



WIRRAL COUNCIL

A GUIDE TO THE ALLOTMENT PROCESSES: HOW IT ALL WORKS

Wirral Council – Neighbourhood Services

The How It All Works document supports the Tenancy Agreement. The How It All Works document is periodically updated. For the latest version, please check the website on the following link. www.wirral.gov.uk/leisure-parks-and-events

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1 How to Become a Tenant:

- 1.1** In order to become a tenant on one of Wirral's Allotment Sites, applicants must be over the age of 18, and a permanent resident of Wirral. Applications from members of the public who do not meet the stated criteria will not be accepted.
- 1.2** Applications can be made to become a tenant of an allotment site by completing the on-line application, available via the Wirral Council website.
- 1.3** There are separate waiting lists for each individual site, and an applicant may choose to join a maximum of two waiting lists for Wirral's allotment sites.
- 1.4** Prospective tenants can also join Council owned sites which are self-managed – these are Gilroy (West Kirby); Sandringham Avenue (Hoylake); Wingate (Eastham); Thingwall (Arrowe Park); Leasowe Community Centre.

2 Waiting List:

- 2.1** When an application is received the applicant's name is entered onto the Council's allotment administration database. The date listed for the applicant on the waiting list will be the date that the application was received by the Council. This determines an applicant's position on the waiting list.
- 2.2** Wirral Council will liaise with each Site Secretary to ensure that listings are accurate and are being adhered to in order to make sure that the integrity of the waiting lists are never compromised.
- 2.3** Once an applicant has been added to the waiting lists for their chosen site(s), if they wish to delete an application, and join the waiting list for a different site, the date that they joined the waiting list for the new site will determine their position in that site's waiting list, not the date of their original application.
- 2.4** In the interest of sustainability, we encourage applicants to apply to allotment sites within a 3-mile radius of their residence (where possible).

3 Allotment Allocation Process

- 3.1** When a plot on any of the allotment sites becomes available, the site secretary will be contacted by the Parks, Allotments & Countryside Team to inform them of who is vacating (please see Termination of Agreement).
- 3.2** The Parks Allotments & Countryside Technical Support Administrator will check the waiting list and make contact with the site secretary who will check the waiting list and also make contact with the applicant. (If an allotment site does not have a Site Secretary this process will be supported by the Parks, Allotments and Countryside Technical Support Administrator). The Site Secretary will then make contact with the applicant at the top of the list by email or phone (or post if the applicant does not have an email address). Email is seen as the primary method of contact for potential new tenants. The Area Manager / Team Leader will be copied into this email. The Site Secretary will encourage the applicant to provide a speedy response to the offer of a plot. The site secretary will offer to show the applicant the plot if this is helpful.
- 3.3** All forms of communication with the applicant, be it by telephone, email or letter will clearly state that the offer will be withdrawn within 15 calendar days of the offer being made if there is no response. The applicant will accept or decline the offer in writing to the Parks, Allotments and Countryside Technical Support Administrator. If after 15 calendar days, there has been no response from the applicant then the process will begin again with the next applicant on the waiting list.
- 3.4** If the applicant that was at the top of the waiting list and did not respond within 15 calendar days, contacts the Parks, Allotments and Countryside Team they will be reinstated on list and offered the next available plot.
- 3.5** Should an applicant refuse an offer of an allotment on 2 separate occasions, they will be removed from the allotment waiting list.
- 3.6** Once an applicant has become a tenant of one site, they may choose to remain in their current position on a second waiting list, if the second site is preferable to them. Should the second site become available, and they choose to accept that plot, they will relinquish their original plot and move to the second site. This is to ensure as many people as possible are able to take part in allotment gardening, and to ensure fairness that everyone is

only allowed to hold tenancy of one plot, especially whilst the demand for allotments exceeds the supply of available plots.

- 3.7** No-one will be able to hold a tenancy of more than one plot, due to the demand for plots.

(The Allotments Partnership Strategy and Improvement Plan recognises historical situations and will not be retrospectively enforced i.e. existing tenants (pre-2015) who hold multiple plots will not be asked to surrender any of their allotments).

4 The Agreement:

- 4.1** Once an applicant has viewed the available plot and decided that they wish to accept, then a tenancy agreement will be completed. If the site secretary at the particular site has agreed to take on the role, they may issue the Tenancy Agreement, to minimise the time for the new tenant to take up their tenancy. If not issued by the Site Secretary, it will be sent to the applicant by post. On receipt of the signed Tenancy Agreement, either by post or given to the Site Secretary, a key or combination lock number will then be issued, either by the Site Secretary or by Wirral Council.
- 4.2** The applicant will keep one copy of the agreement and sign the second copy of the agreement, which should then be returned: if this was issued by the Site Secretary, it can be returned to them, and they will forward to the Parks, Allotments and Countryside team for their records. Otherwise, the applicant can return it directly to the Parks, Allotments and Countryside team for their records.
- The How It All Works Document forms part of the Tenancy Agreement. The new tenant will be sent, along with the two copies of the Tenancy Agreement, a copy of the How It All Works Document. The Tenancy Agreement will state:
 - The applicant's personal details
 - The commencement date of the tenancy agreement
 - The terms and conditions of the agreement

5 Allocation of Key or combination lock number:

- 5.1** Once the agreement has been received, Wirral Council will issue a key or combination lock number where appropriate to the new tenant in order for them to gain access to their allotment site. If the Tenancy Agreement was issued by the Site Secretary, a key or combination lock number where appropriate will also be issued by the Site Secretary.
- 5.2** No tenant may enter the allotment until they are in possession of a key / or combination lock number where appropriate that has been officially issued by the Parks, Allotments and Countryside team or the Site Secretary.
- 5.3** A suitable returnable deposit may be required for the key. The purpose of the deposit will be to ensure keys are returned when plots are vacated. Under no circumstances should keys be copied and given to third parties. At some sites, access is via a combination lock, so no key is required. If the site has a combination lock, then this will be issued on receipt of the signed Tenancy Agreement. The combination lock number must not be given out to third parties.

6 Tenancy

- 6.1** The tenant is required to regularly attend their plot and keep it in a cultivated or tidy state, depending on the time of year.
- 6.2** Wirral Council recognises that allotments are a family friendly activity, and friends and family are welcome assist in the work and cultivation of the plot alongside the tenant.
- 6.3** If members of family/friends are assisting with the plot when the tenant is not present (i.e. the tenant's partner is also involved with the cultivation of the plot), they should be introduced to the site secretary prior to these visits.
- 6.4** The tenancy agreement is limited to the tenant only. Plots cannot be transferred or sub-let to family or friends (other than as set out in Paragraph 7.5). Breaches of this rule will result in a termination of tenancy.
- 6.5** If a tenant has found that a full plot is too much work, they may ask to have their plot size reduced to a half plot by contacting the Parks, Allotments and Countryside Local Team Leader responsible for their site. If agreed they will alter their records in the database and adjust their rent for the plot accordingly.

- 6.6** Tenants who move out of the Wirral Borough Council area will be required to surrender their allotment tenancy.

7 Inability to tend plot due to sickness or personal issues:

- 7.1** In order to ensure that plots do not become overgrown because a tenant is unable to tend the plot due to sickness or personal issues, Wirral Council have developed a short-term tenancy agreement.
- 7.2** The short-term tenancy agreement allows the tenant to nominate one person (must be 18 years of age or over) to legally enter the tenants plot for an initial three months, which may be extended to 6 months should more time be required by the original plot tenant.
- 7.3** The person nominated will be expected to keep the plot in a satisfactory condition and continue good horticultural practice as far as is practical but will not be expected to cultivate to the levels required of the original tenant. The short-term tenancy is not an offer of permanent tenancy and is non-negotiable.
- 7.4** Due to previous issues, to guarantee fair allocation of plots and to ensure as many people as possible in Wirral are able to benefit from allotment gardening, a plot tenancy will not be transferred to someone who has been helping a tenant on a plot as this could result in people 'jumping the queue'.
- 7.5** If a tenant has a regular helper on their plot, the tenant can request that this person is officially registered as the co-worker. However, a co-worker needs to have been registered for a minimum of 4 years before they have an automatic right to the tenancy of that plot, should the incumbent tenant wish give up their tenancy. It is the responsibility of the incumbent tenant to ensure that a co-worker is officially registered. Without this record, the tenancy cannot be transferred.
- 7.6** An exception will be made if a plot tenant dies (or becomes medically incapacitated on a long term or permanent basis). In this circumstance the plot holder's legal partner can be allocated the tenancy of the plot if they request it, as long as they do not already hold a plot tenancy in their own right and have advised the council previously that they are an active partner in the cultivation of the plot. Plots will not be transferred to the children of a deceased tenant, unless already officially registered as a co-worker.

8 The Enquiry / Complaints Process:

- 8.1** Allotment enquiries and complaints may be made by plot holders, site secretaries, site society representatives, neighbours, other residents, Councillors and MPs.
- 8.2** Enquiries, service requests and complaints can be made via the Council's website (www.wirral.gov.uk). Councillors should use Councillor Net so that their enquiry is logged appropriately.
- 8.3** Responses to enquiries will be made by the most appropriate Parks, Allotments and Countryside Officer. In most cases, this will be the Parks, Allotments and Countryside General Manager or Team Leader, responsible for the Allotment site in question. The enquiry or complaint will be investigated as necessary (this may require contact with a plot holder or site secretary) and responses to the person who raised the enquiry will be made within fifteen working days (members of the public) or ten days (Councillors and MPs) in line with the Council's complaints procedure standards.
- 8.4** If the enquiry is not dealt with or answered to the satisfaction of the enquirer, they can raise a stage one complaint. The complaint will be investigated, and a response given within the corporate timescale for responses to complaints (fifteen working days), or an explanation given as to why a full reply will take longer (for example if a complainant needs to be contacted to investigate the issue further and they are currently on holiday).
- 8.5** If the enquirer is not happy with the findings of a stage one complaint, they can escalate the complaint to a stage two.

9 Investigation/Audit Process:

- 9.1** If an enquiry/complaint requires an investigation then the Parks, Allotments and Countryside Team will ensure that they clarify the facts through interviews, which will be documented.
- 9.2** When the investigation has been completed and findings discussed with all parties involved then relevant actions will be identified, communicated and monitored within the timescales that have been agreed.

10 Inspection Process:

- 10.1** Monthly inspections will take place between March and October. This inspection will be carried out by a member of staff from the Parks, Allotments and Countryside team (for example, the Local Parks, Allotments and Countryside Local Manager/Team Leader). The Site Secretary and a nominated representative of the site's allotment society (where one exists) will be invited to take part in the inspection. Any necessary follow up actions will be identified, agreed and implemented to ensure standards are being maintained.
- 10.2** If a tenant is issued a formal dirty plot notice during the March to October inspection period, a reinspection will be carried out after 28 calendar days of the issue of the dirty plot notice. If the required improvements have not been made, then a notice to quit will be issued following the reinspection. (This will include reinspection in November if a formal dirty plot notice was issued in October)
- 10.3** Any plot that, at any time, is identified to not be being maintained in line with required standards (both horticultural and animal plots) will be subject to monitoring visits and appropriate follow up actions.
- 10.4** An annual inspection of self-managed allotment sites, listed as Wirral Council assets, will also take place. This will be undertaken by a member of staff from the Parks, Allotments and Countryside team and a nominated representative of the self-managed allotment group. The inspection will include checking whether the terms of the lease are being followed. Any necessary follow up actions will be identified, agreed and implemented, in accordance with the terms of the lease agreement.

11 Improvement Notices/Action Planning:

- 11.1** If a tenant allows their plot to fall below the required standard and is deemed not to be adhering to the tenancy requirements, they will receive an improvement notice, which will clearly state the work that needs to be addressed and the timescales that will be permitted for this to be completed. The timescale for improvements to be made will be 28 days.
- 11.2** After 28 days, another inspection will take place. If the necessary improvements have not been made, then a Notice to Quit will be issued. This will give the tenant 28 days to vacate the allotment plot and to remove any personal items.

11.3 If a tenant does not maintain the required standards of maintenance and receives two improvement notices within a two-year rolling period, they will then receive a warning notice advising them that if they receive a third improvement notice within a two-year rolling period, they will receive a final warning.

11.4 Following the issue of a final warning, any further failure to maintain the required standards within the following 2 year rolling period will result in the termination of the plot holder's tenancy agreement.

11.5 If the plot is not left in a satisfactory condition, the Council reserves the right to carry out the necessary work to return the plot to a satisfactory condition (taking into account the state it was in when the tenant took on the plot). The vacating plot holder may be billed the cost of this remedial work.

11.6 A tenant may request that an improvement notice be reviewed. At the discretion of the Local Manager an improvement notice could be suspended but will remain on file and will be taken into account should further action be required.

11.7 A tenant may request that a Notice to Quit be reviewed. At the discretion of the Local Manager a Notice to Quit could be suspended but will remain on file and will be taken into account should further action be required.

12 Financial Processes:

12.1 The Parks Allotments and Countryside Local Manager or Team Leader will undertake an annual inspection and produce an action plan. One of the purposes of the action plan will be to identify any potential improvements, with health and safety issues being a priority. Any works identified will be put forward in that financial year for the works to be undertaken. It should be noted that priorities may need to change throughout the year, but any works identified will be rolled forward into the following financial year. A summary of Wirral's allotment related income and expenditure will be provided on an annual basis to both site secretaries and the Wirral Allotment Society.

13 Site Secretaries, Meetings and the Chair of the Secretaries Group:

13.1 The role of site secretary is an important voluntary role which helps ensure the smooth running of each allotment site.

13.2 Site secretaries are required to adhere to the rules and regulations of the tenancy and site secretary agreements.

13.3 Should a Site Secretary wish to relinquish their role, then they should inform the Parks, Allotments and Countryside Technical Support Officer. They will then revert to being a plot holder and required to pay the annual fee for their allotment.

13.4 Where a vacancy arises, appointments to the role will be made following an advert for the role being placed at the allotment site requiring a new site secretary. Interested plot holders will be asked to put their name forward to the Parks Allotments & Countryside Team. Interviews based on the requirements of a site secretary, will be held by a member of the Parks Allotments and Countryside Team with input from the Chair of the Site Secretaries. The most suitable candidate will be appointed.

13.5 The Parks, Allotments and Countryside Team will invite all site secretaries of non-self-managed allotment sites to a quarterly meeting (to be held in the following quarters: January/March, April/June, July/September and October/December) regarding issues related to their role as site secretaries. The meeting will be chaired by the Chair of the site secretaries' group. A site secretary who is unable to attend may ask a fellow plot holder from their site to attend the meeting as an observer to feedback any main points from the meeting to the site secretary. Any observers at site secretary meetings are allowed to speak on behalf of the site secretary. Site secretaries of self-managed sites may also attend but are not eligible to vote on any issues.

13.6 An attendance record of those site secretaries attending will be taken. If a site secretary fails to attend 3 of the site secretary quarterly meetings in a row, it will be taken as evidence that they no longer wish to/are not able to undertake the voluntary role of site secretary and an advert will be placed on site inviting plot holders to express interest in applying for the role. This process is necessary due to the importance of the site secretary role within the effective functioning of Wirral's non-self-managed allotment sites.

13.7 The role of Chair of the Allotment Site Secretaries group is a voluntary position, the purpose of which is to assist the Council in the running of site secretary meetings. The post will be held for 3 years. The timetable for the next elections will be an agenda item at each January Site Secretaries meeting. If the 3-year term of office is due to finish in a particular year, expressions of interest will be sought from interested site secretaries and a ballot will be held in the October meeting.

13.8 The incumbent may re-stand for election. If there are no other candidates for the October meeting, then site secretaries can re-confirm the reappointment. The incumbent chair can elect to stand down at any point of their tenure.

13.9 The election will be by a show of hands, unless a secret ballot is requested, If a ballot is requested this will be organised by the Parks, Allotments and Countryside team, where a ballot paper will be sent to all site secretaries with an anonymous return's envelope. The results will be counted and confirmed.

13.10 If it is agreed that the election will take place by a show of hands, the appointment will be made at the autumn meeting by those Site Secretaries present. The elected chair of the Site Secretaries Group will commence their term in office from the end of that meeting.

14 Wirral Council Partnership

14.1 Wirral Council recognises the importance of allotments and the contribution to health it provides, as well as being an enjoyable and positive activity, and intends to work to promote the positive relationship between the Council and its managed and self-managed sites.

14.2 To help this, the Council will work with site secretaries who fulfil an important role on a voluntary basis, which helps to support the Council with the management of their particular sites by being a first point of contact and helping the Council promote the use of allotments for tenants and the wider allotment community.

14.3 The Council will also encourage the establishment of Allotment site societies and work with them to promote the betterment of their allotment site, recognising the positive contribution they can make through fundraising and practical self-help such as organising work parties.

14.4 To prevent a conflict of interest and recognise that individual plot holders may not wish to be a member of an allotment society, the role of site secretary and allotment site associations should remain separate (i.e. a site secretary role and the chair of an allotment site society must be held by different people).

15 The Wirral Allotments Competition:

15.1 The annual allotments competition is managed by the allotment community and plays an important role in the allotment year in Wirral because it provides plot holders with an opportunity to showcase their work and encourages friendly competition. It also encourages everyone to help care for and maintain the allotment sites in line with good standards of horticulture and allotment upkeep.

15.2 The judging criteria will be made available to all plot holders and site societies. The date of the final judging week will be advertised on all site noticeboards.

15.3 There will be a number of awards for individual plot holders and for allotment sites. All Wirral Council allotment sites will be visited during the assessment period (June/July) and awards will be presented at the Allotment Competition awards annual event.

15.4 Each year, two local judges, drawn from the allotment community, will carry out the final judging. Any member of the Wirral allotment community wishing to be considered as a judge for the following year should make their interest known to the Parks, Allotments and Countryside Senior Manager in December each year. Judges will be selected in January each year.

15.5 The annual allotment awards event will be run by the allotment's community. The Mayor of Wirral will be invited to present the awards.

16 Insurance and Liability:

16.1 Plot holders may wish to take out insurance as they are entirely responsible for their allotment plots and any liabilities relating to them. Plot holders who are members of the National Allotment Society may be able to claim free insurance through their membership of the National Allotment society.

16.2 The infrastructure of non-self-managed allotment sites, such as boundary fences and paths is the Council's responsibility and will be inspected, maintained or improved by an officer from the Parks, Allotments and Countryside Team in liaison with the site secretary and representative of the allotment site's society (if one exists). If allotment holders volunteer their time to assist Wirral's Parks, Allotments and Countryside Team in its upkeep, then liability arising from such approved activity can be covered by the Council's Liability policy, as long as the work is carried out with the approval of the nominated officer, namely the Parks, Allotments and Countryside Local Team Leader responsible for the allotment site in question.

16.3 Considerations that apply to 'Parks Friends Groups' are also relevant to allotment plot holders and societies. For example, allotment site volunteer work needs to be planned with and sanctioned by the relevant Council officer (the Parks, Allotments and Countryside Local Team Leader) and the Council's volunteer registration process can be applied. Please note that no cover is available from the Council if an allotment site's society is a registered charity, and in these cases an allotment site society should arrange insurance cover for their activities.

17 Equality and Diversity:

17.1 Wirral Council's Parks, Allotments and Countryside team are committed to ensuring equal access to the allotments' service and understand the diversity of our communities. We seek to respond appropriately to the differing needs of all of our tenants and applicants.

18 Health and Safety:

18.1 Health and safety is an important matter for allotments. More information can be obtained in the Useful Information Document.

19 Further Information/Hyper-links:

www.wirral.gov.uk/leisure-parks-and-events

www.wirralallotmentsociety.org.uk.

www.wirralenvironmentalnetwork.org.uk

[Home | Social Farms & Gardens](#)

www.allotment-garden.org,

www.nsalg.org.uk

www.wirral.gov.uk/composting

www.poultryclub.org

<https://www.facebook.com/DomesticFowlTrust/posts/3801121059925242/>

www.nationalbeeunit.com

www.pesticides.gov.uk/guidance/industries/pesticides/topics/reducing-environmental-impact/wildlife

[Home | Social Farms & Gardens](#)

British Bee Keeping Association: www.bbka.org.uk

Liverpool Beekeepers: <http://www.liverpoolbeekeepers.co.uk>

Cheshire (incl Wirral) Beekeepers Association: <https://cheshirebka.co.uk/>

Bee Keeping the Natural Way: <https://beekeeping.co.uk/>

Bee Keeping Questions for Beginners; www.beeginners.info

The Informed Voice of British Bee Keeping: www.Bee-craft.com/beekeeping

National Bee Unit Website: www.nationalbeeunit.com