

Allotment Water Usage Review

Information for Plot Holders and Council

Water Expenditure and Budget Review

During a review of the **2025/26** budget, the Parish Council identified that water expenditure at the allotment site had significantly exceeded the amount originally budgeted. The water budget was overspent by **£495** during the financial year. The Council has observed a general increase in both water usage and associated costs in recent years, with the previous three financial years reflecting this ongoing trend, as demonstrated by the year-end accounting figures below:

- 2023/24: £649 overspend
- 2024/25: £103 overspend
- 2025/26: £495 overspend

In response to these increasing costs, the Council increased the 2026/27 allotment water budget by £500 in order to better reflect anticipated expenditure and future demand. This additional cost has not been passed on to allotment plot holders.

Current Water Usage Review

Having considered the above information, the Council considered it prudent to undertake a review of water usage during 2026/27 to ensure that the revised budget allocation is sufficient to meet actual costs. The review will remain ongoing throughout the financial year and is intended to assist the Council in informing future budget considerations and financial planning.

In the interests of transparency, allotment plot holders were informed that the review was taking place and were encouraged to reduce water usage where practical and reasonable. The Council recognises that access to water is essential for successful cultivation and acknowledges the efforts already made by plot holders to use water responsibly.

The Council is aware that the current review has caused concern among some allotment users. However, it is important to emphasise that the purpose of the review is not to unfairly target plot holders, but to ensure the long-term financial sustainability of the allotment site while continuing to support and maintain the facility for the benefit of all users.

Why the Review is Taking Place

The Council has seen a continued trend of:

- Hotter and drier summer conditions
- Increased demand for water across allotment sites both locally and nationally
- Rising utility costs

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Financial Position of the Allotment Site

Income – 2025/26

Total income received from allotment rents during 2025/26 was: (year-end accounting statement figures).

- **£7,355**

Costs Included When Calculating Plot Fees

The following costs are currently considered when setting allotment fees:

Cost Area	Amount
Water Usage	£1,995
Site Maintenance	£500
Administration Costs	£7500 approx

Administration costs include staff time associated with the operation and management of the allotment site, including the handling of correspondence and the resolution of issues arising throughout the year. The figure provided is considered a conservative estimate, as the level of staff involvement fluctuates and frequently exceeds the amount budgeted. For comparison, national administration cost data obtained from the National Allotment Society indicates that administration costs for allotment sites of a similar size to Hullbridge typically range between £8,100 and £13,500.

Additional Costs Not Included in Plot Fee Calculations

There are also several costs currently absorbed by the Council which are not included when calculating allotment rents, including:

- Annual software costs
- Public Liability Insurance for the Site
- Staff training
- Professional fees including Internal and external audit fees
- Printing and postage and fuel costs for hand delivered mail/rent renewals and tenancy agreements.
- Bank charges associated with cheque payments
- Stationery
- Arranging manure and woodchip for tenants

The Council is also considering membership of the National Allotment Society at an approximate annual cost of £70 to ensure continued access to specialist advice, guidance, and legal support.

In addition, funds have been earmarked for necessary tree works at the allotment site.

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Overall Financial Position

When all operational and administrative costs are taken into account, the allotment site currently operates at an estimated annual deficit of

- **£2640**

The Council continues to support the allotment site despite this deficit because it recognises the important community, wellbeing, and environmental benefits allotments provide.

National Context

Advice has been sought from the National Allotment Society regarding the current review of water usage. The Society has confirmed its support for the Council's approach and advised that similar reviews are being undertaken by allotment providers across the country due to climate change and increasing water costs.

Commitment to Transparency

The Council reserves the right to review allotment costs where necessary in order to protect the long-term viability of the site. Plot holders will be kept fully informed throughout the process and advised of any future decisions or outcomes.

For transparency, the Council publishes all income and expenditure annually alongside its accounts on the Council website in accordance with the Local Government Transparency Code 2015.

Clerk Hullbridge Parish Council.