



Colchester Allotment Strategy

February 2011

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1. Introduction

The Colchester Allotment Strategy looks at the current management of Colchester Borough Council owned allotments and sets out future aspirations and plans for the next five years. The strategy will be used by staff and partners of Colchester Borough Council as a working document to ensure that the allotments are being managed effectively and meet our customers' needs and aspirations.

The strategy will have a major review in five years and the action plan will be reviewed annually.

Colchester Borough Council owned allotments are managed by the Parks and Recreation Service, part of Life Opportunities. Administrative support for allotments e.g. day to day management of the waiting list, letting and giving up of plots is undertaken by Life Opportunities Group Support.

Grounds maintenance within allotments is undertaken by Veolia Environmental Services Ltd. The maintenance involves cutting main pathways and hedges.

Colchester Borough Council manages 19 allotment sites offering over 940 allotment plots. The demand for allotments is very high with waiting lists of over 440 people. There are also a number of privately run allotments and sites within the borough, managed by Parish and Town Councils. The exact number of allotment plots across the borough is difficult to identify, but it is estimated that there are over 300 non Colchester Borough Council plots being let.

With allotments becoming more and more publicised on programmes such as Gardeners World and through organisations such as the National Trust who are creating 1000 allotments on their land during 2009-2011 (including Dedham) the demand for allotments nationally is rising.

2. Legislation

Allotments are governed by a number of pieces of National Legislation.

- The Small Holdings and Allotments Act of 1908
- The Land Settlement Facilities Act 1919
- The Allotments Act 1922
- The Allotment Act 1925
- The Town and Country Planning Act 1947
- The Allotments Act 1950

The Small Holdings and Allotments Act of 1908 consolidated previous allotment legislation and established the modern day allotment system that is seen today. This Act placed a responsibility on the local authority to provide allotments so to meet the demand of the general public.

The Land Settlement Facilities Act 1919 provided some assistance to servicemen and opened allotments up to the whole population rather than the 'labouring population'. The popularity of allotments increased to a peak of 1,400,000 plots nationally at the height of 'Dig for Victory'. Following this high demand for allotments there has been a slow decline since, with 265,000 plots nationally in 1997.

The Allotments Act 1922 and the Allotment Act 1925 both provided the allotment holder with more security over their tenure, and greater compensation at the termination of a tenancy. The Allotments Act 1925 also intended to initiate the further acquisition of allotments. This was later removed under the Town and Country Planning Act 1947.

The Allotments Act 1950 made better provision for compensation following the termination of a tenancy. It also clarified the system for collecting rent, and included some further allotment management issues. Other further acts have influenced allotment legislation; however the Allotments Act 1950 is still the dominant legislation.

3. Benefits of allotments

The benefits of open spaces and in turn allotments are increasingly being recognised and documented in the public domain. This is through such schemes as Green Flag, BTCV's Green Gym's and various bodies such as Natural England.

Over the last few years there is an increasing amount of research being undertaken regarding the benefits of allotment gardening. These benefits assist local authorities in meeting government objectives in areas such as health, education, environmental, social inclusion and crime reduction.

Some areas of research in this area are detailed below:

3.1 Our Natural Health Service (2009). Natural England

As a result of a study commissioned by Natural England the above campaign was launched with two main aims:

- To increase the number of households that are within five minutes walk of an area of green space of at least two hectares
- To enable every GP or community nurse to be able to signpost patients to an approved health walk or outdoor activity programme

The study backing this campaign was undertaken by the universities of Bristol and East Anglia (E Coombs, A Jones & M Hillsdon: Objectively measured green space access, green space use, physical activity and overweight). This study investigated the connections between green space and public health in Bristol and concluded that the nearer people live to green spaces, the less likely they were of being overweight or obese. In fact one statistic concluded from this report was that 'people that lived furthest from public parks were 27 per cent

more likely to be overweight or obese compared to people who live closest to parks.'

Our Natural Health Service campaign links the above with the fact 'that people are more active if they live within an attractive natural environment whether through activities such as gardening, jogging, cycling, family outings to a park, or simply going for a walk.'

The hope to link green spaces with schemes which GP's or community nurse can refer patients could save the NHS millions through reduced admissions for ailments such as heart disease and obesity. A Health Walk scheme already runs in Colchester and one allotment plot in Colchester is already being used by the NHS to improve the physical and mental health of the local community.

3.2 Allotments for Healthy Living (March 2006). Andrew Farmer on behalf of the Joint Health Unit

This paper explored various government white papers, educational research papers, publications and media articles and used Manchester as a case study. The aim of the paper was to work with the Primary Care Trusts and other organisations to create a GP referral scheme using Manchester's Allotments. The paper highlighted the evidence that on a national level various government departments acknowledged that horticultural therapy was beneficial in not only rebuilding lives but as a preventative health care as well.

3.3 The True Value of Community Farms and Gardens (May 2008). Federation of City Farms and Community Gardens in partnership with the Regeneration Exchange at the University of Northumbria

One of the most recent pieces of research into the specific benefits of allotments was undertaken by the Federation of City Farms and Community Gardens (FCFCG) in partnership with the Regeneration Exchange at the University of Northumbria. The aim of this research was to 'assess and document the impact and value of community farms and gardens to individuals and communities, focussing on opportunities for engagement, volunteering, training, capacity building and empowerment.'

This research was undertaken through working with 22 projects in North East England and Cumbria which were a mixture of community allotments, gardens, farms and stable.

The findings of this research included benefits in the following areas:

- Healthy eating and exercise
- Social interaction and inclusion
- Environmental awareness
- Education and skill development
- Natural therapy

3.4 Food Vision

Food Vision is a joint project run by the Local Government Regulation, the Food Standards Agency and the Chartered Institute of Environmental Health and supported by the Local Government Association and IDe&A.

Food Vision was created in 2000 to promote local initiatives that increase access to safe, sustainable and nutritious food and so improve community health and wellbeing. There is a clear area for allotments within this aim. The benefits of allotment gardening as sited on their website are as follows:

- Fresh, often organic, fruit and vegetables. Although plot holders do not always cultivate for cheaper food, many do.
- Allotments provide physical exercise.
- Recycling can be encouraged for example through composting.
- Green spaces are preserved, especially in urban areas.
- General increase in biodiversity.
- Allotments can be integrated into local public health strategies.
- Educational, in particular where an allotment plot is run with local children. Various mental health benefits.
- Provides a garden to flat dwellers.

(www.foodvision.gov.uk/pages/allotments (July 2010))

3.5 Growing in the Community – Second Edition (2006). Local Government Association (LGA)

The LGA: Growing in the Community guide to good allotment management breaks the benefits of allotmenting into the following categories:

- Allotments and wellbeing
- Food, health and exercise
- Leisure, culture and cohesive communities
- Sustaining the environment
- Green space

These points are broken down further in appendix 1 to illustrate the extensive range of benefits which allotments provide.

This guide covers similar ground as the benefits mentioned above, but has some useful information on the environmental benefits of allotments. As mentioned at the start of this section, allotments can assist local authorities in meeting new objectives. This can be illustrated through section 40 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006. This places a responsibility on local authorities to conserve biodiversity. Allotments can

provide this habitat within an urban area and are in fact a haven for wildlife which have been displaced through development. Natural England published guidance on *Wildlife on Allotments (2007)* which recognises the contribution which allotments have on a broad range of wildlife. This guide also advises allotment holders on things that they can do to conserve wildlife on their plots.

An issue which is in the forefront of many government objectives is that of global warming and the drive to decrease CO₂ emissions. Much of the population is taking this on board and the phenomena of grow you own, composting and reducing air miles is driving up the popularity of allotments. There are also increased concerns about chemicals used on foods and where food has come from which has made organic gardening increasingly popular.

4. Vision and management priorities

This Colchester Allotment Strategy will be guided by the following Council documents:

- Colchester Borough Council's Strategic Plan 2009 – 2012
- Colchester Parks and Green Spaces Strategy
- Colchester Tree Policy
- Planning Policy Guidance Note 17

4.1 Colchester Borough Council's Strategic Plan 2009 – 2012

The Council's Strategic Plan is an important document to guide how the Council will play its part to make Colchester a place where people want to live, work and visit. The Council's vision for the strategic plan is as below:

- Colchester - a place where people want to live, work and visit

To achieve this vision there are three corporate objectives which are:

- to listen and respond
- shift resources to deliver priorities
- to be cleaner and greener.

There are nine priorities for action, listed below in alphabetical order:

- addressing older people's needs
- addressing younger people's needs
- community development
- community safety
- congestion busting
- enabling job creation

- healthy living
- homes for all
- reduce, re-use, recycle

4.2 Planning Policy Guidance Note 17

Colchester Borough Council appointed consultants PMP in 2008 to undertake an audit and assessment of open space, sport and recreation facilities in the Borough in accordance with the requirements of Planning Policy Guidance Note 17 (Planning for Open Space Sport and Recreation, July 2002) and its Companion Guide (September 2002). The study included an audit of all open space provision including allotments so to provide a clear vision, priorities for existing and future open space and a direction for the allocation of future resources.

The prime objectives of the study were to:

- provide a robust assessment of the demand for open space and recreation facilities throughout the Borough, addressing issues of quantity, quality and accessibility
- provide an analysis of identified surpluses or deficiencies and other issues of provision across the Borough
- provide clear recommendations for the setting of locally derived quantitative and qualitative standards for open space, sport and recreation facilities
- provide evidence for the Borough's emerging Core Strategy
- inform the preparation of planning policies in the Local Development Framework
- underpin the development of the Council's Parks and Green Space Strategy.

The consultants carried out household surveys and consulted with Council staff on topics of quantity and quality of allotments. In considering the provision of different typologies of open space within the borough, the consultants divided the borough into 6 analysis areas.

The findings of the audit of current allotment provision across the borough are set out in Table 1 overleaf.

The table illustrates that across the borough there is an overall provision of allotments of 0.16 hectares per 1000 population. The standard set out in the Local Plan is for 0.2ha per 1000 population. Consultation carried out by PMP identified the following residents' opinions about the provision of allotments set out in Table 2.

Table 1 – Quantity of allotments in Colchester Borough

Analysis Area	Population	Hectares	Number of sites	Range in sizes	Hectares per 1000 population
Central	21,745	7.46	8	0.03 – 1.56	0.34
Mersea	7,677	0	0	n/a	0
Rural	28,840	4.18	8	0.01 – 2.02	0.15
Tiptree	9,464	0	0	n/a	0
Urban North	46,600	9.33	7	0.26 – 2.21	0.2
Urban South	56,272	6.5	7	0.18 – 1.88	0.12
Overall	170,598	27.47	30	0.03 – 2.02	0.16

The evidence from the audit and the responses from consultation supported the need for more allotments. It was therefore proposed that the quantity standard of 0.2ha be retained. This proposed standard has subsequently been accepted as part of the Local Development Framework proposals.

Table 2 – Public response to quantity of allotments in Colchester

More than enough	About right	Nearly enough	Not enough	No opinion
2%	27%	11%	28%	32%

The quality of each site was also assessed through a detailed independent site visit (where access was possible). The quality score represents a snapshot in time and records the quality of the site at the time of the site visit. The quality of allotments in Colchester borough is summarised in Table 3 overleaf. All scores are percentages.

Table 3 – Quality of allotments across Colchester

Analysis area	Number of sites	Average scores
Central	8	63.1
Mersea	0	n/a
Rural	8	68.4
Tiptree	0	n/a
Urban North	7	66.7
Urban South	7	69.5
Total	30	67

No recognised quality standards are currently used by the Council but the PPG17 didn't highlight that the standard of allotments to be an area of concern.

Accessibility of Allotments

Table 1 identified the quantity of allotments in the analysis areas. Whilst this gives an indication of the spread of allotments across the borough it does not inform on the accessibility of allotments. As part of the consultation carried out by PMP, residents were asked for their opinions on what was considered reasonable access. In the rural areas the majority of respondents felt a drive time was applicable whereas the majority across the borough favoured a walk time accessibility standard. The recommended accessibility standard in the PPG 17 report is therefore a 15 minutes walk time in urban areas and a 15 minute drive time in rural areas.

4.3 Colchester Parks and Green Spaces Strategy

The Colchester Parks and Green Spaces Strategy provides a clear vision for how green space, including allotments, are to be managed. This vision is to ensure:

Colchester's parks and green spaces are provided to enhance the quality of life of those people who live, work and visit the town and its surroundings.

We aim to develop the range, quality and accessibility of public open space to support regeneration, encourage social inclusion, improve community health and enhance biodiversity.

4.4 Colchester Tree Policy

The policy includes two priorities relating to allotment land :

- The Council will support the planting of small espalier fruit trees and fruit bushes on allotment plots by tenants, but not the planting of large standard fruit trees.

- Where space permits, and where there is support from allotment tenants, land unsuitable for cultivation may be used for the planting of community orchards or short rotation coppice

There is also a commitment for the continuation of the collection of leaves from other Council sites to be used on allotment sites as leaf mulch.

4.5 Allotment Vision – the 4 strands

Colchester's allotments help achieve many of these above priorities with the obvious benefits of healthy living and reducing people's carbon footprint to creating a community spirit and enabling a diverse range of the community to join together in something which they have a passion for.

Using these supporting Council documents the allotment strategy addresses the needs of allotment holders and gives residents of Colchester opportunities for a better quality of life. To achieve this, the allotment strategy develops 4 strands set out below:

- Allotment provision and waiting list management
- Allotment management and user involvement
- Allotment infrastructure
- Income and expenditure – financial strategy

5. Current Allotment Management – background information

Colchester Borough Council manages nineteen allotment sites across Colchester, all of which currently have waiting lists. The size of allotment sites vary considerably with the smallest site having two plots and the largest having over one hundred.

For a prospective allotment holder to add their name to the allotment waiting list, the Council needs to be contacted either through telephoning the allotment administrator or e-mailing allotments@colchester.gov.uk. The current waiting lists are held on an Excel spreadsheet, with a tab for each allotment site. Members of the public are currently able to have their name added to one site, to selected sites or to all nineteen sites.

Once a year those on the waiting list are contacted by letter to ensure that they are still interested in an allotment. Applicants are asked to return a completed form to acknowledge their continued interest in being kept on the waiting list. This helps to ensure that personal contact details remain current and when offered a plot, the potential allotment holder is still interested, which helps plots to be allocated as quickly as possible.

When a plot becomes vacant the person at the top of the relevant waiting list is sent an Offer Letter detailing the plot which is vacant, the size and cost. The person who the plot is being offered to is then given 2 weeks to accept the plot,

otherwise it is assumed that they are no longer interested and they are removed from the list. The plot is then offered to the next person on the waiting list.

If an allotment holder does not accept that particular plot which is being offered to them, then unless there is a justifiable reason, their name will be removed from the top of the waiting list and put to the bottom.

If an allotment applicant accepts an allotment, their name is removed from all other waiting lists for the other allotment sites. If the allotment applicant would prefer an allotment on another allotment site, but would like to start work on the site which has been offered, they can keep their name on the waiting list on the proviso that they swap plots when their preferred site has a vacancy.

Once an allotment is officially accepted a tenancy agreement and invoice are raised. Once the agreement has been returned signed and the invoice paid an allotment key to allow access onto the allotment is issued and works can commence.

The tenancy agreement was reviewed in 2005 and to ensure that all allotment holders were adhering to the same clauses all allotment holders were asked to sign up to the new agreement. At this time changes were made to the payment period from January-December to October-September to make a more relevant fit with the growing season. The changes also meant that new tenants are starting at a better time of the year to ensure that they can fully prepare their plot for Spring.

The new allotment holder is then given three months before the plot is included on the regular site inspections. If work has not commenced at the end of the three month period then a Notice to Quit is sent to the plot holder allowing 28 days for works to commence otherwise the Council takes the plot back.

Some allotment holders decide that they would like to share their allotment with a friend. The advice currently given is for both names to be included on a joint tenancy to give both allotment holders the same rights to the allotment plot e.g. if one allotment holder wishes to give up. If the original tenancy is set up in joint names then there is no charge to have two names on the agreement. However, any subsequent changes made e.g. removing somebody's name and adding another or going from a single tenancy to a joint which results in another tenancy agreement being drawn up a £10 administration fee is charged. This is with the exception of one of the joint tenants dying.

Sheds, glasshouse and poly-tunnels are all allowed on allotment plots with written permission from the Council. All responsibility for these structures lies with the allotment holder of the plot. Any allotment holder wishing to apply for permission to erect one or more of these structures is asked to write to the Allotment Officer stating the dimensions of the proposed structure, what it will be made from and where it will be sited (ideally with a map or sketch of its location). The maximum size shed or glasshouse allowed is 8ft x 6ft, whilst the maximum sized poly-tunnel is down to the discretion of the Allotment Officer, but generally no bigger than 5m long with the width in proportion. Only one of each structure is allowed on an allotment.

5.1 Allotment Budgets

Allotment budgets are set on an annual basis as part of the Council's budget setting process. Allotment budgets are split into direct expenditure, non-direct expenditure and direct income. A breakdown of expenditure and income can be found in Appendix 2

The 2010/11 allotment budget as a whole (e.g. direct and non-direct expenditure and direct income) is currently subsidised by approximately 57%. If direct expenditure costs and direct income are considered, the allotment budget is only 31% subsidised.

With the financial pressures facing local authorities the subsidisation of allotments needs to be reduced if current standards of service are to be retained. Income generated can be used to assist with site infrastructure reducing revenue and capital budget pressures e.g. additional water tanks, new fencing.

5.2 Allotment Rent

Allotment rents are approved by the Portfolio Holder for the service in tranches of five years. When the current tranche was agreed (2009-2014) rents were increased by a higher percentage than normal with the objective to recover a projected 85% of direct expenditure spent on allotments at the end of the 5 year period. The approach was to achieve 100% recovery of direct expenditure in the following five year tranche (2014 – 2019).

A summary of the current allotment rents can be found in Appendix 3. These rates are split between full and concession rates and sites with water and without. When the rates were approved for 2009-2014 the concessionary rates on the basis of age for new allotment holders was removed. A decision was made that concessionary rates would only apply to existing allotment holders who are drawing a state pension and all allotment holders in financial hardship who are claiming benefits. Concessionary rates on the basis of age would not be available for new allotment holders.

5.3 Allotment Partners

Allotment Site Stewards

Colchester Borough Council aims to have a site steward for each of their 19 allotment sites; this is with the exemption of some of the smaller sites. The site steward must be an allotment holder for their particular site and has the following roles to carry out:

- To carry out monthly site inspections and report the condition to CBC.
- Liaise with CBC on empty plots and new plot holders.
- Attend meetings with CBC and other site stewards.
- To report water leaks, broken fences and gates.

- Report any problems or unsociable behaviour on their site.
- Not to get involved in neighbouring plot holders disputes.
- Liaise and assist new tenants.
- With the agreement of CBC, appoint a deputy site steward for your own site (optional)
- To report debris/long grass on vacated plots.
- Anything else that the CBC may from time to time require.

In return for the work that they carry out as a Site Steward they receive an allotment plot rent free for the time that they are a steward.

Allotment site stewards attend a twice yearly meeting with Colchester Borough Council to discuss any works that may be required on their allotment site. From these discussions an allotment action plan is produced which prioritises works in terms of health and safety. This plan is then used to spend the allocated Council budget as the winter works programme.

When there is a vacancy for a site steward for a particular allotment site, all allotment holders are offered the opportunity to apply. This is either done through writing to all allotment holders or displaying a notice on the allotment noticeboard. The method depends upon the time of the year, and therefore how many allotment holders may be visiting the site. Once the deadline has passed and applications have been submitted, factors such as how long the person has been an allotment holder, whether they have received any correspondence regarding cultivation or other breach or nuisance of tenancy are considered. From this a new site steward is appointed on a three month trial. If no allotment holder comes forward to take the site steward role, the regular inspections are carried out by the allotment officer whilst a notice is displayed on site advertising the vacancy.

Colchester Allotment Association

In March 2003 a meeting was held by the Council with the allotment site stewards and/or representatives from Council run allotments. This meeting was organised to discuss how allotments should be run in the future and to see to what degree the allotment holders would like to be involved. From these discussions the Colchester Allotment Association was formed.

The meeting upheld that the Council will continue to manage the allotment sites, but the Association will bring extra benefits to its members and to the community.

Since 2003 the Allotment Association have produced regular newsletters to their members, created a discount seed scheme, running of a recycling centre, tool hire and annual open days and attending other events. They have also applied to various grants and funding bodies for external funds to improve allotment sites, including allotment noticeboards and hard surface roadways.

5.4 Site Inspections

Inspections of allotment sites are currently undertaken on an ad-hoc basis by the allotment officer. These are supplemented with regular site inspections of allotment plots throughout the growing season by the allotment site steward for the site.

The inspections by the allotment site stewards are mainly to check the allotment plots for cultivation. These inspections start at the Easter bank holiday weekend and continue until the end of the growing season (usually September/October). These inspections are normally undertaken once every five/six weeks. Some sites are generally very well cultivated and therefore regular inspections are not required through the whole season (especially on the smaller allotment sites). In these cases the Council asks that an initial inspection is undertaken at the beginning of the season, and a further inspection is submitted if the site steward feels it is necessary.

In 2007 a definition of a cultivated plot was agreed with site stewards and the Colchester Allotment Association. This definition is as below:

A cultivated plot is defined as:

50% or more of the plot is in productive use, i.e. perennial fruit, flowers or vegetables, or soil is overturned. There should be little or no long vegetation on the allotment plot.

Any plots which fall below this definition are sent a Notice to Quit the plot with a condition that if the plot meets the above definition within one month then the Notice to Quit is revoked.

To manage this system with the site stewards, inspections sheets and maps are sent out to all stewards just before Easter. These inspection sheets detail all plots which are out of use, vacant or plots where the tenant is still within their first three months (and therefore exempt from inspections).

This inspection sheet is then filled in by the site steward and returned to the allotment officer, who then highlights plots which need to have Notice to Quits sent to. Once these Notice to Quits have been sent out an updated inspection sheet is then sent to the site steward detailing the actions which have been taken and setting out when the next inspection date is due. On this next inspection, all plots are then again inspected, including any plots which have previously been sent a Notice to Quit letter to determine whether the Notice to Quit stands or is revoked. The plot holder is then informed either way. If the Notice to Quit stands a further two weeks are allowed before the plot is re-offered in case there are any disputes.

Mitigating circumstances as to why an allotment plot can be uncultivated are mainly down to the allotment officer's discretion. Examples of these are illness, death in the family or if an allotment holder is just going through a bad period of time. However, even in these circumstances we would request that long

vegetation is kept to a minimum.

Allotment holders are informed that inspections are commencing on their allotment site by a notice being erected in the noticeboards. This details that the site is being inspected, what the expected cultivation level is and that if there are any mitigating circumstances that the Council are contacted.

This system of site inspections was introduced in 2007 and has worked very well. It has decreased the time that it takes for a plot to be vacated by approximately half, allowing us to allocate it to the next person on the allotment waiting list.

During 2009 just under 9.5% of allotment holders got sent a Notice to Quit for either un-cultivation or non-payment of bills.

5.5 Grounds Maintenance

Grounds Maintenance is undertaken by contractors, Veolia Environmental Services. In 2006 Colchester Borough Council entered into a ten year partnership agreement with Veolia Environmental Services to undertake grounds maintenance on the Council Allotments and other areas within the borough. Specifications for the work can be found in Appendix 4 and covers the activities of

- grass cutting
- hedge cutting
- maintaining water tanks

5.6 Site Security

Fencing and Gates

All allotment sites are fenced with padlocked gates to control access onto allotment sites.

There are a variety of fencing types used on allotment sites, including palisade, closeboard, chainlink and herras fencing (erected in a permanent manner). There are also hedge boundaries and the rear boundaries of neighbouring property (which are not Colchester Borough Council's responsibility).

The preferred choice of fencing if budget allows is palisade fencing with a splayed top. If budgets do not allow for the installation of palisade fencing then either chainlink or herras fencing is installed.

Some allotment sites have an internal hedge which acts as a secondary barrier around the allotment site. In the most recent examples of this having been done the Council have purchased the hedging plants, then allotment holders have worked together to undertake the planting. This has proved a successful way of involving allotment holders in improving the security of sites.

Padlocks

More secure padlocks were installed on all allotment gates in 2007. The keys for these padlocks can only be cut with a designated Colchester Borough Council signature, so copying will not be possible.

To help ensure that keys are returned once the tenancy agreement has been terminated a returnable £10 deposit for each individual key is required which is invoiced at the beginning of the tenancy.

Other Security Products

Anti-climb products are used on some allotment sites. The main product used is anti-climb paint, which is painted on vulnerable gates and fences. Recently, a product called Prikka-strip has been installed on the top of gates and when pressure is applied (e.g. by a hand) it gives a similar discomfort to pressing your hand on the nib of a biro pen, although it doesn't injure. Both of these products require notices warning that these products are being used on the site.

As barbed wire can not be used on allotment sites for liability reasons, the above products are often used in its place.

Allotment Watch

In 2009 Essex Police created an Allotment Watch for all allotment sites within the Borough. The traditional Watch schemes e.g. Neighbourhood Watch all follow a process of communicating any problems through a cascade approach so each individual only needs to call one person and the message gets round to all members. Due to the number of allotment holders on some of the larger sites this approach may not be effective.

It has therefore been proposed that there is one key link between Essex Police and an allotment holder who is prepared to be the main contact for the site. Through this link all minor thefts and break-ins are reported and phone numbers for local PCSOs will be issued so additional patrols or talks can be arranged.

Although this scheme is still at very early stages, the Council fully supports Allotment Watch and will work with both allotment holders and Essex Police to help it to succeed.

6. Allotment Surveys

Feedback regarding the day to day operation of the service is obtained from the site stewards. To achieve a broader response, consultation was arranged with all plot holders and allotment applicants. To ensure that the Colchester Borough Council Allotment service is run as allotment holders would wish and to enable the Council to identify areas for improvement, surveys of both allotment tenants and allotment applicants who are on the allotment waiting list were undertaken.

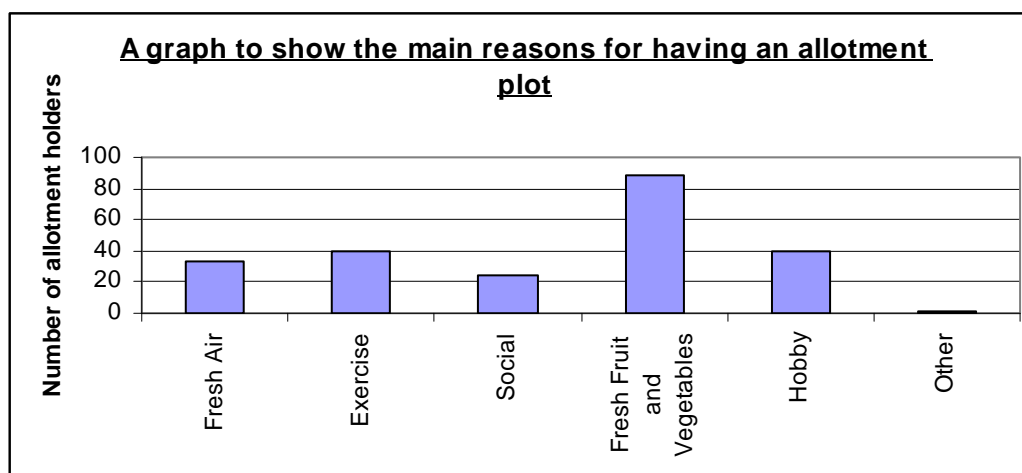
6.1 Allotment Holder Survey

The questionnaire to all allotment holders was sent with the annual bills in November 2009. The return on these questionnaires was 54%. A copy of this questionnaire can be found in Appendix 5 along with the results of the survey in Appendix 6.

From the survey results the following picture was derived of the average allotment holder:

- Rents one allotment plot ;
- Is aged between 50 and 69;
- Either works the plot jointly as a male/female team or alone by a male allotment holder;
- Has no disabilities;
- Is retired; and
- Are white/white British.

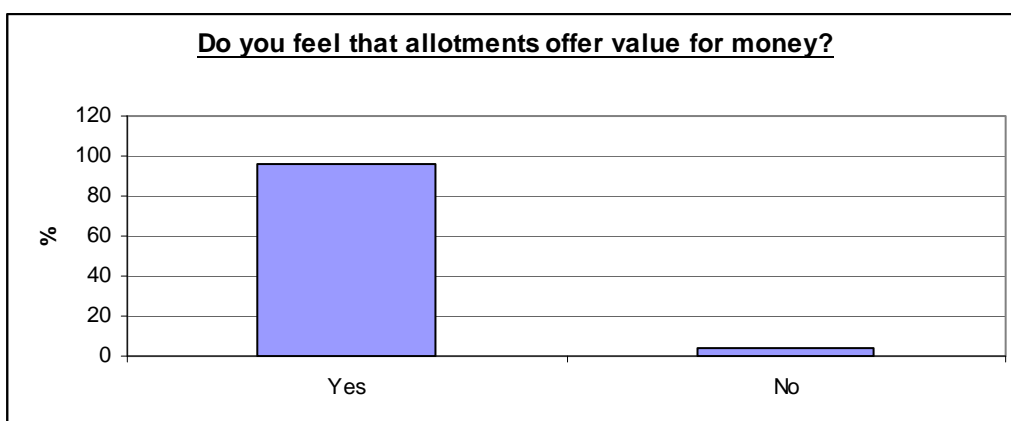
Allotment holders were asked what the main reasons for having their allotment plot were. These are illustrated below:



Most allotment holders travel to their allotment plot on foot (54.2%), with 43.4% travelling by car. This is a disappointing number of people who travel to their allotment predominately by car as 66% of allotment holders live within 1 mile of their allotment site.

Value for Money

Allotment holders were asked whether they felt that allotments provided value for money. The questionnaire was sent out with the allotment invoices and coincided with the first year of the above inflation increased allotment rates which aim to reduce the proportion of the allotment budget which is subsidised by the Colchester Borough Council tax payer.



Taking the above into consideration 95.8% thought that allotments did provide value for money, which raises questions about whether allotment rents could be raised further.

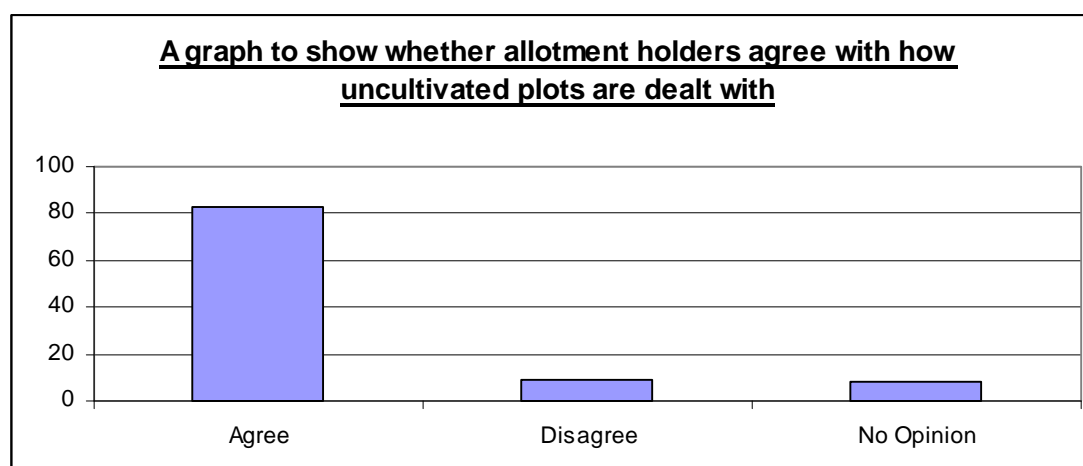
Allotment Cultivation

Allotment holders generally visit their allotment more than once a week during the growing season, with just 11.9% of allotment holders who visit either once a week or less than once a week.

The definition of a cultivated plot is 50% or more of the plot is in productive use, i.e. perennial fruit, flowers or vegetables, or soil is overturned. There should be little or no long vegetation on the allotment plot. A large proportion of allotment holders felt the definition was about right, with:

- 73.2% agreeing that this was the correct level of cultivation
- 24.8% thought it was too low
- 2% thought it was too high

Allotment holders were then asked whether they felt that the Council was dealing with plots which fell below this level in the correct way. Results of this are detailed below.



Although the large majority of people believe how the Council deals with uncultivated plots is the correct way, the largest overall concern from allotment holders are the cultivation of plots. Much of this may be due to the fact that there is little knowledge of how the inspection process works. It has therefore been decided that it would be beneficial for a one off newsletter to be distributed once this allotment strategy has been completed. In addition, the plot inspection process will be revisited within this strategy.

Allotment Management

Allotment holders were asked several questions to determine their satisfaction with a number of areas within allotment management. A summary of this is below:

How satisfied are you with the below?	Very Satisfied or Satisfied	Very Dissatisfied or Dissatisfied	No Opinion
The maintenance of the main paths and tracks	90.0%	6.5%	3.5%
The maintenance of the boundary fences/walls	77.5%	15.5%	7.0%
The maintenance of the boundary hedges	65.5%	14.5%	20.0%
The provision of water on the allotment	77.0%	19.0%	4.0%
How overgrown/vacant plots are dealt with	45.0%	40.5%	14.5%
How queries/complaints are dealt with by Council staff	61.5%	9.0%	29.5%
The security of allotment sites	75.5%	18.5%	6.0%

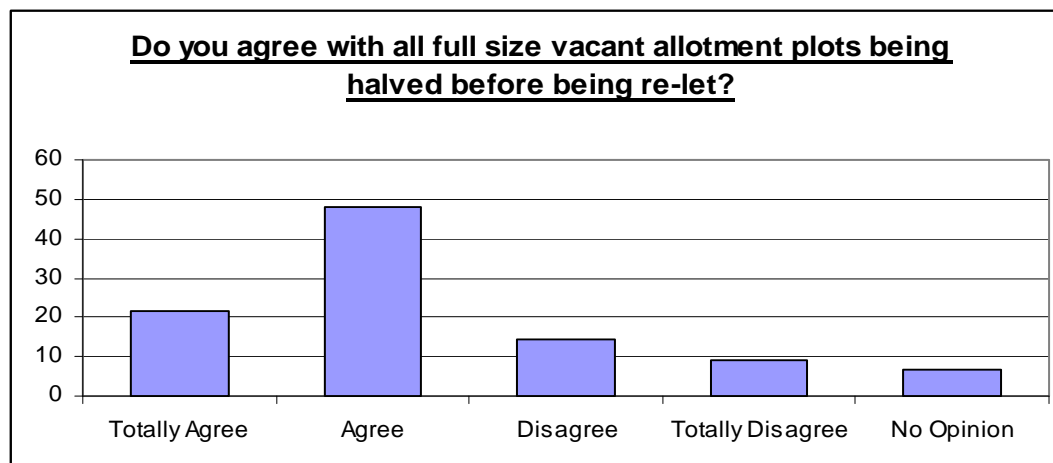
Overall the results of the survey indicate that allotment holders are satisfied with all aspects of the way the allotments are managed; this is with the exception of how overgrown and vacant plots are dealt with. This is an aspect of allotment management which will be dealt with further in the allotment strategy.

An option to be part of a newly established Allotment Watch, run by Essex Police was offered as part of the survey with 24.3% of allotment holders who completed the questionnaire wanting to be part of this and happy for their name to be given to Essex Police.

The majority of people (74.9%) know who their site steward is and generally know at least some of the roles which they play, although some further clarification of this needs to be communicated to allotment holders.

Offering and Allocating Allotments

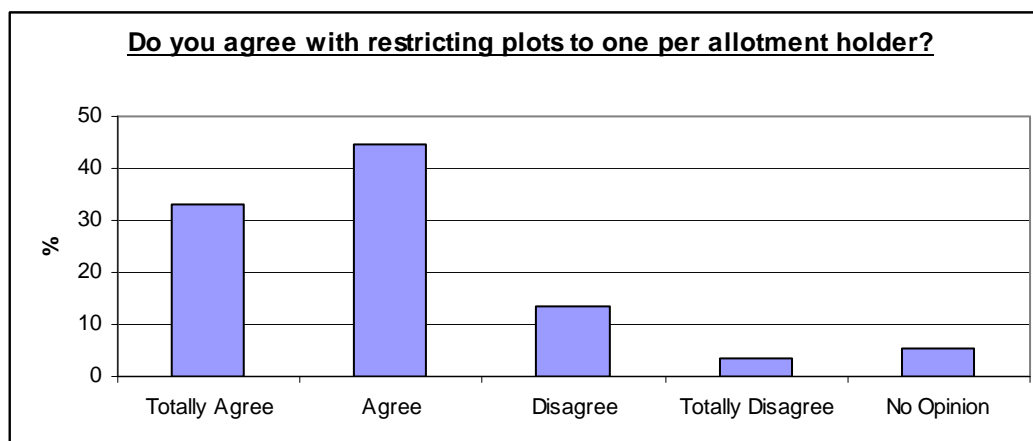
At the end of 2008 the Council introduced changes to how allotment plots are offered and allocated. As consultation with allotment holders has not been undertaken with regards to these changes they were included in this questionnaire. Results are below:



Allotment holders were then asked whether they agreed that the minimum sized allotment plot when halved is no smaller than approximately 100m². The following results were obtained:

- 100m² is too big – 3.5%
- 100m² is too small – 25.2%
- 100m² is just right – 71.3%

Allotments are now restricted to one plot per person (this excludes allotment holders who currently have more than one plot or allotment holders who are already on the waiting list for an additional plot).



A number of people also commented that plots should be taken off allotment holders who have more than one allotment at the moment.

Prospective allotment holders who are waiting for an allotment and live in the borough of Colchester are given priority to people who want an allotment and live outside of the borough. Nearly all allotment holders (91.6%) were in favour of this, with 2.6% disagreeing and 5.8% with no opinion.

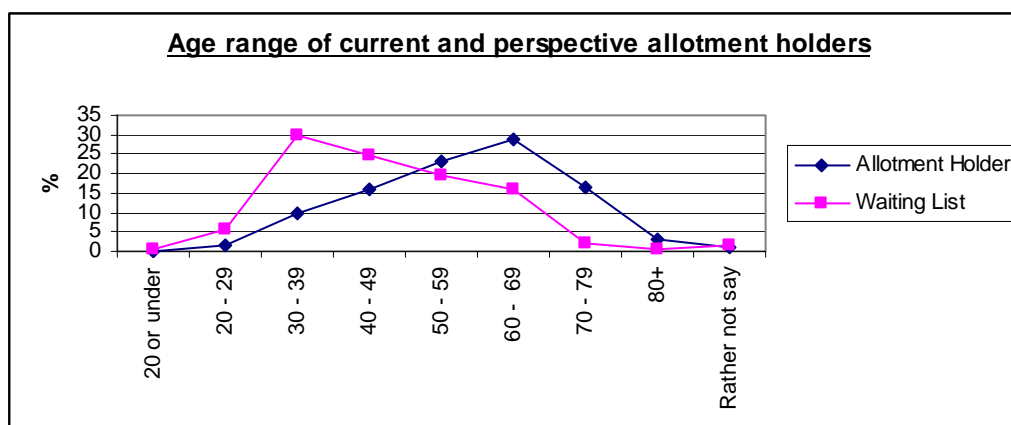
6.2 Allotment Waiting List Survey

The questionnaire to allotment applicants on the waiting list was sent with the annual letter seeking confirmation that they are still interested in having an allotment. A copy of this questionnaire can be found in Appendix 7. There was a 62% return on these questionnaires. Full results of this survey can be seen in Appendix 8.

The most interesting result of this questionnaire is the profile of the people waiting for an allotment plot. This is summarised below:

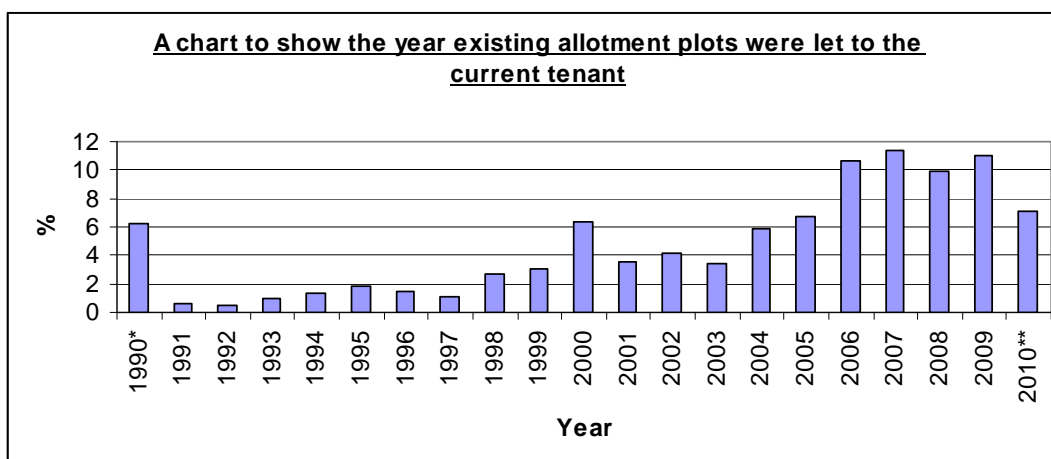
- Is 30-49 years old;
- Predominately want to work the plot as a family;
- Have no disabilities;
- Are in full time employment; and
- Are white/white British.

Compared to existing allotment holders the profile is completely different, showing a different type of person wanting an allotment. In particular the age groups show a definite change of trend as illustrated below.



The results show that the majority of prospective allotment holders on the waiting list are 30 – 39 years old (29.9%), whilst the majority of allotment holders are aged between 60 – 69 years old (28.9%).

This could be for a number of reasons including the well publicised fact of long waiting lists for an allotment plot. The turnover of allotments in Colchester for 2009 was just under 8.7% with tenancies being terminated voluntarily, because an allotment holder died or a Notice to Quit for non-cultivation or non-payment being served. By analyzing existing data from the allotment database the number of years allotment holder have had their plot is shown opposite:



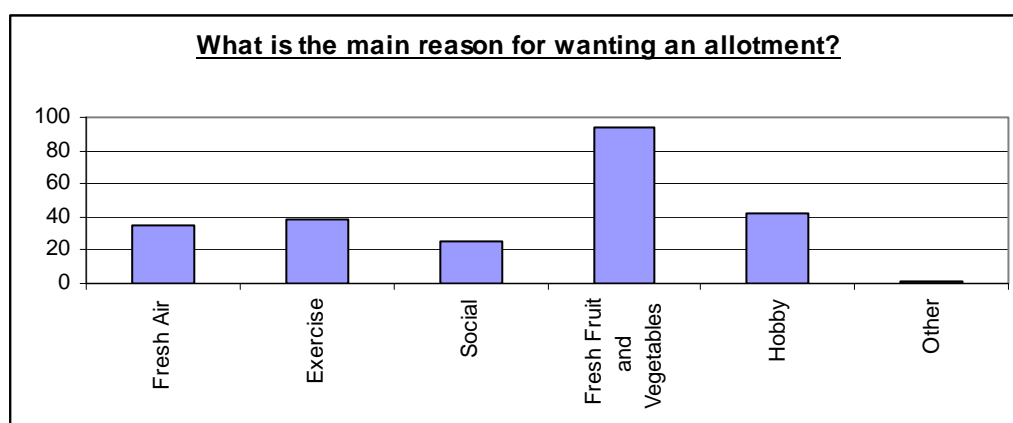
*Data is for 1990 and before

** Data is to date as of September 2010

Over 25% of allotment plots have been rented by the same allotment holder for over 10 years. This together with a relatively low turnover and allotment capacity not significantly being increased is resulting in a growth in the allotment waiting list which is likely to continue.

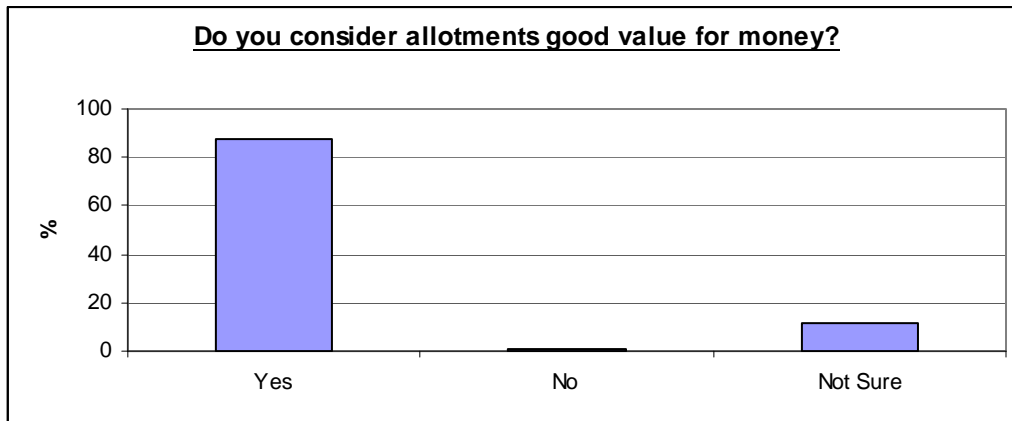
The majority of people waiting for an allotment are also in full time employment (49.6%) which fits in with the younger age group. There is a possibility that this may cause problems in the future as people generally underestimate the amount of time that it takes to manage an allotment which may lead to an increased number of uncultivated plots. The fact that only half allotment plots are now being offered may help this situation, but additional information of the time needed to manage an allotment may be required.

The reasons for wanting an allotment plot are very similar to the existing allotment holders with the majority of people wanting a plot to grow fresh fruit and vegetables.



Value for Money

People on the waiting lists were asked whether they felt allotments provided good value for money. A large proportion of people feel they do with only 0.7% who don't.



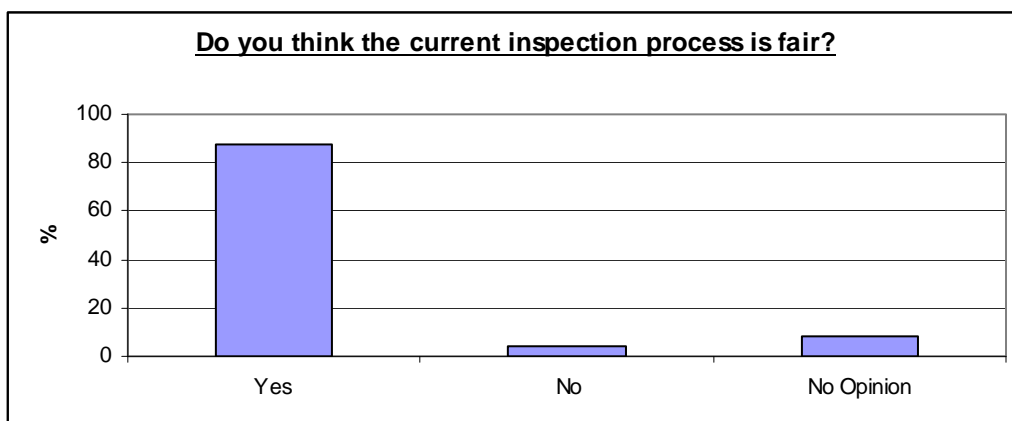
This again highlights that although the Council has raised allotment rents, there may be scope to generate more revenue from allotments to reduce subsidies.

Allotment Cultivation

Generally people on the waiting list agree with how the Council are running the allotment sites in terms of the definition of a cultivated plot with people thinking:

- 76.3% - the definition level is right
- 22.6% - the definition level is too low
- 1.1% the definition level is too high

Most people waiting for an allotment agree that the way which the Council manage the cultivation of allotment plots is fair.

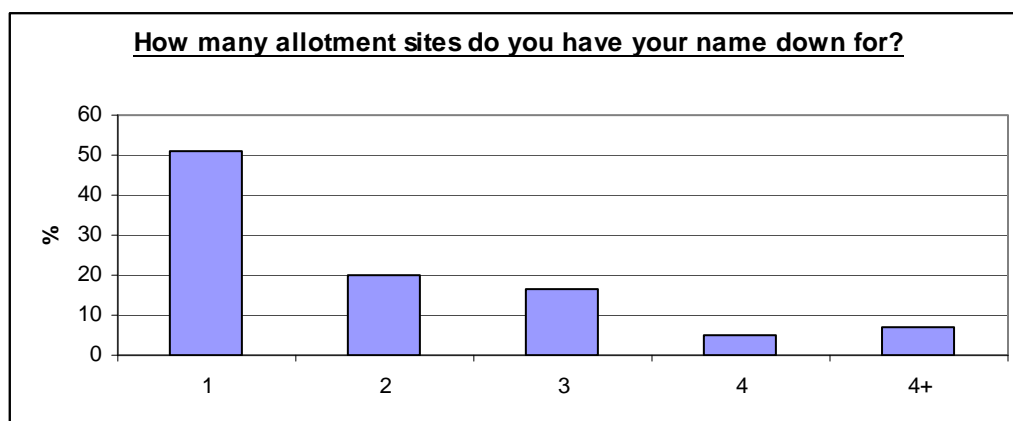


There were still a number of comments from the questionnaire which commented on seeing uncultivated plots on allotment sites. As mentioned in the Local Government Associations 'A place to grow: a supplementary document to Growing in the community' there are always likely to be plots which are uncultivated as there will be tenants who have just taken a plot on and tenants who are under the process of being removed from the plot for uncultivation. Additionally, Colchester Borough Council has never penalised tenants through issuing Notice to Quits for non-cultivation for long term recoverable illnesses such as injured/broken limbs or recent medical surgery which with an aging

allotment holder population can be an issue. Therefore some plots may be uncultivated due to the allotment holder being unwell and in these circumstances we ask that all the long vegetation on the plot is kept trimmed.

Management of the Waiting List

Although many allotment holders are on the waiting list for just one allotment site (51%), nearly half of people on the waiting list have their name down on more than one waiting list. This is shown below:



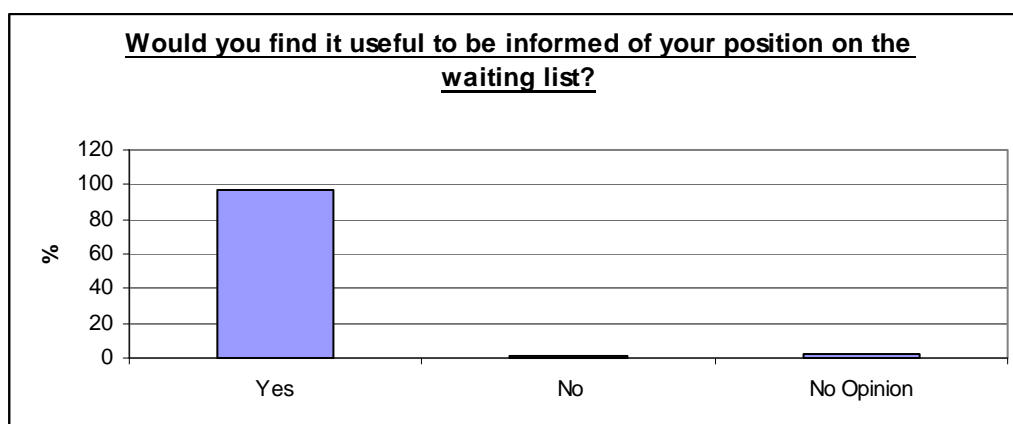
Having names down on more than one waiting list distorts the number of names on the list. The present method of administering waiting lists relates to the specific allotment site and a basic database rather than a search facility on individuals. To remove duplications would therefore be an administrative burden unless specific allotment management software was to be introduced or a new format of waiting list is developed. Many people on the waiting list also get offered a plot and then turn it down as they want to be closer to where they live.

The majority of people on the waiting list think that being contacted once a year to ensure that they are still interested in having an allotment is about right. Results below:

- Contact people once a year - 66.8%
- Contact people less than once a year – 2.9%
- Contact people more than once a year - 30.3%

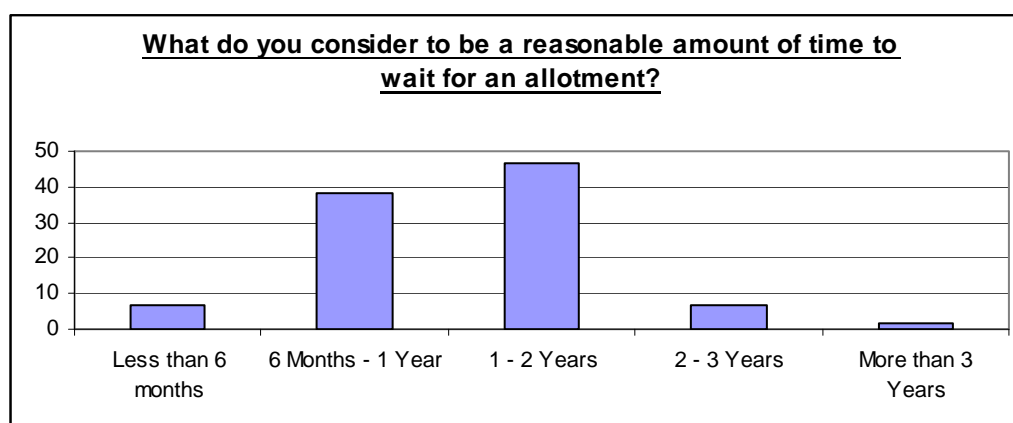
Contacting allotment applicants more than once a year would create additional workload without any significant benefits to the service other than the creation of a current and accurate waiting list. Allotment applicants are always welcome to contact the Council to check on their position on the list.

The large majority of allotment holders on the waiting list would like to know their position on the list when they are contacted about keeping their names on the waiting list.



This is not possible with the software which is being used at the moment, but will be investigated further in this document.

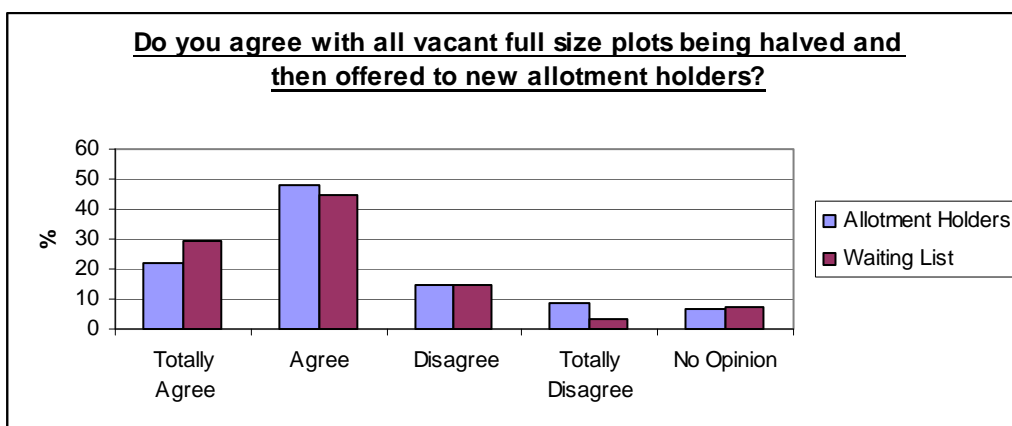
People on the waiting list were asked what they consider to be a reasonable amount of time to wait for an allotment.



The majority of people felt that 1-2 years was an appropriate amount of time to wait which was closely followed up with 6 months -1 year. We are currently advising people that they are looking at a 2 – 3 year wait to be offered a plot which only 6.6% of people felt was acceptable.

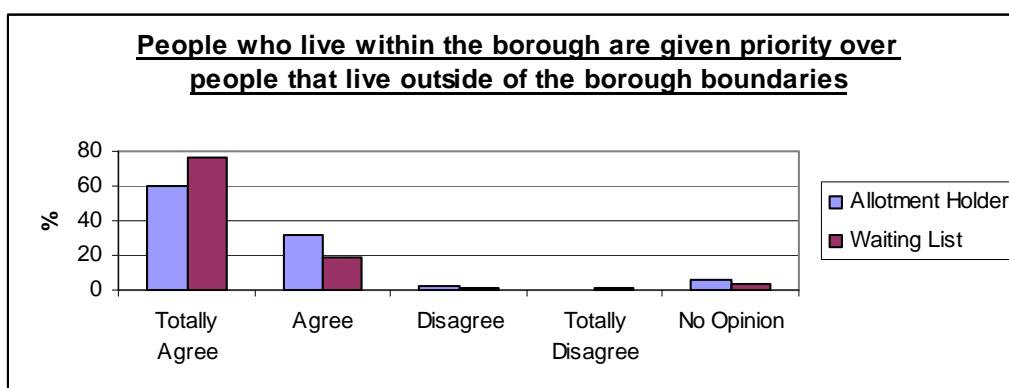
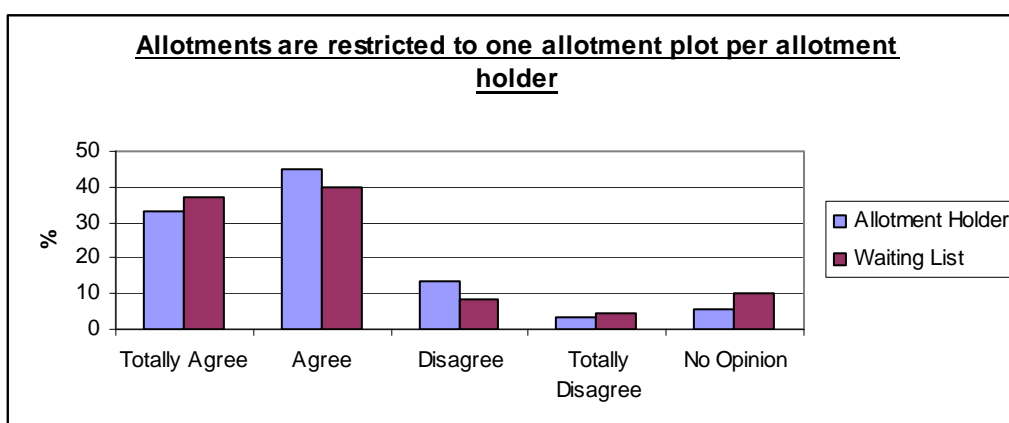
Offering and Allocating Allotments

People on the waiting list were asked the same questions as allotment holders with regards to the offering and allocation of plots. Opposite are the questions asked comparing allotment holders and waiting list responses.



Following the above question people on the waiting list were asked whether they felt that 100m² was about the correct size for an allotment plot. The results were as follows:

- 100m² is too big for an allotment plot – 9.1%
- 100m² is too small for an allotment plot – 13.5%
- 100m² is about just right for an allotment plot – 77.4%



Generally both allotment holders and people on the waiting list agree how allotment plots are offered and allocated.

The Way Forward

7.0 Strand 1—Allotment Provision and Waiting List Management

As with the majority of the country there is an increasing demand for allotments in Colchester. The Council has worked to streamline procedures and ensure that the management of its existing allotments are as efficient as possible. This enables the Council to have a good template when taking on the management of new sites.

The Parks and Recreation team are working with the Spatial Policy Team to ensure that new allotment land is considered within planning of new housing developments. This is being done through the use of the Planning Policy Guidance Note 17 (PPG17) referred to in Table 1 of this document where the adopted standard is 0.2 hectares per 1000 population. Colchester currently has 0.16 hectares per 1000 population (2008) so additional allotment land is required. Using PPG17 data and 2008 based population projections (at a district level) the future shortfall in allotment land until 2033 is illustrated in Appendix 9.

Due to the rising population in Colchester the shortfall in allotment land is growing. By 2030 if the amount of allotment land stays constant in the borough at 0.11ha per 1000 population (decreasing from 0.16ha per 1000 population in 2008), then an additional 0.09ha per 1000 population will be required which equates to 21.63ha.

There are several Parish Councils which have either recently implemented allotments in their parish or are actively looking for allotment land. The Parks and Recreation team holds a record of parish allotments which it is aware of, but this can be difficult to keep up to date and there are no records held of any privately run allotments in the borough. To keep track of the allotment provision in the borough this record keeping needs to be improved through regular contact with other allotment providers.

The 1908 Small Holdings and Allotment Act places a duty on the Council of any borough, urban district or parish to provide allotments should there be demand. This demand constitutes of at least six local taxpayers or electors submitting requests to a local authority. Part II of the Local Government Act 1972 further clarifies this by saying that a district council can not provide allotments in areas where there is a parish council or parish meeting. Therefore the allotment authority would be either the local parish or town council and if neither of these exist, the borough or district council.

Therefore Colchester Borough Council would only be the allotment authority if there was no parish or town council in place. The Council would however offer support in setting up an allotment site and providing any guidance which may be requested.

To assist with the demand of allotment sites the Council will consider other alternatives such as community gardening. The Council already runs the Big Garden at High Woods Country Park and has a few existing small scale

gardens which are managed by the local community however we would be looking to extend on these when opportunities arise.

Establishing land for allotments and community gardens requires infrastructure such as fencing, hard surfacing and water supply. Securing the required funding has been a problem and has inhibited the creation of new allotment sites even where the land is already officially allotment land. Continual searches for funding to implement this infrastructure are being investigated.

A new allotment site has already been earmarked in the north of Colchester through the planning process, but is very much determined by the housing market as to when it will be handed over to Colchester Borough Council. Not surprisingly as soon as this allotment was made public we started to get a waiting list for the site.

Allotment Strategy Action Points – Allotment Provision

ASAP 1	Actively work with Spatial Policy team to ensure that land within new developments is being considered for allotment use
ASAP 2	Identify additional land in suitable condition for potential allotment use to address existing and projected shortfall in provision against agreed standard
ASAP 3	Improve links with Parish and Town Councils so up-to-date allotment provision records can be maintained
ASAP 4	Assisting Parish and Town councils with the creation and management of allotment sites including sharing of strategy document
ASAP 5	Consider using existing Council owned sites for community gardens or allotments with possibility of reduced infrastructure if funding is not available
ASAP 6	Continue looking for funding sources to install infrastructure for allotment sites

7.1 Waiting Lists

The waiting list for allotments fluctuates, but there is normally approximately 440 people waiting for allotment plots. The system of contacting all allotment holders on the waiting list on an annual basis has worked well and has helped with the quick allocation of allotment plots.

7.2 Allotment Waiting List System

The waiting list is counted and recorded twice a year along with the number of plots which are currently occupied. This data can be seen in Appendix 10 and 11. The allotment waiting list is currently held on an Excel spreadsheet and creates problems when the list is being counted. The spreadsheet has a tab for each allotment site and people are added to the waiting list for that individual allotment site. The issue with this is when people add their name to more than

one allotment site as they may be on the waiting list 19 times, but will only get one allotment plot. This makes the figure for the number of people on the waiting list too large as they get counted once for each site that they are on. To eliminate this, a copy of the waiting list has to be created, then all duplications need to be deleted and the waiting list figure counted and recorded from this list.

If an IT package could be used which would allow a person to be added to the waiting list once, but for more than one site the list would be more accurate and less time consuming to manage. It would also allow for an accurate waiting list figure to be found out at any one point of time, instead of the limitations of twice a year.

The questionnaire sent to people on the allotment waiting list highlighted a desire to be able to check their waiting list position on a more regular basis. Together with the above mentioned IT package, developments into interactive webpages are also being considered so that allotment applicants can monitor their progress on waiting lists online rather than contacting administration staff to check on the database.

7.3 Restrict Waiting Lists

Many people waiting for an allotment will add their name to all waiting lists. On many occasions when the applicant is offered a plot they turn it down as it is not in a convenient area of town. To try and overcome this problem it is proposed that any new person adding their name to the waiting list is limited to three allotment sites. The Council would wish to encourage allotment holders to have an allotment within walking distance to their allotment plot to ensure that allotmenting is as environmentally friendly as possible.

7.4 Closing Waiting Lists

The possibility to close some of the longer allotment waiting lists has been considered. There is particular concern regarding small sites with very few plots such as Goodey Close, Folley Gardens and Littlebury Gardens. After consideration of this and limiting allotment holders to only allowing them to put their names on three allotment waiting lists, these smaller sites may not be so popular. There is also a view that although people are aware that there will be a long wait for some of these smaller sites, as they are warned when their name is added, people like to know that their name is on the list and they may get a plot there at some point in the future. Closing waiting lists will also distort the waiting list statistics, as all people waiting for an allotment will not be recorded.

It is therefore decided that no allotment waiting lists will be closed, but applicants will continue to be advised that there is little movement on the small sites.

7.5 Allotment Leaflet

To assist people adding their name to the allotment waiting list an allotment

map leaflet is sometimes used to help them find out which their nearest allotment site is. This leaflet is in need of a review. As we are proposing restricting the number of sites which an applicant can apply for, the location of an allotment applicant's closest allotment site is vital. It is therefore planned to revise this allotment map leaflet so all allotment sites are marked and further useful information is provided. This further information will be informing allotment applicants of what they can expect from allotmenteeing so they are aware of the hard work involved, and some tips on how to get started. It is intended that this revision can be worked on with the Colchester Allotment Association so they can promote the services which they offer.

This leaflet will also be used to promote the Council's policy on uncultivated plots stating how they are regularly inspected and why there are occasionally some uncultivated plots on sites e.g. due to new tenants taking a plot on. Similar information will also be accessible through the Council's website and specific allotment web pages

7.6 Allotment Site Maps

Allotment site maps which provide the locations and plot numbers of all allotments were revised in 2008. These maps are edited on the Council's mapping system, MapInfo, and then converted to PDF files so they can be printed and sent or e-mailed.

The allotment site maps were drawn primarily using aerial photography of the sites and the existing allotment maps. All maps were then reviewed by the allotment officer and alterations were made according to site knowledge. This means that the maps are not to scale and provide a representation of the site only. New allotment holders trying to identify the boundaries of their allotment are always given the opportunity to meet the allotment site steward on site to ensure the dimensions of the plots are correct.

Many of the allotment plots have not been re-measured for a number of years which means that many of the plot areas are not 100% accurate. If an allotment holder does not feel that their allotment plot is the size that they are paying for, then the plot is always re-measured by the allotment officer. To re-measure all allotment plots would be a big task which the current allotment budget would not allow. However doing this would allow an opportunity to make the allotment mapping more accurate as this would be done through GIS. This could be an option for the future, but the ad-hoc basis in which requests to re-measure plots is manageable at the moment, so this should be explored in future management documents for allotments.

7.7 Online Services

Online services are becoming an increasingly popular method to both find information and to contact people. The current allotment website is very basic and needs to be dramatically improved to meet customer's expectations.

The Council redeveloped their main website to make the interface more

welcoming and less complicated at the end of 2009. It is proposed to build on this foundation and make the allotment web-pages an area which both prospective and existing allotment holders can use on a regular basis. It may be possible for prospective allotment holders to be able to track their progress on waiting lists and this could be linked with the possibility of using a new waiting list system.

Allotment Strategy Action Points – Waiting lists

ASAP 7	Investigate a new IT package for the allotment waiting list and records
ASAP 8	Limiting the amount of waiting lists which prospective allotment holders can add their names to
ASAP 9	All waiting lists are to remain open
ASAP 10	New allotment map leaflet
ASAP 11	Improvements to the Council's website pages for allotments

8. STRAND 2 – SITE MANAGEMENT AND USER INVOLVEMENT

8.1 Allotment Management

Self-Management of Allotment Sites

Self-management of allotment sites in Colchester was looked at when the Colchester Allotment Association was formed. It was decided at that time that it would be preferable for the Council to continue with the management of the sites. The Council has not been approached during this time about any of the 19 allotment sites becoming self-managed.

As the current level of income does not equate to the expenditure of allotment maintenance and management there is little incentive for allotment holders to take on the responsibility for site maintenance and management themselves. This is emphasised by the consultation results which demonstrate that allotment holders are satisfied with the service and cost of plot rental. Self-management of allotment sites will be kept under review during the course of the associated action plan.

8.2 Billing

The allotment payment period is from 1 October until 30 September. This fits in with the end of both the growing season and inspection season and provides adequate time for the plot to be re-let to a new allotment holder for the start of the following growing season.

Allotment billing is currently administered by the Council's Finance department (Resource Management). Any ad-hoc billing i.e. at the start of new tenancies is raised by the Life Opportunities Group Support and actioned by Resource

Management. The receipt of payment can be a drawn out administrative process with a number of payment reminders being sent out by Resource Management, followed by a Notice to Quit being sent out by Parks and Recreation. This delays the process of plots being re-let. As part of this strategy a review of the billing process is to be undertaken to investigate ways in which this can be more efficient.

There are also a number of allotment holders who continually delay payment until a Notice to Quit has been issued. Methods to encourage allotment holders to pay more promptly such as Direct Debit or if allotment holders are struggling financially an instalment programme will be considered.

The current allotment tenancy agreement sets out that if a new tenancy is taken out between October and June, then a full years rent is payable. If a plot is taken on between July and September, then those months are offered rent free and the next rent becomes payable in the following October. This essentially means that if an applicant takes on the plot between July and September they can get up to three months of the tenancy rent free, whereas if an applicant takes on the plot between October and June they are paying for a period of time when they are not in possession of the allotment plot.

This causes particular problems when a plot is being let in May and June as the new allotment holder is paying allotment rent from the previous October. This often causes complaints and where possible offering of vacant plots around this period is refrained. However this does not provide a good solution to this problem as many plots are being left uncultivated during this time. It is proposed to introduce a staggered approach where whole months are paid for during the first year of tenancy, so the new allotment holder is paying for the period of time that they are actually in possession of the allotment.

8.3 Letting of Allotment Plots

Allotment plots are let on a first come first served basis i.e. the person at the top of the waiting list for a particular site gets offered the allotment plot. Ensuring that vacant plots are let as soon as possible is important for several reasons. New allotment holders having a plot as soon as possible ensures good customer service and overgrown plots are often used as a dumping area by other allotment holders so in the long run getting a plot let as soon as possible saves the Council money, as well as ensuring a better service to our customers.

A new standard for the turn around from plots being vacated to them being re-let is to be introduced. This turnaround period will be two months at a maximum and less if possible.

8.4 Joint Tenancies

Joint tenancy agreements are currently allowed on allotment sites. Any allotment holder wishing to officially share an allotment with a member of their family or friend can do so for an administration fee of £10.

Many allotment holders have taken advantage of this for genuine reasons, for example a husband and wife working a plot together meaning that they both have legal rights to the plot. However, there are a number of allotment holders who are doing this to pass their allotment onto a friend and who is therefore avoiding having to go on the allotment waiting list.

It has therefore been decided that following an amnesty of any existing allotment holders who are working the plot jointly, joint tenancies will only be allowed at the start of a tenancy. Therefore no existing allotment holder will be able to add another name onto a tenancy agreement. Additionally existing joint tenancies will be unable to change the names on the allotment agreement e.g. remove one name and add another.

8.5 Inspection Process

Site inspections are carried out on an ad-hoc basis by the allotment officer and are supplemented with regular site inspections during the growing season which are currently undertaken by the site steward for the site.

Site Steward Inspections

The main aim of the site steward inspections is to ensure that the cultivation of plots is being undertaken, but they will also report back any further concerns which they may have e.g. water tanks not working properly.

These plot inspections are very reliant on the site steward undertaking the inspections on time and complying with the definition of a cultivated plot (unless there are known mitigating circumstances). In general this is the case, but some stewards do regularly need to be chased to do this.

Some site stewards have voiced concerns that the inspection period does not last long enough and should continue later in the year. It is however felt by the allotment team that regular plot inspections should only be undertaken during the growing season. In theory once the growing season has finished preparation for the following year should start. However, this rarely happens in reality and many allotment holders generally leave the plot preparation until the following spring. It is therefore considered that the cultivation definition would not be a fair way to assess the plot for the whole year and inspections should cease between September and October.

To keep allotment site stewards up to date with the developments of their allotment site outside of the growing season, an update form will be produced. This will be sent out to site stewards once all Notice to Quits regarding non-payment have been confirmed. This will allow the site steward to see which plots have been given up and re-let so these can be monitored.

The way in which the Council ensures plots are cultivated was very well supported by allotment holders in the survey, which suggests that little change is required to how we manage this. As with other parts of allotment management, we are always looking for ways to improve procedures, and if any

further improvements can be made they will be implemented with immediate effect.

Although the large majority of allotment holders felt that the way in which we manage the inspection system is good, there were a large majority who were concerned about the cultivation of allotment plots. It is felt that this is largely due to there being little knowledge of how the inspection process works. A one-off newsletter will therefore be distributed once this strategy has been produced and will include information regarding inspections.

Over the last few years we have dramatically reduced the time it takes for the Council to take back possession of allotment plots. The current process takes approximately half the previous time with a Notice to Quit giving one month to comply with the cultivation definition followed by a confirmation letter being sent and an additional two weeks being left in case there are any disputes before the plot is re-let. During these two weeks we aim to arrange to have the plot trimmed and any allotment rubbish removed by Veolia Environmental Services. However there can be slight delays with this due to plots becoming vacant during the busy period of the year.

The allotment tenancy agreement states that one months notice is required on the issuing of a Notice to Quit, therefore it would be very difficult to cut this time span down any further.

Mitigating Circumstances

Many allotment holders may think that an allotment plot is abandoned if the allotment holder is having personal problems and unable to work the plot. A mitigating circumstance is a valid reason in terms of the allotment tenancy agreement for not cultivating an allotment plot. However, the term mitigating circumstances can be abused to avoid losing their allotment plot. A more structured approach of what is deemed as a mitigating circumstance needs to be considered.

Valid mitigating circumstances

- Hospitalisation for surgery or other serious complaint
- Short-term medical complaint where advice has been given by a medical practitioner that physical work is not advisable
- Death of a close family member (partner, mother, father, offspring, sibling)

In the above cases allotment holders should try to either ensure that long vegetation on the plot is kept to a minimum or ask a friend or relative to tend the plot for them on a temporary basis until they are well enough to tend the plot themselves. The tending of the plot on a temporary basis does not allow the friend or relative any rights to the allotment plot if the plot is later given up.

In extreme circumstances the Council may assist with keeping the long vegetation on the plot short if there are no friends or relatives to assist. Some

allotment sites have a strong community spirit and a group of allotment holders will ensure that the plot is kept in a satisfactory condition if an allotment holder is unable to tend it. The Council encourages this as a good practice and will provide any help it can to assist in ensuring that allotment sites have this, e.g. helping with funding applications, areas for community facilities.

The possibility of allowing someone on the waiting list to assist an existing allotment holder during a time of illness on a temporary one year basis could be considered in the future.

Continual Notice to Quits for Cultivation

There are a number of allotment plots which regularly get Notice to Quit letters with regards to cultivation. The letters spur allotment holders on for the month they have to ensure the plot meets the cultivation standard and then it falls below expectations again. This has been a problem for some years which the Council, the Colchester Allotment Association and site stewards would like to see tackled. To do this a new system regarding the number of Notice to Quits for non-cultivation that an allotment holder can have before the plot is permanently taken off them is to be introduced. It is therefore proposed that any allotment holder who has two Notice to Quits for non-cultivation sent in a period of three years for a particular allotment plot is removed from that plot.

Notice to Quits for Non-Payment

As with the above Notice to Quits for non-cultivation, there are generally a number of allotment holders who do not pay their annual invoice promptly until a Notice to Quit for non-payment is sent. It is therefore proposed that any allotment holder who is sent a Notice to Quit for non-payment is encouraged to set up a direct debit for future payments. If an allotment holder is sent two Notice to Quits for non-payment within a three year period, then this second Notice to Quit will not be revoked unless both payment is received and a direct debit payment is set up for the future.

Allotment Strategy Action Points – Allotment management

ASAP 12	Re-investigate self-management of allotment sites
ASAP 13	Review of the allotment billing procedure
ASAP 14	Create a staggered approach to payment for the first year of the tenancy
ASAP 15	All vacant plots are to be re-let in a two month period
ASAP 16	Send information to site stewards of plots which have been given up and re-let outside of the growing season
ASAP 17	Produce a one-off newsletter to inform allotment holders about the strategy and include information regarding the allotment inspections

ASAP 18	Following an amnesty, joint tenancies will only be allowed when the allotment agreement is entered into at the start of the tenancy
ASAP 19	New mitigating circumstances for non-cultivation to be used
ASAP 20	Introduction of a second Notice to Quit for non-cultivation in three years standing, and the plot is vacated
ASAP 21	Requirement of direct debit payments for allotment holders who are sent second Notice to Quits for non-payment in three years

8.6 User Involvement

The Council currently has two main ways in which they regularly liaise with allotment holders. This is through the site stewards and the Colchester Allotment Association.

Site Stewards

The Council have a formal meeting with allotment site stewards twice a year to discuss issues on allotment sites and to create a programme of works. These meetings are held in November and April. It is felt that two meetings a year is sufficient as the allotment officer is available for on site meetings to discuss issues throughout the year.

Due to the role the allotment site stewards play it is important that the steward is used as the voice of the allotment holder on that particular site. If this is not the case then the Council are not aware of any issues which may be causing problems. Through the allotment questionnaire which was sent to all allotment holders it can be seen that nearly 75% of allotment holders do know who their steward is, but there is concern that 25% of allotment holders don't. It would therefore be a useful exercise to break these figures down to see if there are particular stewards who are maybe less proactive than others so their profile can be raised.

Colchester Allotment Association

The success of the Colchester Allotment Association is strongly supported by Colchester Borough Council and the Council will help the Association in any way they can.

Support is already provided through the rent free provision of the Bergholt Road Allotment building and the printing and postage of the Association newsletter. However there is a desire to work more closely with the Association which may be instigated through regular meetings to discuss any outstanding issues.

Colchester Borough Council and the Colchester Allotment Association worked together a few years ago to create a welcome pack which is sent out to all new allotment holders. To help assist new allotment holders it is proposed that this welcome pack is reviewed and other methods e.g. short courses are

investigated which will help new and existing allotment holders with creating a successful allotment.

8.8 The Allotment Regeneration Initiative's Allotment Officers Forum (East of England)

The inaugural meeting for this region was set up in March 2010 which was attended by allotment officers from across the region. This provides an opportunity for allotment officers to swap ideas and best practices. It was unanimously agreed at the inaugural meeting that future twice yearly meetings will be set up at different authority areas.

Colchester looks to ensure a representative is present at these meetings and will get involved with hosting the event further down the line.

Allotment Strategy Action Points – User involvement

ASAP 22	Ensure all allotment holders know who their site steward is
ASAP 23	Regular meetings with the Colchester Allotment Association
ASAP 24	To review the welcome pack and consider other methods to help new allotment holders
ASAP 25	To be represented at the Allotment Officer Forum

9.0 Strand 3 - Allotment Infrastructure

9.1 Maintenance Regimes

The results of the allotment holder questionnaire indicate that plot holders generally feel that allotment sites are well maintained. However there needs to be a rolling programme of maintenance to ensure the site infrastructure remains in a good condition.

9.2 Grounds Maintenance

The grounds maintenance on allotment sites is minimal with only grass cutting, hedge cutting and tank maintenance being undertaken.

The grass cutting only occurs on the main paths of the sites whilst the small paths between plots are the maintenance responsibility of allotment holders. Grass cutting is currently undertaken with few issues, with no intentions to change the regime.

In the allotment questionnaire there showed a 65.5% satisfaction with the way hedges are maintained on the allotment sites. However in reality there are some problems, particularly at the Blackheath site with access to the hedge. On the Blackheath site there are a number of sheds, compost bins and other items including glass obstructing the hedge so the grounds maintenance contractor

can not safely access the hedge line to cut it.

To overcome this problem of access, all allotment holders who are given permission to erect a structure on their plot e.g. a shed are given permission with the condition that a gap of 1.5m is left beside boundaries to allow for maintenance. If hedge maintenance continues to be a problem it may be considered that all plots next to hedge boundaries will be required to have a grass path next to it so maintenance can be undertaken.

The current levels of maintenance undertaken as part of the grounds maintenance contract are sufficient. However, if budget constraints arise in the future the possibility of allotment holders undertaking the grounds maintenance requirements may be explored.

The provision and repairs to water tanks will be discussed later in this document.

9.3 Roadway Repairs

Repairs to roadways are currently undertaken on an ad-hoc basis either through site steward requests or the result of Council inspections. Some allotment holders have taken the self-help approach and requested loads of recycled tarmac chipping so minor roadway repairs can be undertaken by themselves. This is supported by the Council.

A more structured repairs programme would make budget management for these repairs more manageable, and will be implemented in budget year 2011/2012. Where deemed appropriate all roadway repairs will be undertaken with recycled products, such as recycled tarmac chipping to ensure this activity is sustainable.

9.4 Water Provision

The standard set in 'Growing in the Community', a guide of good practice for allotment management written by the Local Government Association, states that water tank provision should be six to eight allotment holders per tank. Currently only three allotment sites reach this level, with another three sites having no water supply at all. The sites with no water are either sites with only two or three allotments, or sites with a natural water supply provided by underground streams. The remaining thirteen allotment sites require additional tanks.

Overall an additional fifty-one tanks are required on Council allotments to meet the required LGA "Growing in the Community" standard.

Although the ultimate aim of reaching the good practice figure of one water tank being used by six to eight allotment holders is something which the Council seeks to aspire to, a more realistic figure needs to be considered for this plan. It is proposed that all allotment sites should have a maximum of eleven allotment holders sharing one water tank, which will be worked to for the five year duration of this plan. However, with all full size allotment plots being halved the

number of plots managed is continually rising. To overcome this, the average sized plot has been determined as 159m² which means that an area of approximately 1750m² of allotment plots should be sharing one water tank. This will result in the installation of twenty-four additional water tanks which can be seen on a site basis in Appendix 12.

Installing large numbers of water tanks has several issues. The main issue is the size of the water pipe which is feeding the tanks from the mains. This is usually a small pipe (20mm poly-pipe with a 15mm bore) which therefore results in the tanks taking some time to re-fill during times of high usage e.g. early morning and evenings. The more tanks that are installed, the slower the water flow will be to fill water tanks furthest away from the mains. To increase the size of the pipe filling water tanks will be a costly exercise, but may need to be considered in the future.

A secondary issue to this is the sustainability of looking to encourage allotment holders to use mains water to water plants. To support the Council's 'green credentials' allotment holders will be encouraged to reduce their demand on main water and consider alternative sources such as water butts. It is well known that people generally waste a lot of water whilst watering plants and advice on how to reduce this will be supported by the Council.

Allotment holders are not permitted to attach hosepipes to the water tanks, which is something that allotment holders have mentioned in the questionnaire results they would like to do. The use of hose pipes consumes up to 1000 litres per hour according to the Anglian Water website. It also notes that the amount of water that a sprinkler uses in one hour is what an average family of four would use in 48 hours. To reduce water wastage the Council would not look to allow the attachment of hose pipes to water tanks and the use of sprinklers will be banned (except in circumstances where natural water is being used e.g. Grants Meadow or supply from water butts).

A schedule of water tank maintenance also needs to be considered, especially considering the additional proposed water tanks. This will form part of the action plan for future works.

9.5 Toilet Provision

Over the years there have been an increasing number of comments about installing toilets on allotment sites. This is not something that can be considered from the current allotment revenue budgets.

It is therefore felt that these need to be site led projects to ensure allotment holders gain a sense of ownership, as maintenance of the facility would have to be the responsibility of allotment holders. Once a group of allotment holders approaches the Council regarding the installation of toilet facilities the Council will then be able to assist with the search for external funding and management of the project.

9.6 Allotment Waste

Allotments generate a varying degree of waste depending on the approach of the individual allotment holder and how the plot is managed. The largest expense for clearing waste is when a plot is newly taken on, as many new allotment holders expect the site to be freshly prepared and empty for them to start work. In reality this is rarely the case as a plot is either given up through choice by the allotment holder which normally means that they are struggling with the up keep or through a Notice to Quit for either non-cultivation or non-payment which is sent from the Council. All these reasons for giving up an allotment normally means that they are not being cared for. As a result the Council are often approached to help clear a plot. The Council will assist a new allotment holder if they are struggling by either strimming any long vegetation on the plot down (the arisings are not removed) or taking away any non-compostable waste. Only in exceptional circumstances would the Council undertake any additional works than the above. Soil and other compostable wastes are not taken away from an allotment plot due to both cost and to make the allotment operations as sustainable as possible.

To help with the expectations of new allotment holders a new leaflet is to be created which will explain to prospective allotment holders what they can expect from an allotment and cultivation guidance.

9.7 Carpets

The use of carpets on Colchester allotment sites are not banned, however they can cause problems when they are not used properly and they can leach chemicals into the soil. A ban of carpets has been considered in the past, but it was felt that this would be difficult to implement. A voluntary ban has therefore been considered, which would be used to educate allotment holders of the harm which they can cause and suggest alternative weed suppressants. This is to be considered again in the future through consulting with the Allotment Site Stewards and the Colchester Allotment Association.

9.8 Fly-tipping

Unfortunately, many allotment sites have fly-tipping of some description which is usually done by allotment holders. Where waste is fly-tipped and there is no evidence which allotment holders has done this it is removed as soon as possible by the Council to discourage further tipping. If it turns into an ongoing problem then signage is erected. In these cases the culprit is rarely discovered but all allotment holders are warned that their tenancy agreement is liable to being terminated if caught.

The main way to solve this fly-tipping would be to formalise a waste collection day, or provide skips. Skips were once a feature of Colchester allotment sites. However they started to be abused with household rubbish being dumped in them which resulted in this service being removed. The cost implications of re-introducing these and the likelihood of them being abused again, makes it unlikely that this service will be re-introduced. However, if there is a call for a

one off waste collection day, a vehicle is sent to the site for rubbish to be disposed of legally. This may be requested from approximately two allotment sites a year. To save the waste collection from fly-tipping this is considered appropriate and will be continued.

9.9 Asbestos

Asbestos is a very costly material to dispose of and is found on allotment sites. Some of the older sheds are made either entirely or partly of asbestos. When the structure has come to the end of its life, to avoid the cost of removal it is often fly-tipped on the site for the Council to arrange removal. The Council then has to arrange for a specialised contractor to remove the material and dispose of it at a licensed tip.

The Council would not give permission for any asbestos to be taken onto sites and used to build new sheds etc, but this is very difficult to police if the material is brought onto the site without permission being asked. The existing asbestos sheds may have been there many years and are not causing any problems, so it seems unnecessary to ask for the removal of all asbestos from sites. It is therefore felt that for the time being, asbestos removal is dealt with on the ad-hoc basis in which it is dealt with now. However, if/when a voluntary ban on carpets is introduced this will be re-assessed to see whether this could be managed in a similar way.

9.10 Bonfires

Bonfires are allowed on allotment sites in accordance with the Council's Bonfire Guidelines which are produced by the Environmental Health Team. These guidelines include common sense approaches including checking the wind direction, consulting neighbours, burning dry non-hazardous materials and never leaving a bonfire when alight. Bonfires do still cause problems on an ad-hoc basis as allotment holders invariably do not look at the guidelines which are issued with all new tenancies. On sites where there are continued problems the guidelines are either displayed in the noticeboards on site or a letter is sent to all allotment holders on a particular site. This method of managing this ad-hoc problem is appropriate at this time.

9.11 Leaf Pens

One allotment site currently has a leaf pen which is constructed out of herras fence panels. Every autumn this is filled with leaves collected from Council land to be used as mulch on allotment plots. The site where this leaf pen has been erected has modified the structure further to allow for the storage of a communal manure heap. This has proved very popular and other allotment sites have requested a similar facility. The Council consider this a good facility to provide to allotment holders and it reduces transport costs for a contractor to dispose of these at the green recycling point used several miles away. A structured programme of the installation of these is to be considered as part of this strategy document.

9.12 Consents

There are several items on an allotment where consent is required in writing from the Council before the action is taken. These are the erection of any structure on the plot, planting of fruit trees and keeping of livestock. These issues are discussed here.

Sheds, glasshouses and polytunnels

The erection of sheds, glasshouses and poly-tunnels are all allowed on an allotment plot, but only with prior written permission from the Council. The maximum size shed or glasshouse allowed is 8ft x 6ft and has to be in keeping with the allotment site and not affect any neighbouring plot holders. Due to the nature of poly-tunnels these can be of a larger specification and will in the future be limited to 2.44m x 4.57m (8ft x 15ft). Only one shed, glasshouse and poly-tunnel is allowed on any one plot.

Some existing allotment plots already have sheds, glasshouses or poly-tunnels which are larger than specified above and these will be allowed while in good condition. Any exceptional circumstances to the above are at the discretion of the allotment officer.

An increasing number of requests for either communal space and/or sheds are being requested by allotment holders. Although this is usually on a vacant allotment plot, the Council will work with allotment holders to see how these facilities can be accommodated. For example if one plot is being taken out of use for a communal area, the Council will look to see if another allotment plot can be created to compensate for this. Communal sheds are also not subjected to a size limit. Any requests submitted will be the decision of the allotment officer as to whether the specification and location of the shed is acceptable. The Council will always look to work with allotment holders to increase the sites community spirit.

Fruit Trees

Fruit trees require permission before they planted. No standard fruit trees will be given permission to be planted. However, as per Colchester's Tree Policy the following priorities will be met:

- The Council will support the planting of small espalier fruit trees and fruit bushes on allotment plots by tenants, but not the planting of large standard fruit trees.
- Where space permits, and where there is support from allotment tenants, land unsuitable for cultivation may be used for the planting of community orchards or short rotation coppice

Miniature varieties of trees such as step over trees will also be considered, but will ultimately depend on its overall mature size. No trees with a mature height of 1.8m or over will be considered, and permission will only be granted for three trees per allotment plot (with the exception of trained varieties).

Hens and Rabbits

The Council is occasionally approached about the keeping of hens on allotment plots. According to the allotment tenancy agreement written permission has to be obtained from the Council before livestock can be brought onto the site. The Allotment Act 1950 states that rabbits and hens (not cockerels) can be kept on an allotment provided that they are kept in a manner so as not to prejudice health or cause nuisance.

The Council therefore follows this legislation and only allotment holders who can show a thorough knowledge and have undertaken research into how these animals should be kept will be given permission to do so. Guidance given in *Growing in the Community* (2nd edition) by the Local Government Association include giving consideration to:

- DEFRA regulations or restrictions;
- Animal welfare and husbandry;
- Specification and construction of shelters, including security of the structure;
- Storage of animal feed;
- Rodents and other vermin;
- Noise, smell or other nuisance or annoyance;
- Site security.

Although the Council receives approximately one or two requests per year, over the past four years only one allotment holder has showed enough knowledge to be given permission.

To date the Council has not been approached about keeping rabbits on an allotment plot. If this arises in the future similar considerations will have to be demonstrated in a written request as per hens.

Bees

Bees are another popular request especially with the current decline in bee populations. For several years one allotment site had several hives in their conservation area. The hives and allotment holders worked well together for a number of years, but the bees then became restless and started regularly stinging allotment holders so the hives were removed. There are currently no bee hives on any Council allotment sites.

Due to the increasing number of requests for bee hives to be placed on allotment sites a draft procedure was produced and sent to the local bee keeping association for their advice and guidance. The advice received back suggested that allotments were not an appropriate location for hives and the Council therefore followed their advice and therefore does not allow bees on allotment sites. This is something which will be reviewed periodically in the future.

Allotment Strategy Action Points – Allotment infrastructure

ASAP 26	Continuation of the ban of hosepipes and sprinklers from the mains water tanks provided by the Council
ASAP 27	Meet a standard of one water tank per 1750m ² of allotment plots
ASAP 28	Introduce a maintenance regime for water tanks
ASAP 29	Investigate further a reduce rate scheme water butt scheme for allotment holders
ASAP 30	Introduce a voluntary ban on carpets and asbestos
ASAP 31	Structured programme for the erection of leaf pens
ASAP 32	Fixed maximum size for sheds, glasshouses and poly-tunnels
ASAP 33	Encourage community spaces on allotments including sheds
ASAP 34	No standard fruit trees permitted, but relax restrictions in terms of miniature varieties
ASAP 35	Regularly review bee keeping on allotments

9.13 Increased Biodiversity

Two allotment sites currently have conservation areas. Grants Meadow allotments has an area of wetland habitat, where the land is unsuitable for allotment plots. There have been a number of species reported here including a cuckoo wasp (*Hedychrum niemelai*) which is a Red Data Book (RDB3) species, crickets, butterflies, craneflies, hoverflies and water ladybirds. An invertebrate survey also noted a colony of Weasels Snout. A copy of the most recent invertebrate survey undertaken in 2007 is in Appendix 13.

Irvine Road Allotment has a small conservation area of land that was set aside when allotments were in decline with one third of the area being planted with trees which now makes the land unusable for allotments. However the remaining two thirds is a grassland habitat which could be re-established into allotments or provided as publically accessible open space.

Drury Road Allotment has a stag beetle pyramid on a small piece of land within the allotment site. This was installed by an allotment holder who asked permission to build this. After consulting with other allotment holders on the site permission was given.

Small wildlife enhancing projects suggested by allotment holders are always considered to help both with the biodiversity of the site and to create a sense of pride and belonging amongst allotment holders.

One site, New Fairfield Allotment has an orchard area on a piece of unusable allotment land on the site. The trees currently in the area are very old and not very productive. The allotment holders of the site approached the Council

regarding re-developing this area to make it a communal space and to renew the fruit trees and to plant various fruit bushes. The Council are now working with the allotment holders to obtain some external funding for the project so their plans can be implemented.

Allotment Strategy Action Points – Increased biodiversity

ASAP 36	Promote and enhance existing and new conservation areas where land is not appropriate for allotmenting
ASAP 37	In accordance with Colchester's Tree Policy continue to promote orchard growing of trees on land not appropriate for allotmenting

10. Strand 4—Income and expenditure—Financial Strategy

10.1 Allotment Rent

Allotment rents are approved by the Portfolio Holder of the service in tranches of five years. Rents have been proposed for the five year period 2009-2014.

The previous approach regarding an increase in rental was to reduce the subsidy to avoid allotments being an overall cost to the Council (as referred to in allotment rent page 14). Not only does the current pricing policy fail to recover direct costs but it also means that although there is demand for additional allotments, any new provision would be an additional pressure on Council budgets at a time when corporate budgets are under major pressure due to the economic conditions.

With the desire to improve facilities and infrastructure to meet LGA guidance e.g. fencing, water tanks, and to investigate the provision of more allotments to meet demand, consideration needs to be given to the availability of funding to meet the cost of installation and maintenance of these improvements to offer a borough wide consistency of service provision.

With the increasing demand for allotments and the high levels of satisfaction, together with the consultation responses that demonstrated an overwhelming acceptance that allotments offered value for money, it should be possible for the service to cover its direct costs and generate some additional operating funds that can be used within the service to deliver a programme of improvements to bring the levels of allotments in line with standards being recommended in the LGA guidance.

It is proposed to progress the approach to recover the direct costs of the allotment service by introducing a charging strategy that will recover allotment direct costs and generate an additional budget to deliver consistent standards in line with LGA recommendations and support a programme of works that are discussed and agreed jointly with the Colchester Allotment Association.

10.2 Concessionary charges

The decision was made in August 2008 to remove the concession for new plot holders on the basis of age over 60/65 and to focus the eligibility criteria on those experiencing financial hardship and claiming benefits such as income support, disability allowance, job seekers allowance (income based), guaranteed pension credit or working tax credit.

Removal of the concessionary rate for allotments on the basis of age initially seems to be a harsh approach until it is recognised that there is little justification for such a concession. Becoming 60 or 65 does not automatically trigger an access or equality issue requiring the need for a concession and it is considered much more equitable to offer the concessionary rate to all plot holders regardless of age who are in receipt of a benefit demonstrating their financial hardship.

It is considered a more equitable and relevant approach to offer a concession to those with evidence of financial hardship rather than age. It is proposed to remove the concession for existing plot holders on the basis of age over 60/65 but to continue to make concessions available to those claiming benefits.

The removal of the age concession for existing plot holders will generate some additional income but it is expected that a proportion of those plot holders will continue to be eligible for a concessionary rate by providing evidence of financial hardship. Based on nationally gathered information it is calculated that 30% of senior citizens may be eligible for a concession due to financial hardship.

Allotment Strategy Action Points – Financial Strategy

ASAP 38	Introduce a charging strategy that will recover allotment direct costs and generate an additional budget to deliver allotment improvements
ASAP 39	Develop and deliver a programme of works for consistent standards in line with LGA recommendations that are discussed and agreed jointly with the Colchester Allotment Association.
ASAP 40	Extend the review of concessions to offer concessions to all allotment holders with evidence of financial hardship and remove the concession based solely on age.

Action Plan

Allotment Vision- The 4 Strands	ASAP Reference	Aim	Timescale (Financial Year)					Partners	Funding	Complete
			2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15			
STRAND 1: ALLOTMENT PROVISION AND WAITING LIST MANAGEMENT										
Allotment Provision	ASAP 1	Actively work with Spatial Policy team to ensure that land within new developments is being considered for allotment use	x	x	x	x	x	– Planning	Staff time	
	ASAP 2	Identify additional land in suitable condition for potential allotment use to address existing and projected shortfall in provision against agreed standard	x	x	x	x	x	– Planning – Contaminated Land Officer – External bodies e.g. army, university – CBH & Private landowners	Staff time	
	ASAP 3	Improve links with Parish and Town Councils so up-to-date allotment provision records can be maintained	x	x	x	x	x	– Town and Parish Councils	Staff time	

Allotment Vision- The 4 Strands	ASAP Reference	Aim	Timescale (Financial Year)					Partners	Funding	Complete
			2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15			
	ASAP 4	Assisting Parish and Town councils with the creation and management of allotment sites including sharing of strategy document	x	x	x	x	x	- Town and Parish Councils - Contaminated Land Officer	Staff time	
	ASAP 5	Consider using existing Council owned sites for community gardens or allotments with possibility of reduced infrastructure if funding is not available	x	x	x	x	x	- Contaminated Land Officer	External/ Section 106	
	ASAP 6	Continue looking for funding sources to install infrastructure for new allotment sites	x	x	x	x	x	- P&R only	External/ Section 106	
Waiting Lists	ASAP 7	Investigate a new IT package for the allotment waiting list and records	x	x	x	x	x	- ITC	Revenue	
	ASAP 8	Limiting the amount of waiting lists which prospective allotment holders can add their names to	x					- LO group support	N/A	

Allotment Vision- The 4 Strands	ASAP Reference	Aim	Timescale (Financial Year)					Partners	Funding	Complete
			2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15			
	ASAP 9	All waiting lists are to remain open	x	x	x	x	x	-LO group support	N/A	
	ASAP 10	New allotment map leaflet			x			-Colchester Allotment Association	Revenue	
	ASAP 11	Improvements to the Council's website pages for allotments	x	x				-P&R only	Staff time	
STRAND 2: SITE MANAGEMENT AND USER INVOLVEMENT										
Allotment Management	ASAP 12	Re-investigate self management of allotment sites			x			-Colchester Allotment Association	Staff time	
	ASAP 13	Review of the allotment billing procedure		x				- Resource Management -LO group support	Staff time	
	ASAP 14	Create a staggered approach to payment for the first year of the tenancy	x	x	x	x	x	-LO group support	Staff time	
	ASAP 15	All vacant plots are to be re-let in a two month period	x	x	x	x	x	-LO group support	N/A	

Allotment Vision- The 4 Strands	ASAP Reference	Aim	Timescale (Financial Year)					Partners	Funding	Complete
			2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15			
	ASAP 16	Send information to site stewards of plots which have been given up and re-let outside of the growing season	x	x	x	x	x	-P&R only	Staff time	
	ASAP 17	Produce a one-off newsletter to inform allotment holders about the strategy and include information regarding the allotment inspections	x	x				-P&R only	Revenue/ Staff time	
	ASAP 18	Following an amnesty, joint tenancies will only be allowed when the allotment agreement is entered into at the start of the tenancy	x	x				-LO group support	N/A	
	ASAP 19	New mitigating circumstance for non-cultivation to be used		x				-P&R only	N/A	
	ASAP 20	Introduction of a second Notice to Quit for non-cultivation in three years standing, and the plot is vacated		x				-LO group support	N/A	

Allotment Vision- The 4 Strands	ASAP Reference	Aim	Timescale (Financial Year)					Partners	Funding	Complete
			2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15			
	ASAP 21	Requirement of direct debit payments for allotment holders who are sent second Notice to Quits for non-payment in three years		x				-LO group support	N/A	
User Involvement	ASAP 22	Ensure all allotment holders know who their site steward is		x				-Site stewards	N/A	
	ASAP 23	Regular meetings with the Colchester Allotment Association	x	x	x	x	x	-Colchester Allotment Association	Staff time	
	ASAP 24	To review the welcome pack and consider other methods to help new allotment holders			x			-Colchester Allotment Association	Staff time	
	ASAP 25	To be represented at the Allotment Officer Forum	x	x	x	x	x	-P&R only	Staff time	
STRAND 3: ALLOTMENT INFRASTRUCTURE										
Allotment Infrastructure	ASAP 26	Continuation of the ban of hoses/pipes and sprinklers from the mains water tanks provided by the Council.	x	x	x	x	x	-P&R only	N/A	
	ASAP 27	Meet a standard of one water tank per 1750m ² of allotment plots	x	x	x	x	x	-P&R only	Revenue	

Allotment Vision- The 4 Strands	ASAP Reference	Aim	Timescale (Financial Year)					Partners	Funding	Complete
			2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15			
	ASAP 28	Introduce a maintenance regime for water tanks			x	x	x	P&R only	Revenue	
	ASAP 29	Investigate further a reduced rate water butt scheme for allotment holders			x			– Strategic Waste – Colchester Allotment Association	External funding	
	ASAP 30	Introduce a voluntary ban of carpets and asbestos	x					– Allotment Association – Site Stewards	Staff time	
	ASAP 31	Structured programme for the erection of leaf pens	x	x	x	x	x	– P&R only	Revenue	
	ASAP 32	Fixed maximum size for sheds, glasshouses and poly-tunnels	x					– P&R only	N/A	
	ASAP 33	Encourage community spaces on allotments including sheds	x	x	x	x	x	– P&R only	N/A	
	ASAP 34	No standard fruit trees permitted, but relax restrictions in terms of miniature varieties	x	x	x	x	x	– P&R only	Staff time	

Allotment Vision- The 4 Strands	ASAP Reference	Aim	Timescale (Financial Year)					Partners	Funding	Complete
			2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15			
	ASAP 35	Regularly review bee keeping on allotments			x			-Essex Beekeeping Association	Staff time	
Biodiversity	ASAP 36	Promote and enhance existing and new conservation areas where land is not appropriate for allotmentteering	x	x	x	x	x	-P&R only	External/ Revenue	
	ASAP 37	In accordance with the Council's Tree Policy continue to promote orchard growing of trees on land not appropriate for allotmentteering	x	x	x	x	x	-P&R only	External	
STRAND 4: INCOME AND EXPENDITURE – FINANCIAL STRATEGY										
Financial strategy	ASAP 38	Introduce a charging strategy that will recover allotment direct costs and generate an additional budget to deliver allotment improvements		x				-P&R only	Income	

Allotment Vision- The 4 Strands	ASAP Reference	Aim	Timescale (Financial Year)					Partners	Funding	Complete
			2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15			
	ASAP 39	Develop and deliver a programme of works for consistent standards in line with LGA recommendations that are discussed and agreed jointly with the Colchester Allotment Association		x	x	x	x	–Colchester Allotment Association	Revenue	
	ASAP 40	Extend the review of concessions to offer concessions to all allotment holders with evidence of financial hardship and remove the concession based solely on age		x				–LO group support	Income	

Glossary

P&R	Parks and Recreation
ICT	ICT—Business Support and IT Management
LO Group Support	Life Opportunities Group Support

Appendix 1: Benefits of allotment gardening

Allotments and wellbeing
Social benefits <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wealth and diversity of skills amongst allotment holders who pass this on (educational benefits) • Social interaction between all areas of society • Community spirit • Educational benefits for young people e.g. better understanding of where food comes from Economic benefits <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cheaper food through growing your own Environmental benefits <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organic gardening • Recycling of materials including composting
Food, health and exercise
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Source of healthy local food <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Better diet and health • Physical exercise • Therapeutic benefits • Mental health benefits • Physical benefits for the physically disabled • Promoting preventative health
Leisure, culture and cohesive communities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Links with community strategies • Links with cultural strategies • Bringing together different cultural and ethical backgrounds • Benefits to the elderly (who generally do not benefit from subsidised sports provision) • Open days and Big Lunch programme
Sustaining the environment
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased biodiversity including habitats for wildlife • Reducing food miles <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Positive impacts on global warming • Organic food growing • Composting
Green space
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preserves green spaces in urban areas • Inclusion within Planning Policy Guidance Note 17 • Inclusion within Open Space Strategies

Appendix 2: Allotment Expenditure and Income

Expenditure

Budget Code		Budget
1515 2000	R&M Response - General	£9,200
1515 2129	PPM – Legionella Testing	£2,000
1515 2400	Grnds – R & M General	£1,600
1515 2410	Grnds – Programme Works	£17,900
1515 2411	Grnds – Schedule of Rates	£9,400
1515 2560	Water – Metered	£4,000
1515 4040	General – Equip, Tools, Materials	£1,000
1515 4455	External Printing - Alphaprint	£200
	TOTAL	£45,300

Income

Budget Code		Budget
1515 9272	Fees - Licences	£3,900
1515 9305	Charges – General Lettings	£27,000
1515 9453	Rents - Land	£200
	TOTAL	£31,100

Appendix 3: Allotments Rents Oct 09– Sept 14

Allotment plots with water (full price)

Period	Plot rent per m2	Water charge per m2	Total plot rent
Oct 09 – Sept 10	£0.16	£0.07	£0.23
Oct 10 – Sept 11	£0.18	£0.08	£0.26
Oct 11 – Sept 12	£0.20	£0.09	£0.29
Oct 12 – Sept 13	£0.22	£0.10	£0.32
Oct 13 – Sept 2014	£0.24	£0.11	£0.35

Allotment plots with water (concessionary rate)

Period	Plot rent per m2	Water charge per m2	Total plot rent
Oct 09 – Sept 10	£0.12	£0.07	£0.19
Oct 10 – Sept 11	£0.14	£0.08	£0.22
Oct 11 – Sept 12	£0.16	£0.09	£0.25
Oct 12 – Sept 13	£0.18	£0.10	£0.28
Oct 13 – Sept 2014	£0.20	£0.11	£0.31

Allotment plots without water (full price)

Period	Total plot rent per m2
Oct 09 – Sept 10	£0.16
Oct 10 – Sept 11	£0.18
Oct 11 – Sept 12	£0.20
Oct 12 – Sept 13	£0.22
Oct 13 – Sept 2014	£0.24

Allotment plots without water (concessionary rate)

Period	Total plot rent per m2
Oct 09 – Sept 10	£0.12
Oct 10 – Sept 11	£0.14
Oct 11 – Sept 12	£0.16
Oct 12 – Sept 13	£0.18
Oct 13 – Sept 2014	£0.20

Appendix 4: Grounds Maintenance Regime

Grass Cutting

Grass cutting on allotments is undertaken on the main paths around the site. The smaller paths between allotments are the responsibility of allotment holders as they form part of the allotment plot.

The specification for the grass cutting undertaken by Veolia Environmental Services is

Prestige grass cutting (Type G)	
Operation	Frequency/type
Mow grass – Summer	10
Mow grass – Winter	As required
Grass collection	No
Mower type	Rotary
Grass edging	10
Area (m ²)	38001

Hedge Cutting

All mature hedges are trimmed manually by hand or by hand held hedge trimmers, whilst establishing hedges are pruned with either secateurs or long handled pruners. Hedges either have their top and two sides cut, top and one side cut or just the one side cut. The maintenance of a hedge depends on the ownership and its location. Hedge cutting is not carried out during the Spring to allow birds to nest without being disturbed.

The specification for hedge cutting undertaken by Veolia Environmental Services is below:

Cut formal and establishing hedge	
Operation	Frequency/Type
Cut hedge – Summer	1 (June)
Cut hedge – Winter	1 (October)

Maintaining Water Tanks

There are 67 water tanks currently located on allotment sites. These tanks all receive maintenance on an annual basis. This maintenance includes the turning off of all water at the request of the allotment officer (usually at the start of winter frosts), then just before the water is turned back on (when the last frost has passed) the

tanks are emptied of sediment and debris and disposed off site. This maintenance is undertaken by Veolia Environmental Services.

Maintaining water tanks	
Operation	Frequency/Type
Water turned on	At the request of the allotment officer
Water turned off	At the request of the allotment officer
Clean water tanks	To be undertaken before the water is turned on

Water tanks are also regularly inspected for Legionellosis and water hygiene as part of a Council wide programme of maintenance. The testing is currently undertaken by H₂O total air and water hygiene maintenance on behalf of Colchester Borough Council. This testing involves monthly temperature checks and six monthly water trough inspections.

Appendix 5: Allotment Holder Questionnaire

Colchester Allotment Questionnaire

To determine the future management of Colchester's allotment sites we are sending out allotment questionnaires to all allotment holders with their annual invoices. The results of your feedback will help determine how our allotments are run in the future and where you feel improvements need to be made.

This questionnaire can be completed and sent back in the enclosed pre-paid envelope or alternatively it can be completed online by visiting the allotment pages at www.colchester.gov.uk.
Please return this questionnaire by 15 November 2009.

As a thank you to all allotment holders who complete and return the questionnaire we are running a prize draw to win a £20 garden centre voucher. If you would like to be entered into the draw don't

On which allotment site/s do you have an allotment plot/s?

Bergholt Road <input type="checkbox"/>	Blackheath <input type="checkbox"/>	Drury Road <input type="checkbox"/>	East Bay <input type="checkbox"/>
Folley Gardens <input type="checkbox"/>	Goodey Close <input type="checkbox"/>	Grants Meadow <input type="checkbox"/>	Hazell Avenue <input type="checkbox"/>
Highfield Drive <input type="checkbox"/>	Irvine Road <input type="checkbox"/>	Lexden <input type="checkbox"/>	Littlebury Gardens <input type="checkbox"/>
Mercers Farm <input type="checkbox"/>	New Fairfield <input type="checkbox"/>	Notleys <input type="checkbox"/>	Severalls <input type="checkbox"/>
Sheepen Road <input type="checkbox"/>	Stanway <input type="checkbox"/>	The Willows <input type="checkbox"/>	

How many allotment plots do you rent? 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 + ☐

Do you feel that allotments offer value for money? Yes ☐ No ☐

What is the main reason for having your allotment?

Fresh air ☐ Exercise ☐ Social ☐ Fresh fruit & vegetables ☐ Hobby ☐
Other - please specify

How do you normally travel to your allotment plot?

Walk ☐ Bike ☐ Car ☐ Bus ☐
Other - please specify

How far do you travel from home to your allotment site?

Less than 1 mile ☐ 1 - 2 miles ☐ 2 - 5 miles ☐ Over 5 miles ☐

How often do you visit your allotment plot during the growing season?

Daily ☐ More than once a week ☐ Once a week ☐ Less than once a week ☐

Uncultivated plots

An allotment plot is considered cultivated if: *50% or more of the plot is in productive use, i.e. perennial fruit, flowers or vegetables, or soil overturned. There should be little or no long vegetation on the*

Do you think that this level of cultivation is: Too low ☐ About right ☐ Too high ☐

The plot holder of any plot falling below this definition of a cultivated plot during the growing season is sent a Notice to Quit with the condition that if it meets the above definition in one month the Notice to Quit is revoked.

Do you think that this is a fair way to ensure plots are cultivated appropriately?

Yes ☐ No ☐ No opinion ☐

Allotment Management

How satisfied are you with the below?

The maintenance of the main paths and tracks (where applicable)

Very satisfied ☐ Satisfied ☐ Dissatisfied ☐ Very dissatisfied ☐ No opinion ☐

The maintenance of the boundary fences/walls (where applicable)

Very satisfied ☐ Satisfied ☐ Dissatisfied ☐ Very dissatisfied ☐ No opinion ☐

The maintenance of the boundary hedges (where applicable)

Very satisfied ☐ Satisfied ☐ Dissatisfied ☐ Very dissatisfied ☐ No opinion ☐

The provision of water on the allotment (where applicable)

Very satisfied ☐ Satisfied ☐ Dissatisfied ☐ Very dissatisfied ☐ No opinion ☐

How overgrown/vacant plots are dealt with

Very satisfied ☐ Satisfied ☐ Dissatisfied ☐ Very dissatisfied ☐ No opinion ☐

How queries/complaints are dealt with by Council staff

Very satisfied ☐ Satisfied ☐ Dissatisfied ☐ Very dissatisfied ☐ No opinion ☐

The security of allotment sites

Very satisfied ☐ Satisfied ☐ Dissatisfied ☐ Very dissatisfied ☐ No opinion ☐

Do you know who your Allotment Site steward is?

Yes ☐ No ☐

What do you think are the main responsibilities of an Allotment Site Steward?

Would you be interested in being involved with Allotment Watch (run by Essex Police)? Yes ☐ No ☐

If yes, are you happy for your contact details to be passed onto Essex Police who manage Allotment Watch? If yes please give your details Yes ☐ No ☐

Name

Address

Telephone

Email

What do you consider would be the greatest improvement that could be made to allotments in Colchester?

Allotment Provision

To help address the demand for allotments in Colchester we have recently implemented some changes to how allotment plots are allocated. Do you agree with the following?

All full size vacant allotment plots are halved in size and then offered to new allotment holders?

Totally agree ☐ Agree ☐ Disagree ☐ Totally disagree ☐ No opinion ☐

The minimum size of an allotment plot when halving a whole plot is 100m². Do you think...

That 100m² is too big ☐ That 100m² is too small ☐ That 100m² is just right ☐

Prospective allotment holders who are waiting for an allotment and live in the borough of Colchester are given priority to people who want an allotment and live outside of the borough

Totally agree ☐ Agree ☐ Disagree ☐ Totally disagree ☐ No opinion ☐

About you

Which age bracket do you fit into?

20 or under ☐ 20 - 29 ☐ 30 - 39 ☐ 40 - 49 ☐ 50 - 59 ☐ 60 - 69 ☐
70 - 79 ☐ 80 + ☐

Is/are the predominant allotment holder/s working on the plot

Male ☐ Female ☐ Combined ☐

Do you garden the allotment plot

Alone ☐ Jointly with a friend or relative ☐ As a family ☐ As a group ☐

Do you consider yourself as having a disability?

Yes ☐ No ☐

The Disability Rights Commission (DCR) defines Disability as 'A physical or mental impairment which has substantial and long term adverse effect on a person's ability to carry out day to day activities'.

What is your employment status?

Full time employment ☐

Part time employment ☐

Retired ☐

Unemployed ☐

Permanently sick/disabled ☐

Student ☐

Other please specify

Which of the following best describes your ethnic group?

White / White British ☐

Black / Black British ☐

Asian / Asian British ☐

Chinese ☐

Mixed background ☐

Other ☐

If 'Other' please state

If you have any further comments about your allotment site or how the allotments are managed, then please write below:

If you wish to be entered into the prize draw and win a £20 garden centre voucher please provide your details below.

Name

Address

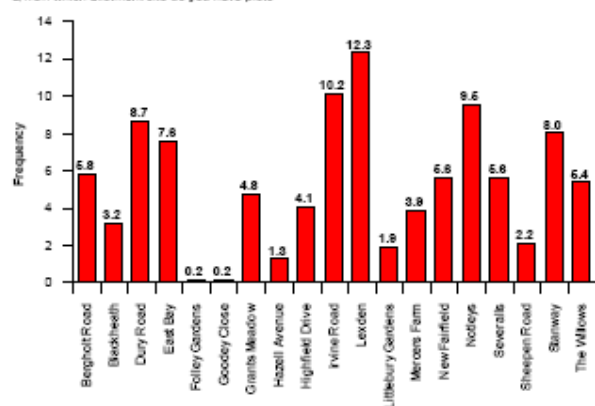
Postcode

Email

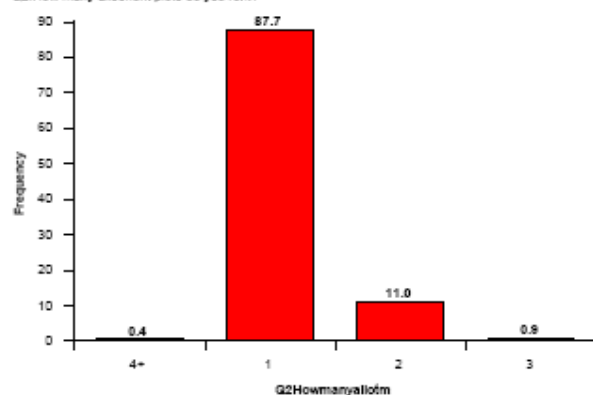
Thank you for taking the time to fill in the questionnaire

Appendix 6: Summary of Allotment Holder questionnaire results

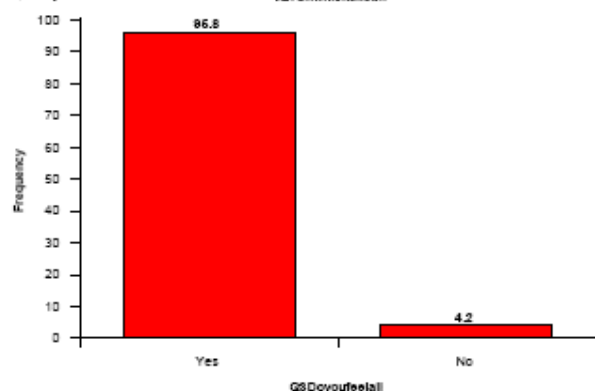
Q1. On which allotment site do you have plots



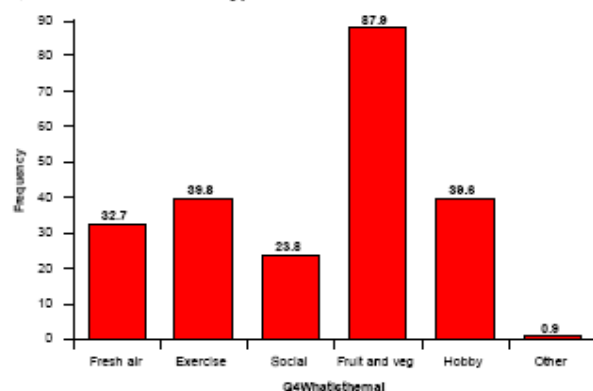
Q2. How many allotment plots do you rent?



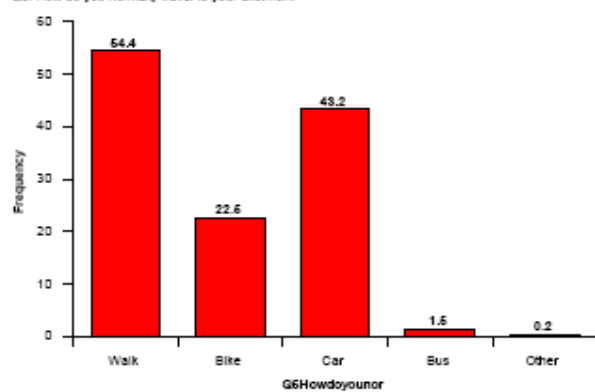
Q3. Do you feel allotments are value for money? Q3.1 On whole allotm



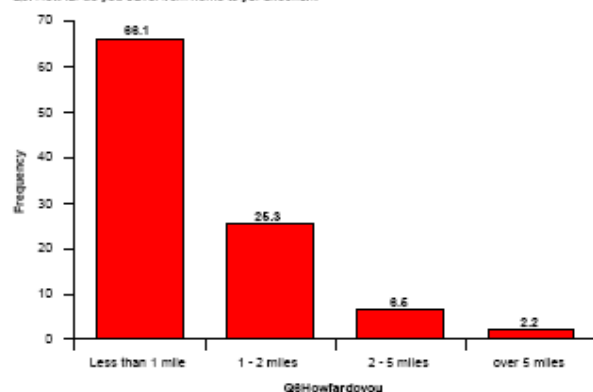
Q4. What is the main reason for having your allotment?



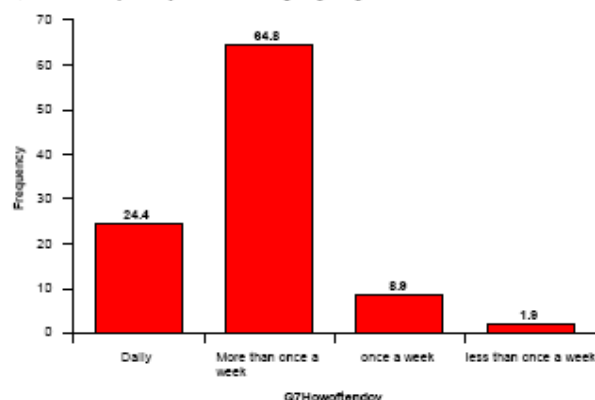
Q5. How do you normally travel to your allotment



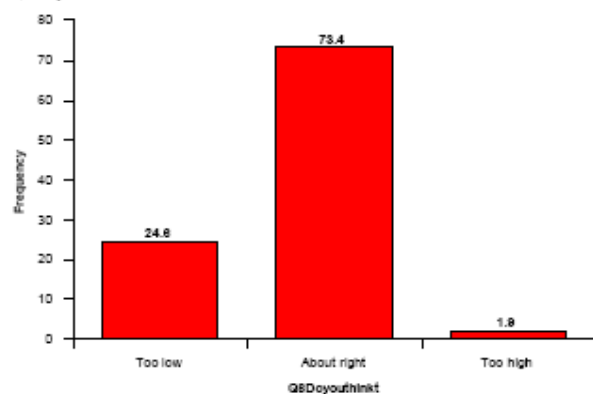
Q6. How far do you travel from home to your allotment



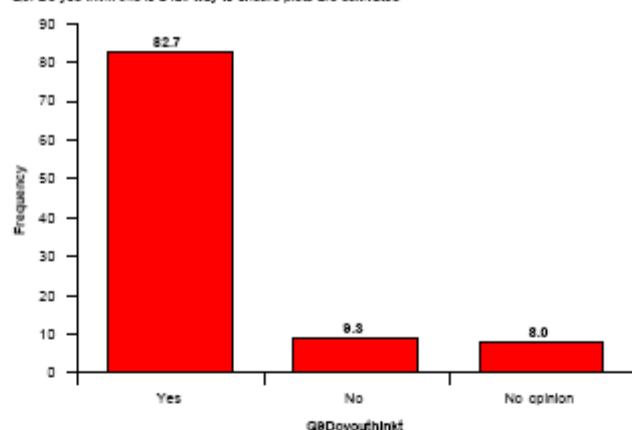
Q7. How often do you visit your allotment during the growing season?



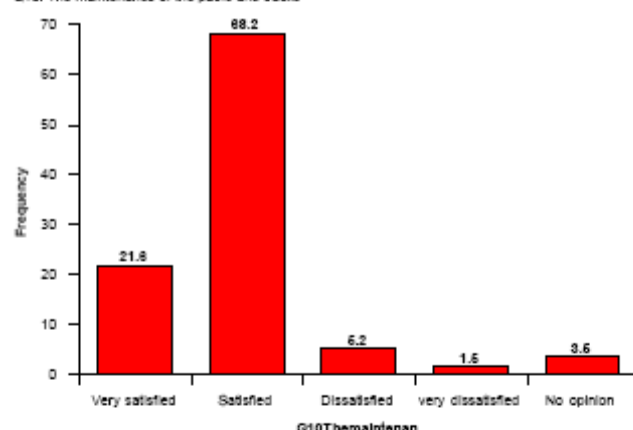
Q8. Do you think that this level of cultivation is



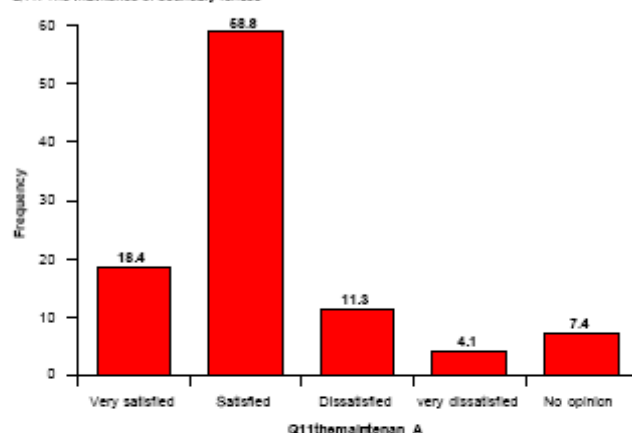
Q9. Do you think this is a fair way to ensure plots are cultivated



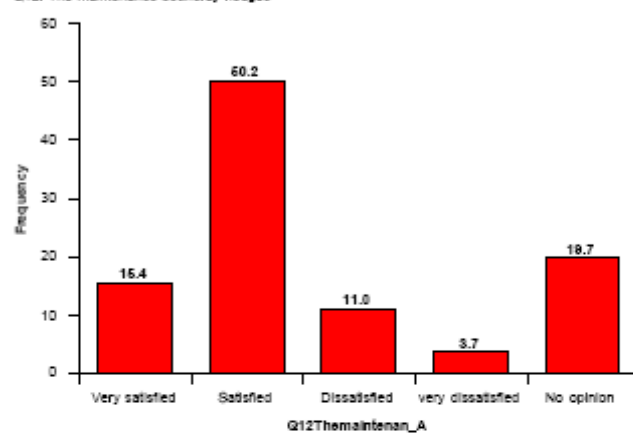
Q10. The maintenance of the paths and tracks



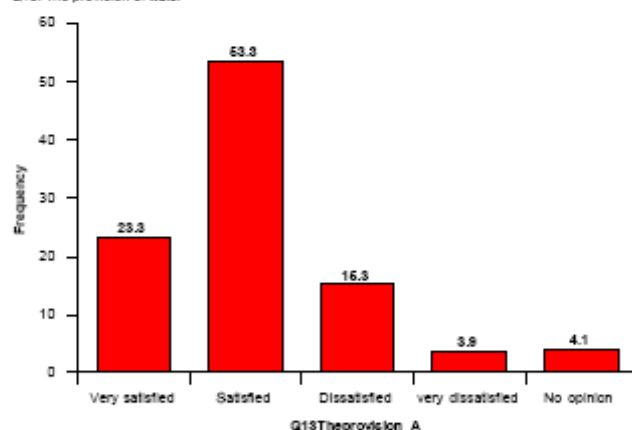
Q11. The maintenance of boundary fences



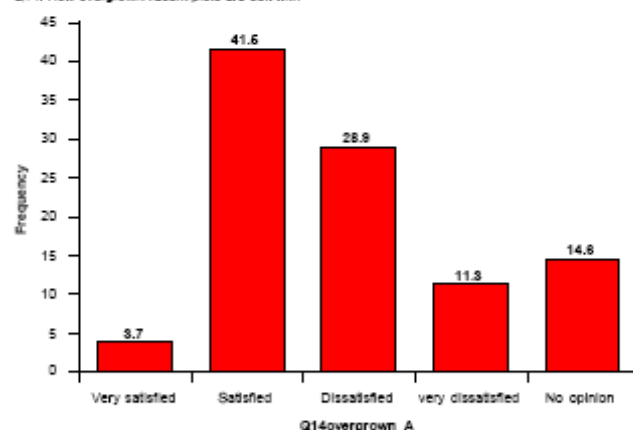
Q12. The maintenance boundary hedges



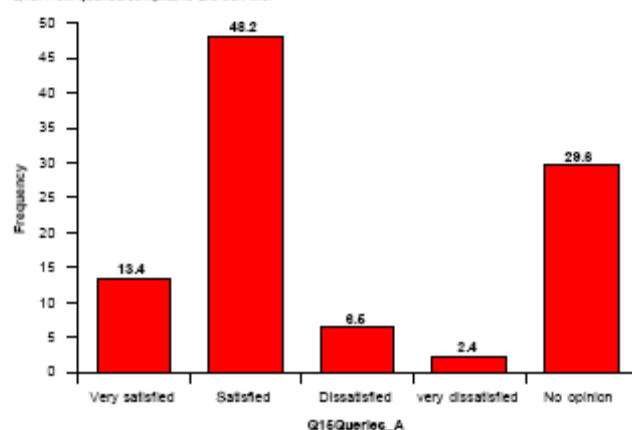
Q13. The provision of water



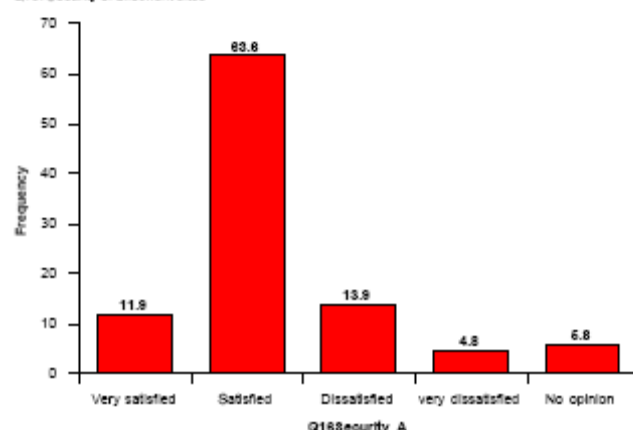
Q14. How overgrown/vacant plots are dealt with



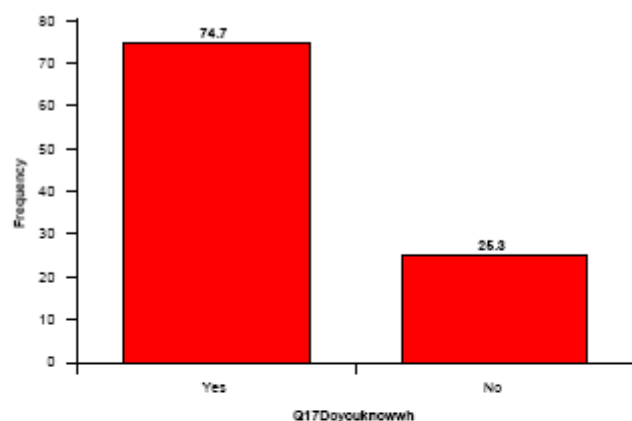
Q15. How queries/complaints are dealt with



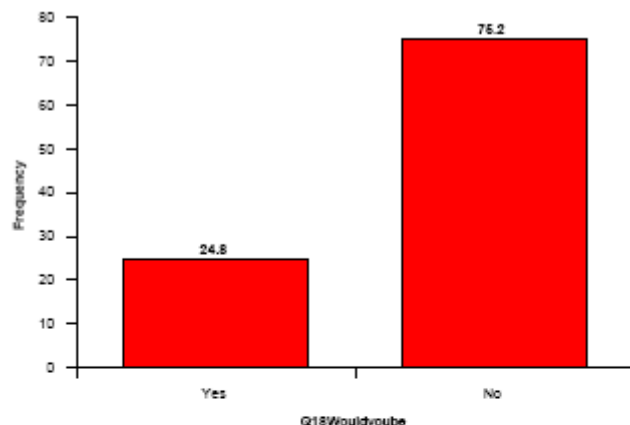
Q16. Security of allotment sites



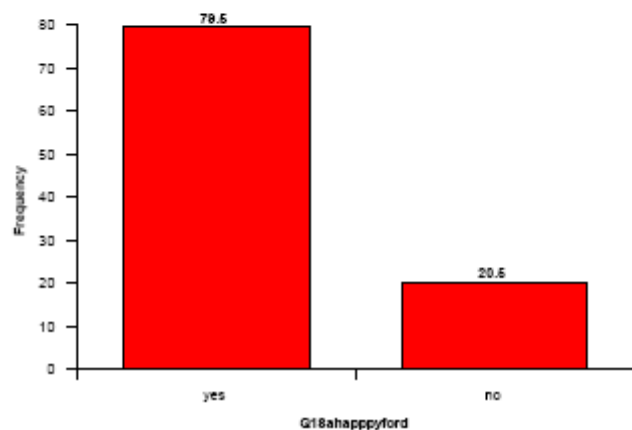
Q17. Do you know who your allotment steward is



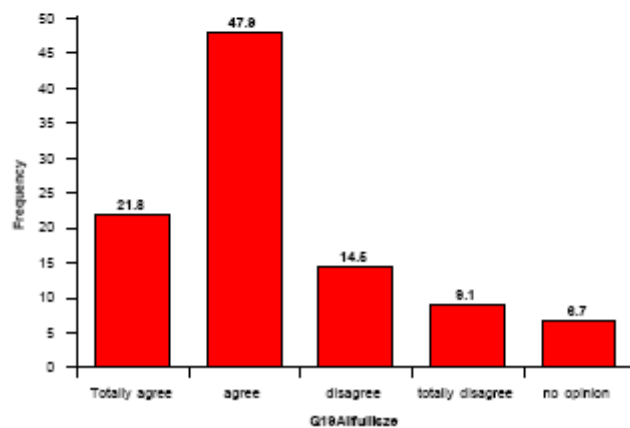
Q18. Would you be interested in being involved in allotment watch



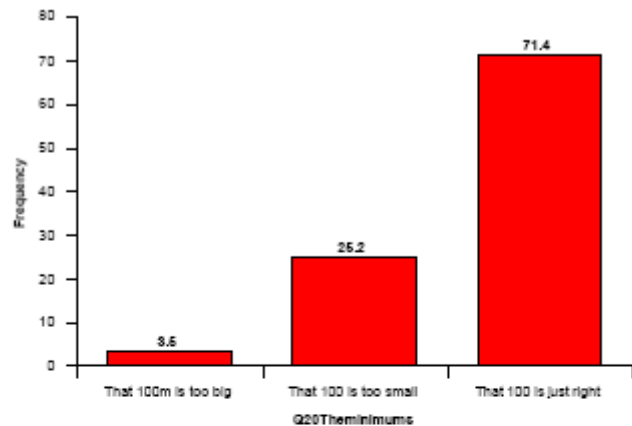
Q18a. happy for details



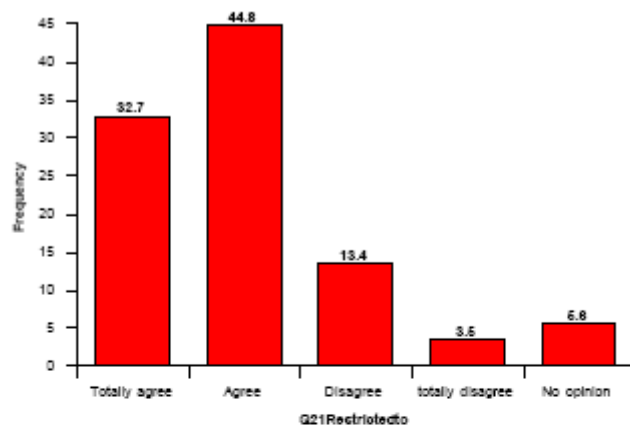
Q19. All full size allotment plots are halved



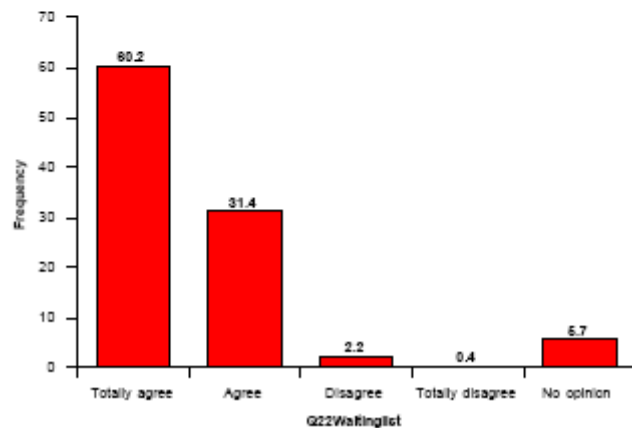
Q20. The minimum size of allotment plots is



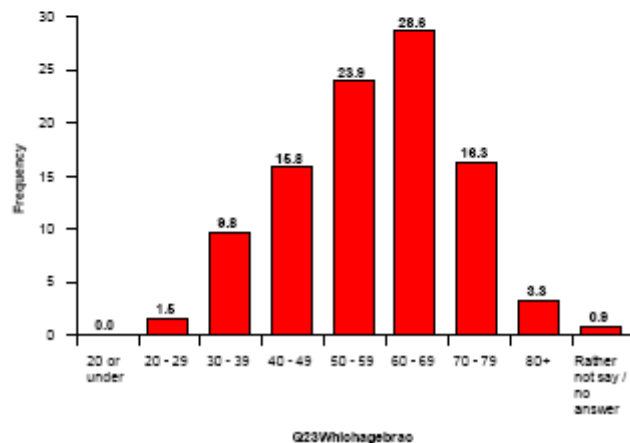
Q21. Restricted to one allotment



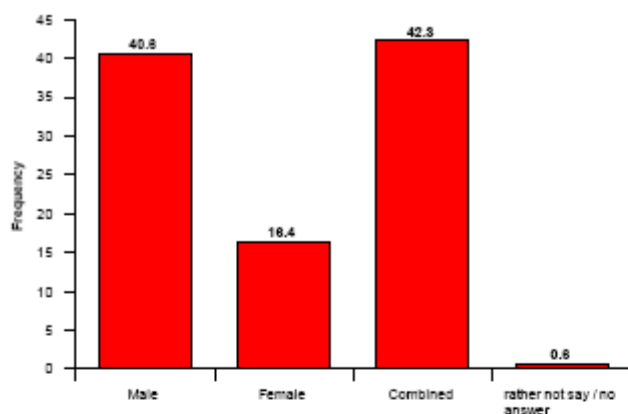
Q22. Waiting list priority



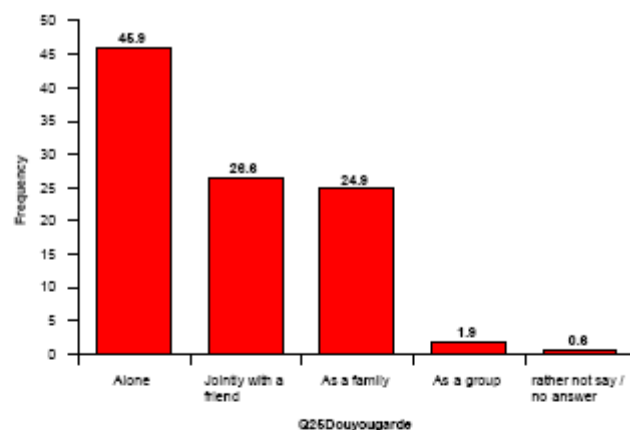
Q23. Which age bracket do you fit into?



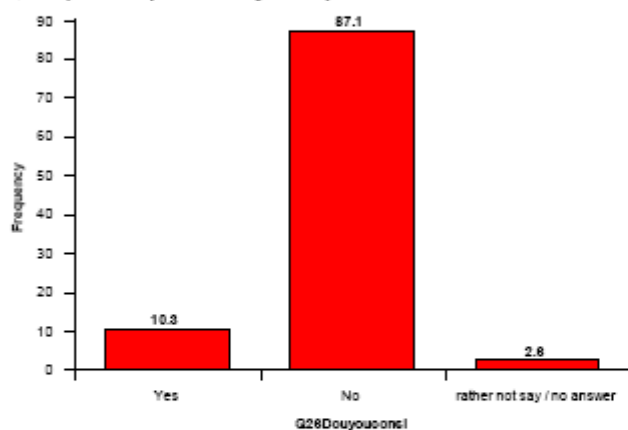
Q24. Is / are the predominant allotment holder



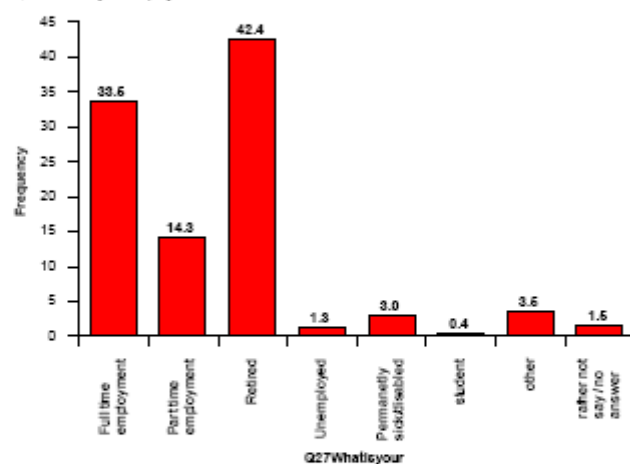
Q25. Do you garden the plot



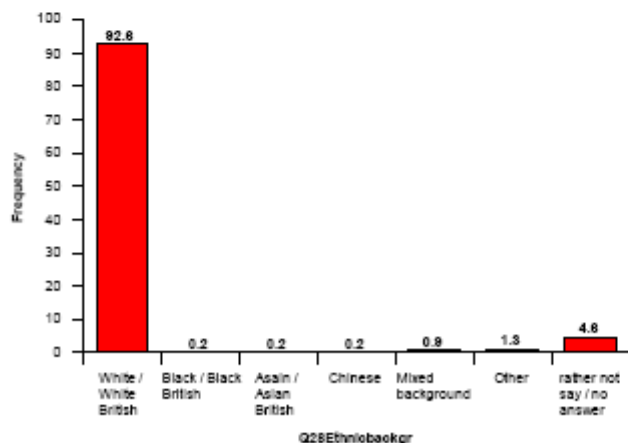
Q24Isarethe
Q26. Do you consider yourself as having a disability?



Q27. What is your employment status



Q28. Ethnic background



Appendix 7: Waiting list questionnaire

Colchester Allotment Waiting List Questionnaire

To help with the future management of Colchester's allotment sites we are sending questionnaires to all people who are waiting for an allotment plot. The results of your feedback and suggestions on where you feel improvements need to be made will help determine how our allotments are run in the

Which allotment site/s are you on the waiting list for?

Bergholt Road <input type="checkbox"/>	Blackheath <input type="checkbox"/>	Drury Road <input type="checkbox"/>	East Bay <input type="checkbox"/>
Folley Gardens <input type="checkbox"/>	Goodey Close <input type="checkbox"/>	Grants Meadow <input type="checkbox"/>	Hazell Avenue <input type="checkbox"/>
Highfield Drive <input type="checkbox"/>	Irvine Road <input type="checkbox"/>	Lexden <input type="checkbox"/>	Littlebury Gardens <input type="checkbox"/>
Mercers Farm <input type="checkbox"/>	New Fairfield <input type="checkbox"/>	Notleys <input type="checkbox"/>	Severalls <input type="checkbox"/>
Sheepen Road <input type="checkbox"/>	Stanway <input type="checkbox"/>	The Willows <input type="checkbox"/>	

Did you find the process to add your name to the waiting list straightforward?

Yes ☐ No ☐

If no, what could be done to make it easier?

We contact all people on the waiting list on an annual basis to confirm that they are still interested in remaining on the waiting list. Do you think that people should be contacted

More than once a year ☐ About once a year ☐ Less than once a year ☐

Would you find it useful to be kept informed of your position on the waiting list when the above letter is sent out?

Yes ☐ No ☐ No opinion ☐

What is the main reason for wanting an allotment?

Fresh air ☐ Exercise ☐ Social ☐ Fresh fruit & vegetables ☐ Hobby ☐

What do you consider to be a reasonable amount of time to wait for an allotment plot?

Less than 6 months ☐ 6 months to 1 year ☐ 1 – 2 years ☐
2 - 3 years ☐ More than 3 years ☐

How long have you had your name on the waiting list?

Less than 6 months ☐ 6 months to 1 year ☐ 1 – 2 years ☐
2 - 3 years ☐ More than 3 years ☐

The cost of an allotment plot with water at full rate for 2009/2010 is 23p per m² (i.e. for an average sized half plot (125m²) £28.75). Do you consider this offers good value for money?

Yes ☐

No ☐

Not sure ☐

How far are you prepared to travel to an allotment plot?

Less than 1 mile ☐

1 - 2 miles ☐

2 - 5 miles ☐

Over 5 miles ☐

How do you intend to predominately travel to your allotment plot?

Walk ☐

Bike ☐

Car ☐

Bus ☐

Other - please specify

Uncultivated plots

An allotment is considered cultivated if: 50% or more of the plot is in productive use, i.e. perennial fruit, flowers or vegetables, or soil overturned. There should be little or no long vegetation on the

Do you think that this level of cultivation is: Too low ☐ About right ☐ Too high ☐

The plot holder of any plot falling below this definition of a cultivated plot during the growing season is sent a Notice to Quit with the condition that if it meets the above definition in one month the Notice to Quit is revoked.

Do you think that this is a fair way to ensure plots are cultivated appropriately?

Yes ☐

No ☐

No opinion ☐

Allotment Provision

To help address the demand for allotments in Colchester we have recently implemented some changes to how allotment plots are allocated. Do you agree with the following?

All full size vacant allotment plots are halved in size and then offered to new allotment holders?

Totally agree ☐

Agree ☐

Disagree ☐

Totally disagree ☐

No opinion ☐

The minimum size of an allotment plot when halving a whole plot is 100m². Do you think...

That 100m² is too big ☐

That 100m² is too small ☐

That 100m² is just right ☐

Allotment holders are restricted to one allotment plot only (this does not apply to allotment holders who currently have more than one plot or allotment holders who are already on the waiting list for an additional plot)

Totally agree ☐

Agree ☐

Disagree ☐

Totally disagree ☐

No opinion ☐

Prospective allotment holders who are waiting for an allotment and live in the borough of Colchester are given priority to people who want an allotment and live outside of the borough

Totally agree ☐

Agree ☐

Disagree ☐

Totally disagree ☐

No opinion ☐

If you have any further comments regarding how the allotment waiting list is run, then please write below:

About you

Which age bracket do you fit into?

20 or under ☐ 20 - 29 ☐ 30 - 39 ☐ 40 - 49 ☐ 50 - 59 ☐ 60 - 69 ☐
70 - 79 ☐ 80 + ☐

Do you plan that the predominant allotment holder/s working on the plot will be

Male ☐ Female ☐ Combined ☐

Do you plan to garden the allotment plot

Alone ☐ Jointly with a friend or relative ☐ As a family ☐ As a group ☐

Do you consider yourself as having a disability?

Yes ☐ No ☐

The Disability Rights Commission (DCR) defines Disability as 'A physical or mental impairment which has substantial and long term adverse effect on a person's ability to carry out day to day activities'.

What is your employment status?

Full time employment ☐ Part time employment ☐ Retired ☐
Unemployed ☐ Permanently sick/disabled ☐ Student ☐
Other please specify

Which of the following best describes your ethnic group?

White / White British ☐ Black / Black British ☐ Asian / Asian British ☐
Chinese ☐ Mixed background ☐ Other ☐
If 'Other' please state

If you wish to be entered into the prize draw and win a £20 garden centre voucher please provide your details below.

Name

Address

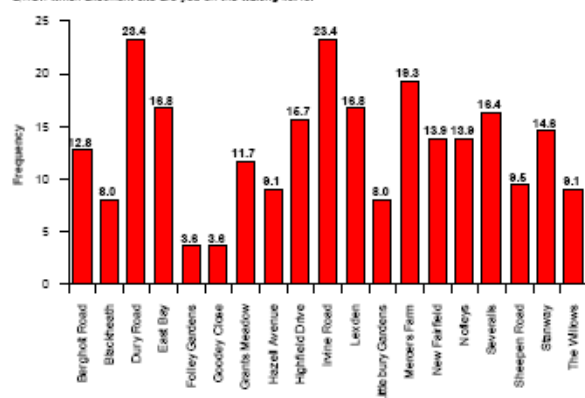
Postcode

Email

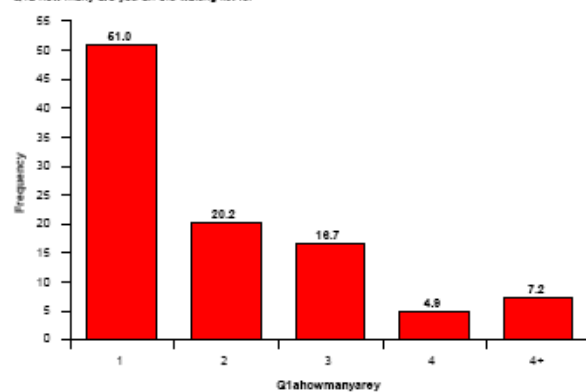
Thank you for taking the time to fill in the questionnaire

Appendix 8: Summary of results for the Waiting List Questionnaire

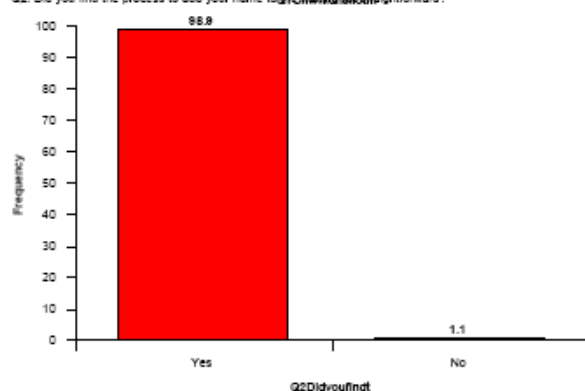
Q1. On which allotment site are you on the waiting list for



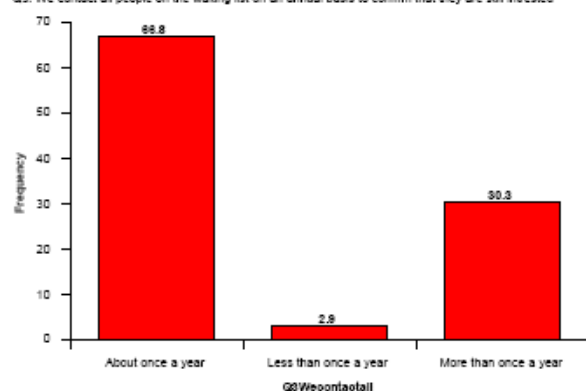
Q1a. How many are you on the waiting list for



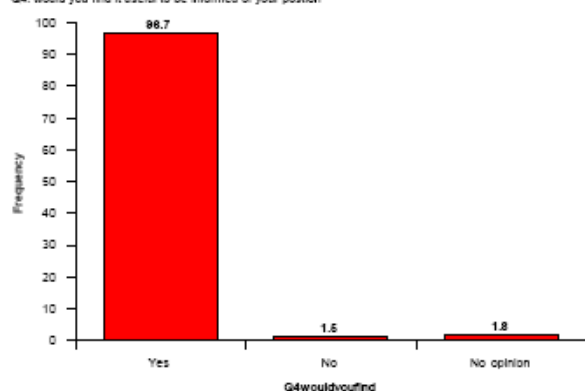
Q2. Did you find the process to add your name to the waiting list straightforward?



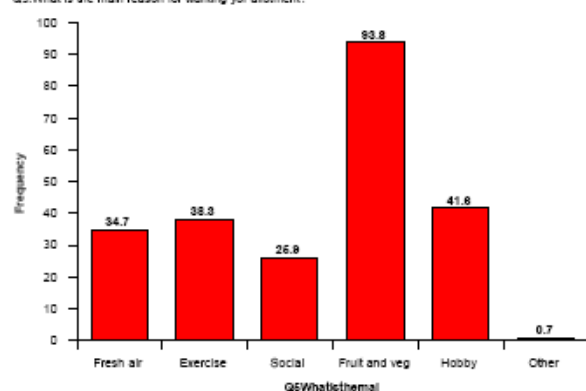
Q3. We contact all people on the waiting list on an annual basis to confirm that they are still interested



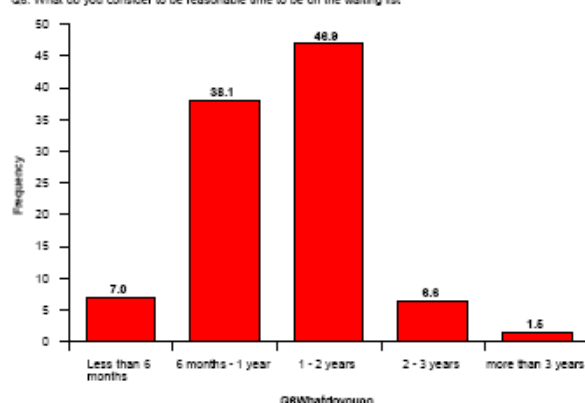
Q4. Would you find it useful to be informed of your position



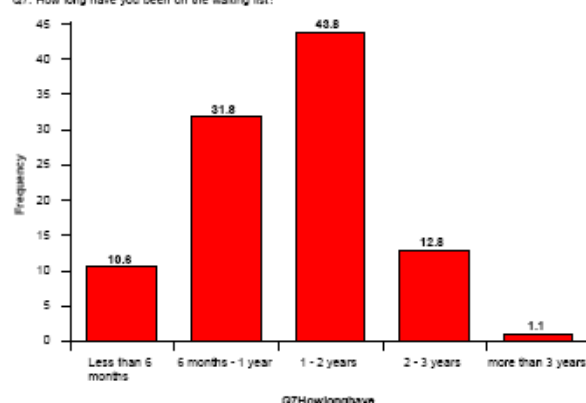
Q5. What is the main reason for wanting your allotment?

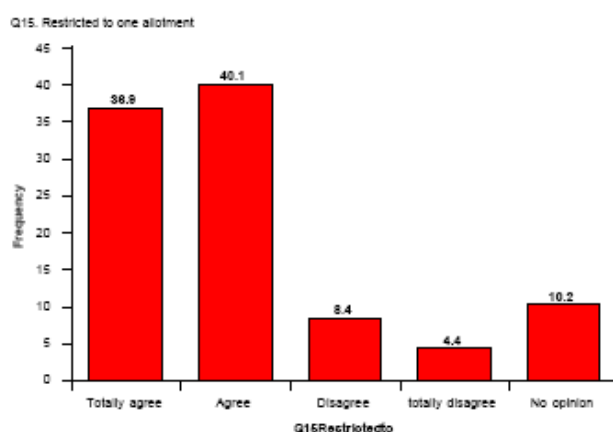
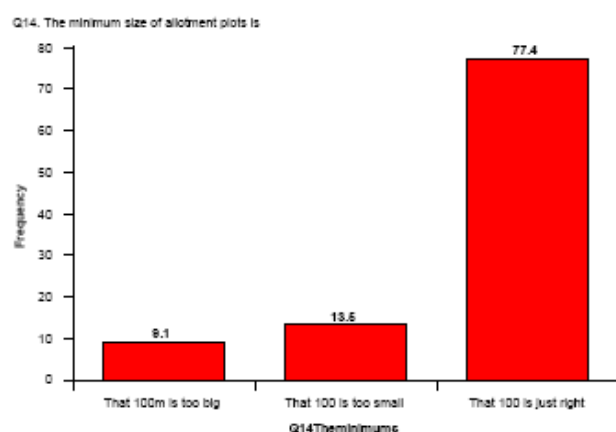
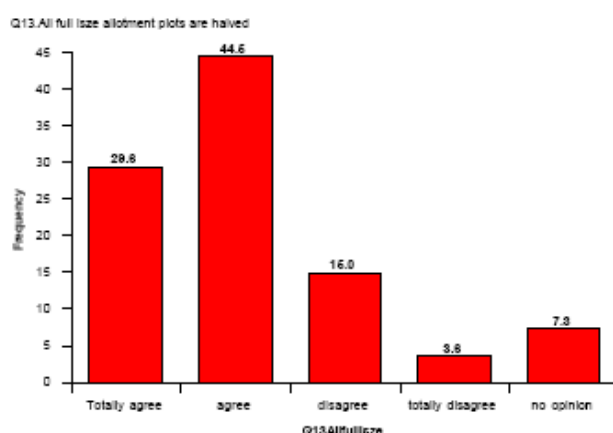
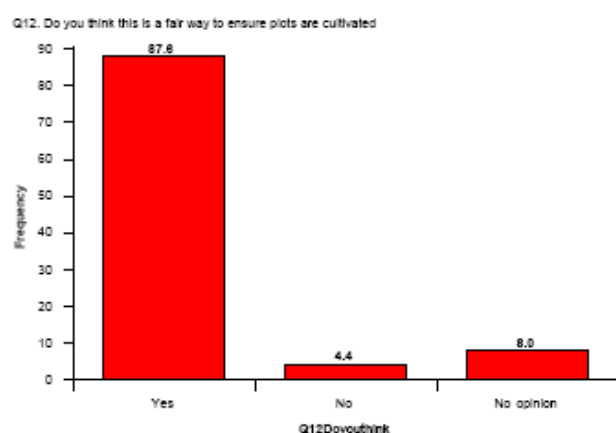
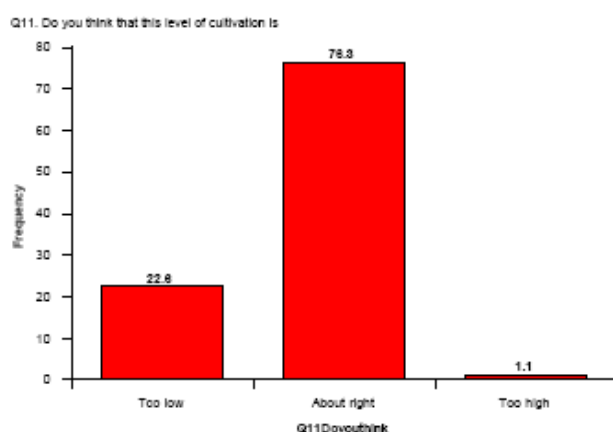
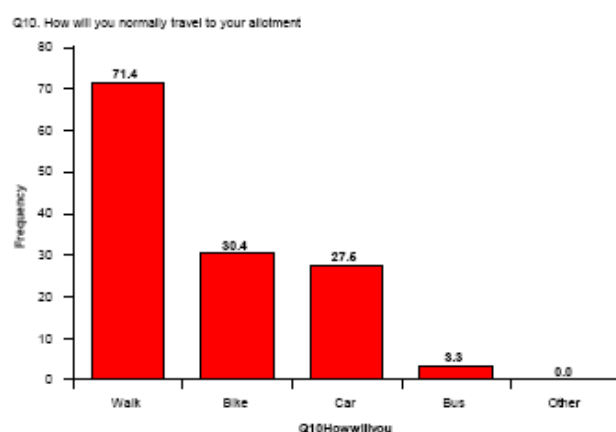
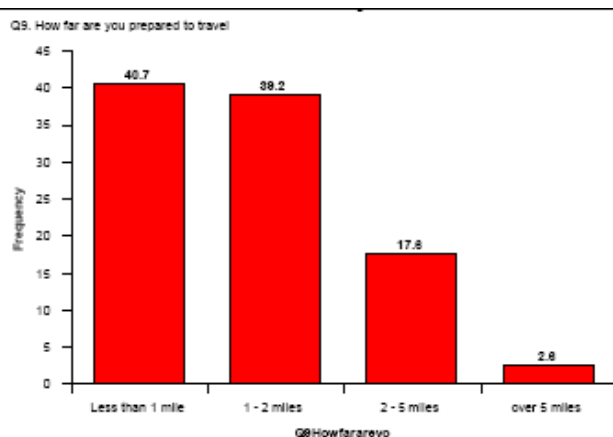
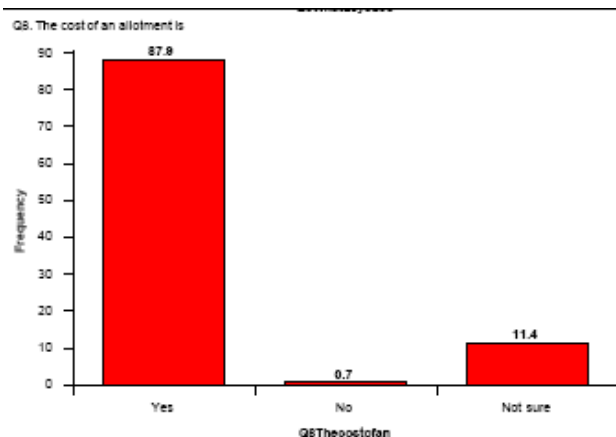


Q6. What do you consider to be a reasonable time to be on the waiting list

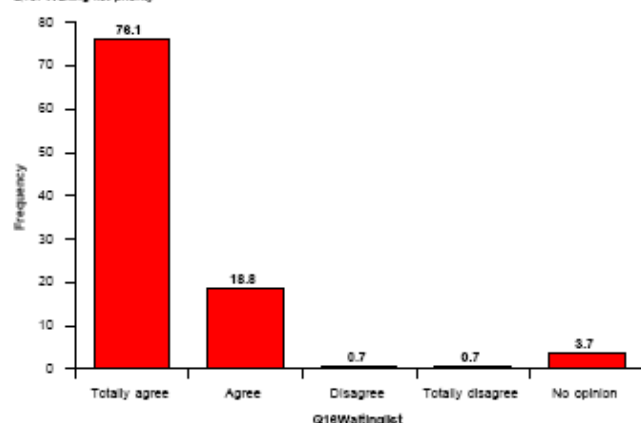


Q7. How long have you been on the waiting list?

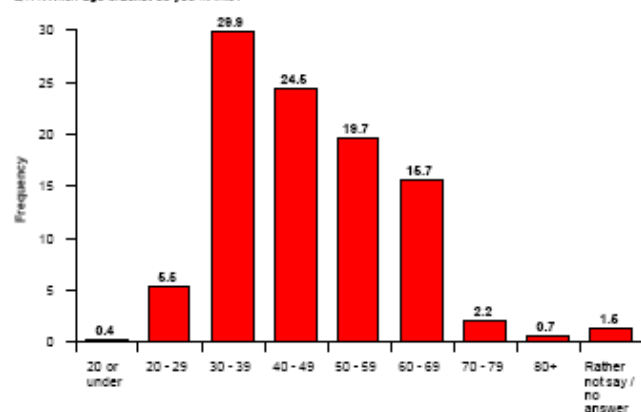




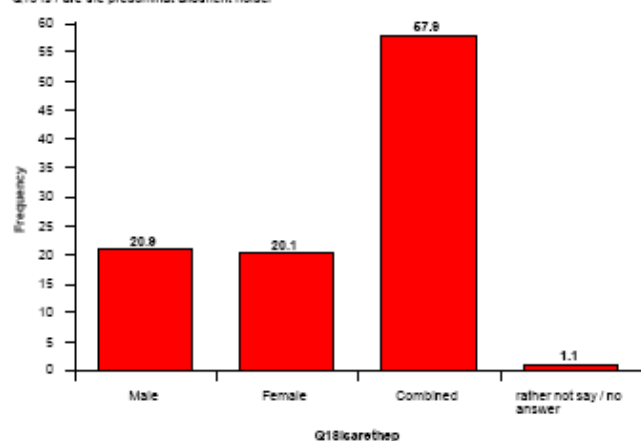
Q16. Waiting list priority



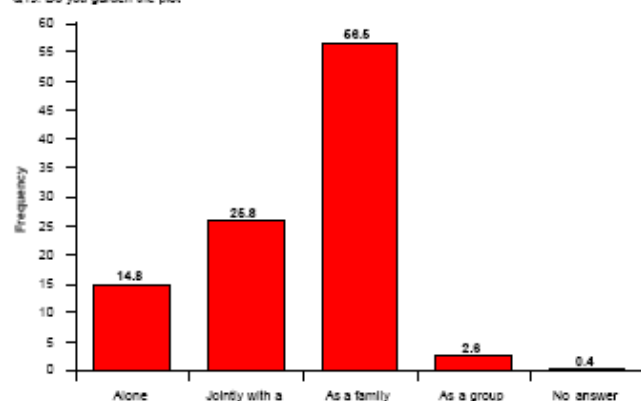
Q17. Which age bracket do you fit into?



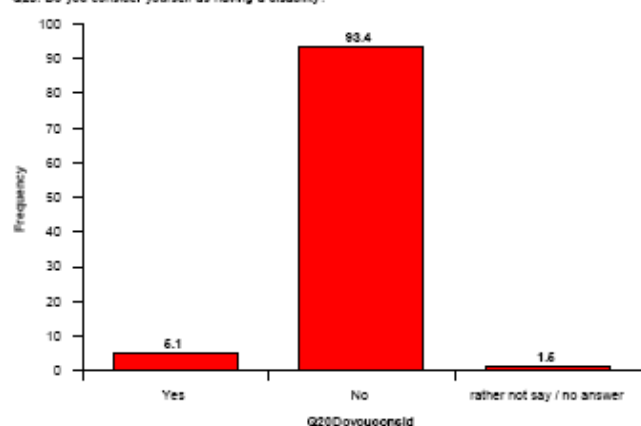
Q18 Is / are the predominant allotment holder



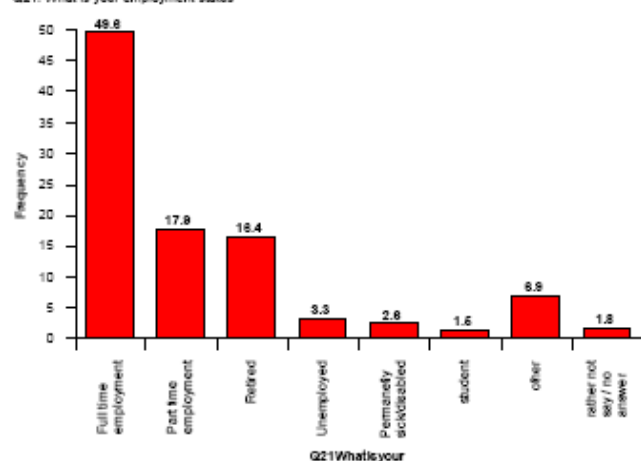
Q19. Do you garden the plot



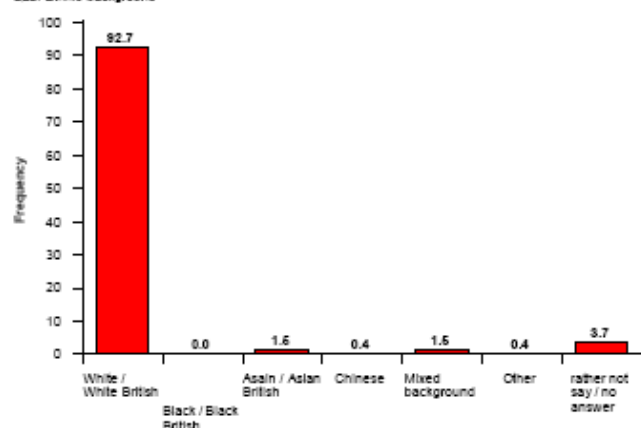
Q20. Do you consider yourself as having a disability?



Q21. What is your employment status



Q22. Ethnic background



Appendix 9: Allotment land shortfall

Year	Population*	Current ha per 1000 population*	Shortage of allotment land per 1000 population (ha)***	Shortage of allotment land per 1000 population (m2)***	Shortage of 125m2 plots***
2008	174300	0.16	0.04	424	591
2009	177700	0.15	0.05	454	646
2010	181400	0.15	0.05	486	705
2011	184900	0.15	0.05	514	761
2012	188300	0.15	0.05	541	815
2013	191600	0.14	0.06	566	868
2014	194800	0.14	0.06	590	919
2015	198000	0.14	0.06	613	970
2016	201100	0.14	0.06	634	1020
2017	204100	0.13	0.07	654	1068
2018	207100	0.13	0.07	674	1116
2019	210100	0.13	0.07	693	1164
2020	213000	0.13	0.07	710	1210
2021	215900	0.13	0.07	728	1257
2022	218800	0.13	0.07	745	1303
2023	221700	0.12	0.08	761	1350
2024	224500	0.12	0.08	776	1394
2025	227300	0.12	0.08	791	1439
2026	230000	0.12	0.08	806	1482
2027	232700	0.12	0.08	820	1526
2028	235300	0.12	0.08	833	1567
2029	237800	0.12	0.08	845	1607
2030	240300	0.11	0.09	857	1647
2031	242600	0.11	0.09	868	1684
2032	244900	0.11	0.09	878	1721
2033	247200	0.11	0.09	889	1758

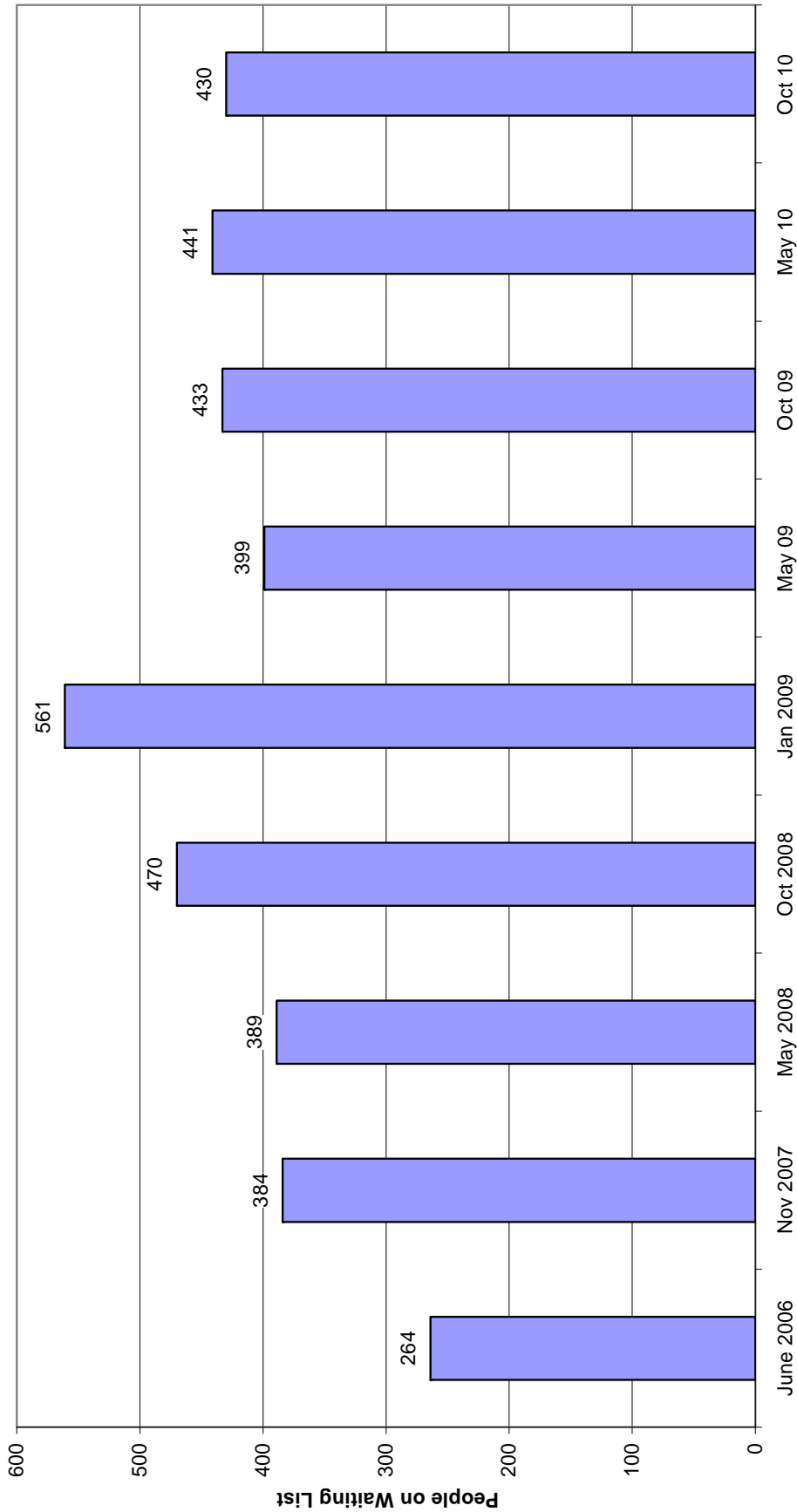
* Data the Office of National Statistics (2010)

** Based on 27.47 ha of allotments in Colchester as per PPG17 (2008)

*** Based on 0.2ha per 1000 population

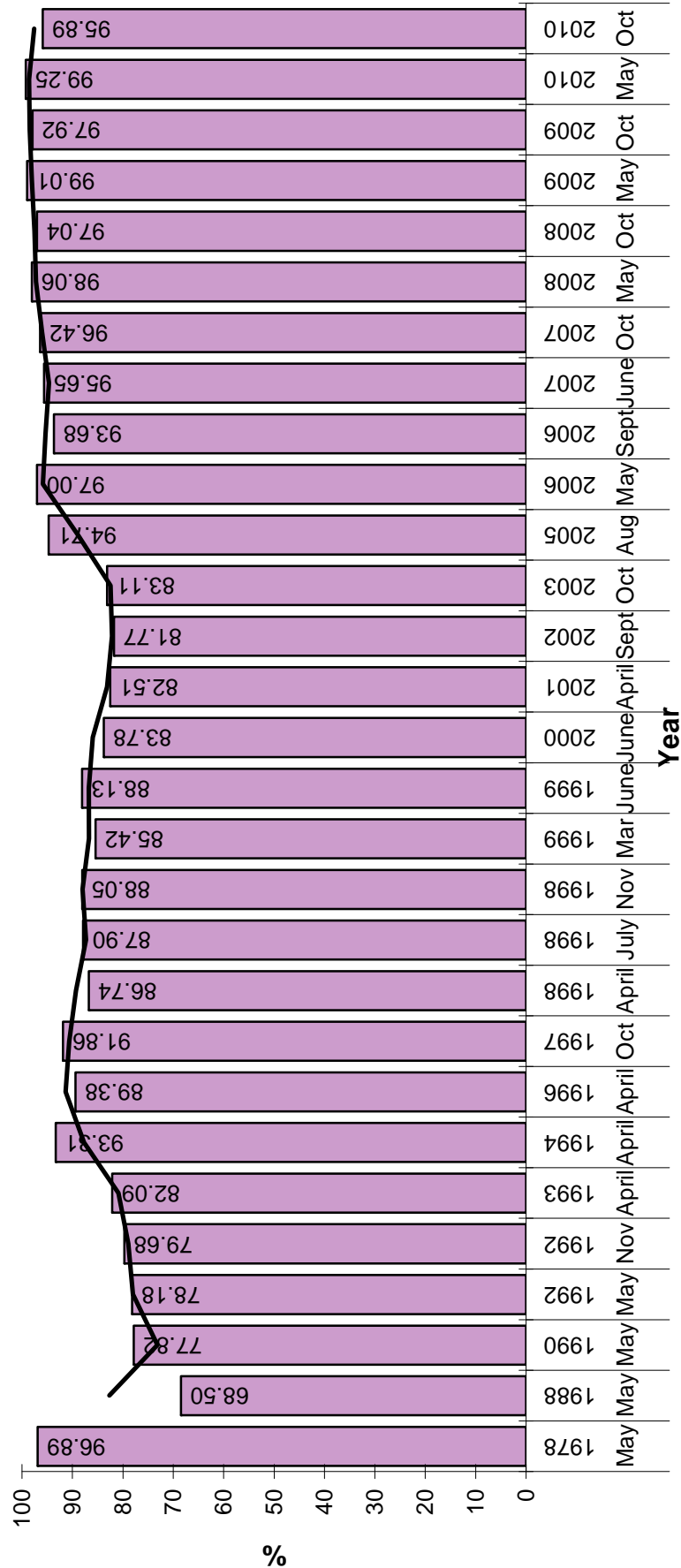
Appendix 10: Number of people waiting for an allotment in Colchester

Graph to show the number of people waiting for allotments in Colchester



Appendix 11: Number of Allotment Plots let

Number of Allotment Plots Let



Appendix 12: Water tanks required on Allotment sites

Allotment	Total Area Cultivated Area (m2)	Current Water Tanks	Additional water tanks required
Bergholt Road	9114	3	3
Blackheath	4408	3	0
Drury Road	12312	4	3
East Bay	10884	14	0
Folley Gardens	270	0	0
Goodey Close	140	0	0
Grants Meadow	7353	0	0
Hazell Avenue	1212	2	0
Highfield Drive	5902	4	0
Irvine Road	14906	6	3
Lexden	16869	7	3
Littlebury Gardens	1389	1	0
Mercers Farm	8711	4	1
New Fairfield	9209	4	2
Notleys	16848	7	3
Severalls	8459	4	1
Sheepen Road	3016	1	1
Stanway	12305	4	3
The Willows	8411	3	2
	151717	71	25

Appendix 13: Grants Meadow Invertebrate Survey

Grant's Meadow Allotments Invertebrate Survey 10.viii.2007

Surveyed 1pm-4pm weather v. hot and sunny

Site conditions appeared very similar to those seen on the survey carried out in May 1999, apart from the fact that a copse of hazel had been planted, and the marsh had undergone management as recommended in our earlier report.

Invertebrates were abundant and active due to the hot weather. The following species of particular interest were found. A full species list follows.

Orthoptera

The long-winged cone head (Nationally Notable A) is new to the site. This species has been extending its range northwards recently.

Roesel's bush cricket, although nationally notable (b) is now very widespread and probably no longer merits this designation. The long-winged form is of interest locally.

Lepidoptera

Eight species of butterfly were recorded and others almost certainly occur in the right season. Of particular interest is the Brown Argus a butterfly which has been increasing lately, probably because its caterpillars have begun using various wild cranesbills as a food plant.

Diptera

Two of Britain's largest flies were found.

Tipula maxima is the biggest British crane fly and *Volucella zonaria* the largest hoverfly, both are local. *Xanthogramma pedissequum* is a local and scarce hoverfly which seems well established on this site, having been found in the previous survey.

Hymenoptera

Hedychrum niemelai is a Red Data Book RDB3 (Rare) cuckoo wasp which is associated with the nests of the two species of digger wasp also found. These insects like bare, sandy ground in full sun.

The bee wolf, although ranked as an RDB3 species, has now become sufficiently common as to no longer rate this designation. It is nonetheless interesting, being a predator on honey bees. It enjoys similar conditions to the above.

Coleoptera

The water ladybird is a Local species and was not uncommon in the marsh area where it lives amongst reedmace etc.

Although the survey concentrated on invertebrates an interesting plant was found on an overgrown allotment to the south of the site. Here a plot had apparently been abandoned after some cultivation earlier in the year. A colony of the scarce arable weed Weasel's Snout or Lesser Snapdragon (*Misopates orontium*) was in flower amongst tall grasses.

At least twenty plants were counted, making this a significant locality for the species locally. According to Tarpey and Heath (1990) the plant is now confined to allotments and there were only five localities known in north east Essex, each having only one or two plants. Nationally the species is in decline, especially in the south east.

An annual, weasel's snout requires spring cultivation to germinate, fitting in well with the typical allotment management cycle. The seed is long lived.

Full list of Invertebrates Recorded

Odonata (Dragon and Damselflies)

Aeshna grandis Brown Aeshna dragonfly

Sympetrum vulgare Darter dragonfly

Orthoptera (Grasshoppers and Crickets)

Chorthippus brunneus Field grasshopper

Chorthippus parallelus Meadow grasshopper

Conocephalus discolor Long-winged Conehead Notable A

Leptophyes punctatissima Speckled bush cricket

Metrioptera roeselii f. *diluta* Roesel's Bush cricket. The long-winged form of this cricket Notable B

Hemiptera (bugs and hoppers)

Homoptera (froghoppers)

Philaenus spumarius Cuckoo-spit bug

Heteroptera (bugs)

Coreus marginatus a squash bug

Gerris sp. a water bug

Ischnodemus sabuleti Cinch bug

Leptoterna dolabrata a plant bug

Liocoris tripustulatus a plant bug

Nabis ferus Field Damsel bug

Palomena prasina Green shieldbug

Lepidoptera (butterflies)

Aricia agestis Brown Argus

Cynthia cardui Painted Lady

Maniola jurtina Meadow Brown

Pararge aegeria Speckled Wood

Pieris brassicae Large White

Polygonia c-album Comma

Pyronia tithonus Gatekeeper

Vanessa atalanta Red Admiral

Lepidoptera (moths)

Pyrausta aurata day flying moth, on mint and marjoram

Diptera (Flies)

Dasineura urticae galls on nettle

Helophilus pendulus a hoverfly

Sphaerophoria scripta a hoverfly

Tipula maxima a crane fly
Volucella bombylans a hoverfly
Volucella zonaria a hoverfly formerly rare but spreading
Xanthogramma pedissequum a hoverfly Local and scarce
Xylota segnis a hoverfly

Hymenoptera (bees, wasps ants etc.)

Andricus quercuscorticis a gall wasp - gall on oak
Bombus pascuorum a bumble bee
Bombus lapidarius Red-tailed bumble-bee
Cerceris arenaria a digger wasp
Cerceris rybensis a digger wasp
Gasteruption sp. a parasitic wasp
Hedychrum niemelai a cuckoo wasp RDB3
Lasius flavus Meadow ant
Neuroterus anthracinus a gall wasp - galls on oak
Neuroterus quercusbaccarum a gall wasp - galls on oak
Philanthus triangulum Bee Wolf RDB3
Vespula vulgaris Common wasp

Coleoptera (beetles)

Altica lythri a leaf beetle
Coccinella 7-punctata 7-spot ladybird
Crioceris asparagi Asparagus beetle
Hippodamia 13-punctata Water ladybird Local

Acari (mites)

Aceria ilicis gall mite on Holm oak

Mollusca

Helix aspersa Garden snail

Jerry Bowdrey Colchester and Ipswich Museum Service