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## **ASSESSMENT OF THE NEED FOR GREATER COORDINATION OF COMMUNITY GARDENS**

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### **1. Purpose of Report**

To assess the need for greater co-ordination of community gardens in the city as agreed by the Strategy and Policy Committee on 13 October 2011.

### **2. Executive Summary**

Wellington City Council currently provides considerable support to the city's community gardens and it is well positioned to continue this level of service. Work conducted by Council Officers' in preparing this report found that the city's wider food sector – of which community gardens are an important part – would benefit from the Council taking a more strategic approach and that further work in this area would be a positive step for the Council to take.

There was mixed feedback from key stakeholders of Wellington's community gardens network on the need for the coordinator role. Officers' conclude that a coordinator would add little value to existing community gardens as the groups that maintain these gardens are generally self-sufficient. Therefore, it is recommended that Council does not support a community gardens coordinator role.

It is recommended that Council continue to support the establishment and/or expansion of community gardens or related projects with clearly defined needs assessments and outcomes. In most cases this support will come in the form of grant allocation. It is also recommended that officers' work on the opportunities and options available for developing a more strategic approach to the city's food sector, of which community gardens are one part.

### **3. Recommendations**

Officers' recommend that the Strategy and Policy Committee:

- 1. Receive the information.*
- 2. Note that the Strategy and Policy Committee received an e-petition in October 2011 recommending that Council support a community gardens coordinator role in Wellington.*

*The Committee requested officers' report back on the need for such a role in three months.*

3. *Note that members of the community wishing to provide further support to the community gardens sector apply to Council's general grants pools to support specific projects.*
4. *Agree that coordination of the city's community gardens can continue to be met through business as usual.*
5. *Agree that officers' work on the opportunities and options available for developing a more strategic approach to the city's food sector, of which community gardens are one part.*

## **4. Background**

### **4.1 Urban agriculture<sup>1</sup> in Wellington**

There are 32 community gardens and orchards in the city (Appendix I) with the vast majority being run by volunteers.<sup>2</sup> Nine of these gardens have specific leases or agreements with Wellington City Council for the use of council owned land for growing food. Another 14 gardens are located in city housing complexes with a further nine community gardens situated on privately owned land.

There are currently plans for another seven community gardens to be established throughout the city: one on Wellington City Council land, four at city housing complexes, and two on private land (Appendix I).

### **4.2 Requests for coordination of community gardens**

The Sustainability Trust submitted applications to both the March 2011 and July 2011 rounds of the Council's grants requesting funding to coordinate the city's community gardens and urban agriculture sector. In response to the March 2011 application, the Grants Subcommittee felt there needed to be evidence from the wider community that there was interest in, and support for, this role before any funding was allocated. The July 2011 application was declined by the Grants Subcommittee with the recommendation that development in the area be deferred until there was a better understanding of local food in Wellington City.

In August 2011 an ePetition calling for the appointment of a community gardens coordinator was submitted by Andrew MacLachlan to Council with 155 signatures. The ePetition was presented to the Strategy and Policy Committee on 13 October, 2011 and the committee requested a report back within three

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<sup>1</sup> Urban Agriculture is an industry located within, or on the fringes of, an urban area which grows, processes and distributes food and/or non-food items to that urban area.

<sup>2</sup> It is likely that there are other community gardens and orchards in the city of which Wellington City Council is unaware.

months assessing the needs for greater coordination of community gardens in the city.

### ***4.3 Wellington's food system***

At the same time as there has been growing interest in coordination of the city's community gardens and urban agriculture sector, there have been calls for the development of policy and/or strategy relating to the city's food system.

A submission was received to the 2011/12 Annual Plan requesting that Wellington City Council consider establishing a Food Policy Council that would contribute towards developing a food strategy for the city. The submission noted that a Food Policy Council would assist Wellington in creating a vibrant, strong and sustainable food system.

Preliminary work completed by City Communities to begin to understand the increased interest and activity around food in the city indicates that there is an opportunity for the Council to take a strategic lead in this area.

### ***4.4 Wellington City Council's current support for local food production***

#### ***4.4.1 Council's community grants***

The Council provides funding to support existing and newly established community gardens in the city through community grants. \$32,004 in 2011 and \$37,158 in 2010 was granted through the Council's grants to support community gardens and food-related initiatives in the city. A break down of these grants is provided in Appendix II as are details of the food-related work that Sustainability Trust and Mokai Kainga are supported to provide through three year funding agreements.

#### ***4.4.2 Parks and Gardens***

The Parks and Gardens business unit supports community gardens and orchards through the licensing of Council-owned land and provides in-kind support to community gardens and orchards.

#### ***4.4.3 City Communities***

The Community Resilience team provides a point of contact within the Council for residents interested and/or involved in community gardens and orchards. Advice is provided around establishing a group or connecting with an existing group, finding land, starting a garden and sourcing funding and materials. A community gardens page on the Council website is currently being developed to make this information more easily accessible by the community.

#### ***4.4.4 Strategy, Research, Urban Design and Heritage***

The Council's Strategy, Research, Urban Design and Heritage Team has partnered with Massey University to develop the concept of an Urban Research Lab which aims to use the city as a living laboratory to test out design strategies

for solving issues of urban sustainability. The first project called 'Edible Wellington' has resulted in two pop-up gardens being trialled in Kilbirnie and Civic Square. Massey University will compile a report outlining the lessons from these projects as well as wider research examining strategies for a more sustainable urban food system.

## **5. Discussion**

### **5.1 *Coordination of community gardens in Wellington City***

Community gardens provide social and environmental outcomes that align with *Wellington 2040* and as such they are an activity to be encouraged.

However, the call for a coordinator is not representative of the wider community gardens community, with some well established community gardens in the city saying that they have no desire or need for a citywide community gardens coordinator. Furthermore, funding a community gardens coordinator role – funding for which would most likely come through General Grants – would:

- add additional pressure to the already highly contested grants pools;
- come at the expense of funding support given directly to individual community gardening groups.

Finally, the Council is currently contributing considerably towards the likely tasks that a community gardens coordinator would fulfil. Where gaps exist in provision, community gardens groups are encouraged to apply to the Council's general grants for projects specific to meeting identified unmet needs.

### **5.2 *Progressing the concept of 'Edible Wellington'***

A number of Business Units within Wellington City Council (City Communities, Parks and Gardens, Strategy, Research, Urban Design and Heritage, CitiOperations, Public Health) are currently undertaking work relating to the city's wider food sector, of which community gardens are one part. There are also growing networks within Wellington's community, not-for-profit and business sectors that are focusing on the city's food systems. Examples include the Urban Agriculture Steering Group; Sustainable Business Network's 'Good Food Forum'; Conscious Consumers; and the Wellington Coalition of Food Banks. There is the opportunity for the Council to assist in bringing together the various strands of current activity in the food sector, thereby enabling a more cohesive approach to this work and improving the city's future access to food.

There are various mechanisms based on international case studies for initiating a wider discussion on how best to strategically develop a city's food system. It is recommended officers' begin work on the opportunities and options available for developing a more strategic approach to the city's food sector.

### **5.3 *Consultation and Engagement***

An ePetition with 155 signatures calling for coordination of community gardens across the City was submitted to the Strategy and Policy Committee in October 2011.

A submission was received to the 2011/12 Annual Plan requesting that Wellington City Council consider establishing a Food Policy Council that would contribute to developing a food strategy for the city. The envisaged Food Policy Council would provide analysis of plans and projects that would assist Wellington to create a vibrant, strong and sustainable food system.

#### **5.4 Financial Considerations**

The recommendation to meet the need for coordination of community gardens through business as usual incurs no new costs.

#### **5.5 Climate Change Impacts and Considerations**

Urban agriculture has the opportunity to realise aspects of the Council's Climate Change Action Plan through both mitigation of, and adaptation to climate change. However, it must be noted that due to the scale of operations, the opportunity for mitigation of greenhouse gas emissions from community gardens is limited.

As such, the benefits from community gardens contribute mostly to the Eco City strategic direction for Council. These benefits include awareness raising and knowledge creation around the diversion of green waste from landfill by composting, water conservation and food growing.

#### **5.6 Long-Term Council Community Plan Considerations**

There are no immediate impacts on the deliberations of the Draft Long Term Plan.

### **6. Conclusion**

Wellington has a vibrant, volunteer-led community gardens sector that the Council is currently supporting, and will to continue to support, through existing mechanisms. Questions remain about the value a community gardens coordinator would add to the current level of activity in the city and that such a role could come at the expense of support given to individual gardens and gardening initiatives.

The discussion of community gardens coordination specifically, and urban agriculture more generally, has highlighted the need for a more strategic approach to the city's food sector as a whole. Undertaking work on the opportunities and options available for developing this sector would be a positive step towards ensuring the city's future food security.

Contact Officers: *Charlie Devenish, Community Resilience Advisor or Jenny Rains, Manager, City Communities.*

## Supporting Information

### **1) Strategic Fit / Strategic Outcome**

*Continuing to support the City's community gardens aligns with the four strategic goals of Wellington Towards 2040: Smart Capital by increasing resilience to rises in the price of petrol, improving social connectedness and neighbourliness, providing people with a healthier more affordable food supply, and improving the public realm.*

### **2) LTCCP/Annual Plan reference and long term financial impact**

*There are no long term financial impacts stemming from this report.*

### **3) Treaty of Waitangi considerations**

*There are no immediate issues requiring consideration of the Treaty of Waitangi, however, Mana Whenua and related organisations will be involved in further work to develop a wider strategy relating to the city's food system.*

### **4) Decision-Making**

*This is not a significant decision.*

### **5) Consultation**

#### **a) General Consultation**

*N/A*

#### **b) Consultation with Maori**

*N/A*

### **6) Legal Implications**

*N/A*

### **7) Consistency with existing policy**

*Coordination of community gardens does not relate explicitly to any specific existing policy, however, the wider notion of urban agriculture does have relevance to the Town Belt Review, the Climate Change Action Plan and the Biodiversity Action Plan.*

## Appendix I

### Existing community gardens in Wellington

Existing gardens and orchards on WCC land with lease or agreement:

- Innermost Gardens, Lawson Place, Mt Victoria
- Brooklyn Community Orchard, Harrison Street, Brooklyn
- Mokai Kainga, Tanera Park, Brooklyn
- Mokai Kainga, 72 Happy Valley Road, Owhiro Bay
- Kilbirnie Pop-Up Garden
- Arlington Gardens, 48 Torrens Tce, Mt Cook
- Aro Valley Community Garden, Community Centre site
- Island Bay and Berhampore Community Orchard
- Jay Street Reserve, Paparangi

Existing gardens and orchards on WCC City Housing Estate

- Arlington Apartments garden (behind basket ball area) 20 Hankey Street, Mt Cook
- Kotuku Estate gardens, Kemp Street, Kilbirnie; (about to extend garden area)
- Daniell St Flats, Newtown;
- Granville Flats, 559 Adelaide Rd, Berhampore
- Duncan Terrace, 7 Duncan Terrace, Kilbirnie
- Strathmore Court, 494 Broadway, Miramar
- Queens Court, 42 Queen Street, Mt Victoria
- Booth Street, 7 Booth Street, Miramar
- Marshal Court, 39 Tahi Street, Miramar
- Hobart Park, 30a Hobart Street, Miramar
- Rintoull street, 263 Rintoul Street, Berhampore
- Darwin St, Karori, Wellington (small vege garden – tenants sharing produce)
- Te Aro Hou, 48 Constable Street, Newtown
- Pukehinau Flats, 1 Ohiro Road, Aro Valley

Existing community gardens on privately owned land

- St Christopher's Church, Tawa;
- Kai o te Aro, Victoria University land site;
- Kai o te Aro, 'secret garden' site;
- Common Ground, Island Bay;
- Innermost Gardens, St James Church site, Newtown;
- Seatoun Community Garden;
- Houghton Bay Community Garden, Houghton Valley School;
- Brooklyn Community Garden, Dorking Road
- Drummond St, Newtown

### Proposed community gardens in Wellington

Proposed gardens / to be established on WCC land

- Lyndfield Lane Community Orchard;

# APPENDIX 1

## Proposed gardens / to be established on City Housing Estate

- Newtown Park Flats, Newtown; (as part of Housing upgrade there will be two here).
- Abel Smith, 151 Abel Smith Street (Garden requested)
- Batchelor Street, 4 Batchelor Street, Newlands (Garden requested)
- Hanson Court Apartments, 3 Hutchison Road (Will have gardens behind new community space as part of upgrade)

## Proposed gardens / to be established on private land

- Onslow College, Johnsonville;
- Newlands Primary School and St Michael's Church, Newlands;



## APPENDIX 2

### Appendix II – City Communities support for community gardens and food-related work in the city

#### Grants – Contestable

##### 2011 Grand total to 31 October: \$32, 004

2011 total for community gardens: \$23,500

- Innermost Gardens, coordination - \$5000 through Mayor's Discretionary Fund, June, 2011;
- Operation Green Thumb, for ongoing maintenance and development of new gardens - \$2000, June 2011;
- Northern Community Gardens, set up - \$6000, July 2011
- Onslow College Community garden, set up - \$3000, October 2011;
- Massey University, Kilbirnie Pop-up Garden workshops - \$1,642, October 2011;
- Ribble Street Orchard, planting fruit trees on grass verges - \$2000, October 2011;
- Newtown Garden Club, set up costs - \$500, October, 2011;
- Sustainability Trust, community garden tours - \$3,358, October 2011

2011 total for food-related work: \$8, 504

- Kaibosh, increasing number of donors - \$5000, July 2011
- Thorndon Farmers Market, expansion of market - \$3504, March 2011

##### 2010 Grant total: \$37,158

2010 total for community gardens: \$17,712

- Innermost Gardens, development of Mt Victoria site - \$7500, July 2010;
- Island Bay and Berhampore Community Orchard, preparing and planting community orchard - \$2800, July 2010;
- Aro Valley Community Council, children's gardening boxes - \$3000, October 2010
- Samoan Methodist Church Wellington Parish Au Uso Fealofani, vegetable gardens for women - \$4412, October 2010

2010 total for food related work: \$19,446

- Transition Towns Brooklyn, performative gardening - \$1446, October 2010
- Herd Street City Markets, redevelopment of the city market - \$15,000, July 2010;
- Thorndon Farmers Market, marketing - \$3000, July 2010.

#### Grants – Contract

- **Sustainability Trust** is supported through a 3 year funding agreement (ending June 2012) to facilitate, among other things, four networking meetings per year to support the city's community gardens and orchards and to provide relevant information to individuals and groups involved in urban agriculture.
- **Mokai Kainga** is supported through a 3 year funding agreement (ending June 2013) to coordinate the centre and its community gardens.