

## So, you want to take on an allotment?

Charlton Kings Parish Council's allotment sites are thriving, with many successful growers. You have asked to go on a waiting list for an allotment at one of our four sites and we would like you to read this leaflet before you complete the tenancy application form that you have been given or have downloaded.

***We think it would be helpful to you, to us, and to others who will also be waiting to take on the challenge of allotment gardening, to ask you to think carefully at this stage about the challenges as well as the great benefits that having an allotment brings.***

Plots can be taken on with great enthusiasm but then handed back in less than a year because the reality of having an allotment has proved to be very different from how it was imagined or perhaps portrayed on television gardening programmes. This is disappointing because people find that they have invested a lot of enthusiasm, as well as money for renting a plot and buying seeds and tools, only to realise that they do not have the time or physical fitness that are needed to manage an allotment successfully.

### **Do you REALLY want an allotment?**

This is the first question to ask yourself. Many new tenants take on an allotment only to realise that what they want, or are able to achieve, could be done at home. Potatoes can be grown in sacks; runner beans and strawberries can be grown in pots and all with the convenience of it being on your doorstep! If the answer is "Yes I do", there are a few other things to think about.



### **Do you have the resources to clear and manage an allotment?**

Although we try very hard to ensure that no allotment is allowed to go wild, it can happen for a variety of reasons. Initial clearance of a difficult plot requires a lot of hard work, particularly if it has previously been abandoned for a time. You need to be sure that you have the capacity yourself, or with the help of others, to take this on. You may decide to use a total herbicide before you start to clear the ground and you may need to make or bring in a compost bin. It all takes time and energy!



### **Do you have the time it takes to manage an allotment and to keep it in good condition?**

If you work, do you have many evenings and weekends free? Even if you don't work, you may have many other calls on your time. Managing an allotment is an all-year-round activity. In the autumn and winter, the plot needs to be cleared, manured, and dug. In the spring there is planting to do, and the summer months are when weeds try to undo all your previous hard work! Especially in the summer, your allotment will require several visits every week. Plots get overgrown very quickly and require constant attention, so don't underestimate the time needed to maintain your allotment in good condition. Talk to existing growers about the time they spend tending their plots.



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dug. In the spring

### **As an allotment tenant, you have responsibilities towards others.**

Keeping your allotment weed-free is as important to your neighbours as it is in helping you  to grow your own vegetables, fruit and flowers. You also need to cut your half of the grass paths between your allotment and your neighbours'. All this requires equipment which you may need to obtain and, of course, additional time.

### **Have you grown fruit and vegetables before?**

Unless you have some experience in general gardening, you might like to start with a small allotment and build up experience before taking on a larger plot. If there was a demand, we could create some 'starter' plots of about 50m<sup>2</sup>, but you would have to move to a different plot later if you wanted room to grow, and a bigger challenge.

### **What sizes of allotments are available and just how big are they?**

A 50m<sup>2</sup> plot is still quite big – two and a half times the size of a large advertising hoarding, and the *average* size of our 250 allotments is about three times that size - 150m<sup>2</sup>. We will be happy to give you a site map with all the different sized allotments shown and arrange to visit the site with you, so that you can work out what you think you would be able to keep in a well-managed condition, which is the most important rule of an allotment tenancy agreement.



### **What happens if I don't keep my allotment in a well-managed condition?**

Allotments are inspected up to four times a year; in May, July, October, and if necessary, the following January. A 'Green' assessment recognises that all the tenancy conditions are being met and that the plot is well-cultivated and cropped. 'Red' reflects poor or no cultivation, with perennial weeds and little or no planting. *A 'Red' assessment will always result in contact being made with the tenant. Unless there are mitigating circumstances, a tenant will not be allowed to keep their allotment for the next season if it has been red throughout the previous summer/autumn and not restored by weeding and digging during the winter.*

### **What next?**

Now that you have got this far but decided that you do not want to stay on the waiting list you might want to think about taking on an allotment another time when your circumstances have changed.

We hope that you have decided to go ahead, in which case, please complete the application form and confirm which Allotment Site list you wish to be on (or you can opt to go on all four).

We will contact you when you have reached the top of your list and there is a vacant allotment. There is a one-off £20 administration fee when you become a tenant for the first time.

**We look forward to being able to offer all our new tenants a good opportunity to "Grow Your Own".**