

Great Waltham Parish Council

Allotments Inspector

1. The Council has identified the need for an Allotments Inspector role which will embrace all on-site aspects of the management of its allotment sites at Brook Mead and Bury Lane. It would be a volunteer role, reporting to the Recreation Committee (“Committee”).
2. The role will include these activities (potentially supplemented by others should future circumstances and requirements dictate):
 - a. Making site inspections;
 - b. Recommending and escalating maintenance issues and concerns;
 - c. Verifying that permitted uses only are being carried out on individual plots;
 - d. Encouraging environmentally-friendly methods of cultivation (as a minimum, those articulated in the Council’s Conditions of Hiring document).

These activities will often require close liaison with the Parish Clerk.

3. The role will be one capable of being filled by an individual (or potentially individuals, one for each site) who does not necessarily need to be a horticultural expert, but should be sensitive to the mechanics of nurturing a success allotment garden. Key attributes for the role(s) will be:
 - a. Communication skills;
 - b. Attention to detail;
 - c. Accurate record keeping;
 - d. Good reporting and feedback skills;
 - e. A firm understanding of the contracts relating to the administration of the allotment sites;
 - f. Willingness to acquire (if not already attained) sufficient horticultural knowledge to ensure well-informed discussions with all stakeholders;
 - g. Even-handedness and fairness when managing disputes and complaints;
 - h. The ability to identify potential solutions for unique sets of circumstances and situations.
4. It is envisaged that typically the role(s) will be filled by a current (or ex-) parish councillor. However, the appointment could be other individual(s) with the required skill sets; for instance, an ex-plot holder. It will be important for the individual(s) to be seen as independent and not susceptible to any conflict of interest, so appointing a current plot holder to the role would need to be considered carefully.
5. The Allotment Inspector will be expected to attend:
 - a. The Committee’s meetings for relevant agenda items;
 - b. Council and other committee meetings for relevant agenda items;
 - c. The Annual Assembly to make a report to the parish on activities at the allotment sites over the previous year.

Inspections

6. The role will involve making regular (at least monthly) visual inspections of the sites and reporting issues and concerns to the Committee if they cannot be resolved immediately by liaison with the stakeholders involved. Such activities and feedback will be underpinned by:
 - a. The terms and conditions of the Council's allotment agreement with plot holders;
 - b. The terms of its leasing contract with the landlord of the allotment sites;
 - c. Representations made by individual plot holders, nearby residents or other parishioners;
 - d. Good/Best practices recommended by organisations such as The National Allotment Society.
7. The elements of each inspection visit should include assessments of:
 - a. The condition and state of cultivation of each allotment garden (plot), taking account of all known factors; for example, the season, ongoing climate/weather concerns and issues, the circumstances of individual plot holders (such as temporary inability to tend a plot), whether the plot is currently occupied;
 - b. The condition of paths between plots which require maintenance by individual plot holders;
 - c. The condition of 'communal areas'; that is, those parts of the allotment sites identified by the Council as being ones for which it is responsible;
 - d. The condition of perimeter hedges, fences and gates.
8. The results of each inspection visit will need to be permanently recorded. The recording mechanism should contain an assessment of the current condition of each element in 7. above (sub-divided as necessary; for example, by individual plots), and be capable of comparison with previous months' data to identify trends and emerging issues.
9. The recording mechanism could be either digital or paper based. However, photographic evidence of issues/concerns should also be secured wherever possible, so a digital solution is more likely to be the most efficient long-term data storage system. The Committee would be required to assess and sign-off the recording mechanism(s) used.

Maintenance

10. Working with the Parish Clerk, the Allotments Inspector would be expected to recommend and oversee the implementation of necessary maintenance work at the sites. This will be both in relation to individual plots (where liaison with the plot holder will be crucial) and those areas of the sites which are the Council's own responsibility (that is, the identified communal areas and the sites' perimeter hedges, fences and gates).

11. The Allotments Inspector and Parish Clerk will be expected to work closely together to recommend to the Committee maintenance strategies taking account (a) the available resource from the handyman role and (b) the need for additional resource from external suppliers. The Allotments Inspector will update the Committee at each of its meetings on progress, issues, concerns etc.

Plot Availability

12. A key task in the role will be to ensure that each allotment site is made use of and hired out to its greatest potential. This will include ensuring that:

- a. Empty/vacated plots are made available for re-hire as quickly as possible; for example, by ensuring unoccupied plots are covered or maintained between hiring contracts. This will involve devising and recommending strategies based on the resources available (see paragraph 11 above).
- b. Any currently unmeasured but potentially hireable areas within the allotment sites are identified and where possible, brought into a cultivatable condition, capable of being hired out, again taking account of available resources.
- c. Assisting the Parish Clerk in ensuring (i) all new/prospective plot holders are residents of the parish of Great Waltham and (ii) the allocation of plots from any waiting list is made in accordance with the Council's Allotment Allocation Policy.