

TONBRIDGE & MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL

COMMUNITIES ADVISORY BOARD

10 June 2015

Report of the Director of Street Scene and Leisure

Part 1- Public

Matters for Recommendation to Cabinet - Non-Key Decision (Decision may be taken by the Cabinet Member)

1 TONBRIDGE ALLOTMENTS - PROPOSED CHARGES

1.1 Summary

1.1.1 This report brings forward proposed charges for allotments in Tonbridge for Member consideration and approval.

1.2 Background

1.2.1 In general, allotments across the borough are provided and maintained by the relevant Town/Parish Council, however, allotment provision in Tonbridge is, in part, the responsibility of the Borough Council.

1.2.2 The Borough Council own 7 allotment sites in Tonbridge providing over 240 plots for community use. Allotment provision is seen as an excellent opportunity to promote both mental and physical well-being at a very low cost (under £3 per month for existing members under the proposed charging structure below). In a recent survey undertaken by the National Allotments Society their members also commented on the social and community benefits that allotments provide. To ensure community buy-in and empowerment for its sites in Tonbridge, the allotments are managed and maintained, on the Council's behalf, by the Tonbridge Allotments and Gardens Association.

1.2.3 The formal agreement between this Council and the Tonbridge Allotments and Gardens Association requires any change in charges to be approved by the Council prior to implementation.

1.3 Proposed Charges

1.3.1 At a recent Tonbridge Allotments and Garden Association, Site Managers meeting, proposals were discussed and brought forward for a revised charging structure. Managers voted for the following proposals to be implemented on the 1 October 2015.

- i) Increase in the charge per rod of 50p per year.

- ii) Increasing the annual rent on sheds by £5.
- iii) Lowering the OAP discount to 25% on rent (previously 50%).
- iv) Introducing a first year one-off charge of £25 for new allotment holders

1.3.2 The charges brought forward above are proposed to offset increases in water and equipment servicing. It is also proposed that the additional income will assist in the repair and replacement of perimeter fencing at the sites. In specific regard to the introduction of an additional one-off first year charge this is proposed to offset the increasing number of new members that drop out within the first year, or who are asked to leave due to undesirable behaviour and leave the site in a mess, resulting in clearance costs for the Association. In regard to discounts offered it is also noted that within the comparisons at **Annex 1** no such discounts are offered by those shown.

1.3.3 For Members information a comparison of the proposed Tonbridge charges in relation to charges by other Parish/Borough/District Councils can be found at **Annex 1**. Members will note that it is often difficult to directly compare due to varying charging structures. Taking into account the above proposed charges a typical 5 rod allotment with shed would be £35 per year for existing members.

1.3.4 Whilst the increases above may appear high in terms of percentage they do represent a small increase across a full year and it is considered that the proposed allotment charges still represent extremely good value.

1.4 Legal Implications

1.4.1 The formal agreement between Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council and the Tonbridge Allotments and Gardens Association requires any change in charges to be approved by the Borough Council prior to implementation.

1.5 Financial and Value for Money Considerations

1.5.1 The Borough Council currently provides the Association with an annual sum of £5,100 to manage allotments on its behalf.

1.6 Risk Assessment

1.6.1 The Association has an obligation to ensure that provision on site is suitable and safe for users.

1.7 Equality Impact Assessment

1.7.1 The decisions recommended through this paper have a remote or low relevance to the substance of the Equality Act. There is no perceived impact on end users.

1.8 Policy Considerations

1.8.1 Community, Healthy Lifestyles, Business Continuity/Resilience

1.9 Recommendations

1.9.1 It is **RECOMMENDED TO CABINET** that:

- 1) The proposed charges for Tonbridge Allotments as detailed in the report and at **Annex 1** be agreed and implemented with effect from 1 October 2015

Background papers:

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Nil

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