

STRONGER COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE

Date: Monday, 21st March 2022

Title: In Bloom & Wild Witney Competitions

Contact Officer: Communications & Community Engagement Officer, Polly Inness

Background

At the meeting of this Committee on 15th November, minute no SC577, it was agreed a task and finish group should be created to discuss the In Bloom competitions with an associated schools project and community gardening.

Current Situation

Following the In Bloom webinar on 10th Feb, links to information from that event was circulated to the In Bloom task and finish group. A meeting of the group was held on 15th February where entry to this year's competition, Schools in Bloom and community gardening were discussed.

Thames & Chiltern In Bloom

The task and finish group agreed the Town Council should enter in the Parks and Green Spaces category for: Tower Hill Cemetery and Eton Close, with a special focus on the Tiny Forest.

Schools In Bloom

It was acknowledged this is always a welcome project for schools, particularly after Covid-19. Members agreed the competition should be along previous lines – a voucher of £25 given to the schools along with a wheelbarrow and compost and the wheelbarrows will be displayed outside the Council depot/Coffee Shed during the summer and moved to Eton Close when the In Bloom judges are coming. We have a spare barrow which it was agreed would be offered to Guideposts Dig n Grow group, who are delighted to accept the opportunity.

The theme this year will be the Queen's Platinum Jubilee and it is suggested that the barrows could be planted with blooms that were popular in the 1950s. Judging will take place when the In Bloom Judges visit, with an opportunity for a vote for the 'people's favourite' award at Witney Carnival this year.

It was suggested that we might try to involve the Rotary Club more this year.

Community Gardening

Members heard the Burwell Community Garden Group were struggling with members to maintain the area. The In Bloom lead officer will make contact with the community garden's founder to see if there are groups who might be able to offer some assistance. Witney Allotment Association had also advised

they were keen to take part in In Bloom or best kept allotment over the summer. Perhaps they could be approached as a possible source of help for the Burwell Garden too.

It is proposed that the voucher allocated should be for a larger amount (£100) as a one off this year to allow the community gardeners to put on a display fit for the jubilee. This may be based on the size of the plots they are gardening as some have very small plots that would not merit such a large spend.

Wild Witney Competition

To compliment national wildflower schemes, at the suggestion of the Climate, Biodiversity & Planning Committee in 2021, the Council ran a 'Wild Witney' competition which encouraged residents to allow wildflowers to flourish in some or all of their gardens.

Members are asked if the Council would like to make this an annual competition with a prize, promoted through social media.

Autumn Planting Scheme

Members are asked to consider if they have any colour suggestions for the Council's autumn bedding scheme. It is possible that this has already been ordered, but with Grounds Contract discussions taking place it would be wise to have a fall back scheme ready to order.

Environmental impact

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

Risk

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

Financial implications

- The cost of entry for each category is Tower Hill £50 and Eton Close at under 1 hectare is £25 a total of £75
- The voucher amounts for each school is £25 this totals £300 – eleven schools plus the guest barrow
- The voucher amounts for community groups is three x £100 and one at £40- this totals £340
- There is a budget of £150 for prizes
- There is a budget of £40 for refreshments on judging day

Recommendations

Members are invited to note the report and;

1. Agree entrance to the national In Bloom competitions at Tower Hill Cemetery and Tiny Forest;
2. Agree the amounts provided to schools and community groups
3. Consider a scheme for autumn planting across the town
4. Consider the running of a Wild Witney competition in 2022