



TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR THE ALLOTMENT LIAISON GROUP OF ASHINGTON TOWN COUNCIL

1. Purpose

The purpose of the Allotment Liaison Group is to consult with allotment site representatives and allotment associations on the following key matters:

1. Rent levels, specifically:
 - Ground rent for sites managed by Allotment Associations.
 - Individual plot rent for sites managed directly by the Town Council.
2. Capital works projects identified by site representatives and associations as necessary for site improvement.
3. Any other matter brought by either Council representatives, or Allotment representatives

By fostering collaboration between allotment site representatives, allotment associations and the Council, the Liaison Group aims to ensure fair and sustainable rent levels and effectively prioritise capital projects, taking into account their affordability within the budget available.

2. Membership

Council Representatives:

- Five Councillors appointed by the Council on agreement, and at the Annual Meeting of the Council in May.
- Relevant officers, including the Executive Officer/Responsible Financial Officer and the Allotments Officer.

Allotment Site Representatives and Allotment Association Representatives:

- Nursery Park Allotment (managed by ATC) - 1 site representative
- North Seaton Colliery (managed by ATC) - 2 site representatives
- Hirst East End Allotment (managed by ATC) – 2 site representatives
- Woodhorn Road Allotment site (managed by ATC) – 3 site representatives
- One representative(s) from each Allotment Association; Green Lane, High Market, Seaton Hirst, and Wansbeck Road.

3. Substitutions

Notification of Substitution:

If a site representative is unavailable, they must inform the Allotments Officer at least 48 hours in advance of the meeting.

The name and contact details of the substitute must be provided at the time of notification.

Eligibility of Substitutes:

Substitutes should be individuals familiar with the site they are representing, such as another plot holder or committee member from the same allotment site or association.

Substitutes must adhere to the same code of conduct and meeting protocols as regular representatives.

Participation Rights:

Substitutes will have full participation rights during the meeting, including the ability to provide input and feedback on behalf of their site or association.

Limitations:

Substitutes are encouraged to attend only on rare occasions when the primary representative is unavailable, ensuring continuity and consistency in representation.



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4. Chair

A Councillor, appointed by the Council, will chair the meeting.

At the first meeting of the Liaison Group in each civic year, the election of Chair shall be the first item of business. The outgoing Chair shall preside over that election if they have been elected to serve on for the new term. If the outgoing Chair has not been elected to serve for the new term, and where the vote for Chair results in a tie, the Chair shall be determined by draw of straws between the candidates nominated.

5. Quorum

A quorum should consist of:

- Two Council Representatives (including the Chair or their delegated substitute).
- At least three Stakeholder Representatives, ensuring representation from at least two different sites or associations.

If the Quorum is not met, the meeting can proceed informally, but no formal recommendations can be agreed.

6. Frequency of Meetings

The Liaison Group will meet twice a year:

- May Meeting – This meeting will focus on discussing rent levels, ensuring the required six months' notice can be given for any changes to rents due in January, April, and July of the following year. **The first rent focused meeting will be required in May 2028 as rents were held for three years.**
- October Meeting – This meeting is dedicated to discussing capital works projects proposed by site representatives and associations, allowing for these discussions to inform the Council's pre-budget deliberations, which typically commence in mid-November.
- A special or extraordinary meeting can be convened if agreed by the Finance and General Services Committee.

7. Objectives

- ❖ Consultation: To gather input and feedback from allotment rent payers and Allotment Association representatives on proposed rent levels and necessary capital projects.
- ❖ Transparency: To provide clear information on the financial realities and obligations of the Council in maintaining allotments, including the rationale for proposed rent adjustments and the budgetary constraints for capital projects.
- ❖ Collaboration: To foster constructive dialogue and mutual understanding between the Council and allotment holders, working towards fair and balanced outcomes on rent adjustments and prioritisation of capital projects.
- ❖ Reporting: To ensure findings and recommendations from the liaison meetings are effectively communicated to the Council, supporting informed decision-making on rent levels and capital projects during the budget planning process.
- ❖ Scope and Limitations: To serve as a forum for consultation and discussion. Final decisions on rent levels and capital spending rest solely with the Full Council.

8. Authority

The group acts in an advisory capacity, reporting to and making recommendations through the Finance and General Services Committee. It does not have delegated decision-making powers.

9. Review

These Terms of Reference will be reviewed annually, and agreed by Full Council.