



CHEL TENHAM

BOROUGH COUNCIL

Notice of a meeting of Overview & Scrutiny Committee

**Monday, 27 November 2017
6.00 pm
Pittville Room - Municipal Offices**

Membership	
Councillors:	Tim Harman (Chair), Jon Walklett (Vice-Chair), Colin Hay, Alex Hegenbarth, Sandra Holliday, Chris Mason, Helena McCloskey, John Payne, Paul Baker and Max Wilkinson

The Council has a substitution process and any substitutions will be announced at the meeting

Agenda

8.	PUBLIC REALM PLANTING STRATEGY	(Pages 3 - 20)

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Discussion Paper

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

27th November 2017

Public Realm Planting Strategic Review

This note contains the information to keep Members informed of matters relating to the work of the Committee, but where no decisions from Members are needed

1. Why has this come to scrutiny?

- 1.1 The proposal to consider an alternative approach to planting in the councils green spaces was being developed and early stakeholder engagement with interested groups had commenced in September 2017. This generated interest in the press and with the public prompting petitions and a debate in council.
- 1.2 The business case for planting options has now been prepared for consideration by the scrutiny committee.

2. Summary of the Issue

- 2.1 The project team were in the process of developing the business case evaluating the options for planting in the council's public realm, including the Long Gardens, Imperial Gardens and parks and gardens across the town.
- 2.2 To support this process, stakeholder engagement had commenced. This resulted in significant public interest in proposals being developed which led to 2 petitions being started, one against the proposal and one in support of the proposal. The petition against received in excess of 750 signatures and triggered a debate in council.
- 2.3 Following the council debate, an additional option has been modelled. As such, the business case and options appraisal now includes 3 options:
 - 1. Retain all seasonal bedding.
 - 2. Retain seasonal bedding in the Long Gardens and Imperial Gardens, change to herbaceous perennials in all other locations.
 - 3. Change to herbaceous perennials in all locations.
- 2.4 The business case outlines the financial and none financial evaluation of each option for consideration by the committee.
- 2.5 The business case and evaluation has been developed with the support of Publica working with the existing service provider Ubico. The project team has drawn on experienced gained by other councils which have considered similar proposals.

2.6 The Cabinet welcomes feedback from the committee on the options being presented.

2.7 The focus of the debate in council was around the 2 key locations i.e. the Long Gardens and Imperial Gardens. Any decision to change the planting approach in these locations will now be subject to further development and consultation.

3. Next Steps

3.1 The Cabinet is due to make a final decision in December 2017 and consider the implication of any decision on the nursery in February 2018.

Background Papers

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Accountability

Councillor Chris Coleman

Scrutiny Function

Overview and Scrutiny committee

Business Case

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Client:	Mark Sheldon		
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Revision History

Revision Date	Previous Revision Date	Summary of Changes	Changes Marked
1 st Aug 2017		Comments and rewording of draft	Y
3 rd Aug 2017	2 nd Aug 2017	New graphs added by Myn – tracked changes accepted by EM.	Y
8 th Aug 2017	3 rd Aug 2017	Comments and rewording of draft	Y
11 th Aug 2017	8 th Aug 2017	MTFS summary tidied up - MC	Y
16 th Aug 2017	11 th Aug 2017	Amendments to herbaceous perennials notes - AR	Y
23 rd Aug 2017	16 th Aug 2017	Amended options with comments from JM	Y
30 th Aug 2017	23 rd Aug 2017	Added comments on potential Council Tax - MC	Y
6 th Sep 2017	30 th Aug 2017	Revised treatment of capital receipt	Y
13 th Sep 2017	27 th Sep 2017	Reordered options	Y
27 th Sep 2017		Added revisions proposed by MS	Y
31 st Oct 2017		New tables added by MC	
14 th Nov 2017		Revisions by EM	Y

Approvals

This document requires the following approvals.

Name	Signature	Title	Date of Issue	Version
Mark Sheldon		Director of Resources		
David Roberts		Head of Property Services		
Tracey Crews		Director of Planning		

Distribution

This document has been distributed to:

Name	Title	Date of Issue	Version
Councillor Chris Coleman	Cabinet Member Clean & Green Environment		
Councillor Rowena Hay	Cabinet Member Finance		
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DRAFT

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1 Executive Summary

- 1.1 Cheltenham's current approach to planting using spring and summer bedding has not changed since the 1950's. The displays have won many awards in the past from Britain in Bloom and are well loved. The Britain in Bloom judging criteria has changed over recent years. It now advocates sustainable planting and does not reward schemes that solely use bedding plants.
- 1.2 Many towns and cities in the UK and across Europe have moved away from this style of planting in order to improve the environment, biodiversity, reflect changing tastes and save money. Given that the council is at a point where it needs to make significant investment in Arle nursery, it is an appropriate time to undertake a review of the public realm planting strategy.
- 1.3 The seasonal bedding plant displays currently featured in much of Cheltenham's public realm, are expensive to source, resource hungry and short lived. They need a substantial quantity of water to maintain them in healthy conditions, especially in periods of dry and hot weather; conditions that are on the increase due to climate change.
- 1.4 The aim of this strategic review is to evaluate the approach taken to Cheltenham's current public realm planting regime and assess the impact of an alternative, more sustainable, town planting strategy.

Sustainable planting is a style of planting which uses perennial herbaceous plants, shrubs and grasses that are suited to the local climate and site ecology, are better for the environment i.e. bee and insect population, are attractive, have long life cycles and require significantly reduced resources to grow and maintain.
- 1.5 Plant species that thrive for a number of years can increase the amount of interest and structure to provide visually pleasing results all year round, improve biodiversity and can be divided to fill gaps in planting. There are multiple benefits associated with this increasingly popular style of planting, all of which are captured herein.
- 1.6 Management of herbaceous perennial schemes are continually assessed to optimise outcomes i.e. high quality displays, environmentally friendly, cost-efficient and easily maintainable. The approach adopts the principals of preservation of limited and costly resources, waste and water reduction, air and soil pollution.
- 1.7 This business case compares options for planting approaches, all of which preserve some existing seasonal bedding floral displays in key locations, in keeping with Cheltenham's heritage. The proposals provide for an attractive public realm that can incorporate both planting styles.
- 1.8 Hanging baskets and window boxes are proposed to be retained in all the options considered.

This document explains how the review will contribute to the delivery of the council's strategy. It states its objectives, projected benefits, critical success factors and financial implications.

2 Strategic Fit

A number of emerging factors have prompted the opportunity to review the planting strategy and subsequently, the future of Arle Nursery.

- The 2013 Green Space Commissioning Review identified that the appeal of high maintenance floral bedding within townscapes is diminishing in favour of more herbaceous perennial schemes.
- Revenue from Arle nursery bedding plant sales supplied for commercial use has reduced year on year as organisations move to alternative more sustainable regimes, and public sector cuts drive reductions in contract values. This reduction in income means there is less to subsidise the Council's bedding plant provision, and therefore the cost to the council for its own planting is increasing.
- The council has submitted two bids to the European Structural and Investment Funds Growth Programme to request grant funding to create and connect habitat in central Cheltenham, thereby increasing biodiversity.
- Planting and landscaping play an important part in delivering the place making agenda for Cheltenham. Public realm planting touches upon our ambition for Destination Cheltenham, economic development, inward investment, culture and tourism.

2.1 Supporting Council Strategy

This review supports our 2017-18 corporate strategy;

- Our environmental strategy, to protect maintain and enhance environmental quality and heritage, specifically to develop a "vision for Cheltenham's town centre and its public realm" (ENV2);
- Our economic strategy, to sustain and grow Cheltenham's economic and cultural vitality, specifically, to develop a "longer term strategy for place making" and a "strategic approach to tourism" (ECON 1 & 4). The Place strategy core values of creativity, pioneering and nurturing are reflected in the review and subsequent recommendation.

2.2 Delivering Outcomes

The options appraisal assesses Cheltenham's public realm planting schemes and aims to;

- Reflect contemporary landscape trends.
- Improve and enhance biodiversity opportunities.
- Protect, maintain and enhance Cheltenham's environmental quality and heritage (a statement of intent within the Corporate Strategy).
- Enhance the townscape for residents and visitors.
- Make the best use of publicly owned sites

2.3 Working with partners to review options

In order to fully explore landscape trends and opportunities for herbaceous perennial planting schemes, the project team has worked closely with representatives of the Green Space Development Team within Warwick District Council (WDC) to learn from their lived experience. Leamington Spa, a town with similar history and architectural style to Cheltenham, commenced a three year phased move towards this style of planting in 2010. Hanging baskets were retained.

The project team visited Leamington Spa in June to view sustainable displays that have matured in the town's parks, gardens, cemetery, at the front of the Town Hall, war memorial and pump room.

WDC estimate that 85% of residents and visitors to the town were positive about the change in planting style. They claim that the remaining 15% became more accepting of the initiative once they understood the concept and rationale for it. Since the herbaceous perennial planting schemes have matured, the feedback has been that should the town planting policy be to return to all seasonal bedding, objections on the grounds of cost and diminished biodiversity would be anticipated.

A diverse range of stakeholders have been informed of the scope of this review. Features of both planting schemes, seasonal bedding and herbaceous perennials, have been shared with them all. Two engagement sessions were held in September in order to generate debate and seek feedback from interested parties. As expected, some strong views were expressed in respect of each scheme. The feedback was mixed. See Appendix A for further information.

Two separate petitions launched as result of this review: one to campaign for the retention of seasonal bedding in specific public realm gardens; the other in support of herbaceous perennials. The former triggered a full council debate on 16th October, the themes of which are captured in Appendix A.

As part of the engagement activity, a CBC web page has been set up to inform residents of proposals for flowering perennial planting. The content of presentations made to stakeholders has been uploaded to the web page. The Gloucestershire Echo published a series of articles in September outlining the pros and cons of the proposals being considered.

2.4 National Strategic Drivers

All local authorities continue to face severe budget constraints. Against this backdrop, CBC is still keen to lead on initiatives aimed at safeguarding and enhancing biodiversity, protecting our environment and reducing adverse impacts on natural systems and resources.

The promotion of biodiversity and local eco systems are deemed to be particularly important in areas where urban expansion consumes land. In light of the JCS recommendations, this is of high consideration within Cheltenham. By cultivating resilience with the town, a pathway towards a more sustainable future is created. Improved biodiversity helps to address climate change, and can inspire town planners to innovate and positively develop the creation of a more sustainable town.

These factors have played a role in our thinking when considering a change to the way in which the public realm planting is managed. The greater variety of plant choice within herbaceous perennial schemes supports increased biodiversity through improved pollination levels, longer flowering and fruiting periods and habitat diversity. As previously mentioned, there is European funding available to support environmental and biodiversity improvements.

3 Options Appraisal

3.1 Option 1: Retain all seasonal bedding

Retain existing seasonal bedding planting regime: Implications	
Community	<p>Existing planting regime is popular with some communities, and preserves the town's reputation for aesthetically pleasing floral displays.</p> <p>Seasonal bedding plants are a convenient solution to managing the need for park spaces required for different purposes during public events e.g. marquees erected in Imperial Gardens for the Science and Literature Festivals.</p> <p>Imperial Gardens were redesigned in 2010 as part of a strategy to establish a one site "Festivals Village" approach to the running of the Jazz, Science and Literature Festivals. Both Imperial and Montpellier Gardens have planning consent to allow up to 70 days of event structures (including setting up and taking down). Designated flower beds can be removed prior to an event and replaced afterwards. This flexibility drives a need for some bedding plant provision, or a change to the existing layout of beds, both of which incur cost.</p> <p>There are opposing views between those that wish to see the current planting regime continue and others that consider it to be outdated and not reflective of more current planting styles being implemented across the country. This potentially exposes CBC to criticism that we lag behind the trend by failing to adopt a more economically and environmentally viable solution.</p>
Economic	<p>The nursery is operating in a shrinking market place, confirmed by reduced demand for bedding plants from other local authorities. Net profit for the last five years has progressively declined towards only breaking even, meaning the cost to the Council for its own plant requirements has been increasing.</p> <p>In addition to the point above, significant and immediate investment is essential in order to keep the nursery fit for purpose and grow bedding plants for our own public realm planting. A substantial programme of planned and reactive maintenance is required.</p> <p>Recruitment of a manager is necessary in order to continue to run the nursery on a commercial footing (the previous manager has retired).</p>
Environment	<p>Bedding plants are the most resource hungry of all planting types, incurring higher usage costs for clean water, peat, energy and labour.</p> <p>In preserving the traditional approach to municipal planting, the potential to modernise and revamp the planting regime is deferred, removing biodiversity and ecological enhancement opportunities. Longer term, we risk falling behind our peers.</p> <p>Commercially grown bedding plants are hybridised, typically producing tighter flowers and less pollen, which discourages wildlife.</p> <p>Spring bedding plants are susceptible to frost, prompting a replacement need for which there is a cost.</p>

Retain existing seasonal bedding planting regime: Implications	
	The glasshouse used to grow the public realm bedding plants is inherently energy inefficient, and it is further compounded by obsolete climate control requirements.
Legal	No implications.
HR	No implications.
Technological	Nursery plant and machinery is considered to be 'end of life'. High ticket items include the automated and complex gas heating system.

3.2 Option 2: Retain seasonal bedding in the Long Garden & Imperial Gardens, change to herbaceous perennials in all other locations

Retain seasonal bedding in the Long Garden & Imperial Gardens, change to herbaceous perennials in all other locations: Implications															
Community Environment Legal HR Technological	For each, the implications of each respective planting scheme are already articulated at 3.1 and 3.3.														
Economic	<p>The following annual bedding plant statistics have been factored into the financial assessment;</p> <table> <tr> <td>Spring numbers</td><td>87,000</td></tr> <tr> <td>Summer numbers</td><td>89,000</td></tr> <tr> <td>Total</td><td>176,000</td></tr> <tr> <td colspan="2">Of which:</td></tr> <tr> <td>Imperial Gardens</td><td>52,000</td></tr> <tr> <td>Long Gardens</td><td>41,000</td></tr> <tr> <td>Total</td><td>93,000</td></tr> </table>	Spring numbers	87,000	Summer numbers	89,000	Total	176,000	Of which:		Imperial Gardens	52,000	Long Gardens	41,000	Total	93,000
Spring numbers	87,000														
Summer numbers	89,000														
Total	176,000														
Of which:															
Imperial Gardens	52,000														
Long Gardens	41,000														
Total	93,000														

3.3 Option 3: Change to herbaceous perennials in all locations

Change to herbaceous perennials in all locations: Implications	
Community	<p>Critically, herbaceous perennial planting supports the council's strategy ENV2, ECON1 and ECON4, and protects Cheltenham's town within a garden reputation.</p> <p>Visually there would be an improvement in the appearance of winter beds with careful choice of plants. A wide spectrum of plant choice provides for design schemes with year round interest, encompassing foliage, flower, seed heads, structure, height, form and seasonal variation. More plant species diversity can reflect the visual trend in landscaping.</p> <p>There is a greater tolerance of plant species to recover from damage / vandalism. Examples quoted by Leamington Spa colleagues include plants being sat on by children, run over by park vehicles, and youths kicking floral displays in green spaces.</p>

Change to herbaceous perennials in all locations: Implications	
	<p>Herbaceous perennials present the opportunity for CBC to modernise its' planting style. Berkeley Gardens already has sustainable plants within it. A new approach would complement the wild meadow areas already created across the Borough and very positively responded to on social media, most notably the poppies planted at Cox's Meadow. Prestbury Road roundabout has been replanted, in June 2017, using sustainable plants with no adverse public reaction.</p> <p>Perennial herbaceous plants may be viewed as more subtle in appearance. Whilst they may not be bred to be as high yielding in flower heads compared to bedding, there are plenty of colourful varieties that can be incorporated into more prestigious and prominent places where vibrant colour is required. Appropriate planting becomes a design requirement.</p> <p>Herbaceous perennial regimes enable a return to the original intentions of the architects and designers of the Regency period for open green spaces within the town. The postcard image of Cheltenham today is undoubtedly the Regency terraces with large numbers of colourful bedding plants that are replaced regularly throughout the spring and summer. This however, is largely a late Victorian fashion and not in keeping with original historical context. In Regency times it is likely that lightly wooded, sinuous shrubberies, with beds of herbaceous perennials would have been used in areas such as the long gardens, and in the gardens once found on the Promenade. Many of these therefore strongly link into the idea of herbaceous perennials today.</p> <p>Feedback from engagement with local community groups suggests that there is support for the adoption of herbaceous perennials. Further opportunities exist to educate the community on herbaceous perennials through exhibits and engagement.</p> <p>Provision for hanging baskets and some key floral bedding displays has been made in the calculations. This overcomes those scenarios where park spaces, occupied with plant beds, are needed for a different use during events and festivals.</p> <p>Britain in Bloom in conjunction with the RHS, advocates that planting activities should be effective year round; Bloom is not just a campaign for the summertime. It deems that whilst seasonal displays are an important element, entries must be proportionate to areas of herbaceous perennials and permanent landscaping. Any local Bloom campaign should consider the entire community, not just specific / prominent areas. Key considerations include conservation and biodiversity, resource management and local heritage. Successful Bloom campaigns will have a year-round programme of activity to keep the community engaged and the area looking its best throughout the year, not just in spring/summer.</p>
Economic	<p>Herbaceous perennials require less upkeep, and negate the need for some beds to be replanted, therefore delivering annual maintenance savings.</p> <p>There is potential to produce more plant material through plant division, negating a procurement need. The prospect to reduce overall costs significantly over a ten year period exists, based on both reductions in number of plants purchased and level of maintenance required.</p>

Change to herbaceous perennials in all locations: Implications	
	Supply of hanging baskets, window boxes and bedding plants in designated areas has been provisioned for within the calculations for this option.
Environment	<p>Herbaceous perennial schemes support biodiversity, ecological enhancement and climate change through a reduced carbon footprint. Plant diversity attracts insects and other invertebrates (including butterflies, bees, spiders and millipedes), birds and mammals. Over the winter season, and with the right plant selection, dead flowers act as a source of food for wildlife, thus creating a stronger urban green infrastructure. Herbaceous perennials typically produce more pollen, essential to supporting the bee population, known to be under threat.</p> <p>The bee population is at risk. A significant reason for this is the loss of their natural habitat; 97% of their grassland habitat has been lost in the past 60 years. Source: Friends of the Earth.</p> <p>Herbaceous perennials would lead to a reduction in usage of clean water, energy and peat usage in production and maintenance, supporting the environmental agenda.</p> <p>Herbaceous perennials require fewer resources to maintain. This was illustrated by the Leamington Spa Green Space Team who showcased many roundabouts where herbaceous perennials thrive in harsher surrounding conditions to accommodate spaces with tarmac and increased road traffic. Designs for such spaces can include drought tolerant plants. They explained that the annual cost of planting their 'Sainsbury's' roundabout has reduced from £3000 to £200 pa, is visually attractive, seasonal grasses provide structure, is now very low maintenance, only requiring 10 additional plants in a 5 year period, whereas originally bedding plants struggled on it. Their Sandy Lane roundabout was planted up 8 years ago and is thriving, having "stood the test of time" in all weather conditions.</p> <p>Maintenance practices greatly influence the waste produced and maintenance cost itself. Less time is required to water displays. Weeding is not necessary for all areas; dead flowers are deliberately left in more discreet beds to provide food for wildlife, leaving only prime flower displays to be trimmed. As a direct result, the Leamington Spa Green Space Team has reduced their annual maintenance regime of 12-14 sessions to 10 shorter visits. These are undertaken by the permanently employed core team, thus reducing reliance upon temporary workers to supplement their resources. A corresponding labour reduction has been reflected in staff costs accordingly.</p> <p>Landscape maintenance practices for successful herbaceous perennial schemes demand a different approach, and can positively influence the waste produced and the cost of the maintenance itself.</p>
Legal	No implications.
HR	<p>New planting schemes provide the opportunity for the Green Space Development Team gardeners to develop their skills.</p> <p>There is likely to be less reliance upon seasonal agency staff required to plant and maintain alternative herbaceous perennial schemes.</p>
Technological	No Implications.

4 Financial Assessment

4.1 Working assumptions

All options assume that Arle Nursery is retained as a going concern.

Nursery income, planned maintenance and inflation are factored in to all options.

Hanging baskets and window boxes are retained in all options.

4.2 Implications of retaining, mixing or changing the planting scheme

PLANTING COST PROJECTIONS SUMMARISED 2017-2027						
	OPTION 1:	Option 1	OPTION 2:	Option 2	OPTION 3:	Option 3
	Retain all seasonal bedding plant schemes in all gardens		Retain seasonal bedding in the Long Garden & Imperial Gardens, change to herbaceous perennials in all other locations		Change to herbaceous perennial planting in all locations	
Account	Description	TOTAL	Description	TOTAL	Description	TOTAL
Ubico Staff Costs	1% inflation each year, no other change	749,500	Slightly reduced labour costs for some sustainable planting	694,316	Reduced labour costs for fewer maintenance visits required	548,600
Premises running costs excluding Programmed Maintenance	includes Utilities and Reactive Repairs and cleaning, but excludes programmed maint.	339,500		339,500		339,500
Programmed Maintenance	Required to continue operations at the Nursery	625,000		625,000		625,000
Transport Costs		100,940	Transport of plants reduction - minimal as Long Gardens and Imperial not included	100,940	Reduced transport costs for fewer maintenance visits	70,658
Supplies & Services Costs	All net costs including tools, fees, phones, equipment less bedding plants and shrubs	89,580		89,580		89,580
Purchase of Material	Bedding Plants & Shrubs (for all customers, mainly seedlings)	1,182,450	Initial cost & design of perennial plants, phased in, plus hanging baskets and bedding plants for external customers	808,451	Initial cost & design of perennial plants plus cost of seedlings for external customers	399,610
Support Services		310,500	No change to overall council costs	310,500	No change to overall council costs	310,500
TOTAL COSTS		3,397,470		2,968,287		2,383,448
Sales - external	Sale of Plants / Floral Displays	-991,120		-991,120		-991,120
Miscellaneous sales	public	-30,200		-30,200		-30,200
Miscellaneous rent	Employee rent - service tenancy	-14,000		-14,000		-14,000
GROSS INCOME		-1,035,320		-1,035,320		-1,035,320
ESTIMATED ONGOING COST OF SERVICE FOR 10 YEARS		2,362,150		1,932,968		1,348,128
ADDITIONAL BUDGETARY REQUIREMENTS (AFTER 10 YEARS)						
ANNUAL BASE BUDGET 2017/18		101,638		101,638		101,638
ANNUAL ESTIMATED INCREASE IN COST OF SERVICE IN 2027/28	* based on assumptions regarding future costs and income levels.	115,791	* based on assumptions regarding future costs and income levels.	56,277	* based on assumptions regarding future costs and income levels.	-21,329
ANNUAL BASE BUDGET 2027/28		217,429		157,915		80,309

4.3 Conclusion of financial evaluation

The business case indicates that option 3 is the lowest cost solution to public realm planting.

Option 2 provides an opportunity for CBC to move towards more wide spread use of perennial plants, allows further time for additional stakeholder engagement and the development of option 3.

5 Key Risks Summary

The following initial high level risks have been identified:

- Public response to changes in planting regime may be negative.
- Potential negative impact on townscape during period of plant establishment.
- CBC exposure to criticism that we lag behind the trend by failing to adopt a more herbaceous perennials solution.
- Viability of Arle Nursery. It is already operating in a shrinking market place, because demand for the commercial supply of bedding plants continues to reduce year on year. Consequently, the cost of growing our own bedding plants increases.

6 Critical Success Factors

Public and media engagement is essential to ensure that a largely positive response to the outcome of the review, and subsequent decision, is achieved.

Planting strategy, design and maintenance must achieve the benefits detailed in the business case.

7 Officer Time and Costs

There will be some level of project officer resource costs for disciplines including but not limited to Communications, Finance, HR, ICT, Legal and Project Management. Allowances for these inputs in order to support the project and deliver the anticipated outcomes have not been calculated within the options appraisal and corresponding financial assessment. Instead they may require costing depending upon needs determined during the project.

8 Timescale

The timescale for the project to be delivered will be partially dependant on the outcome of the options appraisal. A decision on this business case is being sought at Cabinet in December 2017.

The project team is proposing a phased approach to herbaceous perennials, over a three year period, from 2018-2021.

Appendix A: Stakeholder Engagement

Engagement session: 4th September 2017

Organisations represented (some by more than one attendee):

1. Chamber of Commerce on Cheltenham In Bloom
2. Charlton Kings in Bloom
3. Cheltenham Civic Society
4. Friends of Hatherley Park
5. Friends of Imperial Square, Heritage and Conservation
6. Friends of Pittville
7. Horticultural Society
8. Winston Churchill Memorial Gardens

Organisations invited but did not attend:

9. Friends of Leckhampton Hill
10. Friends of Montpellier
11. Friends of Naunton Park
12. Friends of Pilley Bridge
13. Friends of Sandford Park

Engagement session: 5th September 2017

Organisations represented:

1. West End Partnership
2. Business Improvement District
3. Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust
4. Cheltenham In Bloom
5. Chamber of Commerce
6. Suffolk Traders

Organisations invited but did not attend:

7. Bath Road Traders
8. Cheltenham Festivals
9. Cheltenham & Gloucester Bee Keepers Association
10. Hesters Way Partnership
11. Local Enterprise Partnership
12. Civic Society
13. University of Gloucestershire Landscape School

Cheltenham Hospitality Association engaged with afterwards.

Appendix A continued: Stakeholder Engagement

Summarised and anonymised feedback

Our town in the past has been hailed far and wide for our magnificent flower displays. With the hard work and dedication of your Officers and Cheltenham in Bloom we have given our town great notoriety across the country, winning many awards and encouraging visitors from far and wide. Sustainable planting will undermine the attractiveness of Cheltenham and lower the esteem the town once had.

The principles you want to follow are good, e.g. biodiversity, plants better able to cope with seasonal variations etc. Danger is, people think you are being driven by financial considerations only/really. Would be good to set out comparative costs, so we know the difference it will make to budgets.

Please ensure that ground staff are re-trained. Please ensure that reduced costs are not seen as a cost saving but that surplus resources are diverted elsewhere.

The need to train the gardening staff is clearly very important. The changes could be negative if there is not proper investment in this area.

I would be concerned if Cheltenham did not pursue sustainable planting in the areas discussed. I feel the town is looking old fashioned and less attractive with its current bedding schemes. Sustainable planting looks very attractive in other towns both in the UK & Europe.

Use it as an opportunity to do something different - make a statement both in the design and in the way it's used afterwards as a marketing tool. Needs to be more about Cheltenham people than visitors although visitors are important too.

I think it's a great opportunity to show leadership in gardening with wildlife in mind. However, it would be good to have an overall view of biodiversity gains (i.e. not just pollinators, hedgehogs, birds soil).

Difficult to know at this stage but hopefully it will enhance rather than detract if handled properly.

The current bedding planting schemes have high visual impact but were described as belonging to a bygone era , anachronistic, very controlled but unimaginative.

We are in favour of sustainable planting, which incorporates a much greater variety of plants with more interesting forms and textures as well as colour, from shrubs to herbaceous/ grasses and bulbs potentially giving a very long season. Admiration was expressed for the Prestbury Road roundabout. There could be non-visual aspects too e.g. the smell/perfume of Viburnum bodnantense and others, scented Mahonia varieties and Sarcococca, all under planted with bulbs close to pavements.

I do understand that there are financial constraints and that some form of sustainable planting has to be carried out to encourage biodiversity and wildlife but care must be taken as to the siting of this i.e. roundabouts etc. Cheltenham must maintain the flowers in the Long Gardens and Imperial Gardens, this is a must. Please, please think very carefully before a decision is made.

Appendix A continued: Stakeholder Engagement

Summarised and anonymised feedback

I think the sustainable planting experiment on the Pittville roundabout is a great success and could be tried in many other places e.g. along London Road near Oxford Gardens. However I think the Long Gardens in front of the Municipal Offices and Imperial Gardens needs the brighter colours that bedding plants give.

The changes envisaged could look very good, but even so the winter months will always be a bit of a problem, even with seed and grass heads.

The highest possible standards are needed to make the changes a success-design, choice of plants for the site, adequate maintenance and, of course, training of Staff with the necessary skills.

Apart from the two sites mentioned, I am in favour, as long as those in overall charge of Budgets, give you the resources to do a first class job.

I think there are opportunities for using herbaceous plants (and shrubs) to replace bedding and increase biodiversity and reduce costs. However I think it needs to be carefully thought out where and needs to part of the overall urban design.

Each Spring I enjoy seeing the bedding plants but always think of the effort required to put in so many thousands of new plants.

While we generally support the aims of reducing both costs and the environmental impact we have reservations about the Prestbury Road roundabout.

Council Debate 16th October 2017

Themes, concerns and opportunities debated in relation to the petition to retain seasonal bedding in the Long Garden and Imperial Gardens include;

- Adverse visual impact of a different planting regime e.g. loss of colour, vibrancy
- Need for regular maintenance of herbaceous perennials
- Opportunity to up-skill the Green Space Development Team
- Good designs are essential if we move to a different scheme
- Primary concern was deemed to be two significant locations –the Long Garden and Imperial Gardens. Other green spaces were of less concern.

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