

AGENDA 6, Enc ii) Capital Works Assessment Framework for Allotment Sites

Purpose

This assessment framework provides a transparent, fair way to evaluate capital works needs across all Town Council allotment sites. The Allotment Liaison Meeting provides the forum for site representatives to present their capital works requirements and for these to be assessed objectively. However, it is Full Council that has responsibility for agreeing the overall budget available for capital works and approving which schemes proceed. This framework ensures that the recommendations presented to Full Council can be clearly explained and justified, recognising that all sites have genuine needs but available resources must be allocated where they deliver the greatest benefit and address the most pressing requirements.

Assessment Criteria

Each capital works proposal will be assessed across **six criteria**, with a maximum total of **100 points**. This helps us understand which works need to happen most urgently and where Council funding will make the biggest difference.

1. Health & Safety Need (Maximum: 30 points)

Scoring:

- **Critical (30 points):** Immediate risk of serious injury; could cause an accident; Council has legal duty to fix; puts people at risk
- **High (20 points):** Significant risk that could lead to someone getting hurt; failing quickly; creating access problems or safety concerns
- **Medium (10 points):** Minor risk; getting worse but not dangerous yet; starting to cause problems
- **Low (5 points):** No real safety issue; inconvenient or doesn't look nice but not unsafe
- **None (0 points):** No health and safety element

2. Impact & Benefit (Maximum: 25 points)

This looks at who is affected and how much difference it makes

Things we consider:

- How many plot holders are affected
- How much it impacts day-to-day use of the site
- Whether the Council has a legal duty to maintain it as landlord/leaseholder
- Impact on site's ability to attract or retain tenants
- Wider benefit to the community

Scoring:

- **25 points:** Affects everyone on site; stops people using their plots properly; Council legally required to fix
- **20 points:** Affects most plot holders (three-quarters or more); makes site difficult to use
- **15 points:** Affects about half of plot holders; causes regular problems or inconvenience

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- **10 points:** Affects some plot holders (quarter to half); causes occasional problems
- **5 points:** Affects only a few plot holders; minor inconvenience

3. Current Condition & Urgency (Maximum: 20 points)

This looks at how bad things are now and how quickly action is needed

Scoring:

- **20 points:** Completely broken or failed; not working at all; needs fixing immediately
- **15 points:** Very poor condition; will completely fail within 6 months; getting worse quickly
- **10 points:** Poor condition; will fail within 12-18 months; steadily getting worse
- **5 points:** Fair condition; will fail within 2-3 years; slowly deteriorating
- **0 points:** Reasonable condition; just routine maintenance needed

Additional consideration: Can anything be done temporarily to reduce the risk or make it safe until permanent work can be carried out? If temporary measures are possible, officers will note the cost and effectiveness of these options. This helps Council consider whether urgent work can be safely deferred if budget is limited, though permanent solutions are always preferred.

4. Value for Money & How Long It Will Last (Maximum: 10 points)

Scoring:

- **10 points:** Will last 20+ years; stops bigger problems developing; reduces future repair costs
- **7 points:** Will last 15-20 years; good long-term investment
- **5 points:** Will last 10-15 years; reasonable lifespan
- **3 points:** Will last 5-10 years; acceptable solution given circumstances
- **0 points:** Only lasts a few years (<5 years); poorest value

5. External Funding Potential (Maximum: 10 points)

Scoring:

- **10 points:** Strong external funding options available; application in progress or confirmed funding; site association/County Councillor willing to contribute significantly
- **7 points:** Some external funding possibilities; moderate chance of success; could fund portion
- **4 points:** Limited external funding options; unlikely to succeed; small contributions possible
- **0 points:** No realistic external funding available; Council must fund or work won't happen

Note: This criterion rewards schemes that cannot be funded elsewhere, ensuring Council funds are used where they're most needed.

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6. Waiting Time & Equity (Maximum: 5 points)

Scoring:

- **5 points:** Site has received no capital investment in 5+ years; significant backlog
- **4 points:** Site last received capital investment 4-5 years ago
- **3 points:** Site last received capital investment 3-4 years ago
- **2 points:** Site last received capital investment 2-3 years ago
- **1 point:** Site last received capital investment 1-2 years ago
- **0 points:** Site received capital investment within last 12 months

Note: This ensures equity across sites over time. Statutory water system upgrades are excluded from this calculation as they were mandatory, not discretionary investment.

Who Does the Assessment

The Clerk/RFO scores all the proposals, supported by the Allotment Officer who knows the sites well. This approach works best because:

- Officers have no preference for any particular site, so the scoring is fair to everyone
- Using the same person ensures consistency
- The Allotment Officer is already visiting sites and gathering evidence as part of their normal job
- As the Council's Responsible Financial Officer, the Clerk has a legal duty to give impartial advice on spending

Important: Officers prioritise, Councillors decide the budget

The Clerk/RFO uses the assessment scores to prioritise schemes in order of need. However, Full Council decides the total capital budget available for allotment works. Which schemes can actually be funded will depend on the budget Full Council agrees.

The assessment scores show the order of priority - highest scores represent the most urgent needs. But whether the top 2, top 3, or more schemes can be funded depends entirely on the budget allocation decided by Full Council.

Both the Allotment Liaison Meeting and Full Council will see all the scores and evidence. Anyone can ask questions about how the assessment was done. The final decisions on budget and which schemes proceed always rest with elected Councillors at Full Council.

Assessment Process

Before the Meeting

1. Each site representative to confirm the capital works they would like included in the 2026/27 budget, with as much detail as possible, to the Allotment Officer, no later than 17th October.
2. Officers will seek additional information and where possible seek indicative costs.

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At the Meeting

1. Each site presents their proposal (maximum 5 minutes)
2. Questions and clarification from Councillors and Officers

After the Meeting

1. Complete assessment results shared with members of Allotment Liaison Meeting.
2. Schemes prioritised in order of assessment scores (highest to lowest).
3. Recommendations for budget consideration based on:
 - Total assessment scores (priority order)
 - Estimated costs of top-scoring schemes
 - Balance of works across multiple sites where possible
 - Any critical safety issues requiring immediate action

Transparency & Questions

- All assessment scores and evidence will be recorded and available for inspection
- Sites may query their assessment through the Clerk/RFO
- Sites that score well but cannot be funded in the coming year will be noted for priority consideration the following year

Budget Recommendation to Full Council

The Clerk/RFO will present to Full Council:

1. **Complete assessment results** showing all proposals ranked by their scores
2. **Budget scenarios** showing what could be achieved at different budget levels (e.g., if £20k allocated, top X schemes could proceed; if £30k allocated, top Y schemes could proceed)
3. **Recommended budget level** based on priority needs identified through the assessment
4. **Schemes for future consideration** if they cannot be accommodated within the agreed budget
5. **Risk assessment** of not proceeding with the highest-scoring urgent works

This ensures Full Council can make an informed decision on the capital budget allocation, understanding both the priority order of schemes and the implications of different budget levels. The assessment framework helps Council decide how much to allocate by showing clearly what the most pressing needs are.

Key Messages for Site Representatives

- All sites' needs are recognised and valued
- Assessment scores show priority order based on need, not which schemes will definitely be funded
- The total budget available will determine how many schemes can proceed

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- Limited resources must be directed where they achieve greatest benefit and meet most pressing needs
- Scoring is objective and transparent
- High scoring this year but not funded = priority consideration next year
- External funding applications are encouraged and will be supported
- Regular maintenance and minor repairs continue outside this capital programme
- Health and safety concerns will always take precedence regardless of other factors

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