



TODMORDEN TOWN COUNCIL

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REPORT TO FULL COUNCIL

REPORT AUTHOR	Colin Hill Town Clerk and Responsible Financial Officer
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Date	8th September 2021
SUBJECT	Todmorden in Bloom Potential Funding Issues

PURPOSE OF REPORT

1. To bring to the attention of Members a situation that if not addressed in the next two months, could lead to Todmorden in Bloom not being in a position to place orders for plants for next year, or if doing so by way of a very much reduced provision.
2. To make Members aware that earlier this year Calderdale MBC (CMBC) had advised Todmorden in Bloom (TIB) that following structural changes and the need to generate savings, the planting up the installation watering and take down of lamppost displays would no longer be provided by CMBC on a no charge basis, nor the putting up of businesses hanging baskets.
3. To inform Members that in giving this notice, this was literally just two weeks before displays were due to be put up. TIB were being asked to arrange to install these, including carrying out pull testing for existing brackets being used and to take on the watering of all displays.
4. To inform Members that TIB sought the intervention of the Town Council to help them through this and following direct contact at Officer level, and lobbying through Borough Councillors, this year displays were put up – albeit were substantially reduced in number- but on the proviso that this was reviewed ahead of next year's requirement with a view to full cost recovery by CMBC
5. To advise Members that given that plants have to be ordered by October, the Town Clerk has had a call with an officer from CMBC to ascertain what their proposals are, following which is likely that CMBC will be looking for full cost recovery if they are asked to continue with providing the level of service they do.
6. To advise Members that the Town Clerk has sought assurances from CMBC that any changes to the current arrangement by seeking full cost recovery, will be applied to all Town Councils, BID areas in Calderdale, including Halifax itself and such assurance is awaited.

7. To advise Members that the Town Clerk has asked for an indication of what the costs would be and in doing so has raised already at this stage the potential if this were to be implemented, to be on a phased recovery basis – possibly over 5 years.
8. To advise Members that the reality of this situation is that if CMBC do seek full cost recovery this will place a substantially increased financial burden on TIB, that in practice they would be unable to fulfil.

BACKGROUND

9. CMBC historically have grown plants for use in lamppost displays and hanging baskets – around 70 lamppost displays and 60 hanging baskets for local businesses.
10. CMBC put all of these up, water just the lamppost displays and then take all back down at the end of the season. TIB have for many years paid a standard contribution of circa £2,000 to CMBC for this service which clearly has been heavily subsidised.
11. TIB also source circa £1,200 (inc. vat) worth of plants from another nursery to enable various planters and troughs around to be planted out by them.
12. TIB arrange for the watering of the businesses hanging baskets and these planters /troughs and to help meet the cost of this, charge the businesses c£45 per basket and seek grant assistance from the Town Council to make up the shortfall in watering costs.

FINANCIAL

13. Should CMBC implement cost recovery for the service they provide, the burden will fall disproportionately on TIB and they financially will not be in a position to place orders in October without taking on personal financial liability.
14. Whilst sponsorship will be sought, it is perhaps unrealistic to expect substantial sums to be pledged to overcome this shortfall. Volunteers wish to spend the majority of their time in delivering an end product that enhances the appearance of Todmorden.
15. At this stage figures are not available as to how much cost recovery will be sought or if so whether a phased approach to this will be agreed.
16. Given the need to order plants in October, it may be prudent for Members to consider whether first of all they wish to continue to support provision of displays in the Town Centre and if so, if an agreement can be reached with CMBC to phase cost recovery, at what level of maximum financial assistance they would be prepared to provide to enable this to continue.
17. Should Members decide not to support this, it is likely there will be a reduction in grant assistance required by TIB for future years.

RECOMMENDATION

18. That Members note the current position and consider whether to continue to support this initiative or if so, at what financial cost to the Town Council.
19. That the Town Clerk continues to engage with CMBC to establish what their firm proposals are and that all areas in the Borough are treated equally in this respect.

REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION

20. The provision of floral displays is not a statutory provision of either the Borough Council or the Town Council and therefore financial contribution towards cost is entirely discretionary.
21. To establish firm and fair proposals in order to arrive at a way forward.

POLICY IMPLICATIONS:

16. Whilst CMBC has responsibility for Economic Development and helping make town centres attractive and welcoming, the provision of floral displays is entirely discretionary

DETAILS OF CONSULTATION:

17. None from this report.

CLIMATE CHANGE:

18. None arising from this report.

IMPACT EQUALITY ASSESSMENT

19. None arising from this report.

SUPPORTING PAPERS:

20. None

FURTHER INFORMATION, PLEASE CONTACT: Colin Hill