



Brighton & Hove Allotment Federation

Allotment Strategy 2014 Summary

This strategy aims to make allotments enjoyable, inclusive, sustainable and affordable for the people of Brighton and Hove.

It is a co-production of the City Council and the Allotment Federation who worked closely in partnership, supported by the Food Partnership, listening to and engaging the City's allotment community, with its 6000 food growers with 3100 plots on 37 sites, in a wide variety of ways. It was informed and guided by evidence, while setting down current practices and future ambitions.

It emphasises increasing the number of people growing high quality local food by ensuring the availability of good quality land. It promotes a self-sustaining and efficient service, encourages site participation, while fostering biodiversity, organic practices, good food and healthy living. It encourages a cooperative approach.

Over 1800 people were involved in the strategy, many of whom contributed substantial time to surveys of allotmenters that generated valuable and detailed evidence. Almost everyone believed that the major benefits of allotments included healthy food and general exercise. Allotments did not bring about major savings on bills, but individuals and families are able to make better food choices (e.g. organic or healthier food).

A large majority thought that their allotment has a powerful impact on their overall health and happiness, relieving stress and improving their mental health; while many enjoy being part of a community. In comparison to the general population, allotmenters feel healthier. Charities and Community Groups independently run 30 community plots providing access and facilities for vulnerable groups. They too emphasise the benefits of allotments for good mental health.

It is clear that more work should be done to understand how participation in food growing can lead to savings in health and social care costs and a better quality of life. The findings of this research should be shared widely.

The Allotment Strategy makes recommendations on accessibility to ensure that all sections of the community can participate. This includes protecting the concessionary discount of 25% on allotment rental; targeting those who may benefit most, and ensuring that suitable plots are available for those with limited mobility. A feasibility study is needed on the possibility of 'fast tracking' applications from certain priority individuals and community groups.

Many people on allotments care passionately about their own plot and the wider allotment community. This is an asset that this strategy seeks to recognise and build on. A co-operative and participative approach is essential for delivering the strategy, overseeing the action plan, and running the service if the ambitions set out in the strategy are to be achieved. The strategy makes recommendations around structures for governance; developing allotment rules; and communication to facilitate this building on the trust and goodwill of the strategy processes.

Four out of five people are happy with their current plot size; however there is overwhelming support for introducing a choice of plot sizes, changing the current policy of only letting half plots. The choice should include full plots, half plots and the introduction of new compact beds that can foster cooperation and participation. An important finding is that the number of people on allotment waiting lists is possibly half the number previously thought, about 1000 people, allowing this new approach.

An improved, chargeable, self-funding service should be introduced for those on the Waiting List. They should be kept informed of their position on the waiting list, know if there is spare capacity at other sites and have information on training, site open days, and co-working opportunities. They should be helped to understand the time commitment for different size plots and the alternative options for food growing. Similarly once they start renting an allotment many allotmenters want better training and information and to have opportunities to be mentored by more experienced growers.

In 2013 there were over 400 empty plots, representing lost income and causing frustration to plot holders and those on the waiting list. This figure needs to be reduced via streamlining the lettings process, giving better support to site representatives, who manage lettings; and improving ICT systems.

Allotments play an important role in conserving the biodiversity of the city. There is good practice already around composting; growing organically; minimising chemical use; and planting schemes that benefit pollinators, including bees, but more can be done around the management of water usage and rainwater harvesting.

Allotmenters already contribute thousands of hours each year in volunteer time. Volunteers run the Allotment Federation and Site Associations, manage lettings and cultivation notices (Site Reps) and organise social events, tidy up days and/or routine maintenance at some sites. The strategy recommends providing greater clarity, accountability and support for the role of Site Reps, while encouraging more people to participate, increasing the range of opportunities for volunteering.



There is considerable difference across the city ranging from little or no involvement at a site level to site associations that run shops, organise open days and help with running the site. The strategy recommends that all sites are encouraged and helped to undertake activities that encourage on site participation and communication.

This strategy seeks to work towards a self-sustaining and efficiently run service that keeps down costs for both tenants and the Council. Rent rises should be minimised and other avenues explored for reducing costs. Additional sources of revenue should be explored, especially services which would benefit plot holders as well as generate income. Grants or sponsorship for certain pieces of work should be sought. There should be a voluntary option to pay a higher rent for those on higher incomes. If a concession is not needed, the option for individuals to waive it voluntarily should be promoted. In parallel, consideration is needed on whether concessions for vulnerable groups could and should be funded via the City's public health budget.

In the longer term, exploring greater self-management on site is needed to strengthening community involvement, encourage participation while promoting sustainability and reducing costs.