

BRIEFING	TO:	Improving Places Select Commission (IPSC)
	DATE:	24 th October 2019
	LEAD OFFICER:	Andy Lee Green Spaces Manager, Regeneration & Environment 01709 822457
	TITLE:	Allotments Self-Management Update

1. Background

- 1.1** It was agreed at the Cabinet and Commissioners' Decision Making Meeting on the 9th July 2018 to adopt a new vision and specification for allotments in which the Council approved the transfer of Council-owned allotments to a new borough wide self-management body and to establish a Community Benefit Society for this purpose.
- 1.2** Officers have been working with the Rotherham and District Allotment Association (RADAA) to scope out what the new Alliance would look like and to discuss the various business model options. RADAA were asked to help form an initial working group as they were seen as the main umbrella organisation for Rotherham's Allotment Community. RADAA were also able to see the mutual benefits of a community led organisation which would be able to manage Rotherham's Allotments in the future.
- 1.3** Following early discussions with RADAA representatives, Co-operatives UK were employed from August 2018 to help register a new Community Benefits Society to be known as Rotherham Allotments Alliance Ltd (RAA). Various other background work was undertaken including looking at other examples of Local Authorities working in this way.
- 1.4** Interviews were held in January 2019 for the founder Directors of the new Alliance and eight new Directors were appointed to form a Board. This Board included three of the RADAA representatives and two Borough Councillors: Cllr. Steele and Cllr Hoddinott. The requirement for two Councillors (one being the Cabinet Member with responsibility for allotments) is included in the new company's rules. The rest of the Directors come from a variety of backgrounds, but all with an allotment gardening background.
- 1.5** The Rotherham Allotment Alliance (Ltd) was registered by Co-operatives UK with the Financial Conduct Authority on the 2nd April 2019. The Alliance became a legal entity in its own right at this point.
- 1.6** The first meeting of the newly appointed Board of Directors was 11th March 2019. At this meeting Cllr Brian Steele was elected as Chair of the new company along with Mr Jack Taylor as Secretary and Mr Al Dean as Treasurer.
- 1.7** An early decision of the newly formed board was to move the start date for the transfer of Rotherham's Allotments from the Council from the original April 2019 date, as they felt that this was not achievable and could have a negative long term effect on the new

	<p>Alliance and agreed a new target date of 1st January 2020.</p> <p>This later target date would also allow Officers within the Council's Asset Management Service more time to undertake survey work and develop heads of terms for the transfer lease to allow the RAA to take legal responsibility for the allotments sites and sub-let them either directly to tenants or to site societies. Agreed Heads of Terms were agreed and signed off by the RAA Board in September 2019.</p>
1.8	<p>A start up action plan has been prepared by Officers to guide the process and to identify work yet to be achieved by the Board. This Action plan has been updated regularly and acts as a guide to progress. Although there is some work yet to do the transfer of allotments is currently expected to take place on the 1st January 2020.</p>
1.9	<p>Prior to transfer of the land holding responsibility a pro-rata share of the 2019/20 income already collected by the Council will need to be transferred (£15,181) from the Council's revenue budgets.</p> <p>A capital amount of £100,000 has also been made available to the RAA by the Council from 2019/20 for the benefit of improving allotments. It is envisaged that this funding will be monitored by Green Spaces in a legacy role as Green Spaces will retain the Statutory Allotments Authority function under the Allotments Act. This function cannot be transferred to the RAA.</p>
2. Key Issues	
2.1	<p>Officers are working alongside the RAA to ensure that pre-takeover work can take place in advance of the transfer date.</p>
2.2	<p>It has been reported by officers in Asset Management that the time available to draft the new head lease to the RAA may not allow time to register the RAA's legal status as lessee with the HM Land Registry, until as late as March 2020. However, the RAA have accepted this technical issue and neither Officers nor the RAA see this as an issue which would alter the expected January handover date.</p>
3. Key Actions and Timelines	
3.1	<p>The key milestone for the transfer of the allotments to the Rotherham Allotment Alliance remains as the 1st January 2020.</p>
4. Recommendations	
4.1	<p>That this briefing is noted and a further update be reported following the transfer of the allotment management responsibility to the RAA.</p>