

LONDON BOROUGH OF NEWHAM ALLOTMENT POLICY



INTRODUCTION



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Statutory Deputy Mayor, Cabinet Member for Environment and Sustainable Transport

Improving our green spaces and providing opportunities for more of our residents to enjoy the natural world is an important part of the Council's aims and ambitions. Allotments have a long tradition of being important public spaces in the community but are in need of investment.

Since the decision was taken to bring the allotments back in-house to the Council we have been working hard to bring them up-to-scratch, improving signage, working with allotment committees, refurbishing

facilities, clearing derelict plots and working to bring vacant plots back into use.

Demand for allotments is very high and hugely outstrips what we can supply and we know that demand will continue to grow. It is therefore vital that we have a clear allotments policy and strategy so that we are maximising the use of the space we have, providing as many opportunities as we can for as many people; but also to ensure that we have a long-term vision for developing this vital asset.



ALLOTMENT PROVISION

The Parks and Green Spaces Service directly manage eight allotment sites across the Borough, with just over 700 plots.

Allotment sites managed by Newham Council

Allotment site	No. of full plots	No. Of ½ plots	Total current Plots
Bridle path	5	46	51
Connaught	16	75	91
Cyprus	21	30	51
Folkestone	48	173	228
Leyes road	22	62	84
Reynolds	44	0	44
South Beckton	49	6	55
St Mary's	34	89	123
Total Plots			727

Demand for allotment plots in Newham is high, with an ever-increasing waiting list. This waiting list currently exceeds 4,000 people.

The plots are varying in sizes and there are over 200

vacant plots that are currently in an overgrown and fly tipped condition. The council is committed to ensuring that the vacant plots are cleared and let within a reasonable timescale.

Purpose of the policy

This policy sets the over-arching direction for the management of allotments in Newham and details the 4 key principles to enable an improved offer. These are:

1. - Maximise the offer to manage the demand for allotments
2. - Good management & efficient administration
3. - Encourage sustainable practices and promote biodiversity
4. - Increase the amount of land available for food growing

Principle 1 - Maximise the offer to manage the demand for allotments

The purpose of this is to create additional plots to cater for the demand to reduce waiting lists, and to create more manageable sized plots that are better suited to modern lifestyles.



ALLOTMENT AGREEMENTS

Following an inspection of the plots and provided there has not been a breach of the tenancy, the allotment agreement is automatically renewed yearly.

Waiting list

The council is committed to reducing the waiting time for an allotment plot, to manage this the council will temporarily close the waiting list until there is less than 200 residents waiting.

The council will only allow 1 plot per household. Plot holders leaving the borough will relinquish their plot within 6 months.

Re-sizing of Allotment plots

As full plots become available, they will be resized to create additional Allotment Plots which may vary in size between 50m² and up to 150m². The overall number of plots will increase, and this will enable more resident access to an allotment and reduce the waiting time.

Community plots

A Shared plot will be introduced at each site, managed by the site committee to support plot holders who are no longer able to manage their plot, but who wish to stay within the growing community. This will prevent plots becoming unmanageable and assist in reducing the waiting list.

Sessional Staff

Create a pool of trained sessional staff to enable more frequent viewing appointments.

Principle 2 - Good management & efficient administration

The Council have recently undertaken a consultation with residents to discuss the allotment service including how the management and administration could be improved. The Council will create an improvement plan to address these issues.

The Tenancy Agreement

The tenancy agreement sets out the rules and regulations that the tenants must adhere to. A copy can be found in the appendices.

Shared tenancy

The Council can use discretion to provide a shared tenancy agreement for partners. This will usually be agreed for the purposes of supporting a plot holder as a way of improving accessibility.

Inspections

A formal inspection regime will be carried out. All plots will be inspected in August/September to prepare for tenancy renewals in October, and on an ad hoc basis throughout the year. If any plots fall below the required standard, the following process will be instigated: -

1. Initial correspondence or a meeting with the plot holder to discuss any issues
2. A formal notice will be sent warning of the consequences of non- cultivation giving a 30-day notice to bring the plot back to required standard
3. A second 30-day notice will be sent confirming that should the plot not be brought up to the required standard, the tenancy will be terminated.

Newham Allotments Forum

The Council will organise and chair meetings of the Allotment Forum and invite representatives from the sites/associations. This will be used as a consultation and communication tool to continuously improve and better develop the Service provision.

Allotment Committees

The Council will encourage the development of a committee at each of the allotment sites. There are currently committees at Folkestone Road and St Mary's Allotments and the aim is to have a constituted committee at each of the allotment site. These committees would support the Council by carrying out much of the day-to-day management and reporting of repairs. This will improve the response times to resolving issues and the general look and feel of the sites.

Roles and Responsibilities

The Council will continue to have overall management responsibility of the allotment sites. However, fully constituted allotment committees will be encouraged and supported at each of the sites.

ROLE OF THE COUNCIL

The Council will:

- Promote and undertake lettings of vacant plots.
- Encourage good cultivation and horticultural practice.
- Manage essential repairs and maintenance.
- Conduct site inspections.
- Manage terminations of tenancies.
- Manage income collection and prioritise expenditure.
- Liaise regularly with Site Representatives and other Stakeholders.
- Deal with plot holders' issues in a fair and transparent manner.
- Develop the delivery of the Allotment Service to ensure that running costs are covered by income received.
- Communicate useful information about Allotments electronically and via other social media.

Role of Site Committees

The Site Committees will:

- Be a constituted organisation with an elected committee.
- Work within a set of rules agreed with the Council.
- Develop safe working practices.
- Hold a minimum of 4 meetings per year and 1 Annual General meeting.
- Attend forum meetings.
- Inform the Council of any site problems.
- Distribute relevant information to plot holders.
- Support the Council in showing prospective plot holders around the site.
- Be the first point of contact for plot holders and provide general advice on site issues.
- Support and assist the delivery of events to promote Allotment Sites.
- Organise social events /activities for plot holders to encourage community cohesion.
- Attend Council training when required.

Role of the Plot Holder

The Plot holder will:

- Comply with the terms of the Tenancy Agreement and this Policy and Guidance.
- Manage the cultivation of their plot.
- Ensure the health and safety of themselves and any guests visiting their plot.
- Not allow their visitors to cause a nuisance to other plot holders.
- Report any issues to the Site Representative or the Council at the earliest opportunity.
- Comply with any reasonable requests to manage/

improve/maintain their plot.

Support the site as an entirety where necessary to reduce any health and safety risks.

Principle 3 - Encourage sustainable practices and promote biodiversity

The Council is keen to encourage sustainable practices and promote biodiversity within the allotment sites and will produce an online booklet to help plot holders make positive choices.

Principle 4 - Increase the amount of land available for food growing

The mayor's manifesto pledges to increase the number of community gardens across the borough, with at least one community garden in each of the borough's neighbourhoods.

Make use of land within allotment sites not currently being used for growing.

Other matters

Insurance

All sites are covered by the Council's Public Liability Insurance however this only covers claims that are deemed to fall under Council's responsibility, i.e., infrastructure, including paths and boundary fencing. Plot holders are entirely responsible for the security of sheds and their contents as well as for providing any insurance cover for those items.

Health and safety

The Council will seek to ensure that only safe practices are being carried out. Any works that Allotment Groups wish to carry out must be approved by the Council. It is the Plot holder's responsibility to keep their children (under 16) under constant supervision and not leave them to roam the site or enter other plot holders' plots. It is the Plot holder's responsibility to keep any chemicals/equipment secure when not in use and to use them as per manufacturer's instructions.

Review

This Policy and Guidance will be reviewed on an annual basis (or when there is a change in legislation) by the Parks and Green Service.

Amendments from original Policy

Date	Subject	Change

www.newham.gov.uk