
Executive

12th April 2011

Report of the Assistant Director Governance & ICT

Final Report arising from the Edible York Ad Hoc Scrutiny Review

Summary

1. This report presents Members with the final report arising from the Edible York Ad Hoc Scrutiny Committee (the attached A5 booklet refers). Councillor D'Agorne, the Chair of the Ad Hoc Scrutiny Committee will be in attendance at the meeting to present the report.

Background

2. At a meeting of the Scrutiny Management Committee (SMC) in December 2010 Members agreed to undertake a scrutiny review on the theme of local food growing. Councillor D'Agorne had registered the topic and the original topic registration form is available on-line as part of this report.
3. An Ad Hoc Scrutiny Committee was set up to undertake the review and the following remit was set:

Aim

4. To improve how City of York Council supports community food growing

Key Objectives

- i. To develop an information page on City of York Council's website which provides information and links to organisations involved in food growing initiatives
- ii. To identify the barriers to communication between City of York Council and voluntary organisations
- iii. To identify potential areas of land in the city suitable for food growing
- iv. To consider how best to enable and encourage individuals and groups to grow food
- v. To encourage schools to participate in local food growing initiatives.

Summary of Recommendations Arising from the Review

5. Between December 2010 and March 2011 the Committee gathered information in relation to the review and this resulted in them making the following recommendations:

Recommendation 1 – That a collection point be established at the Hazel Court Household Waste Site for garden tools and Council officers investigate and implement a suitable system for collection, storage and distribution of the tools (including exploring the possibility of working with the Community Furniture Store to distribute these). This should be for a trial period of 6 months and if successful then permanently implemented. *(Fourth key objective)*

Recommendation 2 – That the Council website be updated to include more and clearer information about food growing opportunities, food growing information and links to voluntary sector organisations. *(First key objective)*

Recommendation 3 – That the Council actively promotes local food growing by providing information and encouragement by using:

- The Council's website
- Existing publications (Your Ward, Your City, Allotments Newsletter, Housing Tenants Newsletter)
- Providing a link on the Council website to an appropriate York based 'Green Portal' should this be established

In order to provide information to residents on food growing opportunities as well as to generally promote the food growing agenda within the city. *(Overall aim and fourth key objective)*

Recommendation 4 – That the Head of Parks & Open Spaces clarifies and co-ordinates the provision of information (internally & externally) in relation to food growing on City of York Council land. *(Second key objective)*

Recommendation 5 – That a register of mentors be set up through advertising in the Allotments News for mentors for schools, community groups and individuals. *(Fourth & fifth key objectives)*

Recommendation 6 – That City of York Council policies relating to green space management including amenity and communal housing areas should reflect a broad presumption in favour of it being suitable for food growing unless demonstrated otherwise e.g. potential harm to nature conservation or biodiversity, presence of utilities and services, sports use. *(Overall aim and second key objective)*

Recommendation 7 – That the Schools Forum be asked to continue funding the Advanced Skills Teacher post that supports the Sustainable Schools Strategy and that possible ways of strengthening the local food-growing element of the Sustainable Schools Strategy be looked at. *(Fifth key objective)*

Consultation

6. The following were consulted as part of this scrutiny review:

Relevant City of York Council officers
Representatives of Edible York
Representatives from the British Trust for Conservation Volunteers (BTCV)
Representative from St Nicholas Fields
Representative from Yorkshire Wildlife Trust

Archbishop's Advisor for the Environment (York Diocese)
Advanced Skills Teacher for Sustainable Schools

Options

7. Having considered the findings contained within the final report the Executive may choose to support or reject the implementation of the recommendations arising from the review.

Analysis

8. Members of the Edible York Ad Hoc Scrutiny Committee analysed all the information received as part of the review and this was used to inform their recommendations.
9. Due to a cross over in agenda publication dates the Executive agenda will be published before SMC meets to consider the final report. Any comments and amendments received from Members of SMC will be circulated as soon as possible before the Executive meeting on 12th April 2011.

Corporate Strategy 2009/2012

10. This topic is linked to the 'Sustainable City' aspect of the Corporate Strategy 2009/2012:

'We aim to be clean and green, reducing our impact on the environment whilst maintaining York's special qualities and enabling the city and its communities to grow and thrive.'

11. In addition to this the Council's Sustainability Officer has said that the work of the ad Hoc Scrutiny Committee supports the wider sustainability agenda and the Sustainable Community Strategy. Specifically it supports the Sustainable City chapter which aims to reduce York's ecological and carbon footprint and support local food growing initiatives. It also supports the city's climate change framework and action plan and can be seen as a great tool in starting people to take more sustainable action and raise awareness of wider sustainability issues.

Implications

12. **Recommendation 1** (*establishing a tool collection point*) – The Waste Management Officer has spoken with the Yorwaste site manager at Hazel Court who has indicated that there will be no financial implications associated with the recommendation. However it is unlikely that staff resources and space would be available to expand this to other Council household waste recycling sites within the city.
13. **Recommendation 2** (*website improvements*) - The Head of Parks and Open Spaces has indicated that this could be implemented within existing resources.

14. **Recommendation 3** (*promoting food growing*) - The Head of Parks and Open Spaces has indicated that this could be implemented within existing resources.
15. **Recommendation 4** (*provision of information*) - The Head of Parks and Open Spaces has indicated that this could be implemented within existing resources.
16. **Recommendation 5** (*Register of mentors*) - The Head of Parks and Open Spaces has indicated that this could be implemented within existing resources.
17. **Recommendation 6** (*policies relating to green space management*) - The Head of Highway Infrastructure had indicated that he was broadly in favour of cultivating public open spaces, however he did have some concerns surrounding potential planting on highway verges. Highway verges often contained 'hidden utilities and services' and may, as such, be unsuitable for cultivation. Liability for the public highway is non delegable and the Council must accept liability should a third party claim be made against them. In addition to this he suggested that a returnable bond be requested for any scheme to encourage both individuals and groups to return the land back to the Council in the condition they found it.
18. On consideration of these concerns the Committee did not feel a bond would be appropriate and would discourage both groups and individuals from using Council land for growing food. It could also be cost prohibitive to some.
19. In relation to the concerns regarding the public highway Members of the Committee were of the opinion that very few groups or individuals would chose to cultivate a plot of land directly adjacent to a busy road. However they may wish to use land at adjacent to the highway in quieter areas set back from the highway; e.g. Edible York's public bed on Peasholme Green. The Head of Highway Infrastructure had been consulted about this and was happy for the scheme to go ahead. This consultative approach will be followed in future.
20. The Head of Parks and Open Spaces would ensure that any licences issued for plots of land on the highway addressed the necessary highway safety requirements. This would include the legal requirement to wear fluorescent vests/jackets when working on projects on the highway.
21. **Recommendation 7** (*AST teacher*)

Financial - The funding for Advanced Skills Teachers (AST) forms part of the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG). The Schools Forum reviews the allocation of this funding annually and the Forum has decided to allocate funding to continue the AST programme during 2011/12.

The deployment of ASTs is reviewed annually and aligned to school improvement priorities outlined in the School Improvement service plan. An AST role has been aligned to support our Sustainable Schools Strategy and action plan and this work will continue during 2011/12.

The AST for sustainable schools is currently funded to do outreach work as an AST for one day a week and this funding includes a payment to the school to

cover the differential between the substantive role as a teacher at a local primary school and the additional allowance as an AST. The AST role is primarily to support schools with developing their work on Education for Sustainable Development, particularly with regards to supporting the development of learning, teaching and the curriculum. The school also receives funding to cover the costs of supply cover for the outreach day. The total annual cost of the AST is estimated at £9,240 for 2011/12.

The overall level of the DSG is not yet known for 2012/13 and the Schools Forum will need to review the funding of AST roles, along with all other DSG priorities as part of the 2011/12 budget setting and local decision making process.

2. There are no known other (property, legal, equalities) implications associated with the recommendations arising from this review.

Risk Management

22. There are no direct risks associated with the recommendations arising from this review however there may be longer-term sustainability risks if the Council chooses not to support local food growing in a more positive way.

Recommendations

23. Executive are asked to consider the attached final report and associated recommendations and decide whether to support the recommendations arising from the review.

Reason: To address the concerns raised when this topic was originally suggested.

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Wards Affected:**All**

For further information please contact the author of the report

Background Papers:

None

Annexes

Final report A5 colour booklet (printed for Executive Members only) with the PDF version of the document being available on-line