
Scrutiny Management Committee

28 November 2011

Report of the Assistant Director (Environment)

Edible York Scrutiny Review – 6 month feedback and update

Summary

1. This report is to inform the Scrutiny Management Committee of the progress in implementing the Edible York Ad Hoc Scrutiny Review recommendations.

Background

2. In December 2010 an Ad Hoc Scrutiny Committee was formed to investigate the role the council plays, or could play, in supporting communities to grow food locally. The committee set itself the following 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*
3. Having met and interviewed interested parties the committee published its recommendations in March 2011 which were subsequently accepted by the Executive on 12 April 2011. An update on each of the recommendations is provided below.

Updates

4. *"Recommendation 1 – That a collection point is 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)”

5. This has not been started as officers have concentrated on the other recommendations. A further update on this recommendation will be provided at the meeting.
6. *“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)”*
7. This has been developed – see
http://www.york.gov.uk/environment/Parks_and_open_spaces/Allotments/community_food_growing/

Within the pages are contact details of key groups and organisations operating or supporting work in the city – Edible York, British Trust for Conservation Volunteer, Yorkshire Wildlife Trust and York Council for Voluntary Services (CVS), as well as local and national organisations who can offer advice e.g. The Society of Ancient Florists and The Royal Horticultural Society.

8. *“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)”*
9. Articles on local food growing have featured in at least two ward publications – Micklegate, and Dringhouses and Woodthorpe. The council has continued to support Edible York with a new bed being opened at Peasholme Green this spring and both this and the Barbican bed were entered into the Yorkshire in Bloom competition. See

http://www.york.gov.uk/environment/Parks_and_open_spaces/yorkinbloom/Yorkshire_in_Bloom/ The Peasholme bed also featured in the city's Britain in Bloom entry contributing to the Silver Gilt award. The national judges said...*"The introduction and encouragement of the innovative Edible York project is to be commended ..."*

10. *"Recommendation 4 – That the Head of Parks & Open Spaces clarifies and coordinates the provision of information (internally & externally) in relation to food growing on City of York Council land. (Second key objective)"*.
11. To date all food growing requests appear to be coming through this route; web content, liaison with key partners and licence applications are managed through the Head of Parks and Open Spaces.
12. *"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)"*.
13. York CVS already provide a volunteer coordination role and have agreed to continue to act as a coordinator in this area. To publicise the need for volunteers and mentors, the autumn edition of the allotment newsletter contained a large article publicising volunteering opportunities. The newsletter was sent to 1,200 allotment tenants and is available as a download on the council website.
14. *"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)"*
15. To date no licence applications have been turned down. Two licences have been granted for council land both of which are adjacent to but not on the highway. One licence application is under consideration for multiple sites along on residential road verge and a further request has been received for use of small area of amenity land. Licences are also being prepared several sites for British Trust for Conservation Volunteer and Yorkshire Wildlife Trust.

16. *“Recommendation 7 – That the Schools Forum be asked to continue funding the Advanced Skills Teacher (AST) 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)”*
17. The Schools Forum did agree to allocate funding for the AST post for the 2011/12 academic year (i.e. through to August 2012). Any future funding will be considered by the Forum when it discusses the Schools Budget for 2012/13 in February 2012.

Cross cutting projects.

18. In addition to the specific actions outlined above, Parks and Open Spaces are supporting both the British Trust for Conservation Volunteers (BTCV) and Yorkshire Wildlife Trust (YWT) to deliver two food growing initiatives.
19. BTCV has received a Lottery award for three years for their “Get Growing” project. BTCV will be supporting communities and schools throughout the city to grow and learn about food; and current projects include Haxby Road and Westfield Primary schools. Parks and Open Spaces have provided a one off grant of £6k in 2011/12 as part of BTCV’s matched funding contribution.
20. YWT has received a Big Lottery Fund award for three years for their “Dig in” project. YWT will be working with families to design food growing areas, often in or close to play areas, within Clifton, Hull Road, Acomb, Westfield and Heworth wards. Parks and Open Spaces are supporting the project ½ day a month through the Park Ranger service as part of YWT’s matched funding contribution
21. Finally, the council’s allotment service has a number of plots which are used by community organisations and where the produce shared, including YUMI, Lollipop, Scarcroft School, foster cares, youth service, mental health groups and Low Moor Community Kids who archived Gold in Yorkshire in Bloom.

Consultation

22. This report is for information and there is no consultation to consider.

Options

23. Members may choose to do one, some, or all of the suggestions below:
 - a) Sign off those recommendations where implementation has been completed;
 - b) Request a further update be brought to the Committee in six months time on any outstanding recommendations'

Analysis

24. This review was completed in April 2011 and this is the first update on the recommendations arising. Members are asked to consider the updates contained within paragraphs 4 to 17 of this report and consider which, if any, of the recommendations they would like to sign off as complete.
25. If there are any recommendations outstanding after consideration of the report then Members are advised to request a further update in 6 months time.

Corporate Priorities

26. The actions set out in the report contribute to the following Corporate priorities
 - Building stronger communities
 - Protecting the environment

Implications

27. The report has no additional implications relating to:
 - Finance
 - Human Resources
 - Legal
 - Crime and Disorder
 - Information Technology

Risk Management

28. In compliance with the council's risk management strategy there are no risks associated with the recommendations of this report.

Recommendations

29. Members are asked to:

- Note the update report and agree which, if any of the recommendations arising from the Edible York Ad Hoc Scrutiny Review they would like to sign off as complete
- Request a further report to be brought to them in 6 months time to update them on any outstanding recommendations

Reason: To raise awareness of those recommendations still to be implemented.

Contact Details

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Report Approved

Date 11.11.11.

Wards Affected:

All

For further information please contact the author of the report

Background Papers:

Edible York Ad Hoc Scrutiny Committee 22.03.11

Annexes

Worddoc/reports/scrutiny/food growing update