

BLYTH TOWN COUNCIL
Governance Committee Decision Report
Thursday 11 July 2024

1. Purchase of Allotments Management Software

Recommendation

The Governance Committee resolve to purchase Allotments Management Software and Allotment Inspection app.

Ward

Not ward specific.

Risk Management

To make a more efficient allotment management process using a management tool that will enhance staff resource.

Financial Impact

No budget provision but can be met by Governance Committee for this financial year.

Objective

To streamline the management of the allotments more effectively and efficiently.

Report

Allotments Management Software

The existing allotments system is managed manually via the use of Microsoft word and excel; there is a high volume of electronic folders to sift through relating to allotments that are either general or site specific.

The allotment management folders are manually managed by Officers, they contain waiting lists, archived waiting lists, inspections schedules per site and templates letters. Tenancy agreements are filed as hard copy and are not electronically stored.

The allotment financial records are manually entered and maintained by two other officers. Annual rent letters are via mail merge, rent payments are processed, and reminder letters are sent.

There is potential for errors and the allotments would be better managed through one system.

The Rialtas Allotments Management Software manages all day-to-day requirements of managing multiple allotment sites including:

- Storage of essential information about plot holders: plot, name, address, concession, and ability to update with notes
- Tenancy agreements
- Letter templates and Notices to Quit and terminate templates
- Address labels
- The capacity to bulk email directly from the system
- An inspection process with performance indicators and records, including photos
- A rent collection system
- Report creation
- Automatic rent changes, automatic Billing
- Maintenance of a waiting list
- Allocation of plots
- Allotment registers
- Key and plot deposit registers
- All information in one place.

Rental income would still need to be manually entered into the cashbook although it should be noted that Rialtas also supply sector specific accounting software and a sales ledger that work together to auto integrate allotment income received into the accounting software with minimal manual inputs. Officers will be looking at potential accounting software systems to replace the excel cashbook while streamlining processes and maximising staff resource.

The use of the software reduces potential for human error, as all records, notes and rental information and letters, images will be linked to the individual plots and the software will automatically generate reminders.

The inspection app 'bbits' works with smartphones that are GPS enabled. It collates the inspection data and images which are then stored on the cloud and imported to the allotment software; saving time in the field and the office.

The cost of introducing the allotments software including Bbits (a dedicated inspection app) would be approx. £1750 with annual recurring costs of £510, as detailed in Appendix 1.

Elaine Brown

Principal Officer
02 July 2024

Appendix 1

Financial Impact

First year

Purchase of Rialtas software (including training)	£736
Annual Support (multi-user)	£249
Bbits mobile allotment inspection app	£150
App to software integration	<u>£110</u>
	<u>£1245</u>
Import of existing excel database	£300 half day. <u>£500</u> Day
	£1745 Total

Ongoing costs

Rialtas Annual support (multi-user)	£249
Bbits mobile allotment inspection app	£150
App to software integration	<u>£110</u>
	£509 Total