



ENVIRONMENT AND SUSTAINABILITY POLICY DEVELOPMENT AND SCRUTINY PANEL

WEST LOTHIAN ALLOTMENTS REPORT

REPORT BY HEAD OF OPERATIONAL SERVICES

A. PURPOSE OF REPORT

The purpose of this report is to make the Panel aware of the information contained within the Allotments Report 2024 and its intended publication on the Council's website.

B. RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the Panel:

1. Notes the content of the Allotments Report; and
2. Supports the publication of the report on the Council's website.

C. SUMMARY OF IMPLICATIONS

I Council Values	Caring and compassionate Open, honest and accountable Collaborative, inclusive and adaptive
II Policy and Legal (including Strategic Environmental Assessment, Equality Issues, Health or Risk Assessment)	Requirement under the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015, Part 9 Section 121 - Annual Allotments Report.
III Implications for Scheme of Delegations to Officers	None.
IV Impact on performance and performance Indicators	None.
V Relevance to Single Outcome Agreement	- We live in resilient, cohesive and safe communities. - We live longer, healthier lives and have reduced health inequalities. - We make the most efficient and effective use of resources by minimising our impact on the built and natural environment.

VI Resources - (Financial, Staffing and Property)	Resources/funding is required to support community groups to plan, construct, and administer allotments.
VII Consideration at PDSP	None.
VIII Other consultations	None.

D. TERMS OF REPORT

D.1 Background

The Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015 (“the Act”) encourages local authorities to support the development of community food growing spaces including allotments. The Council approved the West Lothian Food Growing Strategy 2020-25 in 2021.

The Act, Part 9 Subsection 121, states that “each local authority must prepare and publish an annual allotments report for its area”. The Act identifies specific information to be included.

This report provides that information from June 2023 to end of May 2024. A summary of the annual activity, where known, relating to those allotment sites leased by the Council is also included. The Council does not operate any allotment sites itself.

West Lothian Council leases land to two independent allotment groups: Killandean Community Allotment Association and Deansmeadow Allotments Association.

Both groups are self-managing with no direct involvement by the Council in the operation of the allotments, or the administration of waiting lists. The Council does not have a direct role in the development or construction of any allotments. Where resources allow, the Council’s Open Space Officer will support community groups with the development of new allotments through advice and guidance, and will produce an annual report as required by the Act. The Council does not have a dedicated Allotment/Food Growing Officer.

There are a number of privately-owned allotment sites located in West Lothian. The Act relates only to those owned or leased by a local authority. The Council has no responsibility in relation to private allotments.

D.2 Allotment Sites Information

The following table provides the information required by the Act.

		Killandean Allotment – managed by Killandean Community Allotment Association	Deansmeadow Allotment – managed by Deansmeadow Allotments Association
1	Location and size of allotment site	Off Simpson Parkway, Kirkton, Livingston. what3words: needed.moment.vibes 1.02ha	Off Hardie Road, Deans, Livingston. what3words: holds.dark.ranked 0.65ha
2	No. of allotments on allotment site	51	22
3	Where the whole of an allotment site is leased from the authority by one person, the proportion of land on the allotment site that is not subleased from the tenant of the allotment site	22.8% 1.02ha is leased from the Council. The Allotment is then sub-let to individual plot holders. The total that is sub-let is 0.7875ha. The area that is not sub-let is 0.2325ha (i.e. area left for paths, communal buildings, communal space etc.).	65.8% 0.6519ha is leased from the Council. The allotment is then sub-let to individual plot holders. The total that is not sub-let is 0.4287ha (i.e. area left for paths, communal buildings, car parking etc.).
4	The period of any lease between the authority and the tenant of an allotment site	20 years, from 1 June 2014.	3 years, from 1 January 1994 to 31 December 1996 and thereafter on a year to year basis. Currently under review.
5	The rent payable under any lease between the authority and the tenant of an allotment site	£650 but discounted if Community Benefits clause met.	£1 “if asked only”.
6	The rent payable for each allotment in the area of the authority	Single bed - £10/year 62.5m ² plot - £20/year 125m ² plot - £40/year 250m ² plot - £80/year.	79.2m ² - £32.50/year 158.4m ² - £65.00/year

7	How, in the opinion of the authority, such rents are decided by reference to the method of determining fair rent	Rents for individual plots are determined by Killandean Community Allotment Association.	Rents for individual plots are determined by Deansmeadow Allotments Association.
8	The number of persons entered in the waiting list	52 (as at 31/5/24).	12 (as at May 2024).
9	The number of persons on the waiting list for a continuous period of more than 5 years	0.	0
10	The steps taken by the authority to comply with the duty to provide allotments.	<p>The Council has set out the process for providing allotments in its Food Growing Strategy available at https://www.westlothian.gov.uk/media/52253/West-Lothian-Food-Growing-Strategy/pdf/20210702_WLC_Food_Growing_Strategy_FINAL_LAYOUT.pdf?m=637807083545700000</p> <p>In summary, a request for a new allotment site will be considered by the Council from an existing constituted community group or from a group of at least 3 people from the community who are willing to develop and manage an allotment site.</p> <p>The group suggests Council owned sites and the Council works with the group to assess the potential sites for suitability considering committee “ownership”, accessibility, conflicting interests etc. The pros and cons of each site are identified.</p> <p>The Council and group agree the suitability of one particular site. The Council advises whether Phase 1 soil tests are required and, if so, the Council commissions a Phase 1 preliminary site investigation (if resources permit) with indicative soil pits to determine the suitability of the site for food growing. If contamination is detected the site may still be suitable for an allotment site if remediation or barriers to contamination can be put in place.</p> <p>If the group is not constituted at this point then it will be assisted by the Council to become a constituted group.</p> <p>Planning consent will generally be required and the planning application is prepared and then submitted by the group.</p> <p>If planning consent is granted then Property Services will negotiate a lease with the group.</p> <p>The Council will offer advice to the group on funding, access, site setup, etc.</p> <p>10% of new plots must be offered to people at the top of the Council’s (or Council owned site used as an allotment site) waiting list.</p>	

11	The number of allotments on each allotment site that are accessible by a disabled person.	51.	22
12	The number of allotments on each allotment site adjusted by the authority during the reporting year to meet the needs of a tenant who is a disabled person.	0.	0.
13	The number of persons on the waiting list who is a disabled person.	0.	Not known, protected information unless a plot holder chooses to share personal information.
14	The income received, and expenditure incurred, by the authority in connection with allotment sites	Income - £0 Expenditure - £0	

D.3 Allotment Activity Summary (June 2023 – May 2024)

Killandean Allotment

Killandean's waiting list continues to grow which requires increased management resources from their Allotment Association.

Splitting one of their larger plots into 6 smaller beds has been a success. One of these single beds is now rented to the Council's Inclusion Team which also includes Eliburn day services and pathways. Use of their minibus and facilities, including wheelchairs, is a considerable benefit to the plot users.

Deansmeadow Allotment

Deansmeadow Allotments Association previously indicated that it wished to be considered for an asset transfer. Property Services is liaising with the Committee to ideally renew its lease (to comply with the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015, or confirm its intention to be considered for a community asset transfer. Discussions are on-going.

D.4 Waiting Lists

The Act requires the Council to take reasonable steps to ensure the number of applicants on Council leased allotment waiting lists is no more than half the number of allotment plots available.

Both of the Council owned sites that are leased and then run as allotment sites were set up before the Act, and the associations have managed their own waiting lists since inception. When a request for an allotment plot is received by the Council, customers are directed to Killandean Community Allotment Association and Deansmeadow Allotments Association, if appropriate. Deansmeadow Allotment Association previously informed the Council that they will not consider requests for a plot unless from “friends and family”.

One or more people (together) can apply for an individual plot but this is counted as a single request when determining waiting list numbers.

Killandean has 51 plots and 52 on their waiting list. Turnover of plots is slow and the length of time on the waiting list increases each year.

Deansmeadow has 22 plots and 12 on their waiting list.

The Council does not currently have a level of dedicated investment that allows for construction or management of allotments. The model for new allotment provision is set out in the West Lothian Food Growing Strategy 2020-25. In summary, the Council will facilitate new allotments by advising and guiding community groups with an interest in an allotment and supporting the development of a constituted group that can themselves develop and operate an allotment.

D.5 Future Provision

In light of existing waiting lists, the Council continues to take reasonable steps to improve allotment provision. The Council is still working with Bathgate Community Development Trust (BCDT) to develop a site in the Boghall area. BCDT is supporting a group of individuals to set up an independent allotment association.

There is some external funding currently available to develop an allotment but this may not be rolled forward indefinitely.

E. CONCLUSION

The Allotments Report 2024 contains information required under the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015, Part 9 Subsection 121.

The Panel is asked to note the information in the report and support the publication of the report on the Council’s website.

F. BACKGROUND REFERENCES

- Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015
- West Lothian Food Growing Strategy 2020-25.

Appendices/Attachments: None

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