
DRINKSTONE PARISH COUNCIL

Management Policy for Allotments and Other Parish Lands

For use in:	<i>Drinkstone village only</i>
For use by	<i>Parish council members Allotment trustees Allotment holders</i>
For use for:	<i>The governance and management of allotment lands on Rattlesden Road (RR) and Gedding Road (GR)</i>
Document owner:	<i>Alice Robinson Councilor for Allotments and village assets</i>
Status:	<i>Draft</i>

Purpose of the Policy/ guideline

This policy is intended to be use for the governance and regulation of the parish council allotment lands on RR and GR.

Contents

This policy will contain:

- *Principle policy for allotment and other Parish lands*
- *Notification of proposed changes in allotment fees document*
- *Rent review process document*

Allotments

1. The Council is obliged to provide allotments to satisfy legal requirements and community demand.
2. The Council considers the allotments to be a community amenity, managed by the Trustees of Charity no. 295860. The allotments are to be accessible to any Drinkstone parish resident, regardless of age, class, employment status, physical or mental disability, political belief, race, religion, sex, marital status, caring responsibilities, sexuality, or unrelated criminal convictions.
3. The Trustees may offer vacant plots to non-residents if there is no demand from Drinkstone residents. Non-resident tenancy agreements will include a 12-month notice period, should a Drinkstone resident request a plot.
4. The Trustees are responsible to the Council for ensuring maximum occupancy, actively promoting allotments as a community amenity, and encouraging plot take-up.

Responsibilities of the Parish Council

The Parish Council as Landlord Will:

- Own the allotment lands and provide adequate insurance.
- Issue tenancy agreements, setting, reviewing, and collecting rents annually in support of the Trustees.
- Manage the financial affairs, including paying outgoings such as water bills, insurance premiums, and pest control.
- Commission and pay for one-off items of capital expenditure (e.g., tree maintenance, drainage, water supply improvements).
- Jointly agree with the Trustees on any substantial changes to the management policy or tenancy agreements prior to their introduction.
- Review allotment rental rates years each December. More detail on this can be found in the financial management section.

The Trustees Will:

- Resolve tenant disputes.
- Notify the Council of long-term non-cultivation of plots.
- Consult tenants on substantial changes to policies or tenancy agreements.
- Manage the waiting list and sign-up new tenants.
- Police sites (e.g., ensuring cultivation, addressing vandalism).
- Maintain vacant plots.
- Conduct, commission, and pay for repairs to hedges, fences, gates, and sheds.
- File annual accounts with the Charity Commission, fulfilling their legal obligations.

Tenant Responsibilities

- Tenants' responsibilities are detailed in the allotment rules.
- The maximum area a tenant can cultivate is a National Standard Plot (250 square meters or 10 rods).

Financial Management

1. Rents for all allotment sites (e.g., Gedding Road and Rattlesden Road) will be the same.

2. Rents will be set by the PC and reviewed each December. These will be based on regional averages and reviewed annually, ensuring affordability and self-financing without creating barriers to accessibility. Concessions may be offered to those on low incomes, senior citizens, or individuals with disabilities.

3. Annual water costs will be calculated based on plot size (e.g., per 125m² for a half National Standard Plot) and included in the annual rent.

Based on available data, the average annual rent for a standard 10-rod allotment plot (approximately 250 square meters) in the UK typically ranges from **£25 to £125 per year. This translates to a monthly cost of approximately £2 to £10. Factors influencing rent include location, plot size, and the management structure (e.g., council-run or association-managed).

Many councils also offer concessions for senior citizens, individuals with disabilities, or those on low incomes.

For Drinkstone Parish Council, aligning rents with this regional average ensures fairness and accessibility while maintaining self-financing principles.

4. Rent payments are due on 1st April each year, invoiced as a single amount inclusive of water charges.

Environmental and Community Engagement

1. Tenants are encouraged to adopt sustainable practices, such as composting, rainwater harvesting, and minimizing pesticide use.
2. Wildlife conservation efforts, such as installing bird boxes or leaving areas wild, are supported.

3. The Council and Trustees encourage community initiatives, such as harvest festivals, gardening workshops, or shared plots for educational purposes.

Health and Safety

1. Clear pathways and plot boundaries must be maintained to prevent accidents.
2. Tenants must follow guidelines for the safe use of tools and equipment.
3. The Council and Trustees will provide emergency contact details and procedures for reporting hazards or incidents.

Other Parish Lands

1. The remaining 0.8 acres on Rattlesden Road, let under a separate lease, is subject to this management policy.

Governance

1. The three allotment Trustees will consist of:

- One current Parish Councillor,
- One current allotment holder, and
- One independent Trustee.

Appendix I
Rent Review Process for Drinkstone Allotments

The Parish Council, in collaboration with the Trustees of Charity no. 295860, will implement the following rent review process to ensure fair, transparent, and sustainable rent-setting for allotments:

1. Annual Review Timetable

- The rent review process will commence annually in December to align with the Council's budget-setting schedule and provide tenants with adequate notice of any changes.
- New rents will be finalized and communicated to tenants by January, with changes taking effect from 1st April of the following year.

2. Data Collection and Benchmarking

- The Council will gather data on regional allotment rents, focusing on comparable parishes within the East of England.
- Benchmarking will include:
 - Average rents for a standard 10-rod plot (250m²).
 - Nearby councils' rent structures (including concessions for low-income groups, senior citizens, and individuals with disabilities).
 - Provisions for water usage or other communal costs.
- Relevant cost increases (e.g., water bills, insurance premiums, or maintenance costs) will also be factored into the review.

3. Community Consultation

- Tenants will be invited to participate in a ****consultation meeting**** during the review period.
- The Council will present proposed rent changes, along with a summary of benchmarking data and financial considerations.
- Tenants will have the opportunity to provide feedback or suggest alternative approaches.

4. Rent Adjustment Principles

- Rent adjustments will aim to:
 - Align with regional averages to ensure fairness.
 - Keep the allotments ****self-financing**** by covering necessary expenses (e.g., water, insurance, minor repairs).
 - Maintain ****affordability**** to prevent financial barriers for tenants.
 - Support sustainability by allocating surplus (up to £500) to the parish reserve for future investment.

5. Final Decision and Approval

- The Trustees will review all consultation feedback and prepare a rent proposal for the Parish Council.

- The Parish Council will discuss and approve the final rent levels at a formal meeting.
- Any substantial changes to the rent policy (e.g., introducing new fees or altering payment structures) will require joint agreement between the Council and Trustees.

6. Notification of Rent Changes

- Tenants will receive written notification of rent changes by 31st January allowing at least two months' notice before the new rents take effect on 1st April.
- Notifications will include a breakdown of the rent calculation and any adjustments made.

7. Monitoring and Reporting

- The Parish Clerk, with support from the Trustees, will monitor rent payments and provide an annual financial summary, including:
 - Income generated from rents.
 - Costs covered by rents (e.g., water, insurance, and maintenance).
 - Any surplus allocated to the parish reserve.
- The financial summary will be presented during the annual meeting of the Parish Council and included in the Trustees' annual accounts submitted to the Charity Commission.

This process ensures transparency, tenant involvement, and alignment with both community and financial goals. Let me know if you'd like to refine any section!