

STRONGER COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE

Date: Monday, 18 September 2023

Title: In Bloom

Contact Officer: Communications & Community Engagement Officer

Background

The purpose of this report is to update members on the progress of In Bloom 2023 and to look ahead for 2024.

Current Situation

Thames & Chilterns In Bloom Competition

The awards ceremony takes place on Wed, 27 Sep 2023 12:30 - 16:00 at Woodley near Reading. The event will be attended by the Biodiversity and Green Spaces Officer and the Mayor, or other representatives of the Council. The results will not be announced until the day of the ceremony.

Town Centre Planters

The planters used to control traffic accessing the south end of Market Square and the High Street from Welch Way are being returned to the Town Council once temporary traffic measures are installed. The original plan was to use these to replace tired concrete planters at The Leys with 6 of them. There may be ten to twelve of these available to us so these will be used elsewhere on the Council's estate. There has been a request from an Oxfordshire County Council run community group to have one. Witney Community Support Group have expressed an interest in having one or two for their grounds, but this might be exactly the kind of service that would benefit from the donation of one of the school barrows as decided at the last meeting of the Stronger Communities committee. **SC390 That, the Council supports the Barrow of Love proposal for Schools in Bloom 2024**

They are not suitable for use as Welcome to Witney signs due to the bespoke nature of the planters needed at the different sites so although Witney Shed are inundated with requests for work, we will continue to work towards having them provided by them in due course.

Community Gardeners

Our community gardeners make a lovely display in the centre of town, and it would be nice to encourage similar displays in gardens and in business premises across the town. A couple of competitions for Best hanging basket or window box and best front garden might encourage a bit of civic pride and friendly rivalry for 2024.

Planting Scheme for 2024

The winter colour scheme is red, pink and orange with lots of tulips and bulbs. The Council cannot do this for summer planting as there will not be enough space in the beds and the dormant bulbs will all be in competition once the growth season starts.

The most commented on and successful planting the Council has had before was multicoloured brights such as the trailing begonias and petunias. Big and impactful.

Themes and colour schemes tend to be more expensive to implement and it is also difficult to get the same tonal shades across different varieties of plant. Likewise, wildflowers do not tend to do well in tubs and beds and require ground preparation well ahead of sowing which would mean they would present as bare ground throughout a good deal of the autumn, winter and spring. If councillors have any preferences for the summer planting, they should make suggestions now so that plants can be ordered in good time.

Environmental impact

Having declared a Climate Change Emergency at its Council meeting on 26 June 2019 Councillors should have due regard to the environmental impact of any decisions they make with regard to its facilities and services it operates.

Risk

In decision making Councillors should give consideration to any risks to the Council and any action it can take to limit or negate its liability.

Financial implications

➤ Prizes for any additional competitions. This could be funded from the existing In Bloom budget.

Recommendations

Members are invited to note the report and consider the following:

1. To encourage Witney Community Support Group to be one of the first organisations to adopt a school barrow under the new scheme,
2. To organise competitions to encourage gardening in the outlying areas of Witney,
3. Decide if there is a preferred planting scheme for the summer.