

**ENVIRONMENT OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE****28 NOVEMBER 2019**

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| <b>REPORT TITLE</b> | Notice of Motion – Verges and Pollinators             |
| <b>REPORT OF</b>    | Colin Clayton, Assistant Director, Community Services |

**REPORT SUMMARY**

In July 2019 Council resolved a motion “Verges and Pollinators” which stated:

*“Council notes the public interest in, and appreciation of, the scheme in Rotherham where the main Ring Road has, for some years, had areas planted with native wildflowers.*

*As these have created an attractive visual environment and encouraged pollinators Council requests Cabinet to instruct officers to:*

- a) report in detail on such a scheme, the cost of introduction and potential maintenance*
- b) offer advice on suitable areas for similar planting in Wirral*
- c) consider an area for an initial trial scheme in Wirral*
- d) draw up proposals for consultation regarding further areas where this could be introduced; and*

*present this report for consideration by the Environment Overview & Scrutiny Committee with a timetable that might enable a trial scheme to commence in 2020.*

*In the meantime, Council requests Cabinet to ensure that officers work proactively with residents who wish to create wildflower meadows on council-owned land in appropriate locations.”*

This paper provides the requested report for consideration.

## **RECOMMENDATION/S**

That Members note and consider the contents of the report to provide guidance on future work regarding pollinator verges.

## **SUPPORTING INFORMATION**

### **1.0 REASON/S FOR RECOMMENDATION/S**

- 1.1 Officers were asked to present this report in line with the “Verges and Pollinators” motion as passed by Council in July 2019.

### **2.0 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED**

- 2.1 None, no other option would meet the requirements of the “Verges and Pollinators” motion as passed by Council in July 2019.

### **3.0 BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

- 3.1 Rotherham Borough Council commissioned the planting of Rotherham Ring Road in 2013 to create an eight mile long river of flowers along the central reservation. The planting is formed from native wildflowers and bulbs with supplementary non-native flower species. The scheme has been successful both as an attractive floral display and for wildlife. It requires less frequent maintenance than the previous planting, being managed on a two year cycle.
- 3.2 The planting on the Rotherham Ring Road central reservation is a seed mix provided by Pictorial Meadows Ltd, who also provided the planting mix used at London’s Olympic site. A mix of annual plant species was selected to cover a long flowering period through use of different species with later flowering species’ new growth hiding the old growth of earlier flowering species. Species include attractive ruderals (flowers that grow on newly tilled soil) such as Poppies, Cornflowers and Corn Marigolds, along with Californian Poppies, Red Orache and Fairy Toadflax. Naturalised bulb areas include Alliums.
- 3.3 The seeds are sown/planted in April, visibility splays are cut in July to ensure road users’ sight lines are preserved. A full cut is undertaken in November.

- 3.4 This regime results in less grounds maintenance work and has led to savings in mowing costs of approximately £23,000 for each two year cycle for Rotherham Borough Council.
- 3.5 Officers have liaised with Wirral Wildlife, a group of the Cheshire Wildlife Trust. This has resulted in a list of possible suitable sites for similar planting to the Rotherham Ring Road scheme:
- 3.6 A553, from Moreton to Meols. From the junction of Millhouse Lane and Hoylake Road to the junction of Birkenhead Road and Heron Road.
- 3.7 Junction of The Rake and Beechwood Road, Bromborough, areas of grass in front of shopping parade and in areas around street trees.
- 3.8 Lowfields Avenue, Eastham, large area of grass opposite junction with Norley Avenue.
- 3.9 Plymyard Avenue, Eastham, areas of grass at junction with Eastham Rake.
- 3.10 Upton Road, Upton, areas of grass at junction with Houghton Road at entrance to the Woodchurch Estate.
- 3.11 Levers Causeway, Storeton. Adjusting the cutting times for long grass could help existing wildflowers thrive. At present cutting may take place when Umbellifers are in flower.
- 3.12 Other potential sites include Thingwall Road, Irby and the Upton Bypass.
- 3.13 Two trial areas are proposed, Levers Causeway and the junction of Plymyard Avenue and Eastham Rake.
- 3.14 These two sites will be trialled for pollinator verge planting, their success will be measured by their overall establishment, biodiversity and visual impact and reception from residents and communities against cost and value.

## **4.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 4.1 The trial of pollinator verges at Levers Causeway would be relatively straightforward requiring a change in the current grass cutting regime. As this would only mean a change in the timings of existing grounds maintenance work there would be no additional cost of trialling this site.
- 4.2 Appendix 1 provides a map of two areas of grass at the junction of Plymyard Avenue and Eastham Rake, these are labelled A and B.
- 4.3 Area A is 240m<sup>2</sup> in area, Area B is 140m<sup>2</sup> in area, this provides a total trial area at this site of 380m<sup>2</sup>.
- 4.4 Costings provided by a potential seed supplier are at £102 for 1kg of wildflower seed. This is to be sown at a frequency of 2g per m<sup>2</sup>.
- 4.5 The method for trialling pollinator verges at the junction of Plymyard Avenue and Eastham Rake would involve cutting and removing existing grass, marking out areas, removal of top layer of turf and sowing seed. This work would require approximately 18 hours of work by two labourers.
- 4.6 The total cost of trialling sites A & B would be approximately £952.80.
- 4.7 Other methods exist for establishing wildflower meadows which may have reduced labour time and greater establishment/success rates but are substantially more expensive.
- 4.8 Application of a soil seed mix, delivered to site, approximately £7.80 per m<sup>2</sup> this would result in a cost of £2964, not including any labour costs.
- 4.9 Application of wildflower turf, delivered to site, approximately £12.80 per m<sup>2</sup> this would result in a cost of £4864, not including any labour costs.
- 4.10 The Council's budgetary pressures may preclude or otherwise affect the Council's ability to undertake and fund non statutory spending into the future.

## **5.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 There are no legal implications of this work which will be carried out on Council owned land.

## **6.0 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS: ICT, STAFFING AND ASSETS**

6.1 The trials will be undertaken using existing resources, should a wider programme of pollinator verges be adopted in the future further studies would be undertaken of any resource impacts.

## **7.0 RELEVANT RISKS**

7.1 Trial areas may be unsuccessful in establishing, due to poor weather and other ground factors. The success of the two trial sites will be monitored and reviewed before further pollinator verges are established.

7.2 Residents may dislike the presence of pollinator verges, preferring a mown grass verge. The trials are small in scale and will be useful for gauging public reaction and opinion on pollinator verges.

## **8.0 ENGAGEMENT/CONSULTATION**

8.1 Engagement will be undertaken with Residents and Members prior to any trial.

8.2 Mechanisms can be created for Residents and Members to suggest sites for future pollinator verges in line with the "Verges and Pollinators" motion. We need to first assess the success, efficiency and impact of the establishment process as described above in the two trial sites proposed.

## **9.0 EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS**

9.1 None because there is no relevance to equality.

9.2 Future actions arising from this work may require an Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) an EIA will be undertaken at a future date if required.

## **10.0 ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE IMPLICATIONS**

10.1 There are likely to be positive environmental impacts from the establishment of pollinator verges, especially if they become widespread into the future following the proposed trials. Pollinator verges provide habitat and food sources for pollinating insects and other wildlife. There are no climate implications of this work at present. In the future should pollinator verges become widely adopted, reduced grounds maintenance may result in lower fossil fuel usage by the Council and its contractors.

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## **APPENDICES**

Appendix 1: Plymyard Avenue/Eastham Rake Areas A & B



VERGES&POL(7).pdf

## **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

**N/A**

## **SUBJECT HISTORY (last 3 years)**

| <b>Council Meeting</b> | <b>Date</b>                      |
|------------------------|----------------------------------|
| <b>Full Council</b>    | <b>15<sup>th</sup> July 2019</b> |