

Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council

Report to Health, Wellbeing and Partnerships Scrutiny Committee – 3rd December 2018

Title: Britain in Bloom

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Reason for Report

The Health, Wellbeing and Partnerships Scrutiny Committee requested a report on the Council's involvement in Britain in Bloom at the meeting of September 2018;

Officer response:

Background

RHS Britain in Bloom is the largest horticultural campaign in the United Kingdom (and one of the largest in Europe). It was first held in 1963, initiated by the British Tourist Board based on the example set by Fleurissement de France , which since 1959 has promoted the annual Concours des Villes et Villages Fleuris. It has been organised by the Royal Horticultural Society (RHS) since 2002.

The competition is entered by the communities of towns, villages and cities. Different categories exist for various sizes of settlements. Groups are assessed for their achievements in three core pillars: Horticultural Excellence; Environmental Responsibility; and Community Participation.

Over 1,600 communities around the UK enter each year, participating in their local region's "In Bloom" campaign. From these regional competitions, roughly 80 communities are selected to enter the national finals of RHS Britain in Bloom.

It is a popular campaign, estimated to involve more than 200,000 volunteers in cleaning up and greening up their local area.

Since 2002, the awards have been based on the Royal Horticultural Society's medal standards of Gold, Silver Gilt, Silver and Bronze; the winner is the settlement judged to have most successfully met the rigorous judging criteria. Judging at the regional stage takes place around June/ July; judging for the national stage takes place in August. The results for the UK Finals are announced in October. The competition covers the UK, the Channel Islands and the Isle of Man.

Floral displays play an important part in the contest, but the "Bloom" title is now, perhaps, misleading: in recent years the competition has increasingly assessed how all sectors of the local community are managing their local environment.

Newcastle in Bloom

The Council has participated in the Bloom campaign for 27 years (since 1991). In the early years, the campaign focused mainly on the Council's traditional annual bedding displays and hanging baskets in parks and town and village centres. However, that focus shifted when the RHS introduced the 3

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pillars of Horticultural Excellence, Environmental Responsibility and Community Participation when they took the helm in 2001/02 and since this time, the Council has developed it's approach to engage much more with local communities and adopt more sustainable initiatives. There is still a place for traditional bedding displays, for example in Queens Gardens which showcases the Council's horticultural excellence in this particular type of design and maintenance, but this is now only part of a much wider, overall strategy which weaves together many strands in seeking to make the Borough a great place to live, work, visit and invest:

Local Services that Work for Local People

Listening to our residents and communities and working with them to deliver the services they want is core to the Bloom ethos. The campaign supports groups who are seeking to carry out environmental improvement projects to their neighbourhoods and green spaces by providing advice and small grants, signposting to other sources of funding, assisting in implementation and connecting people to potential partners.

Growing Our People and Place

Business sponsorship of the campaign is very strong, raising over £65,000 in cash contributions and a further £10,000 in kind. This demonstrates the value that businesses place on maintaining an attractive environment which encourages dwell time and spend in our economic centres. The campaign also promotes training and skills opportunities via it's many partnerships with schools, colleges, the university, social enterprises and community payback/youth offending programmes.

A Healthy, Safe and Active Borough

Educating our communities on the benefits of environmental responsibility and promoting these values in keeping our Borough safe and clean, both through our own work in recycling, street cleansing and environmental management and with our partners in areas such as community safety is integral to the campaign, as is providing opportunities in our parks and green spaces, allotments and sports facilities for people to lead healthy and active lifestyles.

A Town Centre for All

The town and village centres, in particular Newcastle and Kidsgrove, provide high profile, visual locations for many of the benefits of Bloom to be co-ordinated into high impact initiatives which create vibrancy and a sense of identity and place. The campaign has delivered (or facilitated) a public art programme coupled with sustainable planting on the ring road roundabouts, community pledge planting and business litter pledge schemes, major refurbishment of Queens Gardens and other public realm improvements, cleansing activity and street furniture maintenance, business engagement and sponsorship, events and quality floral displays.

Resources

The Bloom campaign is co-ordinated by the Landscape and Community team in the Operations Service, along with a number of other core functions delivered in this Business Unit. There are in the main, 3 employees who work on Bloom, with support from other colleagues where required. The main role of Campaign Co-ordinator (3 days per week) was established around 10 years ago on the

basis that it is self-funding from sponsorship secured. This has been extremely successful, with the Co-ordinator not only covering her salary costs and the entire costs of the campaign, but generating a surplus which funds community projects and contributes to the Council's overall revenue budget position each year.

A detailed table which sets out costs and income for the last 5 years is attached to this report at Appendix 1.

In summary, for 2017/18, the total costs relating to the campaign were £38,329, and the total income generated was £67,000. This resulted in a surplus of £28,671.

Successes

The Council, in partnership with our communities, has been hugely successful in the Bloom campaign, both regionally and nationally, throughout our involvement. We have achieved a gold award for the last 17 consecutive years, and been chosen to represent the Heart of England in the national competition on 5 occasions, winning the small city category twice (2005, 2017).

We have been overall winner of the Heart of England in Bloom for the last 3 consecutive years (2016, 2017, 2018) and in 2018, we had the honour of representing the region in the RHS National Britain in Bloom Champion of Champions category, which is the pinnacle of the competition in the UK. We achieved a gold award, which is outstanding, and were also awarded the judges discretionary award for Wild About Gardens, in recognition of the work we do to promote wildlife and habitat improvement throughout the Borough. In addition to this, one of our local community partners received a Community Champion award. This represents the best ever year of achievement in our long involvement in the campaign, and the national judges complimented our entry on our vision, commitment and dedication, as well as our community development principles and practices. The judges recognise that our Borough clearly "gets it" in relation to the wider benefits Bloom can bring to the area.

However, the success and impact the campaign has had goes much deeper than just the colour of the medals and the award certificates.

Over the years and under its banner, Bloom has brought together over 150 community groups, countless volunteers, 30 schools, 50 businesses and 100 sponsors who have worked together to create a lasting legacy in Newcastle and other towns and villages in the Borough. It has inspired many people, staff and partners, to achieve things which perhaps seemed unachievable, by developing a positive, "can do", supportive culture and by sharing ideas, expertise and resources. The mantra of "it's not just about the flowers" has been embraced in a multitude of ways, and has allowed a wide range of people to get involved in making their community great through a variety of media, including art, poetry, education, social cohesion, healthy eating, recycling, inter-generational activities and celebrating culture and heritage.

This has combined to give Newcastle a unique sense of identity and a reputation both regionally and nationally, as a place where people care about and take pride in their environment and love where they live.

It has also created a positive and mutually beneficial relationship between those involved in Bloom and the council, helping people to understand how local government works, and how they can get involved in shaping and delivering services which respond to their needs and aspirations. Those people, with developed capability and capacity, often act as advocates for the council, demonstrating to others what can be achieved and encouraging further participation. Ultimately, Bloom aims to create sustainable communities, and in the Borough, this appears to be happening, as more groups and individuals are picking up the message and coming forward to make their contributions to the campaign.

In terms of outcomes, the following are the key areas where Bloom has made a significant positive impact:

- The town centre is clean and attractive and people want to live, work and spend leisure time in it
- The Borough has a sense of identity which celebrates it's heritage
- People are engaged in making the Borough a better place to live, work and visit
- Businesses value the attractive environment and want to invest in it
- Children and young people are environmentally aware and responsible
- The Borough is bio-diverse and habitats are responsibly managed
- People enjoy access to high quality green space and facilities

The Future for Bloom

The campaign has grown and nurtured a dedicated, enthusiastic and talented community in the Borough over the years, many of whom are self-sustaining and all of whom have derived great pleasure and benefit from their involvement.

It has helped to create a vibrant town centre, with a unique sense of identity and place and has won and retained the support of many local businesses and partner organisations.

Despite difficult financial times, both within the Council and outside in the wider community, Bloom has adapted and evolved, finding new ways of continuing to engage with people and give them opportunities to get involved in making their Borough a great place.

The intention is to continue with this work, in recognition of the benefits it brings, and the contribution it makes to the priorities for our Borough.

APPENDIX 1 – COSTS AND INCOME

Britain in Bloom – Projected expenditure / income April 2018 – March 2019

Cost detailed below cover all costs related to the Newcastle in Bloom events and competitions, it also covers cost for the Regional Heart of England in Bloom entry and judging day and all costs for the Awards ceremony and other associated projects and events.

Expenditure Britain in Bloom general activities 2018 – 2019

Headings	Details of expenditure	2014/15 Cost (£)	2015/16 Cost (£)	2016/17 Cost (£)	2017/18 Cost (£)	2018/19 Cost (£)
Entry fee	Entry fee Britain in Bloom Competition	200	220	320	320	220
Judges Lunch	Formal lunch for Judges in all the local, regional and national competitions.	500	300	336.90	470	489
Judges Fees	Cost of fees for the judges who judged the local competitions and presentation of the prizes.	700	950	1010	885	1300
Wages staff	For Britain in Bloom co-ordinator,	15,000	15000	20,000	20,138	20,000
Promotional literature -	Graphic design and printing Invitations, flyer, certificates, mounting photographs for prize winners. Advertising boards	2,000	2000	2000	2000	2000
Signage and sponsorship materials	Metal frames, advertising boards plus fitting cost. Tools and equipment	6,000	6000	8500	8500	8500
Food and craft show	Prizes, trophies and gift certificates	NA	NA	NA	NA	250
Planting Assistance Scheme	Bulbs, trees seeds and plants for community planting projects	NA	NA	2000	2000	2000

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Floral decs	For the event on the 5 th October	200	200	NA moved	0 (now sponsored)	0
Sub Total 1		24,600	24,670	34,167	34,313	34,759

Childrens Painting Competition

	Special Event – Schools’ Painting Competition - Keele	2014/15 cost (£)	2015/16 Cost (£)	2016/17 Cost (£)	2017/18 Cost (£)	2018/19 Cost (£)
Venue	Keele University Venue to be held in May Including Venue, PA and catering ect	500	529	515.73	566.67	584.76
Paintings	Framing and Mounting	Sponsored	0	0	0	0
Prizes	For schools and individual prize winning children	335	340	352.75	340.00	357.00
Sub Total 2		£835	869	£868.48	906.67	941.76

Main BIB awards and associated events

Awards Event		2014/15 cost (£)	2015/16 Cost (£)	2016/17 Cost (£)	2017/18 Cost (£)	2018/19 Cost (£)
Civic	Catering for proposed ‘thank you’ buffet for all staff involved in the campaign, and non alcoholic drinks.	700	0	350	543.75	600
New Vic	Catering for prize giving event New Vic	900	1000	1000	1000	1000

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Prizes for winners	Competition prizes all of which are gift vouchers, Gold award winners £75, Silver award winners £50, Bronze award winners £25. (Vouchers were bought for 30% less face value).	2,000	2000	1200	1200	1000
Audio Visual	Local awards ceremony (Tilley Bancroft) / Quadrant prod	250	250	250	250	268.60
Floral decorations	Enhancing main entrance	NA	NA	0	0	0
Trophies, prizes and engraving	New trophies, and engraving to existing trophies with the winners' names each year.	300	400	210.43	116	116
Sub Total 3		£4,150	3650	3010.43	3109.75	2984.60

Total Costs

	Totals				2014/15 cost (£)	2015/16 Cost (£)	2016/17 Cost (£)	2017/18 Cost (£)	2018/19 Cost (£)
Sub Total 1	General cost				24,600	24670	34167	34313	34759
Sub Total 2	Schools Painting Competition.				835	869	868.48	906.67	941.76
Sub Total 3	Awards event.				4,150	3650	3010.43	3109.75	2984.60
Totals					£29,585	£29189	£38,046	£38,329	£38,685
Total Britain in Bloom expenditure 2018 – 2019									£38,685

Income 2018 / 2019

Estimated total sponsorship income (cash) £

Break down of cash Income / expenses	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19
Sub Total income (cash sponsorship)	£63,119.70	66,021.05	67,000	66,000
Less expenditure	£29,189	38,046	38,329.75	38,685
Surplus	£33,930.70	£27,975.05	£28,670.25	£27,315

Non Cashable income 2018 / 2019

Estimated total sponsorship income (not cash) £

Estimated break down of non cashable income	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19
Donation of florals at New Vic (Stafford Nursery)			250.00	250.00
Sponsored vehicle	£100.00	100.00	350.00	350.00
Use of exhibition space	£100.00	100.00	100.00	200.00
Plant material and competition prizes	£3508.25	5746	6632.00	3493.00
Community initiative / events / poetry stones	£735.00	735	2619.20	2938.00
Framing and mounting of pictures	£100.00	100	260	300
Use of community buildings	£150.00	150	0	
Sundry items eg wood donations and volunteer refreshments	£320.00	100	111	150
Total £	£5013.25	7031	10,322.20	7681.00