation to the terms and conditions of the lease itself, but also in relation to contracts regarding catering, cleaning and access to the activity field. The approach adopted with these contracts and the lease of the fields would be to once again align them to the 3yr, 6yr and 10yr review and break periods. Furthermore the Council would be subject to further dilapidations costs at the point when the lease ends in the future. Hopefully with considered and effective ongoing repairs and maintenance, future dilapidations will be minimised.</p>
CHILD AND FAMILY POVERTY	<p>As set out in 4.1, evidence shows that outdoor residential learning is 'most beneficial for vulnerable pupils, including those from disadvantaged households. Compared to school-based activities for year 7 pupils, outdoor residential which focussed on the skills needed for life in</p>

	secondary school deliver the strongest scale of change in pupils psychological wellbeing’.
EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY CONSIDERATIONS	The centre is accessible to customers with protected characteristics and programmes/activities can be planned to meet the diverse needs of customers. Being more inclusive has been a priority for the centre ensuring a broad range of interested stakeholders and visitors can access Carlton Adventure as a place to go.
STAFF CONSIDERATIONS	As outlined in the report, there are six staff members who would be at risk of compulsory redundancy if the Council ceases to operate Carlton Adventure.
ASSET MANAGEMENT CONSIDERATIONS	The Council does not own the asset. The implications regarding the lease and dilapidations costs are outlined in detail in the report.
ENVIRONMENT, SUSTAINABILITY AND CLIMATE CHANGE CONSIDERATIONS	A number of the recommendations and costs outlined in the respective condition surveys relate to improved energy efficiency, including the purchase of a new boiler, repair and replacement of windows, low energy light fittings, improved controllability of lighting and heating settings and thermal improvements to buildings. There will undoubtedly be some year on year revenue benefits from such work and these improvements will also improve the longer term sustainability of the centre as well as its appeal to new and existing customers.
CONSULTATION	Internal consultation has taken place with the Council’s respective Finance, HR and Asset Management teams with regard to this report.

9. RECOMMENDATIONS

9.1 It is recommended that Members:

- Note the current performance and operating conditions for Carlton Adventure.
- Consider the options outlined in **Confidential Appendix E**.
- Agree progression of option 3 as the preferred option.

10. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION

10.1 Based on the robust appraisal of all options and consideration of the current performance of Carlton Adventure, option 3 has scored highest in the

assessment against key objectives therefore supporting an evidence based for this option to be progressed.

11. CONTACT OFFICERS

Jill Harrison, Director, Adult and Community Based Services;
jill.harrison@hartlepool.gov.uk and telephone number

Gemma Ptak, Assistant Director, Preventative and Community Based Services;
gemma.ptak@hartlepool.gov.uk and telephone number

Ian Gardiner, Head of Service, Active and Creative Hartlepool;
ian.gardiner@hartlepool.gov.uk; 01429 523471


Sign Off:-

Managing Director	Date: 31/08/2023
Director of Finance, IT and Digital	Date:
Director of Legal, Governance and HR	Date: 31/08/2023


Appendix Contents;

Appendix A	Confidential Section 5 Usage and Throughput
Appendix B	Carlton Adventure Fees and Charges
Appendix C	Confidential Section 6 Additional Material Considerations
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Appendix E	Confidential Section 7 Future Decisions, Lease Options and Implications
Appendix F	Confidential Operating Costs and Savings by Option
Appendix G	Options Appraisal Scoring Matrix
Appendix H	Confidential Weighted Scores Set Against Objectives 1-10
Appendix I	Confidential Other Considerations/Implications

Appendix B: Carlton Adventure Fees and Charges

 Price List September 2023			
	Price per Pupil		
RESIDENTIAL VISITS	HBC	Non HBC	
SUMMER - 1st March to 31st Oct			
1 night / 1 day activity	£80	£85	
1 night / 2 days activity	£125	£130	
2 nights / 2 days activity	£190	£195	
2 nights / 2 days activity (WEEKEND)	£210	£215	
2 nights / 3 days activity	£220	£230	
3 nights / 3 days activity	£255	£265	
3 nights / 4 days activity	£280	£295	
4 nights / 4 days activity	£305	£325	
4 nights / 5 days activity	£340	£355	
WINTER - 1st Nov to 28th Feb			
1 night / 1 day activity	£75	£80	
1 night / 2 days activity	£115	£120	
2 nights / 2 days activity	£170	£175	
2 nights / 2 days activity (WEEKEND)	£190	£195	
2 nights / 3 days activity	£200	£210	
3 nights / 3 days activity	£235	£245	
3 nights / 4 days activity	£260	£270	
4 nights / 4 days activity	£285	£295	
4 nights / 5 days activity	£320	£330	
** If Canoeing AND Rock Climbing are included in Activity Programme ADD £25 per pupil**			
Visiting Staff Included in Booking:			
Number of Pupils	No. of Activity Groups	Accommodation	Staff
up to 18	2	1 wing	2
19 to 24	2	1 wing + additional rooms and en-suite	3
25 to 36	3	2 wings	4
37 to 48	4	2 wings + additional rooms and en-suite	5
49 to 54	5	3 wings	6
55 to 60	5	3 wings + additional rooms and en-suite	7
61 to 72	6	4 wings	8
Additional Visiting Staff will be charged at £27.50 per bed, per night, PLUS Catering			
Additional Meals	HBC	Non HBC	
Per Day Package	£22.00 per person	£22.00 per person	
Breakfast	£5.90 per person	£5.90 per person	
Packed lunch	£4.70 per person	£4.70 per person	
Evening Meal	£10.00 per person	£10.00 per person	
Supper	£2.25 per person	£2.25 per person	
	Price Per Group of 12		
DAY VISITS	HBC	Non HBC	
Half Day (3 hours) 1 Instructor	£200	£200	
Half Day (3 hours) 2 Instructors	£340	£340	
Full Day (9:30am to 4:00pm) 1 Instructor	£300	£300	
Full Day (9:30am to 4:00pm) 2 Instructors	£400	£400	

Appendix B: Carlton Adventure Fees and Charges continued...

		Price List September 2023	
	Price Per Group of 12		
EVENING ACTIVITY (2 Hours)	HBC	Non HBC	
1 Instructor	£110	£110	
2 Instructors (Canoeing , Rock Climbing)	£150	£150	
Hire of Equipment	HBC	Non HBC	
Buoyancy Aids	£5 each	£5 each	
Sleeping Bags & Liners	£5 each	£5 each	
Holiday Programme	HBC	Non HBC	
9:30am to 4:00pm Own Packed Lunch	£30 per child per day	£30 per child per day	
Hire of Cod Beck Reservoir	HBC	Non HBC	
Half Day 9:00am to 12noon Key Pick up from 8:30am Key Drop Off by 12:30pm	£35		
Half Day 1:00pm to 4:00pm Key Pick Up from 12:30pm Key Drop Off by 4:30pm	£35		
Full Day	£70		
Looked After Children HBC	Self-Catering		
Usually 2 x single en-suite + 1 x 5 bed	£300 per night		
Belle Vue (keyholders)	£230 per night		
Camping including outside bathroom	£8 per person per night		
Hire of 1 wing Bathroom Facilities	£55 per visit		
Minibus Hire	HBC	Non HBC	
Subject to increase if Hire charge & Fuel Increase	£80 per bus per day		
Classroom Hire	HBC	Non HBC	
Per day	£100 + Site Closure Fee if applicable		
Per Hour	£15 per hour + Site Closure fee if applicable		
Dining Room and Kitchen Hire	HBC	Non HBC	
Half Day	£100	£100	
Full Day	£200	£200	
Evening **plus site opening/closure**	£100 **		
Corporate/Team Building Days	HBC	Non HBC	
Catering Package - Buffet Lunch & Refreshments	£15 per person		
Teas, Coffees, Juice, Water & Biscuits ONLY	£5 per person		
Add Classroom Hire, Activity Instructor Fees and Site Opening/Closure if applicable			
Site Opening / Site Closure	HBC	Non HBC	
Site Opening	£70	£70	
Site Closure	£70	£70	

Appendix D: Carlton Adventure: Schedule of Dilapidations

Details relating to the options and implications are shown at **Confidential Appendix D**.

This item contains exempt information under Schedule 12A Local Government Act 1972 (as amended by the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006) namely:

**(para 3), information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that in); AND
(para 4), Information relating to any consultations or negotiations, or contemplated consultations or negotiations, in connection with any labour relations matter arising between the authority or a Minister of the Crown and employees of, or office holders under, the authority.**

Appendix F: Carlton Adventure; Operating Costs and Savings by Option

Details relating to the options and implications are shown at **Confidential Appendix F**.

This item contains exempt information under Schedule 12A Local Government Act 1972 (as amended by the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006) namely:

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Appendix G: Option Appraisal Scoring Matrix

Carlton Adventure: Option Appraisal Evaluation MatrixKey objectives

Drawn from the Council Plan

1. Opportunities for increased participation in physical activity through access to fit for purpose leisure, sport and recreational facilities
2. There is improved mental, emotional and social wellbeing
3. Resilient and resourceful communities with opportunities for all
4. Children, young people and adults aspire to be whatever they want in life

5. Impact our contractual lease obligations (i.e. dilapidations)
6. Impact on other contractual arrangements
7. Optimising income to support a financially viable and sustainable business model
8. Remove the need for additional capital investment
9. Return on investment potential
10. Financial Risk

Scoring – based upon benefit to HBC

1	Zero benefit
2	Small benefit
3	Moderate benefit
4	Significant benefit

Option 1: Vacation of the premises at 31/3/24

Objective	Score	Rationale
Opportunities for increased participation in physical activity through access to fit for purpose leisure, sport and recreational facilities	1	Vacation of the site will remove opportunities for delivery to those organisations with pre-existing bookings and intending to access the site
There is improved mental, emotional and social wellbeing	1	The loss of outdoor residential opportunities at the site will remove the potential for attendees to benefit
Resilient and resourceful communities with opportunities for all	1	The loss of outdoor residential opportunities at the site will remove the potential for attendees to benefit
Children, young people and adults aspire to be whatever they want in life	1	The loss of outdoor residential opportunities at the site will remove the potential for attendees to benefit
Impact our contractual lease obligations (i.e. dilapidations)	1	Vacation of the site will not impact on HBC's lease obligations. We will be required to address dilapidations irrespective of the lease duration
Impact on other contractual arrangements	1	We have aligned other contracts to 31/3/25 to remove any impact on other contracts (i.e. NYCC cleaning and catering contracts)
Optimising income to support a financially viable and sustainable business model	1	Vacation of the site will remove income generation opportunities
Remove the need for additional capital investment	4	Vacation of the site will remove the need for additional investment
Return on investment potential	1	Vacation of the site will remove the opportunity for the Council to generate a return on investment following investment in dilapidations
Financial risk	4	Vacation of the site will remove any ongoing financial risk for the Council which is a benefit to the Council
Total	16	

Option 2: Hold-over under the existing lease to 31/3/25

Objective	Score	Rationale
Opportunities for increased participation in physical activity through access to fit for purpose leisure, sport and recreational facilities	2	Holding-over for 12 months will generate a small beneficial impact
There is improved mental, emotional and social wellbeing	2	Holding-over for 12 months will generate a small beneficial impact
Resilient and resourceful communities with opportunities for all	2	Holding-over for 12 months will generate a small beneficial impact
Children, young people and adults aspire to be whatever they want in life	2	Holding-over for 12 months will generate a small beneficial impact
Impact our contractual lease obligations (i.e. dilapidations)	1	Vacation of the site will not impact on HBC's lease obligations. We will be required to address dilapidations irrespective of the lease duration
Impact on other contractual arrangements	1	As the additional operational contracts are aligned to 31/3/24, there will be a need to negotiate appropriate extensions
Optimising income to support a financially viable and sustainable business model	2	Holding-over for 12 months will generate a limited opportunity to generate income
Remove the need for additional capital investment	4	Over and above dilapidations, holding-over for 12 months will significantly reduce the Council's commitment to further capital investment
Return on investment potential	2	Holding-over for 12 months will limit the opportunity to generate a return on investment (i.e. in relation to dilapidations)
Financial risk	4	The financial risk to the Council is relatively low, given the proposed duration of the lease
Total	22	

Option 3: Establish a new medium term lease

Objective	Score	Rationale
Opportunities for increased participation in physical activity through access to fit for purpose leisure, sport and recreational facilities	4	The duration of the lease provide significant opportunity to contribute to this objective
There is improved mental, emotional and social wellbeing	4	The duration of the lease provide significant opportunity to contribute to this objective
Resilient and resourceful communities with opportunities for all	4	The duration of the lease provide significant opportunity to contribute to this objective
Children, young people and adults aspire to be whatever they want in life	4	The duration of the lease provide significant opportunity to contribute to this objective
Impact our contractual lease obligations (i.e. dilapidations)	1	The duration of the lease will not impact on HBC's lease obligations. We will be required to address dilapidations irrespective of the lease duration
Impact on other contractual arrangements	2	Longer lease enables the negotiation of better value contracts with key partners and the alignment of contract dates with break clauses
Optimising income to support a financially viable and sustainable business model	3	Longer lease provides an opportunity to optimise income and continue recent performance improvements
Remove the need for additional capital investment	0	Longer lease will potentially require additional investment on the site, over and above investment in dilapidations
Return on investment potential	3	Longer lease provides the opportunity to benefit in terms of social and financial return on investment
Financial risk	3	The inclusion of break clauses at years 3 and 6 provide support and protection to the Council in terms in minimising financial risk
Total	28	

Appendix H: Weighted Scores set against Objectives 1-10

The purpose of weighting scores is to reflect the relative importance of objectives in relation to each other. So for the purposes of this exercise, Objective 3 (Resilient and Resourceful communities with opportunities for all) is given a weighting of 10, less than Objective 8 (Remove the need for additional capital investment) which is given a weighting of 20. The difference in weight reflects the relative risk and benefit to the Council associated with additional capital expenditure.

Option 3 below, still provides the greatest potential benefit to the Council, whereby the social impacts outweigh the financial implications over the proposed 10 year lease.

Details relating to the options and implications are shown at **Confidential Appendix H**.

This item contains exempt information under Schedule 12A Local Government Act 1972 (as amended by the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006) namely:

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ADULT AND COMMUNITY BASED SERVICES COMMITTEE

7 September 2023



Subject: ALLOTMENT STRATEGY

Report of: Assistant Director (Preventative and Community Based Services)

Decision Type: Non-Key

1. COUNCIL PLAN PRIORITY

Hartlepool will be a place:
- Where people are enabled to live healthy, independent and prosperous lives.
- Of resilient and resourceful communities with opportunities for all.
- That is sustainable, clean, safe and green.

2. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 2.1 The purpose of this report is to provide an update on the Allotment Strategy and the next steps that are proposed to be taken.

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 At a meeting of this committee on 21st March 2021 it was agreed that the development of an Allotment Strategy was required to understand future priorities, identify service design and operations and ensure access, inclusion and opportunity for all residents who are interested in being part of the allotment community.
- 3.2 It was agreed that the overall aim of the Strategy would focus on the needs of the current user group and wider community that the allotments serve. It proposed evolving service operations, encouraging a wider demographic to access allotments within the Borough and making the service more customer

focused. It is hoped that by doing this, the service would be more inclusive and accessible, creating stronger links into communities.

3.3 A review of the allotment service has been completed which included consultation comprising:

- Meetings with nine Allotment Associations;
- 17 drop in sessions at allotment sites at varying times of day including week days and weekends;
- Two drop in sessions at the Central Hub, one on an afternoon and the other on an evening;
- Paper questionnaires sent out to all tenants; and
- An online questionnaire which could be completed by tenants, partners, people on the waiting list and anyone else with an interest in allotments.

In response 183 questionnaire were completed. Feedback from these responses along with meetings with individual Allotment Associations have been fed into the draft Strategy.

3.4 Work on shaping the Strategy was delayed due to changes within the service and a lack of staff resources. The service does now have officers in place to progress this work and re-engagement with Allotment Associations has begun.

3.5 Subsequent to the service developing the Strategy a review of budgets took place. This coincided with the removal of additional funds which had been provided to the Allotment Service to cover a funding deficit. In order to ensure that the allotments remained sustainable, an increase in rent charges was to be introduced in April 2024. At a meeting of Council on 13th July the proposed rent increase was cancelled and Members agreed to,

“Instigate a wholesale review covering all aspects of the allotment service, with allotment holders at the heart of this process.”

This decision has the potential to impact on the continued delivery of the Strategy and future working arrangements. This is because there will be a need to accommodate the reduced budget and understand further the longer term implications this will have for the service.

4. PROPOSALS/OPTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION

4.1 The wide ranging consultation carried out prior to developing the Strategy has shaped the content. The responses have been considered and an action plan developed around these. The draft Strategy is shown in **Appendix 1**.

4.2 It should be acknowledged that the strategy proposed a change in the approach to managing sites. It was clear from the feedback received that there is a need to join together with tenants, partners and associations, and

work more closely with them to deliver the aspirations they wish to see. In order to do this the document sets out what tenants can expect of the local authority, but also what is expected of them to help in achieving the standards they expect. Further to this is an Action Plan which will be used to track the progress made by the allotment service in delivering the proposed aims of the strategy.

- 4.3 The timescale for implementation of the Strategy is from 2023 – 2026. This is a short delivery period however it reflects the funding uncertainty around the Service, and the request for further review, therefore acknowledges that these could have significant implications for the service in the future.
- 4.4 It is proposed that the draft Strategy is presented to associations. This will be an opportunity for those who previously responded to see how their comments and concerns have been integrated into the document. Provisions will also be made to make available paper copies of the strategy for those tenants who do not have access to a computer and wish to read it, with copies made available in central locations such as the Community Hubs and on request from the Allotment Service.
- 4.5 Alongside the strategy it is proposed that work will be carried out to address the, 'wholesale review' of the service. The work on the strategy did not cover benchmarking and operational delivery models. It is therefore proposed that, in response to the Council decision, a further piece of work is undertaken across the Tees Valley or North East Region to establish:
- Number of allotment sites / plots / vacant plots
 - How services are operated i.e. staffing
 - Cost of rent, cost of additional items i.e. water charges
 - How waiting lists are managed
 - Maintenance offered as part of the cost of the rent
 - Operating models used i.e. lease land to a parish council to manage, association self-manages etc.
- 4.6 This would provide Members and allotment holders with detailed context of how Hartlepool compares to other areas in allotment provision and in terms of value for money. The results of this work could set out the opportunities to consider different operating models in Hartlepool.
- 4.7 The consultation brought to the fore a number of key issues which are of concern on allotment sites. Previous strategies have had funding allocated to them to deliver improvement works. There remains budget from these schemes therefore it is proposed that this will be used in order to deliver enhancements on sites. These have been developed after consultation with site users and are outlined in **Appendix 2**.

5. OTHER CONSIDERATIONS/IMPLICATIONS

RISK IMPLICATIONS	<p>There are reputational risks for the Council if a comprehensive Allotment Strategy is not developed, following the review, with the involvement of tenants and potential future users of the service.</p> <p>The decision to stop the increase in rent will place a financial burden on the service which may impact on service delivery for tenants and future support that can be provided to those using allotment sites.</p>
FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS	<p>It was anticipated that the Allotment Strategy would be delivered within the existing budget. The additional works that are proposed in order to deliver the aims of the strategy will be supported by capital funding. These are outlined in Appendix 2.</p> <p>Should a solution for the deficit in the revenue budget not be found, there may be a need to reconsider further how both the strategy and the service are delivered to take into consideration the reduced budget that the service will be operating with.</p>
LEGAL CONSIDERATIONS	None.
CHILD AND FAMILY POVERTY	Allotments provide benefits through increasing access to a healthy diet (fresh fruit and vegetables), physical activity, engagement with the natural environment and social interaction, all of which have proven benefits to health and wellbeing. Consultation on the Strategy provided a chance for wider engagement with the community which is reflected in the final document with pathways to increase access to allotment sites.
EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY CONSIDERATIONS	The consultation provided information on the demographic of allotment holders and their specific needs and requirements. This has been reflected in the strategy to ensure that as sites evolve they offer varying routes for access and wider inclusion.
STAFF CONSIDERATIONS	The new Allotment Strategy will be delivered by existing staff.
ASSET MANAGEMENT CONSIDERATIONS	Allotments are an important Council asset comprising 38 hectares (94 acres) of public land within the Borough. The service continues to manage the land in the most appropriate, cost effective way.

ENVIRONMENT, SUSTAINABILITY AND CLIMATE CHANGE CONSIDERATIONS	Allotments contribute to the bio-diversity of the area they are located in and can also provide vital habitats for many species. Further to this there are opportunities for tenants to contribute to supporting the environment for example through composting on their plots, using water-butts to reduce the need for mains water, and providing seasonal fruit and vegetables reducing reliance on supermarket produce which can have a wider carbon footprint.
CONSULTATION	<p>Prior to the development of the strategy consultation was carried out as outlined in 3.3 and 3.4.</p> <p>Future approaches to communication and engagement with allotment users is embedded in the strategy and as Aim 7 of the Action Plan.</p>

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 6.1 It is recommended that the Committee agree to the progression of implementation of the Allotment Strategy and associated action plan in **Appendix 1** developed using the intelligence from public consultation.
- 6.2 It is recommended that the Committee agree to further work being carried out as outlined in 4.5 in order to deliver a 'wholesale review' of allotments.
- 6.3 It is recommended that the Committee agree to the proposed programme of capital works as outlined in **Appendix 2**.

7. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 7.1 It was agreed at Council on 13th July 2023 that a wholesale review of the allotment service would be carried out. The further work on proposed benchmarking of the service against others operating within the region will gather evidence in order to address this action.
- 7.2 The works outlined in the programme of capital works have been tailored to address the concerns during the consultation completed in 2021.

8. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 8.1 Council, Council Motion (Item 12), 13th July 2023

Adult and Community Based Services Committee, 20th January 2022
Allotment Strategy, Update on Consultation

Adult and Community Based Services Committee, 29th July 2021, Allotment Communication Strategy

Adult and Community Based Services Committee, 12th March 2021, Allotment Review Update

Council, 17 September and 20 October, Allotments Service Review and Dispute Resolution Process

Neighbourhood Services Committee Report 13 March 2020, Allotments Service Review and Dispute Resolution Process

Neighbourhood Services Committee Report 26 July 2016 Allotment Review

Neighbourhood Services Committee Report 19 February 2018 – Phase two Allotment Strategy and Review

Council Minutes – 12 September 2019

9. CONTACT OFFICERS

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Sign Off:-

Managing Director	Date: 15.08.23
Director of Finance, IT and Digital	Date: 15.08.23
Director of Legal, Governance and HR	Date: 15.08.23



Hartlepool Borough Council

Allotment Strategy 2023 - 2026



Contents

- 1. Introduction**
- 2. Purpose of the Strategy**
- 3. Core Principles**
- 4. Consultation**
- 5. Strategic Aims 2023 – 2026**
- 6. Delivering Change**

Appendix 1; Consultation Summary

Appendix 2; Action Plan

1. Introduction

The Council manages over 1,000 allotments across 16 sites in the borough. These spaces are an important resource, offering a wide range of benefits to the community and the environment. They are not just a way of providing good, low cost food, though this remains important, but also offer a recreation role providing healthy exercise, social contacts and, the fun and challenges of growing vegetables, fruits and flowers.

Requests for allotment plots have steadily increased in recent years and this peaked during the pandemic. This demonstrates the importance of sites as people increasingly look for opportunities where they can spend time outdoors and connect with the natural environment through cultivating their own produce.

2. Purpose of Strategy

The purpose of this document is to provide strategic guidance on the management, development and maintenance of the current allotment provision whilst supporting the delivery of linked strategies and guidance.

The Council Plan (2021/22 – 2023/24), sets out the town's vision. Directly feeding into the scope of this strategy, are the following aims that have been carefully considered throughout the development of the document.

Hartlepool will be a place that is sustainable, clean, safe and green where:

- Resources are managed sustainably by reducing our consumption of energy and water.
- There is reduced environmental crime.
- Levels of Anti-Social Behaviour are reduced.
- We have a sustainable approach to waste management.
- Land and air quality is improved.
- Initiatives are in place to tackle climate change.

Hartlepool will be a place where people are enabled to live healthy, independent and prosperous lives:

- The appropriate conditions are in place to enable people to make healthier lifestyle choices including reducing obesity levels;
- Individuals are able to better manage long term conditions and prevent ill health;
- There is increased participation in physical activity through access to fit for purpose leisure, sport and recreational facilities including parks and open spaces;
- There is improved mental, emotional and social wellbeing;
- Families and individuals have food security;

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

Through these partnerships we'll identify the means and support necessary to take forward works to improve the quality, appearance and environmental value of allotments and increase community participation.

Through these actions we'll make a positive contribution to a greener and healthier future for the people of Hartlepool

3. Core Principles:

The vision seeks to enhance the use of allotment sites for existing and future plot holders. This will be achieved by putting in place a framework to develop and manage allotments in partnership with users.

This strategy aims to:

- Set standards for the provision of allotments.
- Increase the pathways to take on the tenancy of an allotment.
- Improve the standard of service provision.
- Increase the benefits derived from allotments.
- Improve the financial position of the service.

As a result of implementing this strategy a service will be developed which will provide:

- Good access and good security at allotment sites.
- Reduced numbers of neglected plots.
- Opportunities and encouragement to individuals and communities wishing to be involved in the cultivation of allotments.
- Efficient and effective allotment administration.
- Fair, open, equitable treatment, and safe tenure.

- Encouragement to sites to develop self-management and associations.

4. Consultation

A review of the allotment service was completed in 2021 which included consultation comprising:

- meetings with nine Allotment Associations;
- 17 drop in sessions at allotment sites at varying times of day including week days and weekends;
- two drop in sessions at the Central Hub, one on an afternoon and the other on an evening;
- paper questionnaires sent out to all tenants; and
- an online questionnaire which could be completed by tenants, partners, people on the waiting list and anyone else with an interest in allotments.

In response 183 questionnaires were returned. Feedback from these responses, along with meetings with individual Allotment Associations, has been used in the development of this document. A summary of key findings from the consultation can be found in Appendix 1.



5. Strategic Aims 2023 – 2026

This strategy sets out a framework for the next 3 years to develop allotments as a community resource in partnership with the allotment associations and tenants. It will focus on the following issues:

1. Site Security
2. Vacant plots and invasive weeds
3. Fly-tipping and environmental offences
4. Wear and tear including general repairs.
5. Drainage including flooding
6. Community plots and trial plots
7. Communication

Aim 1. Site Security



Tenants told us that:

“Security is an issue, the outside fence is not good enough”

“Several break- ins and destruction of property leaves an uneasy feeling whilst on site”.

6.1 Appendix 1

“Although I feel “safe enough” when on my allotment, the fact that we have occasional break-ins overnight, means that I am less sure how safe the environment is outside the hours of 8:00 to 18:00”.

What HBC Allotment Team will do:

- Work with anti-social behaviour services including undertaking joint site visits where anti-social behaviour has occurred.
- Actively work with Allotment Associations and tenants on specific sites where security issues remain a persistent problem.
- Encourage all site users to report allotment crime allowing the police to give crime numbers and raise the priority level of allotment crime.

What we expect from tenants:

- Ensure gates are kept closed at all times.
- Height barriers are not taken down without permission.
- Report any break-ins or antisocial behaviour to the police.



Aim 2. Vacant Plots and invasive weeds

Tenants told us that:

“There are people waiting on the list and there are empty plots, not being tended to or looked after”

“I know there is a problem with plots left unattended with little or no work being done by the tenant. I understand it takes time to go through the process of taking back the plot but surely things could progress quicker”.

“Given that the average plot size in Hartlepool is 321 square metres (almost the same size as one and a half tennis courts), ... [I think] there should be more smaller plots available”

What HBC Allotment Team will do:

- Meet people from the waiting list who are viewing over grown or fly tipped plots to offer advice about taking on an allotment and the support available.
- Complete Annual Inspections to ensure plots are cultivated.
- Work closely with associations and tenants to investigate plots that may be vacant or are not being cultivated.
- Act promptly to reallocate vacant plots.
- Develop guidance for prospective tenants with basic information on cultivating an allotments so they can understand the commitment required before taking on a plot.
- Identify suitable allotments to deliver a partner funded, low cost, pilot project to support and train a cohort of new tenants.
- Clear vacant plots, so they are more attractive to those wanting a tenancy
- Split plots to provide smaller spaces for gardeners looking to downsize or who are just starting out.
- Remove invasive weeds to increase the number of plots available.

What we expect from tenants:

- Promptly report any plots that are not being cultivated or worked.
- Report any fly- tipping on unattended plots.
- Dispose of waste appropriately and respect the allotment environment and vacant plots.
- Report any invasive weeds.

Aim 3. Fly-tipping and environmental offences



Tenants told us that:

“[Site are] often very run down, look a blight on the community and act as a place for fly tipping”.

“Some sites are amazing! (smaller ones). Bigger ones are often prone to long term empty plots, fly tipping, ASB, arson etc., due to the perimeter/gates [being] left open, sub [letting] etc.”

“There's a large area opposite our plot [that] could be used for plots. It's currently a dumping ground”

What HBC Allotment Team will do:

- Work with the Community Safety Service, to identify and prosecute fly-tippers.
- Ensure allotment holders dispose of their waste in the correct manner.
- Promote reporting of fly tipping through association meetings, monthly newsletters and social media.

What we expect from tenants:

- Report any fly-tipping and evidence promptly.
- Dispose of any waste in the correct manner.

Aim 4. Wear and tear including general repairs



Tenants told us that,

“[There is a need for] upkeep of fencing and general maintenance, of roads and paths.”

“Rough paths and parking difficulties can cause problems.”

What HBC Allotment Team will do:

- Action reported repairs as soon as possible
- Work with allotment associations to establish what the priority repairs are.
- Look into external funding opportunities for sites to support investment in infrastructure.

What we expect from tenants:

- Report any wear and tear immediately.
- Ensure that care is taken when using infrastructure on site i.e. taps, gates etc.
- Work with the Allotment Team to support projects to invest in infrastructure on sites.

Aim 5. Drainage including flooding



Flooding is an issue on a number of allotment sites. This results in some plots being left unused and others only suitable for raised beds. Carrying out works to remove or minimise flooding in these areas will enable the plots to be brought back into use.

What HBC Allotment Team will do:

- Add raised beds to plots that have flooding issues.
- Investigate using flooded plots for other purposes that suit wet environments.
- Improve drainage by digging trenches.

What we expect from tenants:

- Report any flooding immediately.
- Ensure that taps are turned off after use and leaks are reported promptly.

Aim 6: Community Plots / Trial Plots



Tenants told us that:

“Each site could have one community allotment so that anyone can join in, great social space, mental health improver and easy to get to”.

“Schools and young people could help allotment holders. Groups of people could hold a tenancy, i.e. a few neighbours or friends or a community group.”

What HBC Allotment Team will do:

- Clear vacant plots and create community allotments where associations indicate a need for such spaces.
- Support the development of multi-use, accessible plots, created to meet the specific needs of individual sites.
- Invite participation in a pilot project to install multi-use accessible plots to offer spaces to tenants who may no longer be physically able to maintain plots, and encourage participation by less able gardeners by providing starter plots.

What we expect from tenants:

- Work with the allotment team to support the introduction of multi-use accessible plots.
- Associations to work with the Allotment Team to support the introduction of community plots on sites.

Aim 7: Communication

It was the intention that the consultation carried out as part of this strategy would be the beginning of an ongoing conversation with parties who are interested in creating a shared vision for sites across the town. This will underpin future work with Associations and allotment users.

What HBC Allotment Team will do:

- Communicate regularly with tenants to understand their needs and aspirations.
- Work closely with associations through regular meetings to support their work.

What we expect from tenants:

- Associations to be willing to attend regularly meetings.
- Tenants to support requests for feedback and information.

6. Delivering Change

The Council and allotment holders, working collaboratively to achieve these aims, will bring positive change to allotment sites, with clear expectations for all parties working together, to make this a successful partnership.

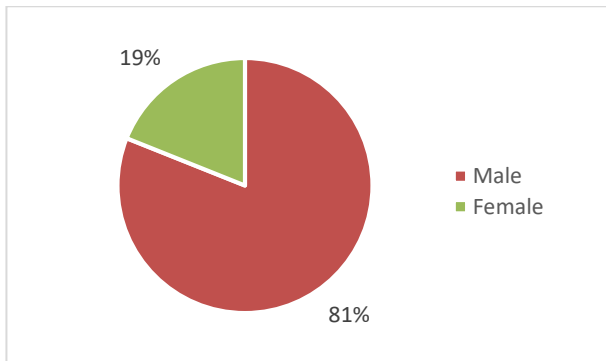
The service will continue to respond to the needs of allotment holders ensuring that any projects delivered are fit for purpose and solve the problems they have been developed to address. In order to ensure that this happens in a timely manner an action plan has been developed which is attached as Appendix 2.

6.1 Appendix 1

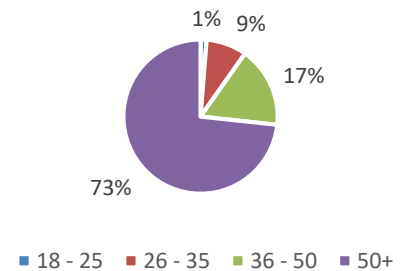
APPENDIX 1

Summary of key messages from consultation completed October – November 2021

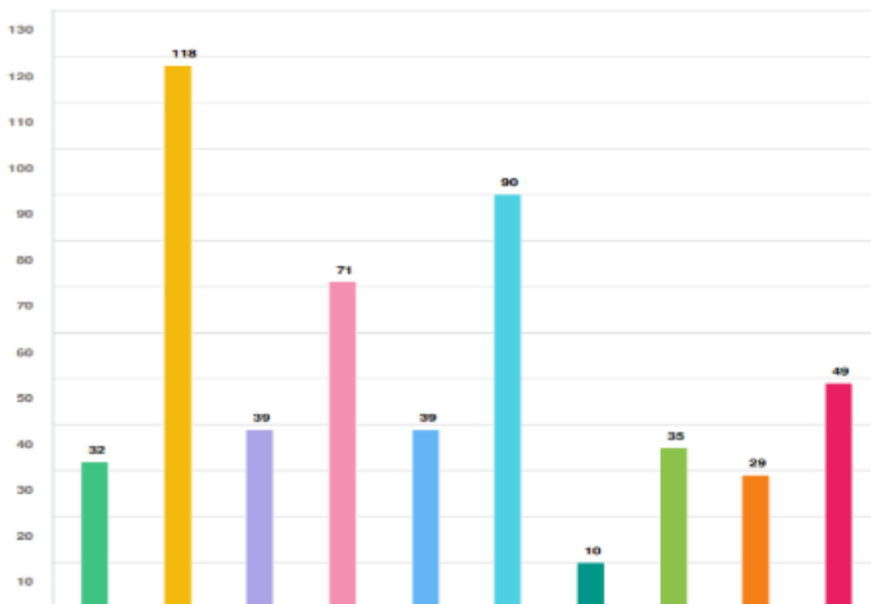
Who are our tenants?



Tenant Age Range

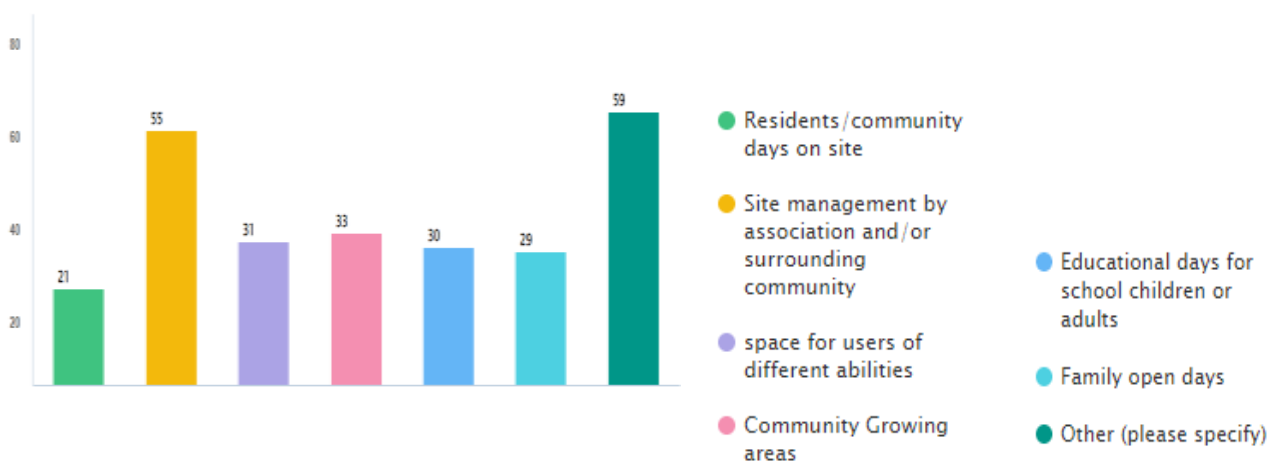


What are the top three priorities for sites?



1. Security on sites (118 responses);
2. Removal of waste (90 responses); and
3. Site maintenance (71 responses)

What positive changes would you like to see on your site?



Other comments did not reveal any significant trends and were largely site specific and included issues such as parking, new fences, skips, CCTV etc.

APPENDIX 2; ACTION PLAN

Aim	Objective:	Actions	Completed
Aim 1: Site Security	Provide safe and secure allotment sites.	Develop a programme to raise awareness throughout 2024, to highlight security issues on sites. Actions to include, <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Social media campaign• Feature issue in newsletter• Investigate closer working relations with partners and colleagues to pool resources to tackle to issue.	January 2025
		Develop guidance for tenants and association on security issues including guidance on securing their plot.	March 2024
Aim 2 :Vacant Plots and invasive weeds	Bring vacant plots back into use by providing a variety of different sized spaces for new tenants.	Assess existing allotment sites in consultation with associations to identify vacant allotments.	September 2023
		Develop a programme of works in association with partner organisation to clear vacant plots.	October 2023
		Identify vacant plots to be made available to people on the waiting list and those to be split.	October 2023

Aim	Objective:	Actions	Completed
		Identify space on sites and develop a scheme to provide plots for individuals to downsize or trial allotment gardening	January 2024
		Implement trial area of small plots for down-sizers and those new to gardening including, <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Revised waiting list process • Guidance for prospective tenants taking on an allotment. 	March 2024
		Develop a network of Mentors to work with HBC to support and train potential new tenants	March 2024
		Review down-size plots and gather feedback from associations and tenants in order to assess success and future roll out on other sites.	March 2025
	Clear plots of invasive weeds and bring them back into use.	Assess existing allotment sites in consultation with associations to identify allotments with invasive weeds.	October 2023
		Develop a programme of works in order to safely clear vacant plots.	January 2024

Aim	Objective:	Actions	Completed
		Implement the programme of works and offer plots for rent as they become available.	January 2025
Aim 3 Fly-tipping and environmental offences	Reduce levels of fly-tipping on allotment sites.	Develop a programme to raise awareness throughout 2024, to remind tenants of the need to dispose of rubbish responsibly and how to report fly tipping. Actions to include, <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social media campaign • Feature issue in newsletter • Investigate closer working relations with partners and colleagues to pool resources to tackle to issue. 	January 2025
	Raise awareness of how to dispose of rubbish and waste responsibly.	Develop guidance for tenants on ways of disposing rubbish including guidance on how to reuse and recycle common items found on sites.	March 2024
	Provide allotment sites that are welcoming and attractive.	Carry out quarterly audits of all sites to identify areas requiring repairs	March 2026

Aim	Objective:	Actions	Completed
Aim 4. Wear and tear including general repairs		Support tenants to establish associations on sites that don't have them in order to identify contacts to liaise with regarding site wide works.	March 2025
Aim 5. Drainage including flooding	Ensure all allotment sites have adequate drainage systems in place or suitable infrastructure to enable cultivation.	Assess allotment sites and identify all plots which are subject to regular flooding	December 2023
		Work with Building Services to develop a scheme to address flooding on identified allotment sites.	June 2024
		Implement identified works to bring water logged plots back into cultivation.	March 2025
Aim 6: Community plots and trial plots	Create community plots for local groups to cultivate.	Consult with community groups to identify need for community plots including, <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preferred locations • Space requirements and • Infrastructure needed. 	December 2023
		Assess all allotment sites and consult with Associations to identify three suitable spaces to pilot community plots.	March 2024

Aim	Objective:	Actions	Completed
		Work with community groups, allotment associations and tenants to implement community plots on sites.	September 2024
		Review three community plots including gathering feedback from community groups, associations and tenants in order to assess success and future roll out of further plots.	February 2025
	Create multi-use accessible plots to offer to tenants who may wish to downsize, and encourage participation by less able gardeners.	Consult with Associations and tenants to identify suitable spaces for multi-use accessible plots including, <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preferred locations • Space requirements and • Infrastructure needed. 	December 2023
		Engage with tenants and those on the waiting list to assess interest in multi-use plots and create waiting list if evidence of demand.	February 2024
		Work with Building Services to prepare plot designs for multi-use spaces.	June 2024
		Create pilot study with multi-use plots on one allotment site	September 2024

Aim	Objective:	Actions	Completed
		Review multi-use space including gathering feedback from associations and tenants in order to assess success and future roll out on other sites.	September 2025
Aim 7: Ongoing communication and engagement will be held with associations and allotment users who are interested in creating a shared vision for sites across the town	A rolling programme of communication will listen to tenants and build relationships with individuals and associations to understand how best to support allotments sites.	6 electronic newsletters sent each year to inform and engage with tenants	March 2026
		A yearly report sent with tenancy paperwork to provide an update on the work of the past year and proposals for the future year	
		Four meetings a calendar year with associations to listen to feedback and inform.	
		A yearly survey of tenants, partners and those on the waiting list will be held through 'Your Say Our Future', with paper copies made available, to capture feedback and ensure that the focus of the strategy remains relevant.	

Proposed Capital Spend on Allotment Sites

Site	Project	Estimated Cost
Chester Rd	Resurface lanes to improve access on site.	£23,000
	Review vacant allotments, clear and provide spaces for tenants to downsize or new tenants to trial gardening.	
Stranton	Review vacant allotments, clear invasive weeds and install infrastructure to bring plots back into use.	£25,000
Thornhill	Improve security with new external fence.	£17,500
Nicholson Field	Resurface lanes to improve access on site.	£36,500
	Review vacant allotments, clear and provide spaces for tenants to downsize or new tenants to trial gardening.	
Rossmere	Resurface lane to improve access on site.	£23,000
	Clear invasive weeds and install infrastructure to bring plots back into use.	
Burn Valley	Resurface lanes to improve access.	£20,000
Station Lane	Improve security with new external fence.	£18,000
	Review vacant allotments, clear and provide spaces for tenants to downsize or new tenants to trial gardening.	
Thompson Grove	Improve security with new external fence.	£3,000
Woodcroft	Resurface lanes to improve access on site.	£7,000
	Total	£173,000

ADULT AND COMMUNITY BASED SERVICES COMMITTEE

7 SEPTEMBER 2023



Subject: LEVELLING UP PARKS FUND UPDATE
Report of: Assistant Director – Preventative & Community Based Services
Decision Type: No decision: for information.

1. COUNCIL PLAN PRIORITY

Hartlepool will be a place:
- That is sustainable, clean, safe and green.

2. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 2.1 To provide the Adult and Community Based Services Committee with updated information on the Levelling Up Parks Fund in line with the project proposal previously presented at committee in October 2022 for Burn Valley Gardens.

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The Levelling Up Parks Fund was announced on 1 August 2022 by the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) and Hartlepool Borough Council was allocated a grant of £85,000 for the creation or significant refurbishment of an urban green space. There was no competitive bidding process for this grant. DLUHC assessed the provision of accessible, quality green space across the UK against the Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) to produce a list of eligible authorities.
- 3.2 Authorities were required to confirm acceptance of the grant and to provide DLUHC with a project proposal by 3 October 2022. A Memorandum of Understanding for use of the grant was agreed in October 2022.
- 3.3 Burn Valley Gardens was selected as the most appropriate green space to invest the Levelling Up Parks Fund grant as the park is bordered by numerous highlighted Lower Layer Super Output Area (LSOAs) and is the closest significant green space to the communities living within those areas.

- 3.4 The project proposal for Burn Valley Nature Trail and Play was agreed and welcomed with positive feedback by members in October 2022. The proposal was developed based on officer knowledge of green space and playground use, consultations with external organisations such as Play Out Hartlepool CIC, and engagement with communities who frequent Hartlepool's parks via a survey. Three clear outcomes were proposed for the project:
- Improving health by developing an interactive trail and refurbishing the natural / adventure play area.
 - Climate mitigation and increasing biodiversity through a 'tree uplift' and tree planting programme, and installation of a sensory garden
 - Development of a community social space
- 3.5 To achieve the identified outcomes, it was agreed that the funding would be spent on:
- Refurbishment and expansion of the natural play area located in upper Burn Valley Gardens.
 - Development of an interactive trail through the park and leading to Summerhill.
 - Increasing biodiversity by planting native flora in a sensory garden around natural play area.
 - Climate mitigation by removing hazardous trees and planting additional heavy standards in the park.
 - Creating an area for socialising / picnics in upper Burn Valley Gardens.
 - Repairs of potholes on paths to improve accessibility and reduce trip hazards and replacement of rotten timber in wildlife area.

4. **PROGRESS UPDATE**

4.1 Green Flag Assessment

An initial site assessment by Green Flag Awards was funded by DLUHC. This involved a judge visited Burn Valley Gardens to give advice and ideas for potential improvements based on the Green Flag Awards criteria.

The judge completed a walk round of the entire site and scored each section against the Green Flag Award criteria and collated feedback. The judge made the following comments in the assessment undertaken:

- Burn Valley Gardens is close to achieving the Green Flag standard.
- This is a wonderful project for the local community; this area of the gardens reaches a wide area of deprived communities and is in need of restoration.

4.2 Interactive Trail

As part of the refurbishment project, an interactive trail has been created in Burn Valley Gardens to provide an engaging and educational experience for park visitors. The following points highlight the features and progress of the interactive trail:

- **Oak Way Marker Posts:** A series of 14 oak way marker posts with rubbing plaques showcasing native flora and fauna have been strategically installed throughout the park. These posts are accessible to wheelchair users and visually impaired individuals, with braille embossed on the rubbing plaques. Additionally, 8 posts have been placed in Summerhill Country Park, extending the Nature Trail into the countryside.
- **Educational Nature Videos:** Work is ongoing out to develop a series of educational nature videos for the digital aspect of the Nature Trail. Visitors will be able to access these videos via QR codes. The videos will contain subtitles and an audio voiceover to ensure inclusivity and enhance the educational experience.
- **Illustrated Map:** A commissioned map featuring artwork has been created and installed to showcase the locations of the way marker posts within the nature trail. The map also includes interesting nature facts and illustrated images of flora and fauna found in the park. It offers both a short and long route option, allowing park users of all abilities to feel included and encouraging physical activity. The way marker posts have been engraved with a daisy or leaf logo to guide users along the designated route, without the use of arrows, promoting exploration throughout the park.

4.3 Natural Play

Work is currently underway to install a trim trail constructed from robinia wood with bonded mulch surfacing. This addition will provide a natural play area for visitors to engage in physical activity and exploration.

4.4 Tree Uplift

The Tree Uplift element of the Levelling Up Parks Fund scheme consists of two main components: the planting of new trees and the removal of over-mature trees for safety reasons. The following details the progress made in this aspect:

- **Planting of New Trees:** A total of 30 heavy standard trees have been planted throughout Burn Valley Gardens, including a small apple and pear fruit tree orchard. Each tree species was carefully selected for its ecological, community and aesthetic value, considering factors such as benefits for pollinators, provision of fruit and/or nuts, high ecological impact rating and tolerance to air pollution.
- **Removal of Over-Mature Trees:** A survey conducted by the Parks and Open Spaces team and Arboricultural Officer identified trees that required felling or major pruning due to safety concerns. Over-mature trees that were rotten and/or infected with fungal diseases were removed, and tree limbs were pruned where necessary. Where deemed safe, tree trunks were left standing as dead wood to provide valuable habitat for wildlife. The progress made in relation to the tree uplift element of the project ensures a healthier and safer tree population within Burn Valley Gardens.

4.5 Sensory Garden

Work is ongoing to install the sensory garden into Burn Valley Gardens and is a key feature of the refurbishment project. It aims to create a unique sensory experience for park visitors. The following points highlight the progress and details of the sensory garden installation:

- **Wheelchair Accessibility:** Special measures have been taken to ensure that the sensory garden is fully accessible. This ensures that individuals with disabilities can easily navigate and enjoy the garden.
- **Way Marker Post:** A way marker post has been strategically placed in the center of the maze within the sensory garden as part of the nature trail to encourage natural and explorative play in the park.
- **Seating Placement:** Galvanized metal seating will be installed in the sensory garden, set back into the lavender beds, providing a comfortable resting place for visitors.

4.6 Biodiversity

In addition to the sensory garden, efforts have been made to promote biodiversity within Burn Valley Gardens as follows:

- **Lavender Species:** To attract pollinators and add vibrant colors, different species of lavender are being planted in the garden. These lavender plants not only enhance the visual appeal of the park but also contribute to the ecosystem by supporting pollination. The lavender plants also provide a sensory element to the maze for a more inclusive and nature-based play option within the park for individuals who may not be interested in/ able to access more traditional play equipment
- **Silver Birch Trees:** To provide shade and enhance the ecological balance of the park, silver birch trees are being planted in amongst the sensory maze to offer a serene atmosphere and support the local wildlife population.

5. OTHER CONSIDERATIONS/IMPLICATIONS

RISK IMPLICATIONS	<p>The most significant risk to investment in Burn Valley Gardens has been identified as vandalism and other anti-social behaviour. The most recent equipment installed in the park suffered from an arson attack within weeks of installation. As a result of this, considerations has been given to the materials used and the type of equipment installed as well as the capacity of the Council to maintain equipment and address any issues that may arise.</p>
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FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS	<p>The total funding of £85,000 allocated by DLUHC for the Levelling Up Parks Fund was broken down into:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Up to £47,500 capital for creation or improvement of the park including hard and soft landscaping. • Up to £18,500 revenue for project preparation, creation and maintenance. • Up to £19,000 ‘tree uplift’ for tree planting and related costs. <p>Quotes were sought for each element of the scheme in accordance with the Council’s procurement process.</p> <p>Consideration was given to ongoing maintenance costs for additional equipment purchased and installed through the grant funding scheme, including maintenance of the refurbished play area, fixing or replacing any missing / broken parts of play equipment and patching up any play surfaces. There will also be tree maintenance to consider. It was previously proposed and agreed that an element of the grant be reserved for future maintenance, which is also stipulated in the DLUHC MoU.</p>
LEGAL CONSIDERATIONS	<p>Planning permission was not required to expand the natural play area. Details were submitted to the Planning Services One Stop Shop for consideration and appropriate action taken.</p> <p>For any new installations to the play area, all equipment will be in line with British Standard (BS EN 1176) safety standards.</p>
CHILD AND FAMILY POVERTY	<p>There are no child and family poverty considerations specifically associated with this report, although the development will enhance opportunities for children and families to access play and recreation space free of charge.</p>
EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY CONSIDERATIONS	<p>There are no equality and diversity considerations associated with this report. Accessibility has been taken into account when developing proposals.</p>
STAFF CONSIDERATIONS	<p>There are no staffing considerations associated with this report – the project will continue to be delivered within the existing staffing resource.</p>
ASSET MANAGEMENT CONSIDERATIONS	<p>The proposed plans to utilise the Levelling Up Parks funding will significantly improve Burn Valley Gardens.</p>

ENVIRONMENT, SUSTAINABILITY AND CLIMATE CHANGE CONSIDERATIONS	<p>The proposed plans to utilise the Levelling Up Parks funding will significantly improve the environment within Burn Valley Gardens. The addition of new trees planted in the park will help to purify the air, create shade and capture carbon from the atmosphere.</p> <p>The sensory garden will increase biodiversity within the park with the addition of multiple lavender species which will provide forage for pollinators and have positive impacts for species higher in the food chain.</p>
CONSULTATION	<p>Consultation has been undertaken with Council officers with knowledge of green space and playground use, as well as with external organisations such as Play Out Hartlepool CIC and with Adult & Community Based Services Committee members.</p> <p>(Public consultation has been undertaken through an online survey on 'Your Say, Our Future' which highlighted a number of points relating to Burn Valley Gardens that influenced the Levelling Up Parks Fund scheme and project design:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Burn Valley Gardens is the second most visited park. • Use of the playgrounds is one of the top reasons for visiting, alongside use of sports facilities and going for a walk. • Most visitors visit the park once a week or more. • When asked what could be improved in the park, cleanliness, security, playground facilities and maintenance of flowerbeds and trees were voted as most important • Comments from residents highlighted the need for new tree planning, replacement of play equipment and refurbishment of the wildlife area.

6. RECOMMENDATION

- 6.1 It is recommended that the Adult and Community Based Services Committee note the contents of this report and the update provided on the Levelling Up Parks Fund scheme, and support efforts to pursue Green Flag status for Burn Valley Gardens.

7. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 7.1 Green Flag status is the benchmark international standard for publically accessible parks and green spaces in the United Kingdom and around the world. Winning the award visibly demonstrates the commitment to park improvement and enhancing the quality of life for the community. This can lead to overall regeneration, with upgraded facilities and increased community engagement. Green Flag status attracts visitors with people making special trips to award-winning sites, and popular events ensuring repeat visits. The award also serves as a lever to secure funding for future improvements and maximizes revenue opportunities.

8. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 8.1 Report to Adult & Community Based Services Committee – October 2022.

9. CONTACT OFFICERS

Gemma Ptak
Assistant Director – Preventative & Community Based Services

Sarah Scarr
Head of Service – Heritage & Open Spaces

Jenn Gant
Team Leader – Parks & Open Spaces

Sign Off:-

Managing Director	Date: 15/08/2023
Director of Finance, IT and Digital	Date: 15/08/2023
Director of Legal, Governance and HR	Date: 15/08/2023

ADULT AND COMMUNITY BASED SERVICES COMMITTEE

7th September 2023



Subject: JOBS AND SKILLS IN THE COMMUNITY HUBS

Report of: Assistant Director (Preventative and Community Based Services)

Decision Type: Non-Key/For information

1. COUNCIL PLAN PRIORITY

Hartlepool will be a place:
- where people are enabled to live healthy, independent and prosperous lives.
- of resilient and resourceful communities with opportunities for all.
- that has an inclusive and growing economy.

2. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 2.1 The purpose of this report is to update the Adult & Community Based Services Committee on the progress made in embedding Jobs and Skills into the Community Hubs and Wellbeing Service.

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 Jobs and Skills (previously Learning and Skills) was transferred into the Community Hubs and Wellbeing Service following a departmental restructure in December 2021. The rebranded team, Jobs & Skills @ the Hub, has relocated from Church Street with the administration function based in the Centre for Independent Living (CIL) and the rest of the team having a community presence in Central Hub, Waverley Allotment Project and South Hub providing information and advice on the opportunities available including career advice, job search and support with enrolment.

3.2 Jobs and Skills is embedded in the Community Hub Strategy 2023 – 2028 that was agreed by Committee in January 2022. The Strategy focuses on an overarching vision whereby the Community Hubs in Hartlepool together with our partners and the Voluntary and Community Sector will nurture opportunities through access to ideas, imagination and connection.

3.3 The strategic priorities are:

- Health and Wellbeing
- Community
- Digital and Innovation
- Reading
- Diversity, Disability and Difference
- Jobs and Skills

3.4 A classroom has been built on the first floor of Central Hub and a room set up as a classroom in South Hub meaning that more formal, face to face classes can now take place in community settings that are familiar to people, which is proving very popular.

3.5 Jobs and Skills is currently made up of a number of elements – the Adult Education Budget, Multiply and the Youth Employment Initiative.

3.6 Adult Education Budget

3.6.1 The Adult Education Budget (AEB) within the Tees Valley has been devolved to Tees Valley Combined Authority (TVCA) by the Education & Skills Funding Agency (ESFA).

3.6.2 Hartlepool's AEB allocation is comprised of:

Skills (including Foundation Learning)	£279,930
Learning for Inclusion	£513,140
National Skills Fund	£ 80,000
Total TVCA Adult Education Budget	£873,070

3.6.3 The principle purpose of the AEB is to engage adults and provide them with skills / learning needed for work, an apprenticeship, or for further learning.

3.6.4 The AEB supports adults to achieve qualifications and can also through Learning for Inclusion, offer tailored programmes of learning to help engage those furthest from the labour market or to enhance the local community.

3.6.5 The Learning for Inclusion element was introduced by TVCA on 1st August 2022 and was ring-fenced for Local Authority providers. TVCA recognised the challenges individuals faced during the COVID pandemic and lockdowns and identified the need for a programme that could support individuals to reengage with their local community by providing activities that could help reduce isolation and support individual's wellbeing.

3.6.6 The Learning for Inclusion provision in Hartlepool provides outreach support and programmes of learning to engage adults and assist in addressing some of the key priorities within our communities. We have been able to create learning provision in response to local needs with a focus on key topics such as:

- Learning for personal development aimed at addressing the specific needs of adults in areas such as isolation, social exclusion, mental health and well-being;
- Learning that aims to enhance community engagement, develop stronger communities and respond to the priorities within communities, and;
- Learning opportunities for adults residing in disadvantaged neighbourhoods in partnership with key stakeholders such as the Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise Organisations (VCSE).

3.6.7 We identified that partnership working would be critical to developing and delivering our Learning for Inclusion programme and, building on relationships developed and built on during and since the pandemic lock-downs, we have been able to commission VCSE organisations to attract individuals to the programme and identify specific sessions that meet the needs of communities.

3.6.8 During academic year 2022/23 we have delivered a range of courses as part of our Learning for Inclusion programme, these have included volunteer team development in advance of the Tall Ships Races event, creating a community garden, crafts, wood turning, ballroom dancing and sewing. Working with the VCSE we have exceeded our Learning for Inclusion targets as outlined below.

	2022 – 2023 Target	2022 – 2023 Delivered	Over achieved
Unique Learners	650	691	41
Enrolments	800	941	141

3.6.9 Partnership working has also been crucial in the developments at Waverley Terrace Allotment Project. The ending of National Lottery funding in 2022 resulted in a need to review the sites use and ultimately expand the opportunities the site offers.

3.6.10 With the site now part of the Community Hub service we have worked with partners such as TEWV, Hartlepool Carers and the Food Network given them the opportunity to take over space at the site. This has led to increased use of the site, providing meaningful, positive activities for people including increased opportunities for volunteering. The network of organisations on the site means people can be signposted and supported to build on their experience and explore further opportunities.

3.6.11 The Waverley Allotment Project will be developed to provide horticulture Learning for Inclusion opportunities going forward.

3.6.12 The introduction of Learning for Inclusion has enhanced the Community Hub offer as it has allowed us to engage with new people by delivering targeted activities in the hubs and other community venues whilst also providing an additional ‘offer’ for those who are already actively engaged in the hubs and their activities.

3.6.13 The Skills element of the AEB allows for the delivery of a wide range of post-19 accredited and non-accredited courses. This includes GCSEs, functional skills, English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) and National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs). Accredited skills provide adults with the occupational skills and knowledge to support their careers and legal entitlements across English, maths and digital.

3.6.14 The legal entitlements allow learners aged:

- 19-23 to be fully-funded if they study for a first qualification at level 2 and/or level 3.
- 19 and over, who have not previously attained a GCSE grade C/grade 4 or higher to be fully-funded if they study for a qualification in English or maths, up to and including level 2.

3.6.15 Foundation learning provides adults furthest away or with low qualifications with non-regulated learning and preparation for work opportunities.

3.6.16 In addition, a range of sector specific qualifications have been delivered such as Level 2 Teaching & Learning in Schools, Level 3 Business Administration, Level 2 Adult Care and Level 1 Community Interpreting.

3.6.17 The AEB programme as a whole provides opportunities for adults to engage in a course at a level that meets their requirements allowing them to improve their skills and learn new skills at their own pace.

3.6.18 Our current achievement for skills for 2022 -2023 is outlined below.

Indicator	Target	Actual to date
Enrolments	750	655
Achievement Rate	98%	99.4%

3.6.19 HBC are not the only providers of AEB provision in the town and we are working with the College of Further Education to ensure that we maximise the skills element of AEB to avoid competition and remove duplication.

3.7 Ofsted

3.7.1 Ofsted is the Office for Standards in Education, Children’s Services and Skills. It inspects services providing education and skills for learners of all ages to ensure that organisations providing education, training and care services in England do so to a high standard for all children and students.

3.7.2 Ofsted inspectors make judgements of the overall effectiveness of the following areas:

- The quality of education
- Behaviour and attitudes
- Personal development
- Leadership and management

3.7.3 The Inspectors use the following 4-point scale to make all judgements:

- Grade 1 – outstanding
- Grade 2 – good
- Grade 3 – requires improvement
- Grade 4 – inadequate

3.7.4 The AEB programme delivered by Jobs and Skills is subject to Ofsted regulation. The last Ofsted inspection took place in November 2017 and the service was graded 2, good. We are anticipating our next inspection before the end of 2023.

3.7.5 Inspectors will judge how effectively leaders and managers focus public funding on people who are disadvantaged and least likely to participate in education and training, and work with other partners to wider participation and support learners progression to further learning and/or employment relevant to their personal circumstances.

3.7.6 Inspectors will also assess how well leaders and managers use community learning funding (Learning for Inclusion) to develop learning programmes and projects that develop stronger communities, where appropriate.

3.7.7 As outlined above, we are confident of the progress we have made engaging with the VCSE and other partners including the College of Further Education, to be assured that the programme we have delivered and continue to develop will support the outcomes required by the Ofsted inspection.

3.8 Multiply

3.8.1 The Government announced the Multiply Programme, funded via the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) in 2021 to support adults to understand and be able to use maths in their daily lives.

3.8.2 In December 2022, HBC was named by TVCA as the lead body for the Tees Valley Multiply Programme (Community Led). The programme aimed to support over 4,000 adults across Tees Valley in the period from December 2022 to March 2025 and incorporated two key elements:

- Bitesize Provision: short informal activities lasting up to two hours which are outside of a classroom and introduce numeracy using fun themes such as cooking, crafts, sports or money management.
- Substantive Provision: more formal learning sessions lasting over two hours which introduce key maths terms such as addition and subtraction with the aim of eventually progressing individuals onto Functional Skills.

- 3.8.3 The programme is for adults who do not already have a formal maths qualification at Level 2 and is focused on delivering within local community venues so making activities accessible.
- 3.8.4 To help deliver the Multiply programme, we launched a grant opportunity for VCSE organisations to deliver the Bitesize Provision. This led to 17 VCSE organisations being contracted across the Tees Valley with 6 in Hartlepool.
- 3.8.5 Performance to the end of March 2023 against the year one targets is highlighted below:

Provision Type	Year 1 Target	Actual
Bitesize provision	1,216	1,463
Substantial provision	150	106
Total	1,366	1,569

- 3.8.6 Exceeding our bitesize provision is due to the commitment and creativity of the VCSE organisations who between them have delivered a range of activities such as cooking on a budget, reuse and recycle, diamond painting, sewing, sign language, wreath making, snowman trails, crafty critters and making sense of money.
- 3.8.7 Whilst the target for substantial provision was not met, this is because the programme did not start until December so did not allow much time to recruit individuals who had taken part in bitesize provision to progress to more substantial learning. We do not anticipate any issues meeting the target for 2023/2024.
- 3.8.8 The Multiply Programme is delivered in partnership with the other four Tees Valley Local Authorities who coordinate activities in their areas and deliver the substantial provision. We all employ dedicated Community Development Workers who work with partners and support individuals before, during and after they have engaged on Multiply to support them to progress onto the next stage of their journey including accessing further support such as Learning for Inclusion.

3.9 Youth Employment Initiative

- 3.9.1 The Tees Valley Pathways and Routeways Programmes are part of the Youth Employment Initiative. This is a national programme for areas with high levels of youth unemployment which is funded through European Social Fund (ESF) with the Department for Work & Pensions (DWP) as Managing Authority.
- 3.9.2 The provision aims to support young people aged 15 to 29 who are unemployed and/or economically inactive across Tees Valley. The Council was successful in becoming the Lead Accountable Body for both the Tees Valley Pathways and Routeways Programmes with delivery via a consortium of 18 organisations from the public, private and voluntary sectors.

3.9.3 The programme, which started in April 2016, has been extended twice resulting in an overall contract value for both programmes of £31.9m which includes £7.9m of local match funding, of which £2.28m was provided by Tees Valley Combined Authority.

3.9.4 The provision will officially end on 31 December 2023.

3.9.5 The table below demonstrates the success of the programme with an over-delivery against targets and nearly 12,000 young people being supported and over 6,000 positively progressing, mainly into employment or apprenticeships.

Programme	Starts		Progressions	
	Target	Actual to Date	Target	Actual to Date
Pathways	10,098	10,554	4,738	5,441
Routeways	1,025	1,244	525	636
Total	11,123	11,798	5,263	6,077

3.9.6 In December 2022, an external evaluation was carried out which reviewed the social and economic impact of the Tees Valley Pathways and Routeways Programmes. This highlighted the following points:

- Economic Impact including reduced unemployment rates and contributions from individuals now in employment was calculated at £130.4m.
- Social Impact including reduced demand on critical services such as mental health, homelessness and drug and alcohol support was calculated at £99.9m.

3.9.7 This means that by December 2022, for every £1 spent, £6.78 of economic and social value was generated in the Tees Valley.

3.9.8 The ending of the Youth Employment Initiative will create a gap in provision for young people with no financial initiative identified to help fill the gap left.

3.9.9 In Hartlepool, the Department for Works and Pension (DWP) funded a Youth Hub the funding of which has been extended until March 2024. The Hub is a partnership between HBC, JobCentre Plus, and National Careers Service, members of the Youth Employment initiative and youth services, Further Education College and specialist training providers. The Hub provides support for young people aged 16-29 who are not in work, education or training and offers:

- Careers education and information and advice.
- A specialist training and one-to-one advice and guidance
- Programmes to help young people develop skills and gain work experience linked to employers within growth employment sectors. Training programmes linked to employment opportunities
- Access to alternative provision to help young people prepare for the world of work.

- 3.9.10 Whilst the funding for the specialist activity in the Hub will end in March 2024, we will work to ensure that the partnership working developed for the Youth Hub will continue ensuring youth employment remains a priority.
- 3.9.11 A new UKSPF Investment Proposal for People and Skills was launched in April of this year aimed at support the economically inactive to move closer to/into employment. HBC has led on a Tees Valley funding application to provide support to those people who are economically inactive due to gaps in provision for retirees, temporarily sick and those looking after the family/home. We also included the development of bespoke programmes for NEET (not in education, employment or training) young people particularly young carers and teen parents.
- 3.9.12 We have had initial confirmation from TVCA that we were successful with our bid but are waiting for written confirmation and the funding agreement. If the programme proceeds the Tees Valley councils will receive £900,000, £300,000 of which will support the programme in Hartlepool and go some way to ameliorate the loss of the Youth Employment Initiative.

4. PROPOSALS/OPTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION

- 4.1 Considerable progress has been made in embedding Jobs and Skills into the Community Hubs and Wellbeing service and we propose to build on this success by continuing to work with VCSE partners, ensuring that the Learning for Inclusion and Multiply elements of provision meet the needs of our local communities.
- 4.2 Having staff permanently based in the community areas of the Community Hubs has, since October 2022, led to:
- Over 2,000 interventions being delivered including Jobsearch, CVs, Interview Techniques, Benefit Checks and Online Job Applications.
 - 71 individuals supported into employment.
 - 307 individuals supported into volunteering including Tall Ships Quay Mates.
- 4.3 We propose exploring how we can take the success of embedding Jobs and Skills into Community Hubs Central and South and offer a similar service in the North of the town and in branch libraries.
- 4.4 We also propose to continue working with Hartlepool College of Further Education to maximise opportunities for skills and qualifications across the town meeting the needs of local people and demands of local employers.
- 4.5 Developing our offer for young people and adults with additional needs is also proposed. This will include the implementation of a Supporting Internship offer together with other areas of support to help people to lead the best lives they can. This area will form the basis of a future report to Committee.

5. OTHER CONSIDERATIONS/IMPLICATIONS

RISK IMPLICATIONS	The Youth Employment Initiative ceases in December 2023 but the potential award of the UKSPF People and Skills fund will help ameliorate the impact of this loss, subject to funding being confirmed and the UKSPF Investment Proposal for People and Skills being implemented..
FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS	<p>The majority of the Jobs and Skills service is grant funded. The AEB grant has not been increased for the last 10 years with outputs remaining unchanged. Delivering the programme during the cost of living crisis and managing pressures from salary increases has created some challenges. TVCA are now reviewing the programme, funding and expectations and have confirmed that any identified increases in funding will be implemented from September 2023.</p> <p>Multiply is funded until March 2025.</p> <p>Grants from Multiply and the Learning Inclusion element of AEB to the VCSE contributes to their sustainability.</p>
LEGAL CONSIDERATIONS	There are no legal considerations associated with this report.
CHILD AND FAMILY POVERTY	The provision available through Jobs and Skills aims to reach those people who need support to increase their skills and enhance their chances to maximise employment or volunteer opportunities that might be available. By being community based and working with the VCSE, we can provide tailored solutions to people in places that are accessible for them. By being based in the Community Hubs and Wellbeing Service, the team can draw on the other resources including the Support Hub ensuring that people can be linked into the other support that is available such as financial advice and guidance and The Bread and Butter Thing food subsidy scheme.
EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY CONSIDERATIONS	Working with the VCSE and delivering in community spaces has ensured that our courses meet the needs of local people. We have worked closely with groups who specifically target BAME communities and have been able to support the delivery of ESOL in community settings together with targeted courses/activities including women only sessions.

STAFF CONSIDERATIONS	<p>The cessation of the Youth Employment Initiative in December 2023 will have some impact on staff within the team, particularly those employed on fixed term contracts specifically to deliver this initiative. It will also have a wider impact on staffing levels in organisations who have been funded via the initiative.</p> <p>The potential award of the UKSPF People and Skills fund will help ameliorate the impact of this loss in HBC.</p>
ASSET MANAGEMENT CONSIDERATIONS	There are no asset management considerations associated with this report.
ENVIRONMENT, SUSTAINABILITY AND CLIMATE CHANGE CONSIDERATIONS	There are no environment, sustainability and climate change considerations associated with this report.

6. RECOMMENDATION

- 6.1 It is recommended that the Adult & Community Based Services Committee notes the progress made and supports the proposed developments within the Jobs & Skills @ the Hubs service.

7. REASON FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 7.1 The proposed further developments will continue to maximise opportunities for people in trusted community spaces.

8. CONTACT OFFICERS

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Sign Off:-

Managing Director	Date:
Director of Finance, IT and Digital	Date: 15.08.23
Director of Legal, Governance and HR	Date: 15.08.23