



Allotment Inspections and Notice Procedures

Inspections are undertaken at quarterly intervals. Here is what we are looking for on inspections:

Cultivation

We will look at the entire plot to see that the majority of it is being cultivated. If this is not happening, this will most likely lead to receiving a cultivation improvement notice letter.

As per the tenancy agreement, the tenant should have at least 80% of the plot under cultivation of crops. If there is a structure on the plot such as shed, green house, polytunnels and fruit cages, these are included in the 80% cultivated area.

Weed Growth

Where there are large areas of weeds, a weed notice will be issued. We will also look at uncontrolled areas of perennial weeds such as brambles, nettles and unmanaged grass. Beds with established and seeding weeds alongside crops will also be liable to a weed improvement notice. Seasonality will be taken into account when we inspect. At mid-summer, most of the plot should be used for growing crops. Plots mostly covered in plastic mulch will be liable for notice, as may a plot given over mainly to cut grass, without permission. During the autumn and winter months, we will be looking to see that plots which have become weedy in the late summer are being cleared and improved, however this does not mean you need to be sowing crops. Generally, if you are using the winter months to improve your plot by clearing waste and increasing cultivation, then this will be taken into account.

Waste and rubbish

The level of waste will be assessed on the plot. The tenant is expected to keep the materials they bring onto their plot to a minimum. Items such as double glazing, timber, doors, tyres and building or landscaping materials are of particular concern. Any items of household furniture, as well as material that may break down and pollute the soil or pose a health and safety hazard may also lead to an improvement notice being issued.

Other

We will also look at hen houses to ensure that animal welfare is being taken care of and that no cockerels are on the plot. Any trees on your plot will be checked to ensure that they are being kept under control and the vegetation is not overhanging on to other plots or pathways.

Improvement Notices

If you have received a notice - why and what action should you take?

If your plot is not clearly numbered, then you may have received a neighbour's notice in error. Your plot must be clearly numbered - as per the Tenancy Agreement. If you do not have a plot marker, please contact the Allotment Officer by calling 01296 425678 or you can email kim.colbeck@aylesburytowncouncil.gov.uk

Most notices are issued for poor cultivation or weed-infested beds, but they can also be issued for overgrown boundaries, plots infested with brambles and long grass, dangerous structures, as well as tenants having illegal/excessive waste on their plot. You need to deal with the issues identified before the earliest reinspection date on the notice to pass it.

What is the difference between a weed and a cultivation notice?

A weed notice can relate to weed infestation on existing beds and will state in the notice reasons or large areas of weed infestation that you are failing to control weeds on your plot, this might include areas at the back of plots, behind structures and between trees. Usually a weed notice is best responded to by simply tidying your plot and ensuring all bed areas are dug over before the reinspection.

A cultivation notice relates to the percentage of the plot you are cultivating. The reasons in your notice will state that you are not cultivating your plot in line with allotment rules. Cultivation notices can be issued due to excessive areas of lawn (without prior permission) or grass pathways and overgrown and non-cropped bed areas - including overgrown hedging and bramble-infested areas. To avoid a cultivation notice, you need to be cultivating at least 80 per cent of your allotment area. However just cutting back weeds or covering beds with weed-suppressing material is not enough to pass inspection. Of the two, the cultivation notice will tend to require more work to put right. However, both notices can lead to the termination of your tenancy if problems persist.

Allotment waste notice

Tenants sometimes bring materials or green waste from their home onto the allotment. Often this is in breach of rules and may result in a waste notice. Any materials brought onto the allotment that are not being used to cultivate crops could be liable to a waste notice. If you have a notice, then we will expect you to remove all the materials that are not being used for cultivation from the plot. Any organic material that is causing a health risk could result in a waste notice.

When will I be re-inspected and how does this process work?

Re-inspections are undertaken 14 - 28 days from the date printed on the letter. If you have a notice relating to any other mis-use of plot, say for waste materials, or having over-sized structures or oversized or poorly maintained flock of hens, then that notice remains active until the issue is resolved.

Normally when we are making the re-inspection, we will expect to see a considerable improvement. If you are still not in line with allotment rules then you may receive a second notice; however, if your initial rule breach was serious and on re-inspection you have taken no noticeable action then your tenancy may be ended at the first re-inspection. Ideally a tenant will respond swiftly to a notice, as the longer an issue like weed infestation or poor cultivation is left, the harder it gets to put it right. Strimming and tidying the plot to reduce overgrown vegetation will not be viewed as the required 'considerable improvement' and could result in a second notice being issued. If a tenant is exploring methods for killing weeds over time, the use of quality black plastic or woven weed mat is recommended, rather than carpet, which is forbidden.

I have received a Notice, but I am struggling to keep up with the work and I'm afraid I might lose my plot, what action should I take?

If you have a large plot, then you should consider having your plot split. A smaller plot is ample for growing crops and is often more manageable if you are experiencing problems. We have also found that tenants who take on smaller plots are far less likely to receive future notices. If you are struggling, please contact the Allotment Officer to discuss.

I received a Notice, but I am unable to take action because, I have been ill or have other mitigating personal reasons. What can I do to avoid failing my follow-up inspection and having my tenancy terminated?

First, you need to inform us of your situation, preferably by calling on the Allotment Officer on 01296 425678 or by emailing kim.colbeck@aylesburytowncouncil.gov.uk, well in advance of the expiry date on the notice. In exceptional circumstances, such as a medical condition or family bereavement, then the tenant may be allowed extra time to resolve the issues. If you need more time to move large quantities of materials, such as those identified in a rubbish notice, then extra time can be arranged to allow you to remove waste, but this must be by agreement with us.