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**Notes from Allotment Review Discussion
7th April 2011**

The Strategic Planning and Environment Overview & Scrutiny Committee will be reviewing allotments at their meeting on 21st June 2011. At the Dacorum Local Food Initiative, held in February 2011, the Chair of the Committee, Cllr Alan Anderson, invited people to feed into this review. Given DEF's continued interest in Dacorum, DEF's steering group considered it an opportunity to feed in DEF's ideas.

A discussion was facilitated at the DEF meeting to discuss the following:

- Managing the current Portfolio
- Providing new allotment sites
- Meanwhile gardening & landshare

Notes were taken during this discussion are summarised below. These notes will be passed to both Katy D'Souza, Assistant Estates Surveyor at Dacorum Borough Council and Cllr Alan Anderson, Chair of the Strategic Planning and Environment Overview & Scrutiny Committee. If you would like to feed in anything individually to the review please contact Katy at katy.d'souza@dacorum.gov.uk

1. Need to include all allotment holders in the review/consultation:
 - not just those that are members of organisations such as the Allotment Association (*reported that Katy was considering putting up laminated signs on all sites inviting comment from holders*); and
 - request for Allotment Association and other groups to collate response/input from their membership & submit to DBC
2. Provision for wildlife:
 - must be included in planning for existing & particularly new sites in terms of ensuring wildlife corridors/links to other sites/habitats (mapping exercise);
 - need to consider provision for pollinators and particularly wild bees; and
 - some wild areas already included in sites but need to ensure these are included in all sites.
3. Provision of advice/information for allotment holders (old & new):
 - Legal and advisory information about environmental/sustainability actions such as rainwater harvesting, waste management, use of produce etc; and
 - Legal and advisory information about keeping of livestock and/or bees on allotment sites.
4. Site & waiting list review:
 - Need to review of all DBC sites in the Borough in order to identify any 'spare' plot space or areas for development as wildlife areas / water harvesting sites;

- Waiting list audit – what is the timetable for the DBC work that is already underway? – also need to ensure no duplication on the list as historically people could put themselves down for a number of different sites;
 - need to review all allotment provision in the Borough in the same way including private, parish council and others; and
 - need to carry out some research in terms of the trends of demand, requirements demand and geographical implications.
5. British Waterways examples (in London) of creative ways to achieve additional growing spaces include: barge allotments; hanging plots on bridges.
 6. Need to investigate and make the most of opportunities for funding/site provision through S106 agreements – this could be linked to the geographical elements of the review (see 4. above).
 7. Allotment holder fees:
 - general support for considering a review of fees for allotment holders in order to cover the cost of maintaining the sites by DBC;
 - if increases are made then there must be a sliding scale (or similar) to allow for those on low incomes etc; and
 - need to revisit the contract/agreement between DBC and allotment holders to clarify the ‘roles & responsibilities’ for each – particularly in terms of DBC stating its maintenance/management commitment.
 8. Site wardens – need for a formal ‘Role & Responsibilities’ agreement with all new/existing site wardens to ensure clarity and commitment from individuals.
 9. Site access:
 - need parking provision for all sites wherever possible to allow (particularly older/less able) holders to bring tools etc; and
 - need to ensure that all new allocations for allotments are made with a geographical bias to enable non-vehicular access by majority of holders.
 10. Water provision:
 - support for current schemes including rain-water harvesting facilities (Grove Hill & Bennetts End) and agreed these should act as pilots with aim to roll out across the Borough; and
 - to include condition on DBC/Allotment Holder agreement that permission for structures (sheds etc) will only be given if rainwater is collected from them.
 11. New plot provision:
 - must ensure that any projects lead by independent groups on DBC sites are carried out as true partnership projects. Some problems experienced during the Grove Hill project which resulted in the Allotment Association being charged unexpected legal fees by DBC. Perhaps a ‘rules of engagement’ advisory sheet could be developed by DBC and others to give a template for how these projects can be delivered in the future; and
 - other landowners – some work being carried out on identifying potential sites through the Dacorum Food Strategy initiative; British Waterways explained that there are a number of restrictions on use on their land which can preclude use for food growing.

12. Education opportunities & community links - *in addition to the education/support for allotment holders listed above:*

- good example of local links and interest being made through the Grove Hill site project; and
- need to consider how to make stronger links and provision for schools, community groups and others to raise awareness of benefits of physical activity and healthy eating etc.

Other related points raised:

- Local food & land management – need to make the link between sustainable management of chalk grassland and agricultural livestock.
- Management of open spaces - need to ensure management regimes of open spaces are designed to be supportive of local wildlife; also as an education resource for local residents to better understand why a site is managed the way it is ... i.e. leaving leaf litter & fewer (meadow) cuts etc.