

REVIEW OF BEDDING OPERATIONS

Head of Service/Contact: Ian Dyer, Head of Operational Services

Urgent Decision?(yes/no) No

If yes, reason urgent decision required:

Annexes/Appendices (attached): Annex 1: Pictures of Planting Schemes 2019

Other available papers (not attached):

Report summary

To note the success of this years in-house bedding operation and plans for further improvements.

Recommendation (s)

(1) That the Committee note the contents of this report

1 Implications for the Council's Key Priorities, Service Plans and Sustainable Community Strategy

1.1 This reports links to several of the Council's Key Priorities, Keep our Borough Clean and Green, Managing our Resources and Supporting our Community.

2 Background

2.1 At the meeting of the Environment Committee held on 23 October 2018, the Committee agreed that the contract for the borough bedding scheme (with the exception of baskets and troughs) was brought back in-house to commence on 1 January 2019.

2.2 The Committee noted that the service would be delivered at no extra cost by implementing a range of improvements including employing seasonal staff, revitalising soil conditions and providing a mix of sustainable and traditional planting schemes.

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3 Review of bedding operations

- 3.1 Over the course of the winter and spring approximately fourteen flower beds were converted from traditional bedding to sustainable planting schemes or a mix of both.
- 3.2 Grounds Maintenance staff consulted with ward councillors, venue managers and stakeholders to ensure that those concerned were involved in the transition from traditional to sustainable planting.
- 3.3 To give the new plants the best chance of survival, the Grounds Maintenance team used a variety of landscaping features to overcome the poor soil conditions. The team constructed timber framed raised beds which were filled with a mix of new compost and well-rotted horse manure, before being covered with landscape fabric, planted up and then topped with purple slate. Please see a selection of photographs in annex one.
- 3.4 These measures not only serve as an attractive design feature but more importantly assist with weed control and moisture retention which will help to reduce on-going maintenance and watering costs.
- 3.5 The traditional bedding plants arrived during early May and all the remaining beds were planted up before the Derby to ensure the Borough looked its best to welcome the Queen and race-goers.
- 3.6 The remainder of the season focused on watering and weeding and despite the dry weather the majority of plants have survived and the team have received numerous compliments from members of the public and councillors who have commented favourably on the plant selection and the fresh approach to the planting schemes.
- 3.7 The team are now busy stripping out the summer bedding in preparation for the arrival of the spring bedding plants in mid-October and work is underway to design the summer planting scheme.
- 3.8 The team are conscious that a delicate balance needs to be achieved by keeping seasonal bedding plants to bring colour and vibrancy to the Borough whilst delivering a scheme that continues to be financially and environmentally viable.
- 3.9 With this in mind, the plan is to convert eleven more beds to sustainable or mixed planting over winter period.

4 Baskets and Troughs

- 4.1 The basket and trough element of the bedding contract is due to go out to tender at the end of September.

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- 4.2 Officers allocated a figure of c£10,000 to this element of the contract. However, we feel that this maybe an underestimate as the prices for supply and watering have increased over the past year and six of the troughs which were previously removed at the request of Surrey Highways are due to be reinstated at other safer locations.
- 4.3 Some economies maybe found by reducing the number of hanging baskets at the Town Hall and all efforts will be made to bring the contract in to as near this sum as possible.

5 Financial and Manpower Implications

- 5.1 The proposed budget breakdown for the in-house operation as stated in the report to Environment and Safe Communities Committee in October 2018 was as follows:

4 x Seasonal operatives for 3 weeks	£5,500
1 x Full time operative	£23,000
Seasonal vehicle hire	£2,500
Purchase of plants (summer and winter)	£17,000
Ancillary Costs	£2,500
Total	£50,500

- 5.2 The basket and trough element of the bedding operation may prove more costly than originally stated. Officers will work with Finance and the Procurement officer to ensure best value, and any additional budget requirement will be met from across the other budgets within the In-house Bedding service, as listed in the table above.

- 5.3 **Chief Finance Officer's comments:** all financial implications are contained within the body of the report.

6 Legal Implications (including implications for matters relating to equality)

- 6.1 There are no legal implications for the purpose of this report.
- 6.2 **Monitoring Officer's comments:** all legal implications are contained within the body of the report.

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7 Sustainability Policy and Community Safety Implications

- 7.1 The move towards more sustainable planting and reducing the use of scarce resources such as water and peat is at the heart of the new operation.
- 7.2 Keeping the borough clean and green has a proven impact on the perception of safety.

8 Partnerships

- 8.1 The Grounds Maintenance team have worked closely with ward councillors, venue managers and stakeholders to design and implement the new planting schemes.
- 8.2 A longer term objective is to encourage collaborations with volunteers, local residents and businesses to sponsor or assist with design, planting and maintenance of beds around the borough.

9 Risk Assessment

- 9.1 There is a financial risk that the basket and troughs may exceed the current costs.

10 Conclusion and Recommendations

- 10.1 The Grounds Maintenance team are pleased with the results of the first season of planting and are encouraged by the positive feedback that has been received.
- 10.2 The Committee are asked to note the contents of this report.

Ward(s) affected: (All Wards);