Allotment Policy

Thurston Parish Council

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1. PURPOSE OF THE POLICY

This allotment strategy has been developed for the provision of allotment plots provided directly by Thurston Parish Council not for privately owned sites.

The overall objective of this strategy is to increase the ability and opportunity for people to cultivate allotment plots in the parish of Thurston.

The strategy seeks through its targets and initiatives to optimise the use of allotments for existing and potential plot holders, identify needs and meet demand.

All initiatives contained in this document are considered in the context of other Parish Council strategies, policies and objectives.

This document provides a framework allowing tenants to develop and manage their allotments in partnership with the Thurston Parish Council (TPC).

2. INTRODUCTION

The provision of allotments by local authorities is a statutory duty. Thurston Parish Council wishes to be able to provide and promote allotments not only because of this statutory requirement but because allotment gardening can make a valuable contribution to the parish's sustainability by providing health, social, economic and environmental benefits.

These can be summarised as:

- Low-cost fresh food production for the family
- Promotion of healthy affordable diets
- Healthy recreational activity
- The opportunity to maintain and develop skills
- Social contact and as a contribution to community spirit
- Better partnership working

Allotments are a valuable green sustainable open space within the rural environment.

They contribute to the retention of traditional skills and wisdom as well as being highly beneficial to the wildlife of the area.

3. CURRENT PROVISION

The Parish Council operates one allotment site: at Thurston Park, Sandpit Lane, Thurston.

The site is divided into 9 (nine) plots of varying sizes – sizes are as follows:

Plot Number	Size (m^2)
1	108
2	90
3	108
4	116.77
5	100
6	100
7	103.53
8	101.97
9	114.12

4. MANAGEMENT

The Allotment Gardens on this site will be managed on behalf of the parish council by the Parish Clerk and the Deputy Clerk. Council's Officers will deal with the day-to-day administration of the allotments, including:

- Collecting and administering rents
- Administering tenancies
- Letting plots and new tenancy agreements
- Enquiries from prospective tenants including site visits
- Inspecting individual plots on a regular basis
- Resolving disputes and dealing with complaints
- Arranging day to day maintenance of the site
- Managing alterations and improvement works

All allotment holders, current and prospective, will be given a copy of the Allotment Tenancy Agreement which will explain the rules in the Tenancy Agreement and what can and cannot be done on the site, along with details of site management and contact details.

The agreement will be reviewed and revised as needed and following consultation with the current allotment holders.

5. SITE MAINTENANCE

The Parish Council is responsible for maintaining clear access to the allotment gardens, allowing tenants access to their plots.

On the site at Thurston Park this will also include the two grassed areas abutting the 8 (eight) allocated parking spaces, which are also within the remit of the parish council for maintenance, and the two water dip tanks.

Duration of lease and ending the tenancy

Allotments will be leased for the period of one year, although they can be renewed indefinitely.

The Allotments Act 1922 provided allotment holders with some security of tenure by setting out specific periods of notice for ending a tenancy. The parish council, as Landlords can only end an allotment garden tenancy by giving the allotment holder a minimum of 12 (twelve) months' notice. The tenancy may be ended by giving one month's notice where the allotment holder has breached any of the conditions of the tenancy agreement.

6. TARGET AREAS OF THE POLICY

- Ensuring sufficient allotments
- Promoting allotment gardening
- Encouraging sustainability
- Providing good administration
- Maintaining adequate resources

7. ENSURING SUFFICIENT ALLOTMENTS

It is the policy of the parish council to continue to meet its legal obligation to provide allotments in Thurston for the residents of the parish of Thurston.

The parish council owns no land other than the site on Thurston Park. The parish council has no plans to sell the site however it is actively looking for additional sites to satisfy demand shown.

In addition to a residents' only policy, the parish council may exceptionally accept applications from voluntary community groups for the tenancy of allotment(s), where the proposed use is beneficial to the residents of the parish of Thurston and may increase allotment use.

8. PROMOTING ALLOTMENT GARDENING

It is the parish council's policy to promote allotment gardening. Details of all allotment sites will appear on the parish council website. Vacant plots will be advertised on the parish council noticeboards; website and the council's Facebook page.

9. ENCOURAGING SUSTAINABILITY

The Tenancy Agreement encourages organic gardening but does not forbid pesticides:

- To encourage and where possible support, good environmental practice including use of organic alternatives to fertilizers and pesticides.
- In consideration of opportunities for improved wildlife habitats, such as hedge planting, lacewing and ladybird overwintering shelters.
- To reduce maintenance and improve biodiversity by making use of unlettable plots and planting to encourage wildlife.

10. MAINTAINING ADEQUATE RESOURCES

It is envisaged that the rental income from the site will not cover running costs, with major capital costs having to be met from parish council revenue budget (potential CIL for the initial start-up costs). The salary of the council's officers time spent on allotment administration will be met from the parish council's staffing budget and not from rental income. The parish council may need, in future years, to balance the benefits of the allotments provision against the cost to the residents of Thurston via the council tax precept.

The level of rents, key (if applicable) and plot deposits plus any concessionary schemes is considered annually and any changes will be introduced in time for renewals on 1 April.

The allotment rental period will run in line with the local authority financial year and for plots taken mid-term, rents will be proportioned accordingly.