

**Workington Town Council**

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**WORKINGTON TOWN COUNCIL**

**ALLOTMENTS POLICY**

**Purpose of the policy**

This allotment policy has been developed for the provision of allotment plots provided by Workington Town Council.

The overall objective of this policy is to increase the ability and opportunity for people to cultivate allotment plots in Workington. The policy seeks, through its targets and initiatives, to optimise the use of allotments for existing and potential plot holders, identify needs and meet demand. All initiatives contained in this document are considered in the context of other Town Council strategies, policies and objectives.

This document provides a framework allowing tenants to develop and manage their allotments in partnership with Workington Town Council.

**Introduction**

The provision of allotments by local authorities is a statutory duty. An allotment is defined as not exceeding 40 poles in extent which is wholly or mainly cultivated by the occupier in the production of vegetable or fruit crops for consumption by himself or his family” (section 22(1), Allotments Act 1922);"

Workington Town Council will continue to provide and promote allotments not only because of this statutory requirement but because allotment gardening can make a valuable contribution to the town's sustainability by providing physical & mental health, social, economic and environmental benefits.

These can be summarised as

* Healthy recreational activity
* Social contact and as a contribution to community spirit
* Low cost fresh food production for the family
* Promotion of healthy affordable diets
* Better partnership working

Allotments are a valuable green sustainable open space within the urban environment, as well as being highly beneficial to any wildlife in the area.

**Target areas of the policy**

* Ensuring sufficient allotments
* Promoting allotment gardening
* Maintaining adequate resources

**Ensuring Sufficient Allotments**

It is the policy of the Town Council to continue to meet its obligation to provide allotments in Workington, for residents within the parish of Workington.

It is an aspiration of the Council to be able to provide allotment sites across the town so that no-one need be more than a 15 minute walk to a site from their home.

**Promoting Allotment Gardening**

It is the Council's policy to promote allotment gardening by ensuring all vacant plots are filled as soon as possible.

The Council holds regular meetings with allotment tenants and interested parties to listen to their concerns and suggestions, acting upon them where possible to make improvements to the allotment sites.

**Maintaining Adequate Resources**

At present the rental income from the sites does not cover maintenance costs, with any development costs having to be met by the Council. The salary of the Estate Team Leader and Finance & Administration Officer’s time spent on allotment administration is met by the Council's staffing budget and not from rental income. The Council needs to balance the benefits of the allotments provision against the cost to the residents of Workington via the council tax precept.

The level of rents and plot deposits are considered annually by the Council’s Environment Committee and any changes are introduced in time for agreement renewals on 1st November each year. It is the policy of the Council to charge a rental for plots based on the area of each plot in square metres.

Tenants may also be charged for water usage if there is running water available on the allotment site. The Council recovers the cost of water charges only and does not make any profit from these charges.

It is the Council’s policy to offer a discount of 50% off the base plot rent (not including water) to tenants of state pension age.

The Council policy is to make each vacated plot sufficiently attractive for letting, which could at one extreme include the use of contractors to clear a plot, at the other, it could include offer of a rent-free period to compensate the new tenants for having to clear the plot.

**Current Provision**

**The Sites**

Workington Town Council currently operates 7 statutory allotment sites and 4 temporary allotment site (listed below), comprised of 279 plots of varying sizes.

Statutory Sites

* Annie Pit
* Cranbourne Street
* Park Lane
* Rose Hill
* Siddick
* Soapery
* Wesley Street

Temporary Sites

* Mountain View
* Salterbeck (including raised beds)
* Stoneleigh
* Wastwater Avenue (including raised beds)

The Council also owns two self-managed allotment sites at Newlands Lane and Feenans.

The Council is open to other of its sites becoming self-managed. In order to begin the process of self-management the following criteria must be met by the applying organisation:

* be an established society or association made up of existing tenants of the allotment site.
* have a constitution which defines its aims, objectives and operational procedures.
* be able to provide a copy of its latest annual accounts and/or most recent bank statement.
* have a bank account operated by a minimum of at least two joint signatories.

Upon receipt of a written proposal and supporting documentation Council officers will review the proposal and contact the applicant to discuss it. Once an application has been deemed valid it will be submitted to the Council’s Environment Committee for consideration.

**Site Access**

The Council is responsible for maintaining clear access to the allotment sites, allowing tenants access to their plots.

**Management**

The allotment sites are the responsibility of the Environment Committee, managed on behalf of the Council by the Estates Team Leader and the Finance & Administration Officer overseen by the Proper Officer. They deal with the day to day administration of the allotments, including:

* Collecting and administering rents / deposits
* Administering tenancies
* Letting plots and new tenancy agreements
* Enquiries from prospective tenants including site visits
* Inspecting individual plots on a regular basis
* Resolving disputes and dealing with complaints
* Arranging day to day maintenance of the site
* Managing alterations and improvement works

**Eligibility**

Plots on the Council’s allotment sites are only available to people who have a permanent residential address within the boundary of the civil parish of Workington.

Only one tenancy will be allocated per household (that is, a person or persons occupying the same housing unit with its own front door).

**Application**

Anyone eligible may make an application to be added to the waiting list for a plot on an allotment site by completing the online form on the Council’s website or by submitting a completed paper form to the Council offices.

Waiting lists are sorted and vacancies filled on a strict “first come, first served” basis, with two exceptions.

* Service and ex-service personal, who are given priority on the lists over all other applicants for any site upon submission of a valid application.
* Residents whose home does not incorporate a garden or shared garden area large enough to allow children to play and to grow flowers / vegetables, who are given priority on the lists over applicants with access to a residential garden area over 250 metres squared for any site upon submission of a valid application.

Once an applicant is contacted regarding a vacancy, the Estates Team Leader will arrange a site visit. If the plot is suitable for the applicant and they wish to take up the tenancy, a provisional agreement is signed and submitted to the council.

**Tenancy**

The allotment plot is intended to be for the use of the tenant named in the tenancy agreement. Allowances are made for friends or family members assisting the tenant but this should not be used as a way to circumvent any of the terms of the agreement (e.g. not residing in the civil parish of Workington, claiming the pensioner discount).

The tenancy agreement allows for a named person to be added as a secondary tenant for any allotment plot. If a person has been named as a secondary tenant for three or more consecutive years and is from the same household as the main tenant they may automatically take over the tenancy should the tenancy end for any reason, but this may only happen once per tenancy.

The tenancy agreement is reviewed and revised by the Council’s Environment Committee as needed and agreed by the Council. This explains the rules which plot holders are expected to follow and what can and cannot be done on the sites (an extract of the agreement showing key points can be found in Appendix A of this policy), along with details of site management and contact details.

An allotment handbook is available for new plot holders, providing information on some of the key terms and conditions of the tenancy agreement, useful practical horticultural information and important safety advice.

**APPENDIX A**

**CONDITIONS OF TENANCY**

During the tenancy, the tenant shall:

* 1. keep the Allotment Garden clean and in a good state of fertility and cultivation;
  2. not cause a nuisance or annoyance to the owners or occupiers of land adjoining the Allotment Garden;
  3. not keep livestock or poultry in the Allotment Garden other than reasonable numbers of hens or rabbits which shall not be kept for a business or a trade;
  4. not bring to or keep animals in the Allotment Garden except those referred to in (c) above without first obtaining the Council’s written consent;
  5. not assign the tenancy nor sub-let or part with the possession of any part of the Allotment Garden;
  6. except for buildings or structures which are reasonably necessary for the keeping of hens and rabbits referred to in (c) above and which may be subject to the tenant first obtaining planning permission, the tenant shall not erect a shed, greenhouse or other building or structure on the Allotment Garden without first obtaining the Council’s written consent and if appropriate planning permission;
  7. not fence the Allotment Garden without first obtaining the Council’s written consent;
  8. maintain and keep in repair the fences and gates forming part of the Allotment Garden;
  9. trim and keep in decent order all hedges forming part of the Allotment Garden;
  10. not plant any tree, shrub, hedge or bush without first obtaining the Council’s written permission;
  11. not cut, lop or fell any tree growing on the Allotment Garden without first obtaining the Council’s written consent and if appropriate planning permission;
  12. be responsible for ensuring that any person present in the Allotment Garden with or without the tenant’s permission does not suffer personal injury or damage to his property;
  13. permit an inspection of the Allotment Garden at all reasonable times by the Council’s employees or agents;
  14. not obstruct or permit the obstruction of any of the paths or roads which provide a means of access to and from the Allotment Garden or the Allotment Garden of another tenant.
  15. ensure all dogs brought to the allotment site are kept on a lead and under control at all times. Any fouling must be removed immediately. Dogs must not be left unattended at any time.
  16. supervise any visiting children under the age of 16 and not allow them to wander onto any adjoining allotment or cause nuisance or damage.