

**SHREWSBURY TOWN COUNCIL  
RECREATION & LEISURE COMMITTEE  
31<sup>st</sup> March 2021**

**Officer:** Gary Farmer – Head of Operations

**BLOOM UPDATE**

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**Purpose of the Report**

To receive an update on Bloom. The Bloom Committee held its first virtual meeting via Zoom on 2<sup>nd</sup> March 2021.

**2021 Judging**

Due to COVID restrictions there will be no Heart of England judging in person this year. The judging will focus solely on an annual portfolio demonstrating all year-round activities.

The criteria has been streamlined to focus on three main areas which are then subdivided into core areas:

- Horticultural Excellence on the basis of Design, Maintenance & Plant Quality
- Environmental Responsibilities
- Community Participation (year-round activities)

**Action**

The Committee agreed to enter the Heart of England Large Town/Small City category.

Work has already commenced on producing the portfolio which demonstrates all year-round activities and projects.

A virtual tour of Weeping Cross Nursery will be produced for the new council website demonstrating the bloom work and behind the scenes preparations for the summer floral displays.

With COVID restrictions a new approach will be promoted with the annual Town of Flowers competition. This will be focussed on residents, businesses, community groups and partners and instead of personal judging as in previous years, entrants will be invited to send in photographs in the following categories: residential gardens (front and rear), businesses, horticultural projects and good environmental horticultural practices. The full criteria including key dates will be advertised on the website & advertised on social media.

Discussions are currently taking place with the BID regarding the availability of hanging baskets for commercial properties in the Town Centre. This is constantly under review due to COVID guidelines.

**Bloom Progress to Date**

Grass cutting of verges and open spaces has commenced.

Plant production is progressing with cuttings and seedlings for all floral displays for:

- The Dingle
- Castle grounds
- Town Square
- Floral Sponsored Islands
- Floral Infrastructure (tubs, baskets, tiered planters)
- Schools
- Community Groups

Over 3,000 new trees were planted during the autumn winter period.

A DEFRA funded tree nursery development is in progress with our partners at Shropshire Council. This will increase tree production capacity at Weeping Cross.

COVID restrictions have inspired more (social distanced) community groups to enjoy the outdoor space and assist with litter picking and environmental clean-ups. Bloom has provided support and assistance.

**Future Meetings**

Further committee meetings have been diarised through 2021, updates will follow.

**RECOMMENDED:**

- (i) **That the Report be noted;**