

Allotment Self-Management Process

Frequently Asked Questions

Question:

The tenants at Irene Ave, Lancing site have only one reason for not self-managing. We do not have a regular water supply. Rainwater is collected in a 1200 l tank from the garage roofs nearby- from ONE side. I have asked for an extension to the guttering so that water can be collected from the other side, and an additional tank. But during a drought like we had this year in spring, we had no water! The showers we had were not enough to barely half fill the tank.

Response:

The cost of installing a mains water supply was considered and rejected due to the high cost and there being only 6 plots at this site and using mains water as opposed to grey water is not environmentally sustainable. We will look to install a water saving system on the garages and a second water tank to allow more water to be collected.

Question:

What advantage is there to us allotment holders or disadvantages to leave the council and set up our own self-management committee?

Response:

The advantage to allotment holders in forming a local community to manage the allotments is to take local control of the allotments, decide what improvement works need to be done, the priority and how the works are completed.

The disadvantage is that ultimately the committee take responsibility for the administration process themselves which comes with the freedom of being able to make your own decisions.

Question:

If there is disagreement among the committee members how is that resolved?

Response:

The setting up of a committee will require the establishment of a democratic process which means that disagreements should be resolved by the committee which is a decision bound by the group's rules.

Question:

Are the committee members responsible for the finances? Where to bank it and if there are liabilities, are the individual committee members responsible for paying them?

Response:

Yes.

Question:

What kind of insurance/liability needs to be taken?

Response:

The group would be advised to take out public liability insurance.

Question:

Is the council attempting to lessen their workload? What are the advantages /disadvantages for the council? for allotment holders ?

Response:

No, we are not looking to lessen our workload. There was a request to give the allotment tenants the option to vote on this issue. For advantages and disadvantages please refer to the second question above.

Question:

What if some allotment holders don't wish to join the group nor to cooperate with the committee's decision or don't pay the rent?

Response:

These tenants may be evicted as they would do if these scenarios occurred under the Council.

Question:

How does this all work? What kind of relationship is there between the self-management group and the council?

Response:

Please refer to Peter Hannam's (From Worthing Allotment Management) presentation slides on the same web page as this frequently asked question document. If there are more questions after reading the document, WAM or the Council will be happy to answer them.

Question:

Is it true that the Adur and Worthing district Council would like to have one management committee to manage all of the allotments in Adur district?

Response:

No.

Question:

Can each allotment organise itself?

Response:

Yes.

Question:

One of the allotment holders writes: When I spoke to Peter (WAM) about this he thought that all the nearby allotments to us can be grouped together i.e Southwick, Middle road and Hamfields. Are there more? Not sure how many. Representatives from each group would form a committee & they would decide on how our allotment is run. However I think it is better if each allotment runs themselves as we all know each other and it is more personable. If other people from other allotments decide for us we are going to be unhappy I think? This may not be allowed.

Response:

It is for the allotment site to decide how they wish to organise themselves. There is no requirement to be set up in any particular way.

Question:

The general opinion seems to be that we come to enjoy our allotment to plant and grow and we really don't want to get involved with the running of it to a committee that self-management and we certainly don't wish to be told what to do by somebody else! Is the concept of trying to save money and labour by having us to their responsibilities?

Response:

No.

Question:

How many of us in our allotment are willing to offer to help organise things is useful BEFORE we do anything?

Response:

it will need to be a majority of those that choose to vote.

Question:

How many people will offer to help in our allotment group?

Response:

This is unknown until after the vote but, we encourage you and other allotment tenants to talk amongst yourselves to consider the proposal and vote accordingly in April 2021.

Question:

What jobs are required to be done by the group?

Response:

Please refer to Peter Hannam's (From Worthing Allotment Management) presentation slides on the same web page as this frequently asked question document. If there are more questions after reading the document, WAM or the Council will be happy to answer them.

Question:

Is it cheaper if we run the allotment for the council or more expensive for us?

Insurance cover: if we cut hedges we need to be insured . We need to know the costs of this job.

Response:

The cost will be neutral as the rent that is retained will pay for the services and other services.

Question:

Water meters may be installed if we-run the allotment. (I think Peter said an allotment in Worthing I think had a leak in a pipe they did not know of and Southern water made them have a metre. SO need-to know if we will be FORCED to have an allotment water meter and when weather gets hotter climate change we are going to use a lot!! Will be expensive.

Response:

All allotments have a water meter already and the group can decide how it is used if they self-manage the allotments.

Question:

Cost of council rates on allotment to share?

Response:

We need further information to be able to answer this question.

=====

Questions and Answers added in January 2021

Question:

In the letter you state that the Council has been asked to propose self-management, by who?

Response:

Parks & Foreshore Manager, Councillors and various tenants across Adur & Worthing.

Question:

Why are we waiting until next year?

Response:

We have made the process deliberately longer to allow people to talk to one another, to the overseer, and to the Council. We recognise that people don't want to be rushed into making a decision.

Question:

When is your intended date of transfer of management, if the vote is not to stay with the Council?

Response:

The decision has not been taken as yet - there is a process to follow for self-management. It will need Executive Member approval (Environment), by way of written report, should the vote for self-management be "yes". This could take several weeks once the decision is confirmed at the end of the process.

Question:

Could a vote for WAM be actioned immediately?

Response:

No, the process is outlined in the letter sent to tenants, the voting commences in April 2021.

Question:

Is there a minimum number of votes that will be considered to be acceptable, to decide on the future management of Humber Allotments?

Response:

We have invited every tenant to cast a vote. Of those, a simple majority will be accepted - either "yes" or "no".

Question:

If the decision is for Humber Allotment tenants to form their own management company, and that can't be achieved, what happens? Do we then revert back to Council control?

Response:

This can't be answered until the results of the voting is known, and those who wish to form the management organisation commence discussions with the Council. Ultimately, it will return/remains under Council control if the organisation couldn't agree to set up a process, or if a process ceases to operate.

Question:

Are there any consequences of voting to stay with the Council? I have been informed by our overseers that the Council does not want to administer the allotments.

Response:

The Council does not have a view on whether this is positive or negative for the tenants to vote either way. This has been answered in the FAQ's above.

Question:

Have there been any discussions at any level, that you are aware of, with regard to selling the Humber Allotment site for residential dwelling development?

Response:

The Council currently has no knowledge or plans to dispose of the Humber Allotments land for development.

Question:

What happens if there are large maintenance works or renewal of infrastructure needed on the allotment site i.e. fencing, new water pipes, gateway entrances?

Response:

Any significant works, as confirmed in the presentation by Peter Hamman from WAM, is carried out as a joint approach by the Management Committee and the Council. For minor works, however, those will be funded using the rent collected by the Management Committee.

Question:

What would happen if we vote to self govern and allotment holders offer to take responsibility for the site, but then at a later stage, for a variety of reasons, there is no-one who will take this on?

Response:

It will revert back to Council control, as advised above.

Question:

Would the self governing be for an agreed period initially, or once voted for would it be permanent?

Response:

There would be a 12 month trial period. After this, it would either transfer to a 5 year period, or revert back to the Council.

Question:

How have the rent levels changed over the period for WAM and how do they compare with the same period for Council managed sites?

Response:

The rents at Council managed sites are increased annually, with inflation. WAM sites set their own rates. Please refer to Peter Hamman's presentation for details on their rent levels.

Question:

What are all the expense items that a self-managed site would be expected to pay for?

Response:

All outgoings.

Question:

What happens when there is a deficit or surplus at the end of an accounting period for a self managed site?

Response:

If there is a surplus - the Management Committee can decide what to spend it on. There cannot be a deficit.

Question:

What is the minimum number of offices and committee members? What happens if there are not enough people available to meet the needs, either at outset or at some time in the future?

Response:

The minimum would be - Chair, Vice Chair, Secretary and Treasurer. If none available in the future, the Management Committee closes and it reverts back to the Council.

Question:

If someone is renting multiple plots, how many votes do they have?

Response:

1 vote per person.

Question:

Can the WAM T&Cs and documents be made available for us to refer to?

Response:

Yes, please contact the Council with your specific request, as stated in the presentation.

Question:

What are the key events following a vote for self-management, and what is the approximate timeline before the handover of responsibility from the Council?

Response:

Please see answer above in the FAQs.

Question:

Given that this proposal was launched before the pandemic, why was it not put on hold until such a time that COVID restrictions are lifted to allow for appropriate and sufficient discussion and consideration?

Response:

We have given ample time. During the various lifting of restrictions, people have been able to meet outside in groups of up to 6, and there has always been the opportunity for telephone calls.

Question:

The site (Irene Avenue) is surrounded by housing. Does the Council hold detailed title deeds for the site to help resolve the boundary issues and who would deal with the boundary issues?

Response:

The site boundary is established. The Council owns the allotment site and will resolve boundary issues.

=====

Questions and Answers added in February 2021

Question:

Further to the question regarding the boundaries, there are places on the allotment (Irene Avenue) where there is a fence at the end of the neighbours' garden and then another fence on the allotment ground approx. 1m inside of this. Who owns and is responsible for the upkeep of these fences?

Response:

Where owned by the Council, the Council is responsible. This will need to be investigated on a site by site, location by location basis.

Question:

Is it not possible for the tenants at Irene Avenue to locate the existing water pipe (which is apparently in the corner of the garages) and extend it via a trench, and to rise inside the

allotment fence - ideally over a bath - with a float system in place to fill up once a watering can has been dipped in, so only replacing the water used, just like a w/c system operates?

Response:

Any new water supply from the mains would need to be seriously considered re its ongoing sustainability of maintenance and the cost of water. We are in a climate crisis and need to explore every option of harvesting water before we look at using mains water.

=====

Questions and Answers added in March 2021

Question:

Who enforces the non-payment of fees?

Response:

The collection of fees will be the responsibility of the self-management group. Any tenant who does not pay their fees may have their tenancy terminated.

Question:

What are the average fees paid per plot p.a. (including water supply and insurance), under WAM. Are there any automatic concessions for OAP's?

Response:

Please contact WAM directly for this information.

Question:

If a self-management group fails and the management reverts back to Council control, does this then make it easier for the Council to apply for development under the allotments act?

Response:

If the management were to revert to Council control, the land would still be used for allotments. The Council has no plans to change allotment use for anything other than allotments.

Question:

The WAM experience quotes money being spent on shipping containers for storage tools and a toilet. I believe Southern Water are responsible for the water supply. Middle Road already have a toilet and an active Facebook page, and most plot holders already exchange seeds, plants and most have or exchange their tools.

Please could you explain further why it would be advantageous to myself and other plot holders at Middle Road to vote in favour of self-management?

Response:

Additional advantages would be:

- Self determination
- Control of tenancies
- Ability to ensure that non-payers and those who don't maintain their plots are evicted
- Tenants can decide how their income is spent and how the allotments are run