

BUDGET - PLANTING

Head of Service:	Ian Dyer, Head of Operational Services
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Wards affected:	(All Wards);
Urgent Decision?(yes/no)	No
If yes, reason urgent decision required:	N/A
Appendices (attached):	None

Summary

To consider the implications of the previously agreed budget saving as set out in the 15 October 2024 Environment Committee '2025/26 BUDGET TARGETS' report.

Recommendation (s)

The Committee is asked to:

- (1) Authorise the decision to reinstate the budget of £30,000 to 'Review of Borough Beautification (flowers and planting)' for 2025/26 and subsequent future years, noting the implications of the decision taken on 15 October 2024 and that alternative savings will be made from increased rental income from buildings within Parks to allow for this change.**

1 Reason for Recommendation

- 1.1 To ensure the Council can continue to provide planting across the borough as part of its commitment to and key priority of a green and vibrant borough whilst meeting the committee's overall saving target.

2 Background

- 2.1 The Budget Targets report brought to the Environment Committee on 15 October 2024 outlined a saving of £30,000 for 25/26 from the Beautification of the borough budget. Recommendation 2 was for the committee to "support the changes to services and savings previously identified in Table 1 of this report and that these are included within the budget presented to this Committee in January 2025".

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- 2.2 However, it should be noted that the previously agreed saving of £30,000 came about as a one-off saving suggestion which could be made should it be required to fund further Statutory Nuisance Noise Investigations for the Chalk Pit. It was never the intention to make this a permanent and on-going saving due to the implications on service delivery.
- 2.3 The removal of £30,000 from this budget is the entire budget for beautification across the borough. Therefore, the loss of funding means that the service would cease in its entirety resulting in:
- No hanging baskets or troughs in Epsom Town Centre and Ewell Village;
 - No bedding plants in parks and on the highway;
 - No bedding plants at any of our venues such as Bourne Hall/Ewell Court;
 - No ad-hoc planting in the Borough to support schemes such as South and Southeast In Bloom or spring bulb schemes.
- 2.4 During the 2025/26 budget setting process, additional rental income totalling £30,000 from operational buildings within the Parks service was identified. This income can be achieved without the need for additional expenditure to be incurred. This additional income can therefore be used to meet the £30,000 saving requirement from 2025/26 onwards, removing the need for the cut to the planting budget.

3 Risk Assessment

Legal or other duties

3.1 Equality Impact Assessment

3.1.1 None.

3.2 Crime & Disorder

3.2.1 None.

3.3 Safeguarding

3.3.1 None.

3.4 Dependencies

3.4.1 None.

3.5 Other

3.5.1 None.

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4 Financial Implications

- 4.1 The original saving was proposed during the 2024/25 budget setting process as an option to be considered and included in the Medium Term Financial Strategy to take effect from 2025/26. Further analysis of the proposal has raised concerns about the effect of the removal of this service.
- 4.2 Where a committee is unable to achieve a proposed saving, alternative proposals can be considered from within the committee's overall budget. The additional income within Parks was identified during the finance officer and budget manager review and has been included within the 2025/26 budget for Environment Committee, which is due to be considered later on this agenda.
- 4.3 Were the original saving to have been made, the additional Parks income would have been used to address the projected Council wide funding gap, as set out in the Budget Targets report. By using this additional income to replace the proposed saving from ceasing planting across the borough instead, the committee is ensuring it is not increasing the proposed deficit, but not meeting its agreed savings target.
- 4.4 The reinstatement of the planting budget and the additional rental income have both been included within the draft Budget Book 2025/26.
- 4.5 **Section 151 Officer's comments:** The financial implications are set out in the body of the report.

5 Legal Implications

- 5.1 There are no legal implications from this report.
- 5.2 **Legal Officer's comments:** None arising from the content of this report.

6 Policies, Plans & Partnerships

- 6.1 **Council's Key Priorities:** The following Key Priorities are engaged:
 - Green and Vibrant: A better place to live where people enjoy their surroundings
- 6.2 **Service Plans:** The matter is included within the current Service Delivery Plan.
- 6.3 **Climate & Environmental Impact of recommendations:** Planting increases biodiversity and helps to meet the aims and objectives of the climate change action plan.
- 6.4 **Sustainability Policy & Community Safety Implications:** None.
- 6.5 **Partnerships:** None.

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7 Background papers

7.1 The documents referred to in compiling this report are as follows:

Previous reports:

<https://democracy.epsom-ewell.gov.uk/documents/s33174/202526%20Budget%20Targets.pdf>