

CLIMATE, BIODIVERSITY & PLANNING COMMITTEE

Date: Tuesday, 12 July 2022

Title: Wildflower Planting

Contact Officer: Maintenance & Environmental Services Officer - Angus Whitburn

Background

In autumn 2021 the council's maintenance team prepared predefined areas for wildflower planting by community groups. The process was proposed by officers as an alternative to 'no mowing methods', ultimately creating more impactful displays and stronger wildflower creation without the need to kill off grass species.

The results so far have been very good at Oxlease field and Burwell recreation ground. The clay content in the soil at Eton Close was higher than expected so the seeds didn't take, since the maintenance team have infilled the beds and re-seeded them. Both Oxlease and Burwell beds will move onto their second year of maintenance which will involve cutting the wildflowers down and leaving the heads to seed into the ground for one week before collecting. Going into spring and summer 2023 the beds should show more diversity.

Current Situation

To get the same effects as what has already been achieved at Oxlease and Burwell the Council's maintenance team would need to start preparations in late autumn. The current areas could be extended out to cover more land or new areas could be selected. The areas currently planted were advised by officers based on the potential for vandalism, accidental damage and capturing an audience. Officers learnt that the bed preparation could be more efficient with the hire of a turf stripper.

New areas could involve adjoining the paths at the Lake & Country Park, sections of the meadows and cemeteries. Areas could be created at the leys recreation ground but due to the activity level on the land, these could be easily damaged.

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 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.

The method of stripping the turf and planting was partially advised based on resident complaints about no mowing methods looking unkempt. The rear of St Marys churchyard is on a no-mow schedule and has already generated complaints this year.

Financial implications

Described here or as stated in the report above.

- The equipment hire budget is sufficient to cover the cost of hiring a turf cutter.
- There is a small horticulture budget that would cover the cost of purchasing further wildflower seeds.

Recommendations

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

1. Suggested wildflower planting areas which officers can investigate further and report back at a future meeting,
2. Continuing with the current method or revert to 'no mowing methods'.