

CONGLETON TOWN COUNCIL
COMMITTEE REPORTS AND UPDATES

COMMITTEE:	Environment Committee		
MEETING DATE AND TIME	28th November 2024 7.00 pm	LOCATION	Town Hall
REPORT FROM	Ruth Burgess – Streetscape Development Manager		
AGENDA ITEM	11		
REPORT TITLE	Allotments		
Background	<p>A statutory duty is to provide allotments. In England where there is a parish or town council it is the parish or town council which is the allotment authority, rather than any higher level authority for the area. So Congleton Town Council is the allotment authority for the area covered by Congleton Town Council . All allotment authorities have power to provide allotments. They also have a duty to do so if there is a sufficient demand for allotments (Section 23, Allotments Act 1908).</p> <p>The duty is confined to the provision of allotment gardens (in the case of a district with a population of 10,000 or more, the duty extends only to allotment gardens not exceeding 20 poles). The law does not stipulate a timeframe within which the authority must act. Whether or not such a demand exists is for the authority to decide, but it must take into account any representation in writing made to it by any six electors or council tax payers resident in the area, to the effect that the circumstances of the area are such that it is the duty of the authority to take proceedings for the provision of allotments (section 23(2), Allotments Act 1908).</p> <p>In practise it is very difficult for any challenge in law to be brought against an authority for deciding not to make such provision, given the way the legislation is worded. The Town Council are aware there is a lack of Allotments with both Allotments sites in Congleton ; Vale Allotments (privately owned) and Hilary Avenue Allotments (CTC Owned).</p> <p>What is an Allotment</p> <p>An allotment, according to the National Society of Allotment and Leisure Gardeners, is an area of land, leased either from a private or local authority landlord, for the use of growing fruit and vegetables. An allotment is traditionally measured in rods (perches or poles), an old measurement dating back to Anglo-Saxon times. 10 poles is the accepted size of an allotment, the equivalent of 250 square metres or about the size of a doubles tennis court. However it would appear that almost all of the allotments in Congleton are smaller than this size, which probably reflect the lack of supply relative to the demand. Current provision as of March 2023 there are 3 known allotment sites in Congleton as follows:</p>		

Site Name	Gross Area of land involved (m2)	Number of plots (full/half)	Ownership	Private/ Temporary/ Statutory	Waiting List open
Hillary Avenue	2,300	18 plots in total. 16 plots are for tenants who live in the CW12 postcode area. Each plot comprises an area of between 50/60 square metres. 1 Plot is reserved for a community group. 1 Plot consists of 2 raised beds and is reserved for a tenant with a mobility/disability issue	Congleton Town Council	Statutory allotment	Yes
The Vale allotments	,2,500	17 Full & 6 Half plots	Congleton Sustainability Group	Quasi public, but not a statutory allotment	Yes
Swan Street	7,180	Unknown, and not capable of being established	Privately owned by number of owners	Privately owned individual plots some of which are known not even to be tenanted	None

	<p><u>The Need</u></p> <p>The National Society of Allotment and Leisure Gardeners suggest that there should be a minimum of 15 plots per thousand households (or 1 plot for every 65 households)</p> <p>Cheshire East Council does not appear to have an allotment strategy, and in any case, CEC is not the allotment authority for Congleton. That is the Town Council. Cheshire East do publish an online list of allotment sites in Cheshire East – none of the above sites in Congleton are on that list, a list that includes other Parish Council sites.</p> <p>Within Cheshire East Council’s Local Plan Strategy, adopted in July 2017, the following references are made to allotment provision:</p> <p>The vision for Cheshire East in 2023 includes that “people will lead healthy and active lifestyles benefitting from improved access to sporting facilities, high-quality open spaces, play areas, allotments, and the open countryside”.</p> <p>Para 12.8 under Leisure states “Leisure and sport facilities and green spaces such as parks and allotments can help to enhance everyone’s life. Such provision is important for residents’ social mental and physical health and well-being and to the achievement of sustainable communities”.</p> <p>Policy SC3 on Health and Well-being indicates that CE and its partners will create and safeguard opportunities “for safe, healthy, fulfilling and active lifestyles, by inter alia (7) promoting the role of communal growing spaces including allotments, garden plots within developments, small scale agriculture and farmers’ markets in providing access to healthy, affordable, locally produced food options.</p> <p>The recently adopted Cheshire East Site Allocations and Development Policies Document (SADPD) also includes various policies about allotment provision and protection.</p> <p><i>Policy ENV7 on Climate change indicates that development proposals should incorporate measures that can adapt and/or demonstrate resilience to climate change and mitigate its impacts, and in particular that development proposals should:</i></p> <p>(iv) include, where possible, opportunities for the growing and sourcing of local food supplies (such as allotments and other community schemes)</p> <p><u>Demand</u></p> <p>Two of the existing sites (The Vale Allotments and Hillary Avenue) maintain a waiting list. Every year they ask those on their waiting lists to confirm that they still have an active interest in obtaining an allotment.</p>
Environmental	None.
Financial	It needs to be noted that there is no budget for the provision of additional allotments.
Decision Requested	Make councillors aware of the shortage of Allotments and consider taking forward into the business planning.