

Sustainability Committee

SC(3)-09-10 : Paper 7 : 21 April 2010

Inquiry into the Provision of Allotments in Wales

Response from the Welsh Local Government Association : Additional information from the 18 March Sustainability Committee Meeting

Introduction

1. The Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA) represents the 22 local authorities in Wales, and the three national park authorities, the three fire and rescue authorities, and four police authorities are associate members.

2. It seeks to provide representation to local authorities within an emerging policy framework that satisfies the key priorities of our members and delivers a broad range of services that add value to Welsh Local Government and the communities they serve.

3. During the verbal evidence session of the 18th March 2010, a number of questions were raised with the WLGA which we agreed to try and respond to subsequent to the meeting. These questions were set out in your letter dated the 23rd March 2010 and are set out below:

4. At the meeting, you agreed to provide the Committee with the following information:

Local authority expenditure figures on allotments and income from them;

WLGA would provide an update on the Community Grown Food working group;

Further examples of shared gardens in relation to the elderly;

An update on progress made with regards to the local sourcing plan, Food and Drink in Wales

Local authority expenditure figures on allotments and income

5. All 22 authorities were invited to respond on this issue; the responses so far received are set out below. We will continue to encourage all authorities to respond on this. It is clear that authorities interpreted this question in slightly differing ways which must be taken into account in making direct comparisons between authorities.

City and County of Swansea

The annual spend on allotments in the City & County of Swansea is £11,400.

The annual income derived is approximately £2,000

The waiting list stands at approximately 100 people at the moment. The average wait is 12 months

Bridgend County Borough Council

Bridgend County Borough Council currently has no specific budget for allotments, they are included as part of our "Miscellaneous Properties". However, in recent years improvements to our allotments and indeed the creation of a new site at Ogmere Vale was funded from the capital works programme, some directly funded and in other cases the monies have been given to the Bridgend County Allotment Association to enable them to obtain match funding. Some small scale repairs & improvements have been funded by Property Services from our miscellaneous properties budget which includes allotments.

Bridgend County Borough Council does not currently maintain a waiting list for allotments as most of our sites are managed by the Bridgend County Allotment Association. As a result, any requests for allotments are usually referred to the Bridgend County Allotment Association and they hold waiting lists for the respective sites. We can however advise that as at February 2009, all bar 4 plots of their sites were let and they had a waiting list of nearly 100 people for the various sites.

Ceredigion CBC

Ceredigion, being a mostly rural area, has traditionally had limited demand for formal Allotment plots within the rural areas. In recent years however there has been an upsurge in the demand for Allotment plots in the various towns and larger villages due to changing circumstance, the popularity of gardening programmes and the awareness of the benefits of a more active lifestyle and self managed, self produced food.

Ceredigion has five Allotment sites of various sizes under its direct control and two devolved management sites under independent management. The popularity of Allotment gardening has resulted in a number of requests under the 1908 Allotment Acts to make available within the County formal allotment sites for the local communities. The Council is considering various ways and partnerships

with other Organisations to provide this service where possible.

It is not practical however to provide formal allotment sites to each rural village. In 2006 Ceredigion County Council provided one new site in Lampeter and a refurbished site in Blaenplwyf. In addition, it made land available for Allotment plots in Aberaeron under separate devolved management to the Allotment Association to meet local demand, and in 2010 leased additional lands to the Town Council in Aberystwyth for Allotment garden use (the Aberaeron site is being extended in 2009 / 2010).

2009/10 Spend on Ceredigion County Council allotments = £6,373

Income received for CCC allotments= £1,180

Loss= £5,193.

Waiting time is approximately four and half years depending on specific site location.

Isle of Anglesey County Council

1. This authority does not have any spend on allotments; the income derived is in respect of rent and is currently £350.00pa.

2. This authority does not directly manage allotment sites therefore we have no figures with regard to waiting list.

Powys County Council

Powys County Council currently has a total of 15 allotment sites throughout the County. These have a total of 251 plots covering 45,080 square mts. There are currently 112 people on our waiting lists, but due to the nature of allocation (only allocated once the current tenants vacate) figures are not available showing how long the waiting times are for applicants.

Seven of those 15 sites are fully administered and managed by an allotment association and the remaining eight sites are administered by the council, but the council is actively working with tenants from those sites to form an association to take on the running of those sites. There is very little income generated through annual rentals (on average £15 per year is charged) and, as there is no specific budget allocation for allotments, most of that income is used for the upkeep of those individual sites.

This is not the complete picture for Powys as some town and community councils also have allotment gardens under their responsibility, but the County Council does not hold any information relating to those sites - enquiries would have to be made through the individual authorities.

Wrexham CBC

Budget 2009/10= £15,059 (direct spend on allotments) This figure excludes cost of landscape designer's time spent on allotments - (60% of her time)=£20,547

Income 2009/10 = £13,972

The Waiting list varies from week to week, currently up to 172 people for the 4 allotments sites WCBC owns. Average waiting time is 2 years.

Annual Expenditure FY 2009/10 - £3,745.00

Annual Income FY 2009/10 - £2,390.00

Annual net devolved expenditure - £1,355.00

No element for officer time in these figures.

What is your waiting list and how long do people generally need to wait (again very vague question as it will vary across the authority but again we'll highlight this in the submission).

We have four allotment sites in the following towns:

Town	Number of Allotment Plots	Waiting List
Ruthin	40	31
Denbigh	25	33
Prestatyn	12	72

Llangollen	16	49
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We have increased the total number of allotment plots by 9 units over the last two years and as and when other large plots revert to the Council we will form a proper footway with gravel boards and a safe ground surface (as funds allow). We will carry on splitting large plots to increase the supply but the waiting list as at November 2009 when I wrote to the local MP was at 185 applications for 109 plots. All the plots are let so the waiting list period is measured in years and not months. We are looking at former allotment land reverting to this use in Prestatyn and also a new site in Rhyl but both of those will not be large enough to meet the level of demand in my view.

RCT

Budget of £14k for maintenance of allotments and is all spent annually.

The income is £7k for rental of allotment land.

The waiting list is 29 people but changes from day to day, some people only want certain plots which they can wait for years, but generally about 2 months.

Cardiff

I can advise that the net expenditure for Cardiff Council's Allotment Service for 2009/10 is budgeted at £ 94k (Gross exp £128k - Gross Income £ 34k).

In terms of waiting list numbers there are currently 853 individual names registered. Waiting times vary and are dependent on the particular site that the prospective tenant is interested in / how far across the city they are prepared to travel. Where we have sites with a small number of plots with long waiting lists it is possible that individuals could be waiting for five years or more. On the other hand if an individual is prepared to travel across the city and take on a plot that is overgrown and put some 'up front' work in it could be a matter of weeks.

Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council

There are a number of allotment sites across the County Borough of Blaenau Gwent in most instances these sites are the responsibility of Community/Town Councils who sometimes contribute small grants to allotment societies, it may be advisable to contact the community councils directly.

Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council is directly responsible for 9 allotment sites (managed through our Estates Section) where an annual grant is given totalling £4,430 (each allotment receiving £492). The nine allotments are run by small allotment committees who deal directly with allocation of sites; unfortunately we are unaware of waiting lists for new gardeners. Allotment societies charge each allotment holder approximately as Follows:

£2.50 per half plot per year

£5.00 per full plot per year

Plus £1.00 membership for each plot holder

Newport CBC

The revenue budget for 2008/09, included expenditure of £114,149 set against an income level of £8,656. Net expenditure was therefore in the order of £105,493. This amount includes SLA charges, admin charges and grounds maintenance charges and improvements.

Waiting lists as at 31st December totalled 192 people. The waiting time varies between a couple of days to up to 4 years, depending on the allotment site. 96 of the people waiting are on waiting lists for the 3 self managed sites. It is the choice of the allotment tenant as to which site they would like a plot on.

Community Grown Food Task and Finish Group

The WLGA have recently been represented in the Community Grown Food Task And Finish Group established by the Minister for Rural Affairs. The Group has representatives from the statutory and third sectors, providing a wide perspective on food and communities. The remit of the Group was to draft proposals to:

"promote, support and encourage community grown food in Wales; both among communities and for individual's growing in their gardens."

Further aims include:

Working towards improving food security by increasing the availability of locally grown horticultural produce in Wales.

Connecting people to the food chain.

Improving health and well being in Wales.

Evidencing current work and providing a best practice guide for future community projects.

To increase the number of people interested in growing food.”

This task and finish group has now completed its initial work by putting together an Action Plan in relation to community grown food.

This plan includes proposed actions on information-sharing; funding; skills and knowledge; as well as land availability and management.

The actions include proposals on increasing land availability through allotments and other growing schemes, as well as improving the management of possible community growing land resources. The Action Plan is currently being finalised to present to the Minister.

Further examples of shared gardens in relation to the elderly

At this time we have no further details on further examples of other than the one mentioned at the committee, however we will continue to encourage authorities to submit any examples.

An update on progress made with regards to the local sourcing plan, Food and Drink in Wales

At this moment the WLGA has no specific comments to make regarding this strategy and its implementation. However many of the issues and concepts have been taken forward in the food module of the SD framework (submitted as part of our evidence) which also contains some practical examples of where this thinking is impacting. We are also aware that many of the actions are ongoing through Value Wales activity that we are engaged with. Whilst the Local Sourcing Plan is less than a year old the WLGA will contribute fully to the annual review process as required.

For further information please contact:

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