

		Executive – 18 th March 2009	Agenda Item No.
Title		Sustainable planting in Warwick District.	
For further information about this report please contact		lan.coker@warwickdc.gov.uk Tel. 01926 456227	
Service Area		Neighbourhood / Cultural Services	
Wards of the District directly affected		All	
Is the report private and confidential and not for publication by virtue of a paragraph of schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, following the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006		No	
Date and meeting when issue was last considered and relevant minute number		Item 10 for Overview and Scrutiny meeting 2 nd December 2008.	
Background Papers			

Contrary to the policy framework:	No
Contrary to the budgetary framework:	No
Key Decision?	No
Included within the Forward Plan? (If yes include reference number)	Yes

Officer/Councillor Approval		
With regard to officer approval all reports <u>must</u> be approved by the report authors relevant director, Finance, Legal Services and the relevant Portfolio Holder(s).		
Officer Approval	Date	Name
Relevant Director	24 th Feb	Mary Hawkins
Chief Executive	25 th Feb	Chris Elliott
CMT	26 th Feb	
Section 151 Officer		
Legal	24 th Feb	Peter Oliver
Finance	24 th Feb	Mike Snow
Portfolio Holder(s)	24 th Feb	Michael Kinson / Chris White
Consultation Undertaken		
Please insert details of any consultation undertaken with regard to this report.		
Final Decision?		Yes
Suggested next steps (if not final decision please set out below)		

1. SUMMARY

- 1.1 The report sets out the reasoning behind the continued move to more sustainable planting across the District and the proposals supported by the town councils involved as a result of consultation over the last three months.

2. RECOMMENDATION

- 2.1 To approve the recommendations and timetable set out in Appendix 1 to increase the areas across the District where sustainable planting will be introduced in place of full floral planting.
- 2.2 To reduce the relevant budget in the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy from 2011/12 by £15,000 to reflect the future saving.

3. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATION

- 3.1 One of the Councils environmental policies is to provide high standards of environmental services across the District delivering a sustainable and quality environment. As a result the Council has been moving towards more sustainable forms of planting and a review of the level of floral planting which takes place across the District has taken place.
- 3.2 The changes impact in both Leamington and Warwick and are supported by Leamington and Warwick Town Councils. No changes to floral planting are planned elsewhere across the District as the majority of floral planting takes place in Leamington and Warwick.
- 3.3 Over the last few years a number of areas where floral planting took place have been replaced with more sustainable planting. The island on the main entrance to the Shires Retail Park, one of the islands adjacent to Warwickshire College and the island at Sandy Lane have all been planted with more sustainable planting over the last three years.
- 3.4 The concept of more sustainable planting is recognised in the Heart of England judging criteria so the introduction of these measures will actually strengthen the various Town's entries in Britain in Bloom.

4. ALTERNATIVE OPTION CONSIDERED

- 4.1 To continue to provide the same level of floral planting in all the areas where floral planting currently takes place. This was rejected as it was agreed that whilst floral planting should continue there should be investigation into the continued move towards more sustainable planting in all areas of the District.
- 4.2 To stop all floral planting in non park areas. One of the Councils objectives is to provide a quality environment and many people associate the floral planting as providing that quality environment. Given that fact and that the area is a popular tourist destination in part due to the floral planting; officers believe there is still an important role for floral planting across the District.

5. BUDGETARY FRAMEWORK

- 5.1 Over the past few years' changes in climatic conditions has had a negative impact on floral displays. With such varied summer weather conditions it is becoming increasingly difficult to design floral schemes which are weather resistant. In some cases when the weather is very hot it is difficult to keep all the plants properly watered and in wet conditions the plants have a very short shelf life even with additional levels of maintenance.
- 5.2 The annual cost of planting and maintaining a floral island is between £2,500 and £6,000. The annual maintenance cost of a fully sustainable area is in the region of £300.
- 5.3 There is an initial cost of planting sustainable plants. An island for example will cost between £5,000 and £10,000. However, with annual costs of floral planting being between £2,500 and £6,000 a year with the lower maintenance costs of a sustainable island the break even point comes within 2 years.
- 5.4 By introducing a phased approach the savings of not putting in floral planting can be passed on to support the initial cost of the sustainable plants being introduced. As a result there is no impact on the revenue budget over the next three years. However there is a potential saving of £15,000 from 2011/12.
- 5.5 The Grounds Maintenance contract is up for renewal alongside the Waste contract. We anticipate that there will be upward pressure on the cost of the grounds maintenance element of the contract if we continue to deliver the same amount of floral planting as we currently offer.
- 5.6 We need to have identified the level of floral planting we wish to include in the grounds maintenance contract from April 2013 well in advance of that date to make sure the tender documents reflect that requirement. There are currently no other plans to reduce floral planting in any other areas across the District.

6. POLICY FRAMEWORK

- 6.1 One of the Council's environmental priorities is to reduce the Council's direct impact on climate change.
- 6.2 One of the Councils policy objectives is to provide high standards of environmental services across the District delivering a sustainable and quality environment.
- 6.3 The move to introduce a higher level of sustainable planting will assist in achieving both those objectives.
- 6.4 However there is no doubt that the provision of areas of floral planting, including support for Britain in Bloom, supports tourism in the area and is popular with local residents who see this as an important part of the making the District an attractive place to live in.
- 6.5 The environmental impact and the revenue cost of floral planting are greater than of more sustainable planting. A balance is therefore required to maintain the attractive standards across the District whilst taking steps to achieve a more sustainable environment.

7. BACKGROUND

- 7.1 A report outlining the reasons for considering more sustainable planting was considered at the December meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee. At the meeting the committee recommended that “a review of the areas where floral planting currently takes place to establish where and how more cost effective and sustainable methods of planting could be introduced without detriment to the quality of the District”. The O&S committee also suggested that the review should be undertaken with the involvement of those Town Councils where changes might occur.
- 7.2 A review has now taken place involving consultation with Town Councils where changes could take place. As a result over the next three years starting in autumn 2009 through to autumn 2011 a phased move to more sustainable planting is planned to take place. That plan is set out in Appendix 1.
- 7.3 The current cost of floral planting at these locations is set out in Appendix 1. There will be a one off cost of introducing sustainable planting after which the annual cost associated with these areas will reduce.

Appendix 1

Location	Annual Floral cost £	One off cost £ sustainable plants	Timescale	Revised annual cost £
Roundabout Binswood Road	2450	3000	Autumn planting 2009	300
Roundabout Lillington Road	5900	6500	Autumn planting 2010	600
Roundabout Warwick New Rd	2900	3500	Autumn planting 2011	350
Roundabout Warwick Castle	5820	7500	Autumn planting 2009	950
Total	17070	20500		2200

- 1.1) Four islands have been identified where we now plan to introduce sustainable planting.
- 1.2) The current annual cost of floral planting and the one cost of planting sustainable plants are shown above together with the timescale when the changes would be introduced and the new annual cost of maintaining these islands.
- 1.3) Sustainable planting will be introduced at the three islands in Leamington.
- 1.4) The island adjacent to Warwick Castle will have an element of sustainable planting as well as floral planting.