

Meeting	Parks & Open Spaces Committee
Date	29 th July 2026
Report Title	Leisure Garden Report
Agenda Reference	13
Author	Jackie Fawcett, Office and Community Administrator

Recommendations

1. To note bench marking costs for the leisure garden rents review and consider uplifting them (need to give 12 months' notice) or in line with the CPI inflation rate as usual from September 2026.
2. To consider the costs of a picnic bench – subject to findings of the consultation – at a cost of £285.60 per bench to be met from 4310/305.
3. To consider fencing repairs – Goodearl site at a cost of £556.90 to be met from 4310/305.
4. To note an update on water storage at Rose Walk site.

Leisure Garden Representatives

We have established a strong and positive working relationship with the Leisure Garden Representatives. Regular meetings are now held, and representatives consistently attend all site inspections, providing valuable input and support. In addition, the representatives contribute articles to our tri-annual newsletter.

Leisure Garden Socials

We have successfully hosted two Leisure Garden Social events and hope to establish these as a regular feature of our community engagement programme. The May event at Ventnor Close was particularly well attended, with tenants from Rose Walk also joining and integrating with the group, helping to strengthen connections across our communities.

In addition, we hosted one of our Craft and Connect sessions in the Sensory Garden. Residents enjoyed sketching *en plein air* using pencils and pastels, creating a relaxed and creative atmosphere. The event proved to be a real highlight of our activities calendar, encouraging both social interaction and wellbeing through outdoor artistic expression.

Leisure Garden Inspections

The next garden inspections are scheduled for **Friday 7 August**. If you would like to attend, please let the Administrator know and arrangements can be made.

We continue to receive a steady stream of applications, demonstrating the ongoing popularity and value of the Leisure Garden programme. The current statistics are as follows:

Current Stats

Site	Number of Plots	Waiting list
Rose Walk (RW)	79	12
Goodearl (GE)	46	2
Ventnor Close (VC)	51	2
Tadpole		33
Any Plot		12



Inspection Stats

Site	Number of Plots	Polite reminder letter	Non-cultivation letter	Vacant plots (through latest comms)
Rose Walk (RW)	79	2	2	0
Goodearl (GE)	46	3	1	1
Ventnor Close (VC)	51	2	1	0

We were pleased to see that several of the extremely overgrown plots highlighted in last year's report were taken on by new tenants this year. The transformation of these plots has been remarkable in such a short period of time and is a testament to the hard work, enthusiasm and dedication of our gardeners.

The improvements made have not only enhanced the appearance of the individual plots but have also had a positive impact on the overall presentation of the sites. As a result, all three Leisure Garden sites are looking significantly better than they have in recent years.

Annual Leisure Garden Competition

Thank you to Councillors Ireland and Heyes for their support in judging this year's Annual Leisure Garden Competition. Due to the extreme heat, the event was postponed for a week, despite the judging date having been brought forward from previous years.

All winners have now been notified by post and invited to receive their awards at the Annual Meeting. Although a different team of judges participated this year, several of last year's winners were once again recognised for their outstanding gardens. The judges were extremely impressed by the overall standard, commenting on the high quality, creativity and dedication demonstrated across the entries.

Annual Plot Holders Meeting

Save the date: Monday 5th October 2026

Notice Boards

The notice boards have now been successfully installed at all Leisure Garden sites and are proving to be a valuable communication resource for tenants. The boards are regularly updated by the administrator with a range of useful information, including important contact details, site location information, details of the nearest defibrillator, upcoming event posters, Leisure Garden Representative meeting minutes, and other relevant notices.

The notice boards are already having a positive impact, helping to keep tenants informed and engaged with activities across the sites. They are also fostering a stronger sense of community, with residents often seen gathering around the boards to read any updates. This simple addition has enhanced communication while also encouraging social interaction among tenants.

Rose Walk Allotments: Proposal for a Rainwater Storage Tank

A suggestion has been made to install a large rainwater storage tank at Rose Walk Allotments to collect water from the roof of the storage building and provide an additional water source for plot holders, particularly those with plots closest to Old Blunsdon Road. The proposal was put forward in response to concerns from some of the more senior tenants who find it difficult to transport water over longer distances.



The Grounds Team has assessed the feasibility of the proposal and identified a number of practical constraints. Firstly, there appears to be insufficient space around the storage building to accommodate a large storage tank. A number of plot holders already utilise the roof runoff by collecting rainwater directly into their own water butts, limiting the available area for any significant additional infrastructure.

The assessment also found that the distance from the existing water trough to the allotment plots at both corners of the site is broadly comparable.

In addition to the practical challenges, there are health and safety considerations associated with the installation of a large water storage tank. If fitted with a tap, there is the potential for plot holders to connect hoses and spray stored water which could increase the risk of exposure to Legionella bacteria. The Grounds Team does not consider the installation of a large rainwater storage tank to be a practical solution at the present time.



Community Plot - Goodearl

Following on from last years meeting to have an accessible plot, this led to a great resolution by linking with a local care company - Saracen Care (a Supported Living provider supporting adults with Learning Disabilities, Autism, and Mental Health needs).

We were approached by Saracen Care regarding the lease of a community plot for use by the people they support. This opportunity provided an excellent outcome following discussions last year and has enabled us to deliver a practical solution through partnership working with a local organisation.

This partnership demonstrates how the Leisure Gardens can support wider community needs while ensuring that gardening opportunities remain accessible to all.

Leisure Garden Rents review

In accordance with the terms of our tenancy agreements, the Parish Council is required to provide tenants with 12 months' notice of any changes to Leisure Garden rental charges. It is therefore important that any future adjustments are considered well in advance to ensure that tenants are informed within the required timescale.

The table below sets out the previous years' rental charges, any increases that have been applied, and a comparison with charges made by other parish councils within the Swindon area. This information provides useful context when reviewing the current fee structure and assessing whether the rents remain appropriate, sustainable, and competitive.

Should the Council wish to introduce a more significant increase for the 2027/28 rental year, tenants will need to be formally notified when this year's rent invoices are issued.

Location	Plot Size	Price	Concession	New Rate 25/26	Concession
RW	Full	45	34	46	35
RW	1/2	31	23	32	24
RW	1/4	16	12	16	12
GS	Full	38	29	39	29



GS	3/4	29	22	30	22
GS	1/2	15	11	15	12
GS	1/4	11	8	11	8
VC	1/2	33	25	34	25
VC	1/4	18	14	19	14

Swindon Allotment Fee Comparison (*ai sourced)

Parish Council	Half Plot Fee	Full Plot Fee	Key Details & Concessions
South Swindon	£46.00	£92.00	Rates drop to £42 (half) and £84 (full) for residents aged 65 and over. Non-parishioners pay double standard rates (£92/£184). Managed via South Swindon Parish Council .
Central Swindon North	£37.50	£71.00	Offers quarter plots for £24 and extra-large plots (260sqm+) for £78.50. Residents on Council Tax Support receive a 25% discount. Managed via Central Swindon North Parish Council .
West Swindon	£36.00	£69.00	Manages the Blagrove allotment site. Historically offered non-resident rates, though waiting lists heavily prioritize parish residents. Managed via West Swindon Parish Council .
Wroughton	~£33.25	~£66.50	Charges by the "perch" (25 square metres) at a rate of £6.65 per unit. A standard 5-perch half plot (125 sqm) figures out to roughly £33.25. Managed via Wroughton Parish Council .
Stratton St Margaret	From £11.00	Varies	Operates 151 plots of widely varying sizes across two sites, with small spaces starting as low as £11 per year. Only available to parish residents. Managed via Stratton St Margaret Parish Council .

Consultation: Proposed Picnic Bench for Rose Walk

We have received a suggestion from a tenant to install a picnic bench on one of the pathways at the Rose Walk Leisure Gardens which led to the proposal for a picnic bench to be installed at each site, considered at the last meeting. A consultation with the tenants has been sent via our newsletter. Should tenants be in favour of the proposal, the estimated cost would be approximately **£285.60 per bench**. Feedback from the consultation will be reviewed before any decision is made regarding installation.

Goodearl – Fencing

The fencing at the rear of the Goodearl Leisure Garden site has been in a poor condition for some time and is now in need of repair. The damaged fence is encouraging incidents of fly-tipping in the area and is having a negative impact on the overall appearance of the site.

In addition, the broken fencing compromises the security of the gardens.

The estimated cost of the repairs is **£556.90** with the work to be undertaken by the Parks and Open Spaces Team. The repairs would represent a positive investment in maintaining the site and supporting the continued improvements seen across the Leisure Gardens.