

**Bristol Parks & Estates
Allotment Strategy
2009 to 2019**

Bristol Allotment Strategy

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1 Introduction

The Allotments service sits within the Parks service, which includes Nature Conservation, Forestry and Childrens Play as well as Parks and Allotments. The Allotment Strategy 1999-2004 was developed as a way to improve the management of the Allotments Service, particularly following criticism by both District and Internal Audit of the way allotments were managed. Its key aim was to to maximise participation in allotment gardening. The Strategy recognises the importance of allotments as a leisure and recreational facility and for their benefits to communities, green spaces, health and well-being and wildlife, as well as in producing low cost locally produced food in a sustainable way (see Appendix A, Allotments Strategy, 1999-2004). This updated Allotment Strategy ensures that we continue to develop and improve the Allotments Service, and continue to maximise participation in allotment gardening over the next ten years to 2019. It has been decided that this strategy needs to be a 10 year Strategy, with a possible extension beyond this, as the targets set are dependent upon the finances available, especially in relation to capital receipts from land disposals. It is intended that the Allotments Strategy will link as a sub-strategy to the wider Parks and Green Spaces Strategy as well as to the other sub-strategies such as the Parks Play Strategy, Playing Pitch Strategy and the Parks Wildlife Strategy, which are also being developed at the present time.

There are currently 3,851 plots (defined as 300 square yard, 253 square metre or 10 rod plots, otherwise referred to as Full Plot Equivalents), that are actively managed as allotment gardens in Bristol, on 108 sites, managed as per the table below:

Level of Management	No of Sites	No of Full Plot Equivalents (FPEs)	No of FPEs Let	Percentage of FPEs Let
Leasing Association completely self-managed ('peppercorn')	11	604	570	94.4%

Leasing Association managing tenancies & collecting rents only	11	605	570	94.2%
Site Representative maintains waiting list & lets plots (Council issues tenancies & collects rents)	40	1,632	1531	93.8%
Non-plot letting Site Representative sends in reports & liaises with Allotments Office	18	606	564	93.1%
No Site Representative or Allotment Association	28	427	328	76.7%
Total	108	3,874	3,563	92%

The above excludes those sites that have already been taken out of allotment use or are in the process of disposal. Further surplus land is likely to be declared surplus over the next ten years unless demand increases significantly on those sites, whilst some are likely to remain as open space for the foreseeable future. The Allotment Section also manages 3 temporary allotment sites on behalf of the Council's Area Housing Offices, and has recently taken over management of a Parks managed temporary site at Craydon Grove, Stockwood and a Housing managed site at Clancy's Farm, Knowle. It is intended that the Housing sites will shortly be transferred to Parks to be maintained as statutory allotment sites. It is intended that new sites should be created where possible in areas of under-provision or high demand, in areas of existing open space or via Section 106 Planning agreements with developers. The above table shows that letting rates are higher when sites are managed via Allotments Associations or Site Representatives.

2 Mission statement

To work towards the vision of a sustainable Bristol through maximising the participation of its citizens in allotment gardening by the improvement of allotment sites and their management, and through the promotion of the benefits and enjoyment of allotments and food growing.

3 Purpose of strategy

The intention is to provide the following:

- Increase the uptake of allotments to a level of 95% by 2019.
- Improve the standard of service provision on all sites as set out in this Strategy by 2019.
- Promote the benefits derived from allotments, home grown food and gardening.

- Improve the financial position of the service.
- To improve maintenance of sites by employing the Allotment Maintenance Team.
- Work more closely with Housing Officers to transfer temporary sites to Parks in areas where there is a shortfall in provision of allotments directly under the control of the Parks and Estates Service.
- Transfer sites defined as surplus to other green space uses such as cemeteries, open space, woodland, conservation areas.
- Work towards the provision of new sites in areas of under-provision and high demand where feasible.

It is intended to continue to work towards providing a service in which people can expect:

- Good access, good security, well maintained haulingways and paths, adequate water provision and freedom from neglected plots.
- Opportunities and encouragement to individuals and communities wishing to be involved in the cultivation of allotments.
- Efficient and effective allotment administration.
- Effective and appropriate allocation of resources.
- Fair, open and equitable treatment, and safe tenure.
- Opportunities for developing gardening skills both on allotments and in gardens and community spaces.
- Encouragement to sites and associations to develop self-management.
- Fair charges and rents.

The Strategy will continue to retain five broad headings, as follows:

- Aim One: Provide enough allotments.
- Aim Two: Promote allotment use and food growing.
- Aim Three: Good Administration.
- Aim Four: Environmental sustainability.
- Aim Five: Provide enough resources.

4 The next ten years

It is widely accepted that the Bristol Allotment Strategy has been a success in many ways. Appendix C lists the achievements of the 1999-2004 Allotment Strategy, and sets out the likely reasons why it has not achieved the targets set in some areas. Bristol City Council has been cited in the Local Government Association's Allotments Best Practice Guide as an example of Best Practice. It therefore needs to build on what has already been achieved to ensure that the momentum continues and to continue the success story. Part of the success of the Allotment Strategy has come from the Strategy being a working document that is at the heart of everything the Allotment section does, and from the feeling of achievement that this can bring. The Allotment Strategy has set targets, which are considered to be challenging yet achievable. It also intends to be flexible and

'grasp the moment' when an opportunity arises, and ensure that the Allotments Section constantly strives to introduce new ideas, whether they come from staff, Site Representatives, community organisations, other Local Authorities or elsewhere (eg the introduction of compost toilets, disabled access plots, new user friendly tenancy agreement, community market gardens, chalet garden and beginner plots). This can only become a reality if the Strategy has the support of the Allotment movement in Bristol and nationally.

It is therefore intended that phase 2 of the Allotment Strategy will run from April 2009 to March 2019. Aim two will now change slightly to become 'Promote allotment use and food growing.' This is to recognise the role that the Council has not just in promoting allotments but in supporting food growing and gardening in general and showing people the benefits of growing food whether on an allotment or in their own garden, on a Community project or school grounds. Bristol has a strong organic, permaculture and local/Fair Trade movement, which links very strongly to the Allotment movement, and it is important that links with these organisations is maintained and strengthened. Recent TV publicity by Jamie Oliver and others has brought the issue of poor diet to the attention of the wider public, and we need to capitalise on this interest to show how growing food can fit into the wider health agenda. The idea of 'plot to plate' is one that links both growing and cooking food together and which has intrinsic links to allotments and the healthy living message.

It is intended that the Allotment Strategy will link as a sub-strategy with the Parks and Green Spaces Strategy as well as other Strategies and documents linked to green spaces, including the Parks Wildlife Strategy, Playing Pitch Strategy, Biodiversity Action Plan, Neighbourhood Renewal and Parks Play Strategy. It is intended that allotments should play a more active role in strategies relating to sustainable development, recycling initiatives, community strategy, neighbourhood renewal and in Bristol City Council's initiatives to promote locally produced and Fair Trade products, through our links with organisations including the Sustainable City Team (Bristol has recently achieved Fair Trade City status). We also have duties to make 'reasonable adjustments' for disabled people under the Disability Discrimination Act. It is intended that we should go further than simply improving physical access to sites, but that we provide a service which actively encourages people with disabilities to take up allotments and to make them feel welcome on our sites.

5 Proposals (summarised under section 6)

The proposals for the next ten years are as follows:

Aim One: Provide Enough Allotments

1.1 Ensure adequate provision of allotments within Neighbourhood Partnership Areas

The provision standard that we aim to provide is a minimum of 7 plots per 1,000 population in any Neighbourhood Partnership Area, with all residential areas being within 3/4 mile of an allotment site. The 1999-2004 Allotments Strategy set out this standard as a minimum of 7 plots per 1,000 population in any ward. It is considered that using Neighbourhood Partnership Areas is a better way of calculating this provision as the boundaries of Neighbourhood Partnership Areas follow more closely physical barriers that may prevent people travelling to an allotment site. It is intended to continue to look at ways of providing allotment sites in Neighbourhood Partnership Areas with less than 7 plots per 1,000 or where there are no allotments within 3/4 mile of a residential area by foot, or where existing sites have waiting lists. Calculations allow for barriers such as main roads or railways, rivers, canals etc. This may be achieved by creating sites in conjunction with the Parks & Green Space Strategy as part of parks improvements, as well as from land surplus to the requirements of other Council departments. It is hoped that this will enable land to be utilised internally within the Council that may otherwise have been earmarked for disposal. It must be accepted, however, that this may not be achievable in some districts where land is at a premium. Nonetheless, it remains an aspiration to achieve when opportunities arise. We also intend to work with developers, planning officers and other Council departments to ensure that new allotments are included within new developments, especially in areas where allotment land has been lost to development. In addition, it must also be recognised that even Neighbourhood Partnership Areas do not exist in isolation, and that where a Neighbourhood Partnership Area has well above 7 plots per 1,000 population, it will be providing allotments to adjacent areas which may have less than 7 plots per 1,000 population nearby. This may mean that those Neighbourhood Partnership Areas do not need more allotments, but also that this provision must be taken into account when deciding whether or not land is surplus.

1.2 Transfer under-utilised sites to alternative or temporary uses

Vacant land not defined as surplus will continue to be utilised for other revenue generating purposes permitted under the Allotments Acts, such as grazing or community uses, ensuring that it is held as a 'land bank' for potential future allotment use. A study will be undertaken to identify the types of uses on allotments and the areas of land available to be transferred to alternative uses. Surplus and under-utilised sites will continue to be transferred to alternative uses. In particular, land will be taken out of allotment use that is not deemed suitable as allotments because of the following reasons:

- Flooding.
- Poor soil.
- Shade from trees.
- Badger setts and other wildlife habitats.

Alternative uses for such land could include:

- Wildlife/conservation areas.
- Willow growing/biomass.
- Forestry.
- City farms.
- Open space.
- Grazing.
- Smallholdings.
- Growing shrubs/plants for the City's parks and open spaces.

It is hoped that, where there are other areas of a site still under cultivation as allotments, the allotment tenants can continue to be actively involved in the management of the part of the site taken out of allotment use. We will not expect existing tenants within such an area to move plots, it is intended that we can work around existing tenants in this situation. Legal advice will be sought as to which of these uses will require Secretary of State consent and which will be deemed as temporary uses under the Allotments Acts, as it is intended that suitable vacant land will act as a potential land bank for future allotment growing. When a site has 6 or more people on its waiting list for allotments, any allotment land in the area used for temporary uses will be transferred back to allotments if there is no alternative vacant land nearby (it is a requirement of the Allotments Acts 1908 that an allotment authority must consider providing allotments where there are 6 people or more requesting to rent allotments). Any allotment site regarded as surplus may be considered as potential green space land if the Parks and Green Spaces Strategy highlights a need for open space in that area, so that land could be transferred in both directions between public open space and allotments use. There are also a number of areas of former allotment sites that have not been used as allotments for many years. These will be considered for disposal in order to generate income to continue the improvements to allotment sites, but only if deemed to be surplus under the definitions of this Strategy, and where there is still a 'Land Bank' of vacant land nearby to allow for future take-up.

The issues to consider when considering a site for an alternative use include:

- Legal issues.
- Accessibility (especially general public access).
- Management responsibility.
- Funding.
- Reversibility of alternative uses (ie requirement for Secretary of State consent).
- Public desire for the alternative use versus need for allotments.

The above issues will need to be considered whenever considering a site for an alternative use. It is important to remember that some uses (eg open space or wildlife) may in theory be reversible, but in practice this may not be so easy, and we may therefore consider that Secretary of State consent should be sought to prevent future conflicts of interest from occurring.

1.3 Work with other Council Offices

The Council's Housing Offices manage many areas of vacant land, including temporary former allotment sites. Although most are land-locked sites that are no longer considered suitable for allotments due to a lack of access, it remains an aspiration to continue to work with Housing Officers to transfer land to Bristol Parks to manage as allotments, in areas where there is a shortfall in allotment provision or where a demand for allotments cannot be met by current provision.

Aim Two: Promote Allotment Use and Food Growing

2.1 Encourage diversity of tenants

The table below shows the ethnicity of allotment tenants on sites directly managed by the City Council, by percentage:

Asian	0.9%
Black	3.2%
Chinese	0.04%
White	54.3%
Combination	0.8%
Other	0.8%
Not known	40%

Of those whose ethnicity is known, the age range is as follows (the figures highlighted in bold and marked with an asterisk (*) are below the overall average percentage at the bottom of the table). Source 2006:

	Age 16-30	Age 31-50	Age 51-64	Age 65+
Asian	0% *	27.8% *	66.7%	5.6% *
Black/African/Caribbean	0% *	16.7% *	31% *	52.4%
Chinese/S E Asian	0% *	100%	0%	0% *
White/European	7.6%	53.1%	30.3% *	9.1% *
Combination	22.2%	66.7%	11.1% *	0% *
Age range of all tenants (for comparison)	7.7%	50.1%	31.2%	11%

This table shows, therefore, that whilst there are now more allotment tenants under 50 than over 50, the majority of black and Asian tenants are still over 50, whilst white and mixed race tenants are more likely to be under 50. The very low number of Chinese/S E Asian tenants means that these statistics for this ethnic group are not statistically significant, though it does highlight a low overall take up among this ethnic group. These figures highlight the fact that more does still need to be done to encourage younger people from ethnic minority communities to take up allotments, especially as it is well known from recent studies that these groups often suffer higher levels of heart disease and other health problems than the national average, and this is often related to diet and exercise which could be improved by allotment gardening. It is intended that we will develop an Equalities Action Plan for allotments which will seek to find initiatives to work with Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) communities to find ways of promoting allotments to these groups. In addition, we will contact other Local Authorities (e.g. Birmingham and London Boroughs) where projects have successfully improved involvement in food growing by under-represented minority groups.

The table below shows the percentage of women and men renting allotments on direct managed allotment sites in Bristol:

Men	63%
Women	34.5%
Shared male/female	2.5%

The demographics of allotment users have changed dramatically over recent years. The traditional image of allotment tenants used to be one of elderly white working class males. Over a third of Bristol allotment tenants are now women or couples, many of them with families, and this trend seems to be continuing, whilst the number of ethnic minority tenants overall is relatively high compared with participation in many leisure activities. Many new tenants are young professional men and women who have concerns about what they and their families are eating, with a strong move towards organic food and sustainable living. Nonetheless, there is still room for improvement, with a majority of younger tenants tending to be from white professional backgrounds, and there is a poor take up among those living in Areas of Deprivation where the need for improved health, fitness and diet is most acute. Allotments in Redland now have over 150 people on the waiting lists, whilst in Knowle West, Speedwell and Hartcliffe there are still vacant plots. Few tenants declare themselves as disabled, and impairments such as arthritis and mobility problems are often cited as reasons for older tenants vacating plots. The Disability Discrimination Act requires the Council to make reasonable adjustments to improve access to its facilities by disabled people. This can include footpath improvements or vehicle access, but it can also involve simpler adjustments such as a gate that is easier to open, or a handrail alongside

a slope, or better information for partially sighted people. Changes to single-plot infrastructure on a needs-basis can help to maintain the Disabled person's tenancy and their independence as a Disabled person, whilst it is well known that food growing can be a means of improving one's self-esteem, physical and mental health. Anecdotal evidence suggests that where adjustments are not made for individual Disabled tenants there is consequently a high drop out rate. Clearance of neglected plots can also help people with disabilities to get started on plots. It is intended, therefore, to address these issues in the following ways:

- To continue to find innovative ways of promoting and advertising allotments locally, especially in areas of poor uptake.
- To promote the health benefits of allotment gardening, especially to disabled people and the pre-retirement age group.
- Encourage allotment sites to have 'open days' when members of the public can visit allotment sites.
- Ensure letting reps are kept regularly informed of plot vacancies so that they can quickly re-let them.
- To work in closer partnership with schools, colleges, Health Authorities, doctors surgeries etc to promote allotments and encourage allotments to be used as an educational resource, as well as giving assistance to schools to develop vegetable plots in their own grounds where appropriate, and to encourage the growing of food to provide healthier school meals.
- To offer plots free of charge to schools and continue to promote the Best School Plot competition.
- To continue to work with more community groups, especially in areas of poor uptake (eg Knowle West, Hartcliffe, Lockleaze) to encourage food growing in areas where it is widely acknowledged that issues such as poor diet, lack of exercise and obesity are most acute.
- To support and attend events organised locally on allotments to promote the image of allotment gardening.
- To improve participation by disabled people by creating a network of accessible plots across the City, with the following facilities:
 1. Raised beds.
 2. Wide paths.
 3. Water supply.
 4. Accessible shed.
 5. Vehicle access.
- The above will be in addition to making sites more physically accessible generally. We will install the accessible plots on one site per year over the five years of the Allotment Strategy, dependant upon the suitability of the site (in terms of levels and access) and the demand for accessible plots.
- To work with the Knowle Northern Slopes initiative to improve the demonstration plot at Knowle West Health Park, on which organic gardening courses can be organised. This is intended to improve

allotment uptake in this area where many plots and sites are under-utilised.

- It is intended to look at ways that the Allotments Team can promote gardening outside allotments, and give general gardening advice where possible.
- Make adjustments on request for individual tenants who have disabilities to enable them to more easily cultivate their plot. This may include re-siting a shed or making an adjustment to a gate, for example.
- Promote the health and therapeutic benefits of allotment gardening.
- To establish an Equalities Action Plan for Allotments, which encompasses the above.

2.2 Improved maintenance by Improving Funding for the Allotment Maintenance Operative

Maintenance is an issue that has been highlighted as an issue in previous tenant surveys. This is particularly true with regard to overgrown and neglected plots. Many new tenants are put off by the poor state of vacant plots. We have therefore re-introduced the Allotment Maintenance Operative, a person with a vehicle and tools, to maintain allotment sites, since autumn 2005. Typical work carried out is the maintenance of paths, hedges, vacant plots etc, with clearance of derelict vacant plots carried out during the winter months. The Allotment Maintenance Operative is be partly funded from the £10.00 per annum above inflation rent increase agreed by the Cabinet for 2010 and 2011, partly from existing budgets currently used to employ contractors, and will be partly funded from the Life Cycle Fund created from the interest generated by Capital receipts. This will be used to make the Allotment Maintenance Operative sustainable as well as to continue to employ additional office staff to provide a quality Allotments Officer service. It is intended that the Allotment Maintenance Operative will enable the promise made in the 1999 Strategy of 'freedom from overgrown plots' to be implemented, and continue to improve the working relationship with tenants and site representatives on the ground.

2.3 Ensure retention of new tenants

Retention of new tenants is a problem that has been cited on many sites. The following table shows the percentage of tenants who took on plots from 1 January 2003, who had since vacated as of April 2005:

No of new tenants taking on plots since 1 January 2003	No of new tenants still on plots in April 2005	Percentage of new tenants in column 1 still on plots in April 2005
1107	812	73.4%

Although the retention rate is therefore quite good, this also means that just over a quarter of new tenants since 1 January 2003 had vacated by April 2005. Tenants who leave after only a few months gain little benefit from their experience, as a previously neglected plot can often only really become productive in the second and subsequent years of cultivation. In addition, plots that have initially been cleared soon become overgrown again, the expense of clearing and rotovating the plot having been wasted, whilst the amount of administration work involved in constantly processing vacancies and new applications creates excessive workloads for allotment staff. It is therefore proposed to carry out 'exit surveys' of tenants vacating plots on a selection of sites including those with and without site representatives, allotments associations and community groups to find out how tenants can be retained for longer. This will enable new initiatives to be developed to help tenant retention.

Anecdotal evidence shows that the reasons why new tenants leave can include the following:

- Lack of knowledge of how to grow food.
- Crops destroyed by pests and diseases.
- Difficulty in clearing and cultivating an overgrown plot (especially removal of previous tenant's rubbish).
- Attitude of some other tenants may be off-putting to younger tenants (particularly on some more traditional 'older male' dominated sites).
- Security/vandalism.
- Lack of time.
- Move away soon after taking on plot.
- Personal or family problems.
- Cost (both of the rent and the seeds, materials etc needed).
- Poor service/service did not meet their expectations.
- People may feel that they are made to feel unwelcome on a site or a part of a site because they are from an ethnic minority, a woman, because of their sexual orientation or because they are from a different age group to the majority of tenants.
- A person may feel unwelcome because they use different gardening methods to the majority of tenants.
- Access problems.
- Lack of a shed on the plot.
- Groups of disabled people or people with mental health problems may be made to feel unwelcome because of the perceived fear or prejudice of other tenants.

Bad experiences, particularly when someone is new to gardening can make them demoralised, considering that it is not worth the effort. There are many cases where take up has improved dramatically on a site, to be

followed by a spate of vandalism and anti-social behaviour, leading back to a rapid decline in tenancies. Sometimes factions can develop on sites because of disputes over a variety of issues, which can lead to a very 'bad atmosphere' on a site. This can lead to tenants giving up because they do not wish to be involved in 'allotment politics'.

Although some of the above factors may be outside of the control of the Council, ways of improving retention of tenants can include the following:

- Clearing and rotovating vacant plots for new tenants.
- Giving support and advice to new tenants (eg tenants packs which we provide to all new tenants and a regular newsletter to all tenants) and ensure (via site reps) that new applicants are made aware of the high time commitment to renting an allotment plot to enable them to make a reasoned judgement as to whether they can manage an allotment.
- Ensuring that all sites are secure.
- Having site representatives on as many sites as possible to provide help and advice.
- Ensure good access.
- Making all tenants aware of their responsibilities towards others, including making it clear that those who harass others can face eviction.
- Offer only half or smaller plots to new tenants on all sites and publicise this fact.
- Ensuring that discounts are available for people on low incomes.
- Encourage the formation and development of allotments associations who can provide seeds, compost etc to members at discounted prices and provide advice and support.
- Continue to fund and support gardening courses aimed specifically at new allotment gardeners.
- Publicise any new local short gardening courses to new tenants via tenant packs.
- Encourage schools to become involved in food growing to ensure that people have a basic knowledge of food growing from an early age.
- Set up a 'buddy' system on sites whereby experienced gardeners can mentor and give advice to new tenants.
- Change the enforcement procedure for newly tenanted plots to allow more time to initially cultivate the plot (see below).
- Remove rubbish for new tenants if it is deemed to be too much for them to remove.

Discounts for tenants on low incomes and for those who take on overgrown plots are already available, as are half and smaller size plots. Tenants packs are given to all new tenants which include an organic

gardening book, free packet of seeds, various advice leaflets, newsletter and discount forms. A programme of plot clearance in 2003 proved very successful in attracting new tenants (tenancies rose by over 4% in one year), and it is hoped that improved maintenance and a plot clearance programme by the Allotment Gang will help with tenant retention. The surveys will enable us to look at any further ways we can encourage new tenants to stay on plots.

It is intended to review the enforcement procedure for tenants who have recently tenanted a plot. Currently the plot must be 75% cultivated after 3 months of tenancy. The new procedure will be as follows:

- 50% of the plot must be cleared within the first 3 months, with 25% cultivated, dug or cropped.
- 75% of the plot must be cleared within 6 months with 50% of the plot cultivated, dug or with crops.
- 75% of the plot must be fully cultivated within 1 year.

In addition, we will ensure that enforcement takes place where rubbish is brought onto plots, including charging tenants for its removal in extreme cases.

2.4 School Food Growing Initiatives

Recent publicity by Jamie Oliver and others has highlighted the issue of poor diet amongst schoolchildren. Government funding has been made available to improve school meals and to improve awareness of the links between diet and health among young people. We intend to work more closely with schools to encourage the growing of fruit and vegetables by schools, whether on allotment sites or on the school premises. There are already a small number of successful school growing projects, including Florence Brown School which has a successful growing project in its grounds, whilst many schools such as Hillcrest Primary and Speedwell Nursery have vegetable plots within the school grounds. The popularity of the Schools Allotment Competition has shown that many schools are already taking up this challenge, and it is intended to continue this competition in future years.

Aim Three: Good Administration

3.1 Update allotment procedures

The allotment procedure manual will be updated to ensure that the current procedures are correctly documented. In particular, it is intended to update the following procedures:

- Reduction of the number of reminder letters being sent out before

issuing Notice to Quits for non-payment of rent, to ensure that non-payers are evicted more quickly.

- The discount application window of June to September will now be strictly enforced to reduce the time and cost of administering credit notes for discounts after invoicing.
- The Council have introduced a 'three strikes and you are out' rule for tenants who persistently receive Notice to Remedy letters for non-cultivation. Any tenant receiving 3 Notice to Remedy letters on one plot within a 3-year period is automatically given a Notice to Quit their allotment (subject to inspection of the plot by an Allotment Officer), which will not be rescinded other than in exceptional circumstances. This was supported by the Allotments Panel on 6 September 2005 and implemented as from 2006.
- Introduction of a separate agreement for persistent problem tenants to sign (eg agreeing not to have bonfires, harass others or bring rubbish onto a site). Failure to abide by the agreement would lead to an automatic Notice to Quit.
- Ensure that there is a procedure for complaints and disputes that includes the Council's 'Fair Comment' procedure and more effective use of the Allotments Appeals Panel where appropriate.

3.2 New tenancy agreement

The new tenancy agreement (see Appendix D) was introduced during 2005, to update the rules and make the tenancy agreement more relevant and easier to read and understand. Site representatives, allotment associations, the Allotment Panel and the Council's legal section have all been consulted on the new agreement. The new tenancy agreement includes the following clauses regarding issues that have been a cause for complaint over many years:

- Tenants who have persistent smokey bonfires can be evicted.
- Banning the use of carpets.
- Ban bringing rubbish onto sites.
- Keeping dogs on a lead and not allowing them to stray onto other plots.
- Tenants who harass others can be evicted.

3.3 Quality assurance

As part of Neighbourhoods and Parks & Estates, it is intended to pursue Quality Assurance Accreditation such as Customer Service Excellence to demonstrate our commitment to improving our service and customer satisfaction.

3.4 Site representatives and devolved management

It is proposed to continue to improve the relationship between the Allotments Office and site representatives and associations by carrying out the following:

- Attend Leasing Association General Meetings.
- Hold at least one Site Representatives Forum meeting per annum.
- Hold one Allotments Annual Review Meeting for all tenants.
- Advice will continue to be given to encourage non-leasing associations to become leasing associations where they show a wish to do so, and to encourage new associations to develop where there are currently none (ARI can provide advice on this).
- Leasing associations will be encouraged to become full-managing (peppercorn) associations.
- Site representatives will continue to be encouraged to carry out maintenance on our behalf.
- Tenants will be encouraged to become site representatives on sites where there are currently none, with the aim of at least 90% of sites having a site representative by 2019.
- A site representatives Code of Conduct will be introduced that incorporates issues such as health and safety, their duties, harassment, anti-racism etc.
- The Capital Investment Programme will continue to include leasing association sites, and will involve detailed consultation with the associations on the requirements of their sites.

3.5 Health and safety

Bristol Parks & Estates is currently reviewing its procedures for risk management and is working on an integrated Health and Safety Action Plan, which includes allotments. It is proposed to continue to improve Health and Safety, both for tenants, volunteers and staff by carrying out the following:

- Risk assessments for all hazards and activities, especially those involving powered tools and machinery.
- Further investment on sites where it is most needed to improve security, paths, handrails etc and removal of hazardous rubbish (and take action against those who dump it).
- Training and advice is now being given to individuals (including site representatives) who carry out maintenance work on allotments and who work with volunteers so that they are fully conversant with health and safety requirements.
- Measures taken to minimise the level of risk involved.
- Ensure that tenants are made aware of their own 'duty of care' (via the Growers Grapevine newsletter), and that they are responsible

for their own Health and Safety and that of others when on their plot.

3.6 Tenant surveys

Further tenant surveys will be undertaken to find out where the allotment service is improving and where the service is still in need of improvement. Tenant surveys were undertaken in 2000 and 2001, so new surveys carried out now will give a useful comparison between then and now. It is intended that there will be options for a paper and online survey.

3.7 Applying for allotments online

To make it easier to apply for an allotment, it is intended to improve mapping of our sites through creating links between the GIS mapping system and the Colony computer system. This will be linked to the allotments section of the Council's website. Tenants would then be able to select a vacant plot on the website and apply for it without actually needing to telephone the Allotments Office. This may help to resolve problems that some people have faced when trying to get through to the Allotments Office during busy periods. This 'Colony Online' system has been implemented in 2008.

3.8 Tenants who occupy multiple plots and tenants who live outside Bristol

High demand for allotments means that some areas of Bristol now have waiting lists of over 12 months for a plot. New applicants are already limited to a maximum of a half size plot, with the option of upgrading to a full plot if they cultivate the half plot successfully. However, in the past, when most sites had vacancies, there was no limit on the number of plots that a tenant could occupy, nor were tenancies limited to Bristol residents. This means there is a small number of tenants that occupy several plots. In addition there are some plots, especially in outlying areas, which are let to people living outside the City.

In order to reduce waiting lists, it is proposed to develop a policy with regard to tenants who occupy more than one plot, and those who live outside the City, in areas of highest demand. Consultation will be carried out to determine whether or not this policy should be applied retrospectively to existing tenants or to new applicants only.

Aim Four: Environmental Sustainability

4.1 Develop links with other organisations promoting local food and food growing

The urban nature of Bristol means that community food projects on

allotments and other areas are very important in developing the concept of a 'sustainable city'.

It is intended that the Allotments Team will develop links with external organisations and the officers dealing with community regeneration projects to encourage food growing, potential new allotment sites and community food growing initiatives, particularly in areas of deprivation. We are already having discussions with housing officers with a view to including allotments within some new developments in areas where allotments have been lost.

In addition, it is intended that we will support and work in partnership with organisations working on food growing initiatives in the community, including those that are creating community gardens and allotments on derelict land in the city, and those that are encouraging food growing in people's own gardens. Two organisations that have received recent media attention have been Grofun and Eastside Roots.

Eastside Roots has created a community garden on an overgrown area at Stapleton railway station, which was previously a 'no go' area used predominantly by drug dealers and prostitutes. They now intend to set up a garden centre in this area.

“GROFUN (Growing Real Organic Food in Urban Neighbourhoods) is working to increase the amount of growing & growers of local organic food in urban neighbourhoods, to improve access to it for all, in order that as many people as possible are eating locally produced organic food, with very little cost to the purse or the environment. We aim to perfect a model of best practice easily replicable in any community, in any city, in any country" (excerpt taken from Grofun website).

The above projects are examples of work that is being supported by the City Council to help people to grow food in the community, and we intend to continue to expand this support financially and in terms of advice and outreach work, that extends beyond the boundaries of allotment sites.

4.2 Promote organic gardening methods

It is intended to continue to promote, encourage and provide advice on organic gardening and promote organisations who encourage sustainable gardening and living (eg Bristol Permaculture Group, Soil Association etc). It is recognised that methods of gardening should be a matter of choice for individuals, but that the strong demand for information on organic and sustainable gardening methods means that an emphasis should continue to be placed on these methods where possible.

4.3 Community markets

Under the Allotments Acts, sale of surplus produce is allowed although use of an allotment for business purposes is not allowed. It is proposed to develop links with community markets, to encourage allotment groups, associations, tenants or groups of tenants to sell surplus produce in local community markets and slow food markets. This will not only help sites and groups to raise funds, but also promote the benefits of allotment gardening to the wider community. In addition we will continue to support and develop the Allotments Fair to ensure that tenants who wish to sell their surplus produce can do so at this event (usually for fundraising or charity).

4.4 Encourage composting and recycling on allotments

The compost bays that have so far been provided are a very successful way of enabling tenants to improve the soil quality of their plots by the use of leaves and organic matter provided from Council parks and other areas free of charge by our contractors. This also contributes towards the City Council's recycling targets. Compost bays will be provided (subject to funding) on further sites where vehicle access is possible for delivery of leaves. In addition, we will look for any other recycling opportunities that exist (eg the provision of old guttering, pallets and wooden crates for water collection and the creation of compost bins), old cycle racks, and containers suitable for water collection.

4.5 Toilets

Lack of toilet facilities can be an issue on allotments, particularly when encouraging women, families and disabled people to use allotments. Mains toilets are not considered to be a sustainable way of addressing this issue on most sites, and would exert a considerable pressure on revenue budgets. Compost 'tree bog' toilets have been very successful where they exist, and it is intended to continue to provide information and funding to build further compost toilets on uncropped areas, on sites where there are tenants willing to look after them, subject to funding.

4.6 Identify and manage areas to be set aside for wildlife and conservation

The patchwork of uses that exists on allotment sites ensures that working allotments are valuable wildlife habitats. Allotments are a crucial urban habitat for species such as slow worms, badgers, foxes, amphibians, snakes, lizards, bats and a wide variety of birds and insects. Many sites also contain ancient hedgerows, remnants of the field boundaries that predated the allotments. Old hedgerows and trees will be protected and better maintained, and operations such as coppicing, hedgelaying and replanting

will be carried out where appropriate, with advice from the nature conservation officers. We will identify all areas to be taken out of allotment use specifically for their wildlife value. On some sites where just a few plots are taken out of use because of, for example, a badger sett, the plots will be taken out of letting but will remain a part of the statutory allotment site. Where, however, an entire site or significant part of a site is to be set aside for wildlife or public access, consideration will be given to applying for seeking Secretary of State consent to remove their status as statutory allotments. This is because creating large-scale wildlife habitats and open spaces is, in practice, likely to be irreversible and incompatible with future allotment use. This does, however, raise issues as to where budget can be found for their maintenance to ensure that their wildlife value is maintained or enhanced. It is intended that such areas would cease to be managed by the Allotments Team and would come under the jurisdiction of area park managers, liaising with nature conservation officers. Allotment tenants and groups could still be involved in the management of these sites where such groups exist and wish to be involved in their management.

In addition, we will produce advice via a leaflet, the Growers Grapevine newsletter and the website on how individual tenants can make their plot more wildlife friendly, and encourage the keeping of hives of honeybees on plots where this is deemed appropriate.

4.7 Encourage community projects and alternative food growing uses of allotment plots

Alternative uses permitted on allotments including orchards, bee-keeping, willow growing, vineyards, community tree nurseries and poultry keeping will be encouraged, either under allotment tenancies or under separate temporary leases, where deemed to be appropriate. Such uses are particularly important on difficult to let plots where poor soil, steep slopes, flooding or shade from trees are a problem, and which can lead to plots remaining vacant even on sites with waiting lists.

Encouragement will be given to temporary uses by organisations promoting healthy eating and growing through community co-operatives, veg box schemes etc. Where suitable plots or sites can be found, encouragement will be given to these organisations by re-prioritising capital investment work on sites which can be used as match funding 'in kind' to both improve the site and to enable them to obtain external grants to fund their project. External funding is often available for projects that is not available to a local authority, particularly where projects aim to improve participation by under represented groups, or where there are obvious health or community benefits. It is therefore in the Council's interest to provide assistance, advice and support to organisations based on allotment sites in making such funding bids where it is compatible with the

aims of the Allotment Strategy.

We will aim to utilise some of the budgets to give assistance to such organisations if there is a direct benefit to allotment regeneration or community participation in food growing. The criteria would be as follows:

Criteria	Points Awarded
Improve allotment take up in an area of under-use	10
Neighbourhood Partnership Area of Local Need	10
Community Involvement	10
Involvement of Schools/Young People	10
Improve Allotment Infrastructure	10
Total	50

4.8 Gardening courses for allotment tenants

Funding will continue to be provided for gardening courses on allotments to assist new and existing gardeners, particularly the City of Bristol College City and Guilds course in Organic Gardening run at Ashley Vale allotments.

4.9 Neighbourhood Renewal

Work will continue with external organisations and other Council departments working towards creating a greener and more sustainable Bristol, to ensure that allotments remain an integral part of this vision. It is intended to work more closely with the Council's Neighbourhood Renewal Team to ensure that the regeneration of existing or creation of new allotment sites is allowed for in neighbourhood renewal schemes. In addition, we aim to create small 'neighbourhood' allotment sites as part of Parks regeneration schemes.

4.10 Reduce Water Wastage

Allotments use over 10% of all water used by the City Council, and this costs £40,000 to £50,000 per annum. Wastage of water is particularly acute on certain sites either due to leaks or the illicit use of hosepipes to water crops. The issue of leaks will be addressed through the installation of new water mains under the Allotments Investment Programme. Taps will be replaced by self-filling troughs and press down taps to prevent illicit hosepipe use.

4.11 Environmental Policy

The Hotwells and district Allotments Association Environmental Policy has been appended to this Strategy (Appendix I). It aims to minimise the environmental impact of the actions of association and its members, and raise environmental concerns. The Allotments Strategy aims, where possible, to follow this policy and to encourage other groups, associations and tenants to do so.

Aim Five: Provide Enough Resources

5.1 Achieve tenancy levels of 95% or over by March 2013

The Council has a key performance indicator of the number and percentage of plots let. The table below shows that the take-up of allotments has risen sharply since the start of the first Allotment Strategy (28% over the 6-year period 2000 to 2007):

Year (end March)	% Occupancy
2000	53%
2001	56%
2002	63%
2003	62%
2004	67.7%
2005	71%
2006	73%
2007	81%

This has led to a belief among Allotment Officers that, with surplus sites removed from the plot letting figures and further infrastructure improvements proposed to remaining sites, overall tenancy levels can be raised to 95% by the end of 2019 as per the projection below. This is a much lower annual increase but is based on less emphasis being placed on the clearance of derelict plots and more on good administration and encouraging self-management:

Year (end March)	% Occupancy	No of sites with 95% occupancy or above
2009	92%	23
2010	83%	32
2011	84%	41
2012	85%	50
2013	86%	59
2014	87%	67
2015	88%	75
2016	88.5%	83
2017	89%	91

2018	89.5%	99
2019	95%	107

Higher levels than this are not thought to be achievable (although some sites do have 100% tenancy levels), as some vacancies are always likely to occur due to changeover of tenancies and difficult to let plots etc. The figures will include allotment tenancies and allotment-related food growing community project uses but not non-food growing temporary uses such as grazing, wildlife areas or plots that are considered to be unlettable because of poor soil etc.

In addition, the table shows that it is intended to monitor the number of actual sites with 90% or above tenancies. This will make monitoring of tenancy levels on a site by site basis more important, and enable specific sites to be targeted for investment and promotion to improve plot letting. The number of sites with 90% or above tenancy rates in early 2008 was 29 out of 98 (ie approximately one third). It is intended that an average increase of approximately 12 sites per annum with 90% or above tenancies over the next five years will mean that all retained sites would have 90% or above tenancy rates by the end of March 2019.

5.2 Investment of capital receipts from surplus land disposals

The table below shows the statutory allotment land disposed of between 1999 and 2005, with the total capital receipts raised and the amount allocated to allotments:

Site	Total Capital Receipt from Sale	Capital Allocation to Allotments Investment Programme
Netham (part)	£30,000	£15,000
Hengrove Farm	£1,200,000	£350,000
Talbot Road (part)	£5,000,000	£2,000,000
Bell Hill	£27,000	£17,000
Symington Road	0	0
Charlton Road (Assoc)	£3,000	£1,500
Whitefield Road 'C'	£175,000	£65,000
Total	£6,435,000	£2,448,500

The following disposals are currently in progress following consultation with the Allotments Panel and having been declared surplus:

- Lockleaze (Bonnington Walk) (part of).
- Alderman Moores (part of).
- Jubilee Gardens.

The major tranche of surplus land disposals is now partly complete or in progress and the Cabinet approved the allocation of Capital receipts of £2.5m from these disposals on 7 December 2004, in addition to the £1.5m already invested during the past 5 years.

The Allotments Panel has highlighted concerns that security should be the main priority when carrying out site improvements to prevent vandalism and theft from plots. Allotment Officers have agreed that this should be the case, and have made a commitment that all direct managed actively worked sites will have adequate security fencing installed by the end of 2008, but that priority must also be given to other important issues. In particular, the items shown on Appendix B have been identified as investment priorities over the next five years. The Allotments Panel have been consulted on these priorities.

Table 2: Investment 1999 to 2004

Association Sites				Direct managed Sites		
Item	No of Sites Complete	%age of Sites Completed	No of Sites yet to be Completed	No of Sites Complete	%age of Sites Completed	No of Sites yet to be Completed
Fencing	7	32%	15	44	59%	31
Haulingways/ paths	6	37.5%	10	25	37%	43
Water Supply/troughs	1	5%	20	18	37%	47
Notice Boards/signs	3	14%	19	41	55%	34
Priority B Items						
Compost Toilets	1	4.5%	21	13	19%	57
Accessible Plots for Disabled People	0	0%	4	2	18%	9
Compost Bays	3	19%	14	14	30%	32

The above table only includes sites completed, the sites which have been partially fenced or received a few additional water troughs, for example, have been included as sites still to be completed. The total number of sites requiring different items varies as not all sites require certain items. Health and Safety has not been included in this table as most urgent health and safety items have been addressed, but new items may be identified from risk assessments and will be re-prioritised accordingly, whilst some are

included in other items (eg fencing and paths).

5.3 Sustainability of Capital Investment Programme

One of the key aims of the 1999 Allotment Strategy was to make the Allotments service a 'stand alone' self-sustaining service. This is now considered to be unrealistic if we are to continue to improve the standard of service that we provide to the public. It has been realised that for improvements to sites to be sustainable they must be long term. Thus, chain link fences are being replaced with, in most cases, steel palisade, padlocks are being replaced with mortice locks, and where appropriate, stone/dirt paths and haulingways are being replaced with macadam. Noticeboards are durable and vandal resistant, and old water pipes are being replaced with new polyethylene mains. In addition, the requirements and expectations of tenants are rising, with requests for accessible plots and compost toilets as already stated. This means that the £1.5m investment proposed in the 1999 Strategy has risen to over £5m in total. With over £4m having been invested during the five-year period up to the end of March 2008, this leaves a further investment requirement of approximately £1.3m after 2010.

Some of the additional revenue will be utilised where deemed appropriate to provide support, assistance and match funding to partner organisations applying for grant funding for allotment projects as already detailed in Aim 4, to create a 'Challenge Fund' to support their work in improving allotments and to bring in external grant funding.

Appendix F shows the cost of improvement work carried out during the period from April 2004 to August 2006. Those items shown in bold are considered complete, while those not highlighted will require further investment. A comparison with the work proposed in 2004 show that whilst some work has cost less than anticipated, the majority of work has cost more than originally anticipated. This is because of the following:

- Certain items were not considered necessary at the time the list of work was drawn up, but have since been reconsidered due to vandalism or health and safety issues (eg fencing at the Rock).
- Inflation was not allowed for in the original estimates.
- High rises in steel prices have caused the cost of palisade fencing to be much higher than anticipated.
- On some sites (eg Perretts Park and New Brooklea) the difficulties in the terrain have made the cost of hard surfacing far higher than Allotments Officers originally estimated.
- Walls originally considered to be in a sound condition have since deteriorated (eg Kennel Lodge 2) which have meant that remedial measures have been necessary.
- Some Capital Receipts have been re-allocated to community groups

(ie HHEAG) to ensure that valuable projects in Areas of Deprivation continue to carry out valuable educational and outreach work on allotment sites.

- The plot clearance element of the Allotments Work Team is high due to the extremely high cost of the disposal of rubbish from sites.
- Some sites originally earmarked for disposal have been brought back into use due to high demand, and will require investment not originally envisaged.

The Allotments Investment Programme must not go over budget, and we will therefore look at ways of reducing costs on the remainder of the programme through the following:

- Where possible letting large contracts to give economies of scale.
- Looking at cheaper options (e.g. stone haulingways and paths may be adequate on some sites instead of tarmac).
- Some items on the list may be considered to be lower priority and may therefore not be carried out during this phase of investment.
- Some completely derelict sites in areas of low demand may not receive investment during the next five years.
- External funding (eg grant funding) will be sought where possible to improve derelict sites, to reduce pressure on the existing budgets.
- Consultation has been carried out with tenants to implement a £20 above inflation rent increase to improve revenue budgets to maintain infrastructure and improve the sustainability of the service.

5.4 Additional staff resources

The implementation of the Capital Infrastructure work programme will require additional staff resources. Approximately 5% of the Capital receipt therefore contributes towards additional Allotment Officer time over the period during which the current phase of the Capital Investment programme is implemented.

Further disposals of surplus land will be required to fund further improvements. However, we will continue to dispose of sites only that have less than 25% tenancy rates and that are in Neighbourhood Partnership Areas with less than 7 plots per 1,000 population. In addition we would not dispose of land if it would cause residents to have to travel more than $\frac{3}{4}$ mile to an allotment site. In addition, it will be necessary to ensure that some land remains as a 'land bank' for future increased allotment usage, which is likely to occur as food prices continue to rise. This will act as a safeguard while freeing up surplus land to meet the shortfall in Capital required.

5.5 Temporary uses

It is intended to further maximise revenue income from land and ensure that all allotment land is utilised to its full potential. This will be both from continuing to explore the type of alternative uses that are permitted on allotments, as well as through giving support for community uses and temporary uses such as grazing and smallholdings. It is intended that by 2019 there will be no 'derelict' allotment sites under the management of Bristol Parks. The retained sites will either be managed as allotments, open space (including wildlife areas) or let under a temporary lease or license for a permitted temporary use.

5.6 Seek opportunities for site improvements by external organisations

Opportunities will be sought where possible to seek improvements to existing sites by developers and other agencies in exchange for surplus land where deemed appropriate. This can be through a 'trade off' of land for work in kind (subject to the land being surplus), or it may be through granting access for pipes and other accesses in exchange for improvements to a site such as a fence, plot clearance or haulingway, or the creation of a complete new allotment site. Examples of where this has already happened include improvements carried out to haulingways and car parking at Bishopsworth Road and Falcondale Road allotments in exchange for drain pipes being laid under the sites, whilst it is proposed that housing development on former allotments in Lockleaze will include the creation of a new allotment site. This will, however, be subject to the proposals not being of detriment to the site or causing undue disruption to ploholders.

6 Summary of Proposals

Aim One: Providing Enough Allotments		
Target	Task/Action	By
1.1 Ensure adequate provision of allotments within Neighbourhood Partnership Areas.	Undertake study to determine provision in Neighbourhood Partnership Areas, and identify where shortfalls exist.	March 2010.
1.2 Transfer under-utilised sites to alternative uses.	Undertake study to identify all land available for wildlife, cemetery, disposal and other use, and liaise with other Officers and depts to ensure all vacant areas of retained land over 0.5 hectares in area are transferred to temporary uses eg grazing, community uses,	March 2010.

	forestry, open space, wildlife, or declared surplus.	
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Aim Two: Promoting Allotment Use and Food Growing		
Target	Task/Action	By
2.1 Encourage diversity of tenants.	Install a network of accessible plots to improve access for disabled people.	1 site per annum, April 2009 to March 2019 (funding permitting).
	Establish links with schools, doctors surgeries etc in areas of poor uptake to promote the benefits of allotments and food growing.	March 2011.
	Establish an Allotments Equalities Action Plan, with a view to establishing initiatives to improve take up by under-represented groups.	March 2010.
2.2 Improved maintenance by the use of an in-house Allotment Work Team.	Undertake study to enable the Allotment Work Team to be sustainably financed to continue to maintain sites and clear vacant plots.	April 2010.
2.3 Ensure retention of new tenants.	Monitor 10 sites to carry out 'exit surveys' to establish reasons why new tenants vacate.	March 2012.
	Set up a 'Buddy' system for existing tenants to mentor and advise new tenants.	

Aim Three: Good Administration		
Target	Task/Action	By
3.1 Update allotment procedures.	Update allotment procedures manual.	March 2011.
3.3 Quality assurance.	Obtain Chartermark accreditation.	March 2019.
3.4 Site	Ensure that 90% of direct managed	

representatives and self-management.	sites have site representatives.	March 2019.
3.6 Tenant surveys.	Carry out 2 tenant surveys.	March 2010 and March 2019.
3.8 Tenants who live outside Bristol or who occupy more than one plot.	Consult and introduce policy.	September 2010.

Aim Four: Environmental Sustainability		
Target	Task/Action	By
4.1 Encourage participation in food growing both on and off allotment sites.	Support at least one Community project per annum.	One per annum.
4.4 Encourage composting and recycling on allotments.	Source second hand guttering and water butts for use by tenants to save water.	March 2010.
4.5 Identify and manage areas to be set aside for wildlife and conservation.	Ensure that all areas of high wildlife value are identified.	March 2012.
4.6 Encourage wildlife conservation by allotment tenants.	Liaise with Nature Conservation Officers to produce an advisory leaflet.	March 2015.
4.7 Encourage community projects and alternative food growing uses of allotment plots.	Let at least one area as a community project per annum.	10 Additional projects by 2019.

Aim Five: Providing Enough Resources

Target	Task/Action	By
5.1 Achieve tenancy levels of 95% or above.	Plot clearance, improved letting process, working with Site Reps and clear overgrown plots.	March 2019.
5.2 Investment of capital receipts from surplus land disposals.	Continue to invest £500,000 per annum as per programme agreed annually with Allotment Panel when funding is available.	Ongoing until March 2019 dependent upon available funding.