ALLOTMENT INSPECTION POLICY

GP20

DOCUMENT INFORMATION	
Item	**Details**
Policy Number	GP20
Policy Title	Allotment Inspection Policy
Responsible Committee	Environmental Committee
Lead Officer	Outdoor Team Supervisor
Administered By	Allotment Administrator
Policy Version	4.0
Date of Previous Review	August 2023
Date Approved	November 2026 TBC
Review Frequency	Every 3 Years
Next Review Due	November 2029

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to establish a fair, transparent and consistent approach to the inspection of allotment plots managed by Bicester Town Council.

Inspections help ensure that allotment plots are maintained in accordance with the conditions of the Allotment Tenancy Agreement and contribute to the safe and effective management of allotment sites.

Scope

This policy applies to all allotment plots located at:

- Anson Way
- Claypits
- Colne House
- Evenlode
- Leach Road

This policy should be read in conjunction with the Bicester Town Council Allotment Tenancy Agreement. Inspections will assess compliance with relevant tenancy conditions, including plot cultivation, maintenance, waste management, structures, boundaries, pathways and animal keeping.

Where a conflict arises between this policy and the tenancy agreement, the tenancy agreement shall take precedence.

1. Site Inspection

1.1 Inspection Schedule

Formal allotment inspections shall be undertaken on at least three occasions during each calendar year.

Inspection dates will be proposed by the Outdoor Team Supervisor and the Sports Administrator and submitted to the relevant Environmental Committee for approval. Once approved, inspection dates will be published in advance to allotment tenants and representatives wherever practicable.

Additional inspections may be carried out where concerns are reported, following complaints, or as part of a re-inspection process.

1.2 Inspection Criteria

Inspections will assess the condition and management of allotment plots, including:

- The extent to which the plot is being actively cultivated and maintained.
- The presence of weeds, overgrowth, hazardous materials, or items that may present a health and safety risk.
- The accumulation of rubbish, waste, or other unauthorised materials.
- Compliance with plot boundaries and the avoidance of encroachment onto neighbouring plots or communal areas.
- The condition and maintenance of adjacent pathways and access routes.
- The condition and maintenance of sheds, greenhouses, polytunnels, animal housing, and any other authorised structures.
- Compliance with size restrictions for structures and installations as set out in the tenancy agreement.
- The condition and maintenance of boundaries, including fences, hedges, and other approved boundary features.
- Unauthorised planting of trees, hedges, shrubs, or other restricted planting material.
- The keeping of animals in accordance with the tenancy agreement.
- The overall condition of the plot and compliance with the requirements of the tenancy agreement.

1.3 Cultivation Standard

Tenants are expected to cultivate and maintain their allotment plots in accordance with the terms of the Allotment Tenancy Agreement.

During the growing season, a minimum of **25% of the plot should be actively cultivated, prepared for cultivation, or otherwise managed for allotment purposes.**

During the growing season, plots should demonstrate active cultivation and management. Indicators of suitable cultivation may include:

- Cultivated beds containing crops, fruit, flowers or other productive planting;
- Ground prepared for planting;

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- Managed grass, pathways and surrounding areas;
- Effective control of weeds and unwanted vegetation;
- Appropriate seasonal maintenance and crop rotation activities.

A plot may be considered insufficiently cultivated where a substantial proportion of the plot is overgrown, inaccessible, unmanaged, or not being used for allotment purposes.
The Council will take into account seasonal conditions, weather, illness, disability, caring responsibilities and other exceptional circumstances when assessing plot condition.

1.4 Persons Conducting Inspections

Inspections will normally be carried out by the Outdoor Team Supervisor or another authorised Bicester Town Council Officer.

The following persons may be invited to attend inspections:

- Bicester Town Council Members;
- Site-Specific Allotment Representatives; and
- Other authorised representatives of the Council, where appropriate.

Ward Members and Site-Specific Allotment Representatives will be informed of inspection dates following approval by the Environmental Committee.

1.5 Inspection Records

All inspections will be recorded using the Council's approved allotment inspection system.
Where a plot is identified as not meeting the inspection standards set out in this policy, the findings will be reviewed, and the Allotment Administrator will issue the appropriate correspondence to the tenant.
Correspondence will only be issued where a plot has been identified as requiring improvement or where further action is necessary under this policy.
Photographs may be taken where necessary to provide an accurate record of plot condition and to support any subsequent action taken by the Council.

2. Procedure for Plots Not Meeting Inspection Standards

2.1 Initial Inspection and Plot Inspection Letter

Where an inspection identifies that a plot does not meet the inspection standards set out in this policy, the findings will be recorded within the Council's approved allotment inspection system.

Photographs may be taken where necessary to support the inspection findings.
The Council will then take the following action:

1. The Allotment Administrator will issue a written plot inspection letter to the tenant by email and/or post outlining the areas requiring attention.
2. The tenant will be notified of the identified issues and will have until the next scheduled plot inspection, or a maximum of two months from the date of the notice, to demonstrate satisfactory improvement.

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3. Tenants experiencing illness, disability, caring responsibilities, or other exceptional circumstances that affect their ability to maintain their plot are encouraged to contact the Council as soon as possible. Each case will be considered on its individual merits and, where appropriate, the Council may request supporting information to assist in determining a reasonable and proportionate course of action.
4. Following the expiry of the improvement period, the plot will be re-inspected to determine whether the required improvements have been completed.

2.2 Continued Failure to Meet Inspection Standards

Where a re-inspection confirms that the required improvements have not been completed, the Council will continue to monitor the plot and may issue further correspondence.

The Council's escalation process may include:

1. An initial Plot Inspection Letter.
2. A Second Warning Letter where insufficient improvement has been made.
3. A Final Warning Letter where the plot continues not to meet the required standards.

At any stage, tenants are encouraged to contact the Council to discuss any circumstances affecting their ability to maintain the plot.

2.3 Recommendations for Tenancy Termination

Where a plot continues to fail inspection following the Final Warning Letter, officers may recommend termination of the tenancy.

Any recommendation to terminate a tenancy will be submitted to the Environmental Committee for consideration.

The Committee will review the circumstances of the case and determine whether further action is required.

2.4 Termination of Tenancy

Where the Environmental Committee approves termination of the tenancy, written notice will be issued in accordance with the provisions of the Allotment Tenancy Agreement.

The tenant will be required to vacate the plot and remove all personal belongings, structures, materials, waste, and other items within the timescale specified in the termination notice.

2.5 Clearance of Plot and Recovery of Costs

Where items remain on the plot after the termination date, the Council may arrange for their removal and disposal.

Any costs incurred by the Council in clearing, reinstating, or making safe the plot, including labour costs, waste disposal charges, contractor costs and VAT where applicable may be recharged to the former tenant in accordance with the Allotment Tenancy Agreement.

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2.6 Exceptional Circumstances

Where a tenant is unable to maintain their allotment plot to the required standard due to illness, disability, caring responsibilities, or other exceptional circumstances, they are encouraged to contact the Council as soon as possible.
The Council will work with the tenant to identify a suitable and proportionate approach based on the individual circumstances of the case.
Where appropriate, the Council may permit temporary assistance in maintaining the plot or agree other reasonable arrangements.
Each case will be considered on its individual merits and, where necessary, the Council may request supporting information to assist in determining an appropriate course of action.

3. Appeals / Representations Process

Tenants may submit written representations to the Council regarding inspection findings or proposed enforcement action. Any representations received will be considered before a final decision is made by the Environmental Committee.

4. Health & Safety

The Council may take immediate action where a plot presents a significant health and safety risk to neighbouring tenants, visitors or Council staff.

5. Data Protection / Photographs

Information gathered during inspections, including photographs, will be processed in accordance with the Council's Data Protection Policy and applicable data protection legislation.

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