SMART ALLOTMENT WATCH SCHEME

Agenda Item No. 7

MEETING: ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE
DATE: 2nd JULY 2014
REPORT BY: WORKS MANAGER

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1.1 The purpose of the report is for members to consider proposals to join the Smart Allotment Watch Scheme.

2.0 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

2.1 The Smart Allotment Watch Scheme is an initiative supported by Durham Police to help reduce crime on allotment sites in County Durham.

2.2 Allotments are often seen as an easy target for criminals and the Scheme is designed to deter criminal activity on allotments.

2.3 This is achieved by adopting a unique colour coding system to identify each allotment site.

2.4 Each allotment under the Scheme will be allocated a colour and all allotment tenants are encouraged to spray their gardening equipment in the identifying colour with paint supplied by the Scheme.

2.5 High value items will also be covertly marked with Smartwater DNA Solution which will then be registered on the Smartwater database. This solution is colourless and can be detected under ultra violet light and will be totally unique to each allotment.

2.6 These measures make items less attractive to steal and are easily identifiable if stolen and allow items to be quickly identified to a particular allotment.

2.7 In addition, Smart Allotment signage (see attached) is also provided for each allotment involved and members of the Scheme are offered membership of a police messaging system which has the potential to keep them updated on criminal activity acting as an early warning system. This is similar to the one which has been used successfully to support Neighbourhood Watch in County Durham.

2.8 Smart Allotment Watch was first launched in Durham at Ferryhill, where participating allotments have seen a 46% reduction in crime.
3.0 CURRENT SITUATION

3.1 PCSO Michael Hutchinson was invited to the Allotment Representatives Meeting in May to outline the benefits of the Smart Scheme to the representatives.

3.2 During the meeting, the representatives were informed that for the Smart Scheme to be successful, allotment tenants in the first instance would need to make sure that the allotment entrance gates were secure at all times, especially overnight to avoid giving criminals an open invitation to access the allotment site.

3.3 All the representatives said that their sites had experienced ‘break ins’ over the years with many items being stolen. They welcomed any initiative that would help reduce crime on allotment sites and requested that the council consider joining the Smart Allotment Scheme.

Items for Consideration

3.4 There is no doubt that the Allotment Watch Scheme in its various formats has been successful in helping to reduce crime on allotments throughout the Country and many allotment groups are members of the Scheme.

3.5 If members wish to support the Smart Allotment initiative, they may also want to consider that membership of the Scheme would only be supported by the Council at allotment sites where all tenants endorsed the Scheme, especially in relation to making the site secure at all times.

3.6 If tenants could be encouraged to keep the allotment entrance gates closed, it would also prevent incidents of fly tipping which would then reduce the cost of waste removal from the allotment sites.

4.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

4.1 Adoption of the Scheme would comply with Council Aims:

2. To Manage the Council’s Finances and Assets in a Responsible Manner

3. To Provide Accessible, Affordable Leisure Facilities and Opportunities

5.0 STAFFING IMPLICATIONS

5.1 None

6.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

6.1 The initial setting up cost for each allotment site to join the Smart Scheme would be approximately £105 per site. The Town Council manages 5 sites in total.

6.2 There is provision in the Allotments Revenue Budget to meet the initial cost of joining the Scheme.
6.3 Following the setting up costs, any additional signs, paint of Smartwater can be purchased as and when required.

6.4 There may also be a saving in tipping charges of allotment tenants endorse the scheme and secure the sites.

7.0 **CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS**

7.1 With cooperation from allotment tenants, the Scheme has the potential to significantly reduce thefts from allotments.

8.0 **EQUAL OPPORTUNITY IMPLICATIONS**

8.1 None

9.0 **ENVIRONMENT IMPLICATIONS**

9.1 None

10.0 **RISK ASSESSMENT**

10.1 It is not considered that the matter contained in this report poses a risk to health and safety of staff or to the financial or public standing of the Council to a degree that a risk assessment should be appended to this report.

11.0 **RECOMMENDATIONS**

11.1 It is recommended that members consider the proposal.
Middridge Village Allotment Association

This Allotment is CCTV and SMARTWATER Forensic code protected

POLICE Patrolled Area

Report suspicious activity to the Police on: Sponsored by MVAA Committee

Telephone: 101