

**REPORT**

SUBJECT: Proposed Community Growing Policy

MEETING: Strong Communities Select

DATE: 23rd March 2013

DIVISION/WARDS AFFECTED: All

1. PURPOSE:

- 1.1 To consider the first draft of the proposed Community Growing Policy which has been prepared to enable communities to use designated areas of under utilised land for the growing of food crops.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 2.1 To provide feedback on the policy as drafted and confirm in principle support for the proposed policy.

3. KEY ISSUES:

- 3.1 The Council's Sustainability Team work closely with representatives and community stakeholders to support and develop sustainability initiatives to enhance community resilience. A clear theme emerging from this work is the need to identify opportunities for communities to grow their own food.
- 3.2 The Council already provides land for allotment use, however there is more demand than supply and more flexible options need to be made available.
- 3.3 A number of schemes are already working successfully in England and the Sustainability Team has been working with the founder of the Incredible Edibles scheme in Todmorden, Calderdale in West Yorkshire to develop a similar concept in Monmouthshire.
- 3.4 The success or not of this scheme will largely depend on making the scheme user friendly with a straightforward process for both MCC as landowner and the prospective users. Therefore it is proposed that the

decision process for approving licences will be delegated to the Estates & Sustainability Manager, following consultation with the ward member.

4. REASONS:

- 4.1 The policy as drafted needs to be subject to further scrutiny from members of the public and stakeholder groups, which may result in changes to the process to make it more accessible to community users.

- 4.2 The policy does not intend to create additional allotments, instead it will highlight areas of land where community growing will be actively encouraged on the basis that the area is a community resource and not that of individuals. Crops can be cultivated and harvested by anybody and those wishing to use the land must do so on this basis.
- 4.3 The Council will not police this land or manage the growing areas, instead licences will be granted to community groups who will undertake this stewardship role.
- 4.4 The Council will actively discourage guerilla gardening (where communities/individuals cultivate land without the landowners knowledge or consent).

5. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS:

It is not intended to charge a fee for the licence agreements, therefore there will be no income for the Council, however there will be opportunities to reduce grass cutting contracts when community growing spaces have been identified.

Each party will be responsible for their own costs in the preparation of the licence agreements.

6. CONSULTEES:

An initial meeting has been undertaken with interested stakeholders to understand what they need and how they would like to see the policy working.

The draft policy has been prepared on the basis of this session, however further consultation will need to be undertaken before it is finalised and progressed to Cabinet.

7. BACKGROUND PAPERS:

None

8. AUTHORS:

Debra Hill-Howells
Ben Winstanley

Estates & Sustainability Manager
Sustainability Surveyor

9. CONTACT DETAILS:

Tel: 01633 644281 or 07775851405
email: debrahill-howells@monmouthshire.gov.uk

Tel: 01633 644965 or 07876 137450
Email: benwinstanley@monmouthshire.gov.uk