

Public Report
Improving Places Select Commission

Committee Name and Date of Committee Meeting

Improving Places Select Commission – 21 April 2026

Report Title

Allotments Self-Management Update 2025

Is this a Key Decision and has it been included on the Forward Plan?

No

Executive Director Approving Submission of the Report

Andrew Bramidge, Executive Director of Regeneration and Environment

Report Author(s)

Zoe Oxley

01709 334383 or zoe.oxley@rotherham.gov.uk

Ward(s) Affected

Borough-Wide

Report Summary

This report provides an update to the Improving Places Select Commission on the continued progress toward the long-term self-management of Council-owned allotment sites in Rotherham. It focuses on developments during 2024 and 2025, including the performance of the Rotherham Allotment Alliance Ltd (RAA) and progress toward finalising the lease arrangements between the Council and the RAA.

The report accompanies the RAA Annual Reports for 2024 and 2025, which are provided as appendices and set out details of governance, financial performance, tenancy management and community engagement. Progress has continued in line with the original vision agreed by Cabinet in 2018, although completion of the lease has taken longer than originally anticipated due to legal and title complexities affecting a small number of sites. These matters are administrative in nature and have not affected day-to-day allotment management.

The Improving Places Select Commission is asked to note the progress achieved and comment on any issues arising.

Recommendations

The Improving Places Select Commission is recommended to:

1. Note the progress made toward the self-management of allotments in Rotherham, including progress on finalising the lease arrangements between the Council and the RAA.

2. Note the progress made by the RAA during 2024 and 2025, as set out in the Annual Reports at Appendices 1 and 2.
3. Comment on any issues arising.

List of Appendices Included

Appendix 1 RAA Annual Report 2024

Appendix 2 RAA Annual Report 2025

Background Papers

Improving Places Select Commission – Allotments Self-Management Update 2024 (22 October 2024)

Council Approval Required

No

Exempt from the Press and Public

No

Allotments Self-Management Update 2025

1. Background

- 1.1 At the Cabinet and Commissioners' Decision-Making Meeting on 9 July 2018, Members agreed to adopt a new vision and specification for allotments. As part of this decision, the Council approved the transfer of the majority of Council-owned allotment sites to a new borough-wide self-management body, to be established as a Community Benefit Society.
- 1.2 Following this decision, work progressed to develop and establish the borough-wide organisation, culminating in the formation of the RAA, a Community Benefit Society created to oversee and support the long-term self-management of allotments across Rotherham. The ambition of the self-management model is to empower allotment holders and local communities to take a greater role in the management and development of allotment sites, while ensuring financial sustainability, improved site conditions, and continued oversight by the Council in its role as the Statutory Allotments Authority.
- 1.3 Management responsibility for the majority of Council allotment sites transferred to the RAA on 1 January 2020. Since then, updates on progress have been provided to the Improving Places Select Commission (IPSC), the most recent being on 22 October 2024. Officers were asked to bring a further update to IPSC to coincide with the publication of the RAA Annual Report for 2025, providing assurance on progress during 2024 and 2025 and outlining the ongoing transition toward full self-management.

2. Key Issues

- 2.1 The RAA has provided its Annual Reports for 2024 and 2025 to the Council in line with the requirements of the Service Level Agreement. The 2024 Annual Report is included at Appendix 1 and the 2025 Annual Report is included at Appendix 2.
- 2.2 **Progress on Lease Completion and Self-Management Arrangements**
Since the update to the Improving Places Select Commission in October 2024, officers and the RAA have continued to work toward completing the lease arrangements associated with the transfer of allotment sites into long-term self-management. Progress has taken longer than originally anticipated due to legal and title complexities associated with a small number of sites. These matters continue to be progressed. The delays are administrative in nature and are not related to the performance or capability of the RAA.

The management and operation of allotments have not been adversely affected by the delay in finalising the lease. The Council and the RAA continue to work collaboratively to ensure that the intent and principles of the original transfer decision are upheld.

Legal Services are continuing to progress the outstanding matters associated with the lease arrangements. Subject to the resolution of these matters, it is envisaged that the lease will be completed and in place from June 2026.

2.3 Service Level Agreement (SLA)

The original Service Level Agreement between the Council and the RAA, which came into effect in January 2020, has now expired. Monthly meetings are taking place in the interim and a revised SLA has been developed and will be formally signed once the lease arrangements are completed.

The new SLA will run for a period of five years and reflects the increased maturity of the RAA as a self-managing organisation. Performance against the agreed Key Performance Indicators continues to be reported through the RAA Annual Reports.

3. Options considered and recommended proposal

- 3.1 This is an update report. No alternative options have been considered. Members are asked to note the progress made since the October 2024 update and comment on any issues arising.

4. Consultation on proposal

- 4.1 This is an update report for information only. There is no proposal requiring consultation.

5. Timetable and Accountability for Implementing this Decision

- 5.1 This report does not seek any decisions and is provided for information only. Accountability for ongoing delivery of self-managed allotments remains with the RAA, supported by Council officers in line with existing agreements until completion of the lease arrangements.

6. Financial and Procurement Advice and Implications

- 6.1 The draft lease covers the financial arrangements between the Council and the RAA. The annual rent due to the Council from the RAA is set at a peppercorn value. The RAA is responsible for all ongoing costs of running the allotments, and these costs are covered by the fees they collect from allotment users under their self-financing model. The lease will also formalise the current arrangement whereby the Council employs an Allotment Administrator and fully recharges these costs to the RAA.
- 6.2 There are no direct procurement implications arising from the recommendations detailed in this report.

7. Legal Advice and Implications

- 7.1 The Council retains its statutory duties as the Allotments Authority under the Allotments Act. These statutory functions cannot be transferred and remain with the Local Authority in non-parished areas.
- 7.2 Work to complete the formal lease arrangements continues. There are no additional legal implications arising from this update report beyond those previously reported.

8. Human Resources Advice and Implications

- 8.1 There are no new Human Resources implications arising from this report.
- 8.2 The secondment arrangement for the Allotment Administrator remains in place. Any future changes to staffing arrangements would be subject to appropriate consultation and governance processes.

9. Implications for Children and Young People and Vulnerable Adults

- 9.1 While the minimum age for holding an allotment tenancy is 18, the RAA continues to recognise the wider benefits of allotments for children and young people through informal learning, environmental awareness and food growing activities.

10. Equalities and Human Rights Advice and Implications

- 10.1 The RAA has an Equality, Diversity, Social and Child Protection policy, which is available on its website and continues to be reviewed and updated as the organisation develops
- 10.2 The RAA is committed, through its governing documents, to providing and promoting allotments that are accessible, safe, inclusive and environmentally sustainable, while remaining affordable and financially self-sufficient.

11. Implications for CO₂ Emissions and Climate Change

- 11.1 This report presents no adverse climate impacts. The continued operation of self-managed allotments provides ongoing positive environmental outcomes, supporting reduced food miles, lower food waste and greater resilience to climate change at a community level.

12. Implications for Partners

- 12.1 There are no direct implications for partners arising from this report.

13. Risks and Mitigation

13.1 Legal Risks

Risk:

Delays or challenges relating to the completion of legal agreements associated with the transfer of allotment sites.

Mitigation:

Ongoing engagement between Council legal services, officers and the RAA to resolve outstanding matters.

13.2 Financial Risks

Risk:

Potential financial pressure on the RAA if income or costs vary from forecasts.

Mitigation:

Regular financial monitoring and reporting through meetings with officers and the Annual Report process.

13.3 Community Engagement Risks

Risk:

Insufficient engagement from allotment holders or communities leading to dissatisfaction or reduced participation.

Mitigation:

Continued use of tenant forums, societies and communication channels to support engagement and feedback.

13.4 Human Resource Risks

Risk:

Reliance on a limited number of staff or volunteers impacting resilience.

Mitigation:

Ongoing development of governance and volunteer capacity and succession planning.

13.5 Access and Inclusion Risks

Risk:

Allotments not meeting the needs of users with disabilities or from marginalised groups.

Mitigation:

Consideration of accessibility in site improvements and engagement with diverse user groups.

14. Accountable Officer(s)

Zoe Oxley, Head of Operations & Business Transformation

Polly Hamilton, Service Director – Culture, Sport and Tourism

*Report Author: Zoe Oxley, Head of Operations & Business Transformation
01709 334283 or zoe.oxley@rotherham.gov.uk*

This report is published on the Council's [website](#)