
Agenda Item: In Bloom Report**Meeting Date:** Monday, 26 January 2026**Contact Officer:** Communications & Community Engagement Officer

The purpose of this report is to inform Councillors about proposed activities for In Bloom 2026.

Current Situation

Witney's In Bloom Entry

This year Witney Town Council is not entering any sites for Thames in Chiltern 'In Bloom' Judging. Work and funds will focus on improving Unterhaching Park using Council own teams and volunteers to bring it to a basic state of preparedness for future planting.

Schools In Bloom Wheelbarrows

Several of the wheelbarrows now require replacement, as they have become worn and damaged through long-term use.

As in previous years, it will be stipulated that no plastic materials are used in any of the displays. The Council also typically offers a guest wheelbarrow to an organisation working with young people, and suggestions for a suitable group are invited. Recent guest contributors have included the Ice Centre and Synolos.

The theme for the wheelbarrows is to be selected from the following options:

- Wellbeing Wheelbarrows planted with fragrant and soothing plants traditionally associated with teas and aromatic enjoyment.
- Sensory Wheelbarrows planted with a variety of plants chosen to delight the senses.

Community Gardening and Schools Vouchers

This year, schools will be asked to retain receipts for any items purchased using a Witney Town Council (WTC) voucher, for record-keeping purposes.

It is not proposed to automatically issue vouchers to community gardeners. A recent review of the winter maintenance at Burwell, the Horticultural Society, and the Edible Gardens shows that these gardens are well maintained, sustainably planted, and feature year-round planting.



Community gardeners will be asked if they require any items, and a voucher will be issued for the appropriate amount only if the items cannot be sourced efficiently through WTC's own suppliers.

The garden at Queen Emma's, currently in its first year, will be allocated a £50 voucher, as in previous years. Receipts will be required for all voucher use to maintain accurate records.

Impact Assessments

The Town Council has a duty to consider the effects of its decisions, functions and activities on equality, biodiversity, and crime & disorder. Consideration should also be given to effects on the environment, given the Council's Climate Emergency declaration in 2019.

a) Equality –

All proposed projects and events aim to be inclusive and accessible to all residents, supporting equal participation across the community.

b) Biodiversity –

No direct impact on biodiversity is anticipated from these activities. Outdoor events will continue to use existing green spaces responsibly.

c) Crime & Disorder –

Community events and engagement activities promote civic pride and positive social interaction, contributing to a reduction in anti-social behaviour.

d) Environment & Climate Emergency –

Events and communications will consider environmental impact, minimising waste and promoting sustainable practices in line with the Council's Climate Emergency declaration.

Risk

The risks associated with Witney's In Bloom activities, including wheelbarrow displays and community gardening, are considered low. Potential risks relate primarily to manual handling of wheelbarrows, safe use of tools and plants, and outdoor working conditions. These are manageable through established procedures, officer oversight, and volunteer guidance. Environmental risks are minimal, as existing green spaces will continue to be used responsibly.

- Risks are considered low and manageable through established procedures and officer oversight.

Social Value

These initiatives deliver strong social value by encouraging community participation, volunteering, and civic pride. Wheelbarrow displays and community gardening support cross generational engagement, provide educational opportunities for schools, and enhance the local environment for residents. Supporting sustainable planting and sensory/wellbeing projects contributes to inclusive and accessible experiences for all.

Financial

All activities will be delivered within existing budgets. Officer time will be managed to ensure cost-effective delivery, and any purchases for community gardens will be prioritised for efficiency, either sourced through WTC suppliers or reimbursed via vouchers with receipts. Overall, the financial impact is minimal and manageable.

Recommendations

Members are invited to note the report and:

1. Suggest a group for **guest wheelbarrow** from organisations with young people.

2. Choose a theme for Schools In Bloom from the two below:

Wellbeing Wheelbarrows (fragrant, soothing plants)

Sensory Wheelbarrows (plants to stimulate the senses)

3. **Approve** the voucher arrangements for community gardens and schools, including:

- Schools retaining receipts for purchased items
- Issuing vouchers to community gardeners only where items cannot be sourced efficiently via WTC suppliers
- Allocating a £50 voucher to Queen Emma's garden