

STRONGER COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE

Date: Monday, 14 November 2022

Title: In Bloom Competitions 2023

Contact Officer: Communications & Community Engagement Officer - Polly Inness

Background

The In Bloom Competitions have come to a close for this year. Considerations are being made for entry into next year's competition classes. As in previous years the initiative has been well supported by our community gardeners and the Witney Rotary Club.

Current Situation

An email (attached) has been received by the Rotary Club suggesting a change to the way in which the School In Bloom barrows are judged. Prizes have now been purchased and will be delivered to schools in the next few weeks (depending on the availability of the mayor) so that they have them in time to begin the new season of gardening.

A meeting of the In Bloom groups is scheduled for Wednesday 16th November so more information on the groups themselves possibly entering their individual gardens in the "It's My Neighbourhood" category will be available after this.

Schools In Bloom Prizes

Each of the eleven schools that entered a wheelbarrow will receive a paper pot maker as their prize. This makes biodegradable pots from old newspapers to plant seeds in. These mean less root disturbance for young plants as they do not need to be removed from the pot before planting as the paper will naturally break down in the soil.

The winners of The People's Choice, Judges Choice and the winner of the Mayors award will each receive a Save the Bees gardening kit in addition to the paper pot maker.

Impact Project

The plan to use unspent budget on an impact project is still being decided. The concern about sheep being stolen rules out these being placed anywhere that isn't covered by CCTV or a busy footfall. There is a potential for the budget to be used to plant bright and welcoming planters on the entrances to Witney where the Welcome to Witney signs are located.

Rotary Letter

We understand that the timing of judging in late July means that awards are made later in the year as schools have broken up by then. Rotary were able to arrange their presentation autonomously to try to fit it in before the end of term, but it seems they were not successful.

Unfortunately, we cannot change the judging dates of our In Bloom entries as the earlier part of July is taken up by the Towns and Villages entries which enter as a whole, leaving the smaller entries such as individual parks until later.

We could allow the Rotary Club to select and award their winner at the Carnival, but this poses its own difficulties. There is no guarantee that all the schools would have a representative there on the off chance that they might win and our In Bloom judges would not be around to witness this element of community engagement with the In Bloom initiative as they are when we all judge on the same day. Community engagement is one of the key scoring elements and one that we tend to score lower on. We actually have a lot of community support and involvement, but it is sometimes difficult to evidence this.

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.

Financial implications

None

Recommendations

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

1. Would they like to select planters at the Welcome to Witney signs for this year's impact project?
2. Would they like to accommodate judging of the barrows at the Carnival for Rotary?