

'Maidstone In-Bloom' Boroughwide Competition

Final Decision-Maker	Communities, Housing & Environment
Lead Head of Service	William Cornall, Director Regeneration & Place
Lead Officer and Report Author	Andrew Williams. Parks & Open Spaces Manager
Classification	Public
Wards affected	<i>All</i>

Executive Summary

This report outlines the opportunity to provide a boroughwide Maidstone In-Bloom competition to encourage gardening and environmental projects. The competition would be run in collaboration with a local retail horticultural nursery who are experienced in providing such schemes in neighbouring boroughs.

Purpose of Report

Report is for discussion and committee decision for the Council to endorse a Maidstone In-Bloom Boroughwide Competition for 2021 that is provided in collaboration with a sponsor

This report makes the following recommendations to this Committee:

1. Agree to provide an In-Bloom competition for businesses and residents to show case their talents in floral displays and environmental projects;
2. Utilise the opportunity to promote and communicate a positive image for the borough;
3. Enter into a collaboration with a local business as competition co-ordinator and administrator.

Timetable

Meeting	Date
Communities, Housing and Environment Committee	2 February 2021

'Maidstone In-Bloom' Boroughwide Competition

1. CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES AND IMPLICATIONS

Issue	Implications	Sign-off
Impact on Corporate Priorities	Accepting the recommendations will materially improve the Council's ability to achieve a Safe Clean & Green borough and has potential to increase community engagement stimulate a degree of 'uplift' in some businesses.	William Cornall Director of Regeneration & Place
Cross Cutting Objectives	The report recommendations supports the achievement of the 'Biodiversity and Environmental Sustainability is respected' <i>cross cutting objective by encouraging and celebrating the environmental categories within the competition</i>	Andrew Williams, Parks & Open Spaces Manager
Risk Management	No additional risk following recommendations	William Cornall Director of Regeneration & Place
Financial	The proposals set out in the recommendation are all within already approved budgetary headings and so need no new funding for implementation. Furthermore resources to enable the competition are to be provided by commercial sponsoring organisation.	Andrew Williams, Parks & Open Spaces Manager
Staffing	We will deliver the recommendations with our current staffing – through Parks & Open Spaces and the Communications Team	Andrew Williams Parks & Open Spaces Manager
Legal	No significant legal issues are anticipated	Andrew Williams, Parks & Open Spaces Manager
Privacy and Data Protection	No additional data will be held by the Council – partner organisation will process enquiries and entries	Andrew Williams, Parks & Open Spaces Manager
Equalities	The recommendations do not propose a change in service therefore will not require an equalities impact assessment	Andrew Williams, Parks & Open Spaces Manager

Public Health	We recognise that the recommendations will not negatively impact on population health or that of individuals and may make a positive contribution for wellbeing & mental health.	Senior Public Health Officer
Crime and Disorder	The recommendation will have no negative impact on crime & disorder	Andrew Williams, Parks & Open Spaces Manager
Procurement	No procurement activity following recommendation/outcome	Andrew Williams, Parks & Open Spaces Manager

2. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

- 2.1 Kent based garden centre 'Coolings' have been running 'In-Bloom' competitions for residents and businesses in a number of Kent Boroughs since 2008. Coolings have now approached Maidstone Borough Council to lead in the establishment and development of an 'In Bloom' competition within our borough . Coolings is a retail nursery with several sites in the region including one site in Bearsted.
- 2.2 The 'Britain In-Bloom ' competition has a long history of local , regional and national schemes supported by the Royal Horticultural Society and often implemented through partnerships and voluntary efforts. See <https://www.rhs.org.uk/get-involved/britain-in-bloom>. The establishment of a local 'In Bloom' competition is widely regarded as a very positive for community engagement and furthermore provides a platform to showcase the borough , raise the profile of local businesses that participate , celebrate residents efforts and improve the environment.
- 2.3 Maidstone Borough Council would not lead on the project delivery but would offer endorsement and media support as a positive community based initiative for residents. Commonly other boroughs offer Mayoral support for presentation of awards etc
- 2.4 Category for entries could be as follows but is open to change to suit our local priorities or needs :
- **Residential Categories:** Best front garden, Best back garden, Best planted pot/trough or basket, Best allotment
 - **Commercial Categories:** Best commercial garden, Best commercial planted pot/trough or basket, Most attractive shop, pub or business frontage.
 - **Environmental & Community Categories:** Best community environmental/biodiversity focused project, Best community horticultural/ornamental project

3. AVAILABLE OPTIONS

- 3.1 Fully adopt the proposal to work with Coolings Nursery and launch a boroughwide in-Bloom competition. Maidstone Borough Council's involvement would be to endorse and promote the scheme. Coolings Nursery would use their experience and expertise to manage the scheme and provide prizes.
- 3.2 Create an alternative MBC only competition .
- 3.3 Do nothing.

4. PREFERRED OPTION AND REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.1 Preferred option is (3.1) to work with Coolings to provide a boroughwide Maidstone In-Bloom competition for 2021 and review in October for decision to proceed or not with following years. The scheme is proven in other boroughs and research shows the competitions are well liked, competently run and feedback from one neighbouring local authority officers group recommends the scheme, the working relationship and outcomes. Coolings are a local business and their agent for the competition is a borough resident.
- 4.2 An alternative Council run initiative would be resource heavy in terms of officer time and incentives and prizes would be need new funding as a growth item.
- 4.3 To do nothing would be a lost opportunity to add interest to the borough for residents and businesses.

5. RISK

- 5.1 No financial risk.

6. CONSULTATION RESULTS AND PREVIOUS COMMITTEE FEEDBACK

- 6.1 None

7. NEXT STEPS: COMMUNICATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECISION

- 7.1 If the recommendation is supported the scheme could be launched in late March /early Spring. The MBC Communications team would liaise with Coolings and develop a joint communications and promotions plan. Early discussions with MBC Communications Manager confirm this would be quickly assimilated into their annual work plan and create a wide range of

opportunities for press engagement, social media updates and further link the scheme to MBC environmental projects, town centre improvements to highlight the borough's commitment to 'Safe, Clean & Green' & 'a Thriving Place'. Furthermore Mayoral support will be requested once significant dates are known this will of course be subject to compliance with any Covid restrictions and diary commitments.

8. REPORT APPENDICES

None

9. BACKGROUND PAPERS

None