

Allotments Survey

This report sets out the results of a survey among allotment holders in Menheniot taken in October 2017.

This report has been prepared by John Hesketh
November 2017

Background

Some allotment holders have asked the parish council to provide more services to the people who use them. This survey was designed to find out what was most important to them. The current annual rental is £12, payable in advance in January. The council provides an unmetered water supply and locks for the entrance into the allotments.

There are 26 plots in the allotments which should bring an annual income of £312. However, this assumes that all plots are taken and that no discounts are given. In 2017, annual income was £265 (that is, 85% of the full potential income). The council also incurs expenses in running the allotments. Currently, these are: our rental payment due to the landlords £80 pa. Water charges from South West Water (latest full year 2016/17) £94. This leaves an estimated net surplus of £91 for the current year that can be used for other expenses or improvements. (for example, earlier this year the council had to buy a new lock that cost £30, and previously it had to pay a contractor to trim the hedges which cost £475).

Headlines

Most of the people who completed this survey expressed a desire for new services and most are willing to pay extra annual rent in order to cover the cost.

The most popular choice for new services was for the provision of an extra water supply to serve the needs of those plot holders who are located at the rear of the allotment. This choice potentially requires a capital investment into the allotment space which the council does not own.

Allotment holders recognise the need for rents to increase if additional services are provided. The additional average income that the survey predicts is a minimum of £133 and a maximum of £221. With the current annual surplus running at £91, that would mean an additional income of between £224 and £312 to spend on improvements.

The Options

The cost of providing additional services are:

Option 1

Installing an extra water supply:

The council can install a water pipe and a trough at a one off cost of £200 (12 gallon single trough) or £250 (60 gallon double trough).

If you choose this option, the cost could be recovered by a one-off increase in the annual rent due in January 2018. This would be either

- £8 per plot holder for the single trough or
- £10 for the double trough.

If no other option were selected, the annual rent would revert to £12pa in January 2019.

Option 2

Providing a trailer within the extra income range of £224-£312 would mean:

- Small trailer one a year £100
- Small trailer twice a year £200
- Medium trailer once a year £220

Note

Small trailer will hold up to 40 bin bags of waste

Medium trailer will hold up to 65 bags of waste

The medium trailer may not fit between the gates and would have to be left outside the allotment boundary. Trailer would be available over one complete weekend, and would need to be booked in advance.

Option 3

Cutting and pruning hedges:

- Once per year £475

Next steps

The parish council will discuss this report at its next meeting on 16 November 2017.

Before that date, we would like you to choose which of the options would best suit you:

Option 1

Water supply

If this is your choice, decide what size of trough you would like.

If you make this choice, you might also want to have a trailer as well. You don't have to choose a second option.

Option 2

If rents increase within the range that most people are prepared to pay, choose

A small trailer once or twice a year

A medium trailer once a year

There would be insufficient extra income to pay for annual hedge trimming.

Please complete the separate survey form attached to this report and return it to us before 14 November 2017.

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If the parish council were to offer these extra services, which would you most likely to use? Please choose the one you are most likely to choose (rank as 1) and least likely (rank as 4).

The most popular first choice for all respondents (41%) was for the council to install an extra water supply at the top end of the allotments.

The next most popular choice was a variation of the same question: would you like a skip installed for you to dispose of your allotment waste? Altogether, the same proportion of plot holders (41%) asked for a skip, with over twice as many asking for a skip once a year (29%) than those wanting a skip twice a year (12%)

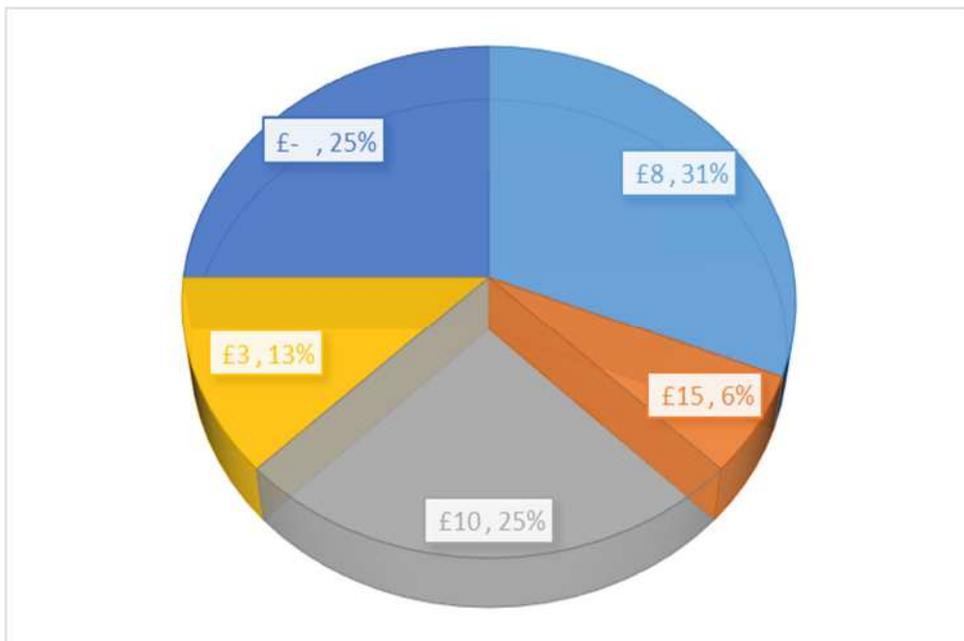
The least popular option was for the council to take over responsibility for pruning and cutting of overhanging trees (18%)



Payment for any of these suggestions would have to come from an increase in the annual rent. You currently pay £12 a year rent. How much extra would you be prepared to pay? The council does not make a profit on rent from the allotments.

The majority of people completing the survey (75%) were prepared to pay extra rent in order to have extra services provided by the parish council.

The average amount of extra annual rent that they would be ready to pay was £6. Scaled up for 26 plots, this would yield the parish council an extra £156 each year to pay for any additional services. A majority of people (56%) were prepared to pay between £8 and £10 extra each year for more services, giving an extra annual income of between £208 and £260.



Comment	Response
External road sign warning concealed entrance	The council can talk to Cornwall Council and ask for a sign to be installed.
Provision of council produced compost	The council does not produce compost and so is unable to supply any of its own.
Stricter monitoring of unkempt plots	The parish council has a councillor who takes responsibility for managing lets and the upkeep of the allotments. If you have any concerns, you can contact them through the Parish Clerk.
Change code on the gate lock	We were not aware that there was an issue with the code. Can the person who wrote this comment contact the clerk?
Take responsibility for the site boundary	Unsure what this comment means: can the person who wrote this comment contact the clerk?
Covering of plots not being used	We will include this as an obligation in a new tenancy agreement and enforce it through our regular inspections.
Committee to talk through issues rather than letting things fester	The council will give consideration to any proposal from allotment holders to form a representative committee.
I do not see the need for a skip at all. We have gone all these years without one and all seems fine. I cannot see me using it.	41% of people replying to the survey asked for a skip, so we must consider the request.
I normally do my own pruning.	This was the least popular (18%) of the proposals we put to allotment holders, and the most expensive. Everyone has the opportunity to comment on the suggestion.
Extra water supply might be a good idea for plots which are far from the entrance, but because we have heavy yearly rainfall here, my containers contain enough water to get by.	The parish council realises that not every suggestion will benefit every plot holder, but it has to consider the benefits to the greatest number of allotment users.

Technical

Survey open from 29 September 2017 until 31 October 2017.

16 responses were received. There are 20 individual plot holders in the allotments, so this means that 80% of everyone eligible to take part in the survey answered a questionnaire.

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