Purpose

This report is to recommend a course of action to address the outcomes of the local government ombudsman (LGO) final decision regarding the management of a consultative process for the ongoing management arrangements for the allotments.

Recommendation

1. To reconvene the Allotment Stakeholders Consultative Group in accordance with the original objectives and terms of reference. These should be reiterated at the initial meeting. The group and officers should work together to fully understand the existing service provided by GBC - what is done and why. This work should also be carried out with regard to the alternative proposal. Stevyn Ricketts to action

2. Both proposals should be considered and evaluated by the group. They may also want to consider alternative proposals. An options appraisal format should be agreed and used in the evaluation of the proposals. (example copy appendix A) Stevyn Ricketts to action

3. Once complete, the group should agree if a further consultation is required. This will be dependent on ensuring that both proposals offer a well-managed, efficient and reliable service to allotment holders. Proposals should ensure appropriate governance. Once this work has been completed, the objectives and terms of reference for the allotments stakeholders group should be revisited to clarify the ongoing relationship between GBC and the Allotments Holders Association and other allotment holders. Stevyn Ricketts to action

4. To complete the actions agreed at the March 2016 meeting - Stevyn Ricketts to action

5. To arrange appropriate training for relevant officers with regard to democratic services with particular attention to group decisions, acting on those decisions, and the need for proper record keeping - Michael Lawther to action

1 Background

The Allotment Stakeholders Consultative group was set up by Gosport Borough Council in April 2005 with the objectives to:

- Facilitate greater understanding of the needs and resources of the Council and the Allotment holders: and

- For the Council and Allotment holders and other stakeholders to work together to secure improvement to allotment gardening throughout the Borough.
Further, the terms of reference for this group were agreed as follows:

1. To identify issues relating to allotment provision
2. To identify and make suggestions for addressing areas for improvements of allotments in the Borough
3. To highlight priorities for improvements to allotments in the Borough
4. The consideration of a medium to long-term improvement plan for allotments in the Borough
5. To contribute to future best value Reviews/Comprehensive performance assessments in relation to allotment matters.

It was also noted that the group's recommendations for works to be undertaken would need to be considered by the then Council's Community and Environment Board, who would make final decisions on expenditure.

The group should be composed of:
- GBC 3 elected members
- Allotment Association 3 representatives
- Diocese Allotments 1 representative (1 deputy)
- Non Association plot holders 2 representatives

The capital receipt from the sale of the Camden site would continue to be shown separately in the Council's published accounts.

This group has continued to meet and this report deals in part with the management of decisions made through this group.

2 Report

In June 2015 the Allotment holders association proposed that it could manage the allotments rather than the council. At this meeting it was agreed that:

- Councillors and Officers would meet separately to consider the associations revised scheme when the association provided it
- The association would provide a leaflet setting out how it would manage the allotments - this would be sent to all allotment holders with the invoices in November to ask whether the council or the association should manage the allotments

The LGO found that the Council had made errors in carrying out what had been agreed at the meeting in June 2015 and made a number of recommendations in regard to this.

This report proposes actions with regard to the recommendations made by the LGO in their final decision in December 2016; these were:

a) Establish a new group to consider the merits of the revised scheme and whether it should be put to tenants again
b) Deal with the actions agreed at the March 2016 meeting
c) Train relevant officers about the relationship between group decisions and how they should be acted on, and the need for proper record keeping.
3. **Risk Assessment**

3.1 It is vital that the LGO recommendations are addressed.

The recommended actions ensure that any proposed scheme for managing the Borough's allotments would be scrutinised in order to ensure a robust delivery method with appropriate governance and assurances necessary for delivering public services.

Failure to comply with the LGO recommendations will have consequences for the authority which could be both financial and reputational.

4 **Conclusion**

- The recommendations of this report should ensure that the LGO investigation outcomes are acted upon and that the matter of the future management of allotments in the Borough is fully explored.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Financial Services comments:</th>
<th>None for the purposes of this report.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Legal Services comments:</td>
<td>The LGO recommendations must be complied with.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crime and Disorder:</td>
<td>No impact.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equality and Diversity:</td>
<td>Allotments are accessible to all residents within the Borough.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service Improvement Plan implications:</td>
<td>Actions will be included on Covalent and delivered by the relevant Council Sections.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corporate Plan:</td>
<td>To be a listening organisation which is open and responsive to community needs and provides a focus for community leadership. To value customer and public opinion and to deliver customer focused services to clearly defined standards. To provide sustainable, efficient, effective services whilst making best use of limited resources and maximising income streams. To share expertise to deliver an efficient co-ordinated services. To ensure fair treatment and access for all. Promoting health and well-being. Working in partnership.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Risk Assessment:</td>
<td>See paragraph 3. Risk is high if no action taken</td>
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<tr>
<td>Appendices/Enclosures:</td>
<td>• Appendix A  Appendix ‘A’ Example of an options appraisal format</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Report author/Lead Officer:</td>
<td>Colette Hill 023 9283 4872</td>
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