

Rother District Council**COUNCIL MEETING**

31 July 2023

PUBLIC QUESTION 4**Name of person submitting the question:** Sharon Blagrove**Member to whom the question is to be put:** Councillor Timpe**Question**

Recently, in a bid to make cut backs RDC have been removing flowers from areas in the town such as the town hall square, grassing it over to save on gardening costs.

It is also planned to do the same in the Garden of Remembrance at Bexhill Cemetery. I have today submitted a petition with approximately 800 signatures to the council showing the public are not happy about this at all. The petition will ask the council to re-think this as it also impacts wildlife when flowers are taken away.

Please can the Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Neighbourhood Services explain the rationale for this decision?

Answer

To support in reducing the Councils budget deficit, whilst also considering environmental impact and biodiversity, in May this year the Council discontinued planting seasonal bedding plants in several locations around Bexhill. A small area of bedding in the Cemetery's Garden of Remembrance was included in this. In total these changes are forecast to save the Council around £47k per annum.

Traditional seasonal bedding in the district is now confined to the war memorials, the roadside entrances to Bexhill and a reduced area in Manor Gardens.

Whilst annual bedding plants can create an attractive floral display, they have very little wildlife value, a negative environmental impact in terms of the associated production process and waste, and the displays, which are generally short lived, are labour intensive to maintain and require large amounts of water.

In the Garden of Remembrance, rabbit damage was a common occurrence. Where the Garden of Remembrance is concerned, RDC proposes to plant spring flowering bulbs in the coming autumn both in the former bed locations and elsewhere within the garden. Additionally, the large rose bed which is sparsely planted will be enhanced with a selection of plants to create a permanent display requiring significantly less on-going maintenance and offering a food source for pollinators. It's considered that rather than detracting from the setting, this will in fact enhance the area.

Elsewhere in the town where the bedding has been discontinued RDC proposes to introduce a variety of different perennial wildflower mixes. This is a more sustainable approach both environmentally and financially to providing attractive floral displays which so many residents and visitors to the town enjoy.

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