



Andover Town Council

Item No. **8**

To **consider** issues with the timescale of getting new tenants onto vacant plots.

- a. To **consider** an Allotments Allocation draft Policy.
- b. To **appoint** a WG to amend policy, if necessary, prior to P&R.
- c. To **review** the process with potential tenants.

Produced for: Allotments Committee

By: Town Clerk

Date of Report: 20 Sept 2023

Background:

An action from the June 2023 meeting was for the Clerk to draft a waiting list policy wording for review. It worked well in the recent Grants Policy WG to review tweaking the words prior to presentation to Full Council. It is therefore suggested that this happens again before presentation to the P&R Committee.

Current Waiting List process:

Applicants are entered onto a waiting list in our database. We record:

- Name, Address and Phone Numbers.
- Date added to the list.
- 3 Preferred Sites (if applicant has a preference)
- Sites they are Not Interested in. (NI)
- If they already have another plot. (Current policy is not to offer 2nd plots.)

Person waiting	Joint person	Date Added	Size wanted	Preferred Site	2nd Preferred Site	3rd Preferred Site	No held	Ref	Order	Notes
[REDACTED]	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	01/09/15	1	Picket Twenty			0	486	1	NI: all other sites. 11/4/23
[REDACTED]	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	01/04/19	1	Picket Twenty			0	504	2	Originally for Ox Drove. Now wants P20 13/01/23 JW
[REDACTED]	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	06/10/19	1	Saxon Heights			0	686	3	NI: all other sites. Tried to contact twice. (see WL folder)
[REDACTED]	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	01/12/19	1	Ox Drove			0	508	4	NI: all other sites 13/4/23
[REDACTED]	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	07/04/20	1	Ox Drove	Picket Twenty		0	929	5	Declined AW 13/07/23 JW NI: BL, MR, TD, OWR & SH
[REDACTED]	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	27/05/20	1	Picket Twenty			0	556	6	asked NI 11/4/23 - P20 only
[REDACTED]	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	01/08/20	1				0	608	7	asked NI 11/4/23 - offered BL 17/4/23 - chased BL offer 15
[REDACTED]	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	04/08/20	1	The Drove			1	607	8	2nd plot request (would like plot 51A)

When a plot becomes available on a site, the list is looked at starting at the top and working down. The vacant plot is offered to the next person in line, unless they have expressed:

- That they are only interested in different site(s).
- They have already declined a plot at that particular site.
- They are already a plot holder.

This works well, and is fair, but can be a little time consuming to go down the list.

There have been requests from local groups asking if they can apply for plots and jump the queue as they would benefit many people at once.

Process to introduce new Tenants:

1. A **“Free Plot” letter** is emailed to tenants copying in the Warden. The letter details the name, phone number and email address of both the prospective tenant and the warden and the following:

Please let us know as soon as possible whether you intend to take a plot or not.

If we have not heard from you by latest [L1 WEEK FROM TODAY], the plot will be offered to the next person on the waiting list.

In anticipation of your favourable reply, we attach:

1. GDPR Form, which please read, sign and return to us.

2. Rules and Regulations

Upon receipt of item 1, we will issue the Tenancy Agreement and the Rent Invoice.

Note: if no email address is held, then the letter is posted, but this is now quite rare.

2. Officer calls Tenant’s listed phone number to advise that an email has been sent about a free plot. Generally, messages are left.
3. Warden & New Tenant get in touch with each other to arrange to view the plot.
4. If a tenant accepts the plot, the Warden advises Officers by email. (usually the same day) and the Tenancy and Invoice are sent immediately to the tenant.
5. The tenant must pay & sign the Tenancy before receiving the padlock code for the gates.

ISSUES THAT ARE ENCOUNTERED or REASONS TO START THE PROCESS AGAIN:

- Tenants don’t want the plot due to its handover condition.
- Tenants decide they would prefer another site.
- Tenants delay in making their mind up.
- Tenants don’t reply to calls or emails.
- Tenants don’t have availability to view plots that fits in with the Warden’s schedule. (To be clear, wardens are not at fault and try very hard to accommodate potential tenants)
- Tenants accept a plot, then either don’t pay, or don’t return the paperwork.
- Tenants accept a plot then change their mind.

TIMESCALES:

Minimum 2 Weeks from Plot surrender to a New Tenant Starting.

Allowance to view the plot.	1 week from letter.
Allowance to return papers and pay	1 week from viewing / acceptance.

Often the delay is 3-4 weeks due to the various reasons above.

During the growing season, plots become overgrown very quickly and this becomes a problem when tenants change their mind. Plots can be left in a good condition, but soon become unmanageable if they cannot be re-tenanted very quickly. This will cost council money, that is not recoverable from the previous tenant.

Draft Allotments Allocation Policy:

INTRODUCTION

Andover Town Council (ATC) has a number of Allotment sites around the Town and has a long list of people wanting to gain a plot. The Council understand it has a duty to avoid discrimination and offer plots in a fair manner.

ELIGIBLE PERSONS

- Single persons or Spouses / Partners living together who are over the age of 18 are eligible to apply for a first plot provided they live within 1 mile of the Town and agree to the terms and conditions of the Tenancy.
- Second plots are not currently offered to Single or Joint Tenants.
- Second plots may be available to Groups at the discretion of the Council, and only if the second plot has not been easy to find a tenant for.
- Previous tenants may only reapply if they have not been evicted due to:
 - a. Non-cultivation of a plot.
 - b. Breach of the rules and regulations, (with the exception of late payment.)

The following types of groups can apply:

All types of Not-for-Profit Organisations, including but not limited to:

- Voluntary Organisations run by unpaid volunteers.
- Clubs or Societies or Not for profit organisations.
- Parent / Teacher Associations or Schools.
- Apolitical, or groups which are not primarily political organisations.
- Charities and Charitable Incorporated Organisations (CIOs)

CRITERIA FOR GROUP APPLICATIONS

Groups must:

- Be open to everyone, not selective in membership and compliant with The Equalities Act 2010.
- Have at least 10 members.
- Confirm that at least 75% of the people who are members of the group live in the Town.
- Not be requests for larger or extended families.
- Benefit people of all faiths, even if the group is run by a religious organisation.
- Explain clearly why having an allotment will benefit all the group members.
- Nominate a single person to be responsible for the condition, upkeep and payment for the plot and who will ensure that members abide by the Rules & Regulations.

DOCUMENTATION REQUIRED FROM NEW GROUP APPLICATIONS.

Application forms must be accompanied by copies of:

- The applicant's Safeguarding policy.
- The applicant's current Public Liability insurance.
- Confirmation that two Trustees/Volunteers are DBS checked if the organisation works with children or vulnerable adults.
- Any relevant Risk Assessment(s).
- Andover Town Council's application form.

TIMEFRAME

The Council commits to offering plots to single or joint applications on first come first served basis depending on the locations that applicants prefer.

Group applications may jump to the top of the waiting list if the following conditions are agreed to:

- The Group will accept a plot that the Council have had difficulty tenanting to single or joint applicants for any reason.
- The Group will accept a plot or plots that are in a particularly bad condition and will agree to bring them up to an acceptable condition within 6 months.
- If the Group is permitted to jump the waiting list, they will comply with the publicity requirements.

PUBLICITY REQUIREMENTS FOR GROUPS

Andover Town Council requires that:

- The Town Council's logo is used on all published information about the allotment.
- The Town Council is mentioned as being supportive to the Group in press, on social media and associated publicity.
- Photos are supplied once a year showing the usage and progress made on the plot(s).
- Permission is granted to publish groups that are allocated plots on the Council's website.

POLICIES OR PROCESSES TO BE READ IN CONJUNCTION WITH THIS DOCUMENT

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Allotment Tenancy Agreements• Allotment Application Form | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Allotment Rules and Regulations. |
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FURTHER ASSISTANCE

For details of our full Privacy Policy, please refer to www.andover-tc.gov.uk.

Alternatively, you may write to us at Andover Town Council, 38 Chantry Way, Chantry House, Andover, Hampshire, SP10 1LS.

Recommendations:

1. To **approve** the Draft Policy for Presentation to P & R Committee.
2. If the above motion fails: To **appoint** three Councillors to work with the Clerk to amend the draft.
3. To **review** the process followed for new tenants and to **suggest and agree** improvements.
 - a. Should officers now additionally show tenants plots in office time?
 - b. Should 1 week deadlines be strictly adhered to? i.e. if tenant can't view within 1 week then they remain on the waiting list?
 - c. Should Tenants be given 2 days to pay and sign tenancy after accepting a plot or lose it?
 - d. Councillors to make other suggestions.