Croughton Parish Council

Supplementary Report: Basics of Allotments Training

Meeting: Parish Council Meeting
Report by: Clerk
Date of training: 27 October 2026
Purpose: To report on the training attended by the Clerk and identify matters relevant to the Council's ongoing management of Croughton allotments.

1. Background

The Clerk attended the *Basics of Allotments* training course delivered by the Leicestershire and Rutland Association of Local Councils (LRALC) on 27 October 2026.

The course provided an overview of the legislation governing allotments and the practical responsibilities of parish councils in providing and managing allotment sites. Topics included tenancy agreements, rent setting, site maintenance, health and safety, insurance, plot inspections, vacant plots, waiting lists, facilities and the development of allotment policies.

The training was particularly relevant to Croughton Parish Council in view of the current condition of the allotment site and the work being undertaken by the Allotment Working Group to identify priorities and consider improvements to the management of the site.

This report summarises the principal points from the training and highlights areas which the Council may wish to consider as part of its ongoing allotment review.

2. Legislation and the Council's responsibilities

The training covered the main legislation relating to allotments, including the Allotments Acts of 1908, 1922, 1925 and 1950.

The course explained that councils have responsibilities concerning the provision and management of allotments, the terms on which plots are let and the procedures followed when dealing with tenants and site management issues.

The importance of ensuring that allotments are let for the purpose of cultivation as allotment gardens was emphasised. Tenancy agreements should clearly establish the intended use of the plot and the respective responsibilities of the Council and the tenant.

Relevance to Croughton: The Council should ensure that its existing allotment rules and tenancy agreements remain appropriate, clearly worded and consistent with the relevant legislation. Any proposed changes should be reviewed carefully before adoption.

3. Tenancy agreements and allotment rules

The training highlighted the importance of having clear, comprehensive tenancy agreements and supporting policies. These should explain the obligations of both the Council and plot-holders and provide a consistent basis for managing the site.

Matters which may need to be addressed include:

- Rent, payment dates and tenancy renewal.
- Cultivation requirements and acceptable standards of plot maintenance.
- Responsibility for paths, hedges and boundaries.
- The use of water and the prevention of wastage.
- Waste disposal, composting and manure management.
- Permitted sheds, greenhouses, polytunnels and other structures.
- The keeping of hens, rabbits or other permitted animals.
- The use of chemicals and pesticides.
- Bonfires and potential nuisance to neighbouring properties.
- Subletting, breaches of tenancy conditions and termination procedures.

The course also emphasised that rules need to be enforceable and applied consistently. Requirements should be proportionate to the circumstances and clearly communicated to tenants.

Relevance to Croughton: The Allotment Working Group has identified a review of the existing rules as an area for consideration. The training supports this approach. A review could identify gaps in the current arrangements and establish a clear, practical set of requirements for all plot-holders.

4. Plot inspections and cultivation standards

A significant part of the course concerned the inspection of allotment plots and the management of plots which are not being adequately maintained.

The training advised that councils should establish clear inspection criteria and communicate these to tenants in advance. Tenants should understand what is expected of them, when inspections will take place and how concerns will be addressed.

Where a plot does not meet the required standard, the course recommended a measured and documented approach, including:

- Recording the condition of the plot, including photographs where appropriate.
- Identifying the specific improvements required.
- Issuing an improvement notice where necessary, with clear remedial actions and an appropriate period for compliance.
- Considering the tenant's circumstances and previous history.
- Exploring alternatives, such as assistance or a move to a smaller plot, where appropriate.
- Keeping a written record of correspondence and decisions.

The course advised that termination of a tenancy should be a last resort after other avenues have been explored. It also highlighted the importance of having a fair and impartial process for handling appeals.

Relevance to Croughton: The Council has previously discussed a decision in the spring regarding plots which are not being adequately cared for. Establishing a documented inspection procedure, with clear cultivation standards and a consistent approach to improvement notices, would assist the Council in addressing these issues fairly.

The Council may wish to agree a suitable inspection schedule and determine who will undertake inspections and report findings to the Council or the Allotment Working Group.

5. Site maintenance, facilities and health and safety

The training considered the responsibilities associated with maintaining a safe, accessible and welcoming allotment site.

Areas highlighted included access routes, security, water supplies, fencing and boundaries, damage, overgrown areas and the condition of facilities. The course also emphasised the need to monitor hazards and address damage promptly.

An annual risk assessment was identified as an important element of allotment management. The course also highlighted the need for appropriate public liability insurance and employers' liability insurance where applicable to council staff and volunteers. Any allotment association undertaking delegated responsibilities would need to consider its own insurance arrangements.

Water management was another topic. The training recommended measures to encourage water conservation and reduce contamination risks, including suitable taps and covered water-storage containers.

Relevance to Croughton: The current condition of the allotments and the maintenance priorities identified by the Allotment Working Group make this an important area for the Council. The existing issues, including the plot 14 tap and the access track, should continue to be considered alongside the planned allotment wall repairs.

The Council should ensure that the allotment site is covered by an appropriate risk assessment and that identified hazards are recorded and prioritised. Maintenance responsibilities should also be clearly established.

6. Allotment management arrangements

The training considered different approaches to allotment management, including direct management by the Council, the appointment of a site representative or the involvement of a tenants' association.

Direct Council management allows expenditure, maintenance and future development to be managed alongside other Council responsibilities. A site representative can help maintain communication between the Council and tenants, report issues and support day-to-day management.

A tenants' association may provide greater involvement by plot-holders and help organise maintenance and communications. However, the course highlighted that delegated management requires clear written agreements, defined responsibilities and appropriate arrangements for finance, insurance and health and safety.

Relevance to Croughton: The existing Allotment Working Group provides a forum for discussing issues and developing proposals. The Council may wish to continue using this arrangement to inform decisions while retaining clarity over which matters require formal Council approval.

If responsibilities are delegated in future, these should be documented and the extent of the delegation agreed by the Council.

7. Rent, budgeting and financial planning

The course highlighted the importance of preparing an annual allotment budget based on accurate estimates of income and expenditure.

Councils should consider routine running costs, planned maintenance, unexpected repairs, insurance, water charges and future investment. Earmarked reserves may be appropriate where expenditure is anticipated or where provision is required for unexpected maintenance.

The training also covered rent setting, the need to consider what tenants can reasonably be expected to pay and the importance of giving appropriate notice of rent increases. The course noted that changes to rent should be considered alongside the terms of the tenancy agreement and the applicable legal requirements.

Relevance to Croughton: The Council should continue to review allotment income and expenditure as part of its annual budget-setting process. Future maintenance requirements, including the allotment wall and other site improvements, should be considered when establishing budget priorities and any necessary reserves.

Any proposed changes to allotment rents should be considered separately by the Council, taking account of the current tenancy terms, costs and applicable requirements.

8. Vacant plots and waiting lists

The course recommended that waiting lists should be reviewed at least annually to establish whether applicants still wish to take a plot and what size of plot they require.

Councils should also monitor the number of vacant plots, promote availability through appropriate communication channels and consider whether the level of demand indicates a need for additional allotment provision.

The training highlighted the value of considering whether existing tenants might prefer to move to a smaller or larger plot, where suitable plots are available. This may help make more effective use of the existing site.

Relevance to Croughton: The Council may wish to review its current waiting list and plot occupancy as part of the wider allotment review. This would provide a clearer picture of demand and help inform decisions about vacant or poorly maintained plots, plot sizes and future site priorities.

9. Policies and consistency

The training identified a number of areas where written policies may be useful, including cultivation standards, bonfires, water use, waste and composting, sheds and other structures, pesticides and chemicals, and the keeping of animals.

The course emphasised that policies should be practical, clearly communicated and consistently applied. Requirements should also reflect the particular circumstances of the allotment site.

Relevance to Croughton: Rather than introducing separate policies without an overall framework, the Council may wish to review its existing rules and tenancy agreement together, identifying which matters can be addressed within the agreement and which require supporting policies or procedures.

The Allotment Working Group could help identify the practical issues requiring attention and make recommendations for the Council's consideration.

10. Recommended next steps

In light of the training and the current work being undertaken at Croughton allotments, the following actions are suggested for consideration:

1. **Review allotment rules and tenancy agreements** to ensure they are clear, practical and cover the main responsibilities of the Council and plot-holders.
2. **Develop a plot inspection procedure**, including inspection frequency, criteria, record keeping and the process for addressing plots requiring improvement.
3. **Review health and safety arrangements**, including the site risk assessment, insurance cover and the recording and prioritisation of hazards.
4. **Review the waiting list and plot occupancy** to establish current demand and identify any opportunities to make better use of the available plots.
5. **Review maintenance priorities** alongside the Allotment Working Group's existing work, including the tap, access track and wider site condition.

6. **Consider allotment finances** as part of the 2027–28 budget, including routine maintenance, future works and appropriate provision for unexpected expenditure.

These actions could be progressed through the Allotment Working Group, with recommendations brought back to the Council for consideration and approval where required.

11. Conclusion

The training provided a useful overview of the legal, administrative and practical considerations involved in managing parish council allotments. It reinforced the importance of clear tenancy agreements, consistent inspection procedures, appropriate health and safety arrangements, planned maintenance and effective communication with plot-holders.

The learning is directly relevant to the current condition of Croughton's allotments and the work already being undertaken by the Allotment Working Group. A structured review of the Council's rules, procedures and maintenance priorities would help establish a consistent approach to allotment management and provide a sound basis for future decisions.

Recommendation: The Council is asked to note the report and consider the proposed next steps, with relevant matters to be progressed through the Allotment Working Group and reported back to the Council as appropriate.