

BRIEFING NOTE

High Street Hanging Baskets 2019

1. The purpose of this Note is to confirm whether the Council should continue to provide free hanging baskets to High Street businesses in 2019.

2. In recent years the Council has provided and maintained hanging baskets for all traders that requested. The cost has been approximately £1,500 + VAT per annum plus the opportunity cost of Parish Office staff time spent in planning and organising. The agreement is that the basket is provided by the Council but it is the responsibility of the trader to provide the bracket and water the foliage. (We experienced one instance when a claim for a broken window was made against the Council because the bracket was not sufficiently strong, but the claim was dismissed.) In 2018 33 traders and businesses accepted and 17 refused the offer.

However, our experience in the last 2 or 3 years has been not wholly satisfactory:

- a) Considerable time was spent obtaining written consents from traders, and many left it very late before committing, causing difficulties for the contractor preparing the planting.
- b) The turnover of businesses caused communication problems with identifying new owners.
- c) The care and watering of accepted baskets was mixed, with about one third (12 or so) being neglected by the traders.

Notwithstanding this experience, a number of businesses chose to provide and maintain their own baskets, in displays which complemented their shopfronts, and these were predictably well maintained.

3. The contracts for the provision of baskets and for the maintenance of the Village Garden both expired in 2018 and new contracts are now required. It is suggested that the Council's funds and efforts could be more effectively focussed on the Garden, by improving the floral displays, rather than the hanging baskets. The budget for 2019/20 for baskets is £1,500 and for the Garden Maintenance £1,700. (The baskets budget is part of the 'Tourism and attractiveness' budget in Community Affairs Committee, whereas the Garden budget is part of the Grounds Maintenance in F+GP Committee.)

4. It is therefore recommended that the Council's funds are directed to the Village Garden displays for 2019/20 and that the hanging baskets provision is not renewed.

Stephen Hoyles
CLERK TO THE COUNCIL
17 January 2019
