

SALISBURY CITY COUNCIL

Report

Subject : Sustainable Planting
Committee : Environment & Climate Committee
Date : 3 July 2023
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1. Report Summary:

1.1. This report provides information in relation the City Council moving towards sustainable planting options as opposed to traditional hanging baskets, flower tubs and Gilbert.

2. Background:

2.1. Salisbury City Council declared a Climate Change Emergency in 2019 and is committed to making Salisbury as carbon neutral as possible by 2030.

2.2. Colourful displays adorn central Salisbury ever summer, bringing colour and a sense of fun to the city centre as well as an expression of civic pride.



2.3. However, these displays are increasingly demanding in terms of costs and other resources as the summer become increasingly dryer and hotter, as the climate continues to change. For example, approximately 30,000 litres of water was used on Gilbert last year at an estimated cost of £700.

2.4. Gilbert's frame has reached the end of its life span, with much of the internal watering pipework now failing.

- 2.5. These traditional displays also offer little in terms of increasing bio-diversity.
- 2.6. The need to consider sustainability and biodiversity is increasingly pressing. It is time for a more forward-looking approach that is more sympathetic to the environmental challenges the country are facing, and that embraces change and considers alternative approaches.
- 2.7. Rethinking and/or reimagining the current approach offers some exciting new opportunities to deliver a better and more integrated approach.
- 2.8. The budget for the 2023/24 floral displays including Gilbert and watering is £30,000.

3. Why Change? – Key Objectives:

Sustainability

- 3.1. Sustainability is an important consideration and should be applied to all aspects of the planting, through the entire lifecycle of any products used, including their after-use.
- 3.2. Reduce, reuse, recycle are three key issues to consider in order to minimise negative environmental impacts. Careful consideration should be given to impacts which could potentially be caused through the whole lifecycle of planting displays including products and methods used.

Biodiversity

- 3.3. With the increasing understanding that we rely on healthy ecosystems for our own wellbeing, there is now a realisation of the importance of maintaining and improving biodiversity within towns, cities and the wider countryside wherever possible. Providing valuable urban greenspace and habitat, enhanced with nesting boxes, bug hotels, hibernacula and water features can offer wildlife a refuge.
- 3.4. Inspiring the public to do the same can help multiply these benefits. The Council's future planting displays could go some way to delivering some of these benefits and, combined with offering further information and resources, could provide key stakeholders including the public and businesses with advice on how this approach could be expanded. Such an approach could help encourage others to think more sustainably and the overall net gain over time could make a significant contribution to this important objective.

Reduction in costs

- 3.5. Increasingly, costs are escalating, and this also needs to be carefully considered and managed. Recent global events, supply issues, political changes and environmental pressures have resulted in ever higher costs, some availability / supply issues and an increased pressure for councils to reduce spending.
- 3.6. Reconsidering the approach to planting displays could help to reduce costs in the long run. For example, the use of drought resistant and lower maintenance planting mixes could significantly reduce maintenance / watering costs throughout the year. The creation of larger planted spaces, as opposed to smaller planted containers / hanging baskets / troughs would help to reduce production costs, waste materials and energy required to sustain this traditional approach.

Wellbeing

- 3.7. Green spaces are multifunctional and if carefully planned / designed / managed can produce many benefits:
- meeting space, social connections, exercise, opportunities for relaxation
 - amenity value and civic pride
 - ecosystem services - plants can help filter pollution, provide nectar bars for pollinators, and trees release phytoncides which can boost the immune system
 - noise mitigation
 - wildlife habitat
 - potential for food production
 - community engagement / cohesion in caring for and managing green spaces
- 3.8. With increasing urbanisation and changes to the way we live and work, outdoor spaces are becoming increasingly important in our daily lives.
- 3.9. Salisbury Market and Guildhall square have been the site for numerous events over recent years: Salisbury's Charter Market, Arts Festival performances, Christmas markets and performances by children's choirs, fairgrounds, live music, ice rinks, crazy golf, art and crafts markets, food festivals and much more.
- 3.10. The city's public spaces therefore are invaluable on many levels and often form the backdrop for urban life, cultural events, and our day-to-day experiences, contributing to public wellbeing and the quality of life.

Aesthetics

- 3.11. In recent years, we have seen an increasing appreciation and understanding of the importance of natural world. With greater public interest in this and a demand for more nature related pursuits, such as gardening for wildlife, there has been no better time to bring a more natural aesthetic to our city centre.

Promotion of Salisbury and the Council

- 3.12. There is a valuable opportunity for a new approach to reflect Salisbury's civic identity, and the Council's considered approach to meeting both public expectations and environmental pressures.
- 3.13. Explaining the message along with the traditional original branding <https://www.traditionaloriginal.com/resources/> could be used to help explain the transition from the current approach to one that is underpinned by the need to improve biodiversity and sustainability and reduce costs. A new approach that reflects innovation, proactive thinking, and a will to seek the very best possible solutions.

4. Proposal – Parklet on Market/Guildhall Square & Living Pillars:

- 4.1. It is proposed that for 2024/25 the Council changes to grouped planting in the form of a parklet on the Market/Guildhall Square.
- 4.2. A parklet could offer many of the benefits outlined in this paper (sustainability, reduction in costs, wellbeing etc).
- 4.3. A suitable space has been identified that would not inhibit the market or other events.
- 4.4. The parklet would be designed to be fully accessible to wheelchair users.

4.5. The parklet could potentially be left in situ all year round, helping to enhance the space and turn the grey, green. An example of these is illustrated below:



4.6. In addition to the parklet, it is proposed that the traditional hanging baskets are replaced with living pillars. These type of plant installations offer for more benefits to wildlife and require less watering.



Substrate

- 4.7. Plant suppliers with high environmental standards should be used. Supplied plants should all be grown in peat-free compost, using an organic substitute that is locally and sustainably sourced.
- 4.8. Biochar could be incorporated into the planting compost to increase nutrient and water holding capacity, and this should be sourced locally.

Water

- 4.9. Efforts should be made to minimise water requirements. Rainwater is the most sustainable source and rainwater harvesting is something we actively do at our depot.
- 4.10. Drought tolerant planting can be used to significantly reduce watering requirements.

Planters

- 4.11. A targeted approach could be applied, delivering fewer but better-quality displays as detailed above.

5. Recommendations:

It is recommended that the Committee:

- 5.1. Approve the proposals outlined in this report, so that allocated budgets for floral displays for 2024/25 can be used in accordance with this proposal.

- 6. **Wards Affected:** The project would take place in St Edmunds, but users come from across all wards

- 7. **Background Papers:** Nil

8. Implications:

- 8.1. **Financial:** Nil in relation to this report.
- 8.2. **Personnel:** Nil in relation to this report.
- 8.3. **Environmental Impact:** As detailed in this report.
- 8.4. **Equalities Impact Statement:** As detailed in this report