



## **MARKET HARBOROUGH IN BLOOM BUSINESS CASE 2020**

### **Introduction**

**Market Harborough in Bloom Volunteers** was formed in 1996 with the following aims and objectives :

- Improve, manage and develop the town and surrounding areas of Market Harborough by involving members of the community in designing, planting and maintaining floral displays.
- Develop projects to encourage saving natural resources.
- Undertake nature conservation projects including monitoring and educational programmes.
- Encourage children and young people to become aware of their environment through active participation.
- Encourage sustainable development.
- Promote community involvement through campaigns and community projects resulting in a better environment
- To participate in Regional and National Competitions.

Since its inception the group has built a successful reputation and gained much support from local businesses, Harborough District Council and local charities. Our headquarters is based in Welland Park where we have use of a greenhouse and polytunnel. Market Harborough in Bloom Volunteers has a constitution and we hold an annual general meeting each year as well as regular officers meetings. The officers are all volunteers and consist of a Chairman, Secretary, Treasurer, Project Manager and Youth Development officer.

Starting out with six hanging baskets we now have over 100 planters/baskets throughout the town centre along with more permanent bedding areas such as those at the fire station and the new wildflower areas at the railway station and Fairfield Road.

Each year we enter the East Midlands in Bloom competition and have received nine consecutive gold awards in the large town category. Twice we have been nominated by East Midlands in Bloom to enter the national competition Britain in Bloom, receiving a Silver Gilt in 2013 and a Gold in 2016. The Britain in Bloom finals involve the highest achieving communities across the UK and are organised by the RHS.

## **Strategic Case**

What we want to achieve in 2020 is very similar to previous years; that is to maintain a gold standard for Market Harborough whilst continuing to enhance the non-horticultural aspects of the East Midlands in Bloom competition. Community involvement has been a focus this year with increased contact with schools and youth groups to encourage the next generation of gardeners. Support from local businesses is important to us and The Harbs Collective did a great job in arranging a floral themed window display competition to support Market Harborough in Bloom and promote local independent businesses.

Horticultural achievement is still the mainstay of the In Bloom competition. Its aim is to encourage the improvement of our surroundings through the imaginative use of trees, shrubs, flowers and landscaping. It also aims to achieve a litter free and sustainable environment.

Most volunteers join because they have an interest in gardening and want to participate in the preparation and planting of the town centre where the visual impact is most obvious. We also have other areas that are cultivated such as outside the fire station, regenerated areas in Nelson Street and Rockingham Road. There are newly planted wildflower areas at the railway station and Fairfield Road.

Increasingly, however, there is more emphasis on environmental responsibility and community participation. Environmental responsibility includes conservation and biodiversity, resource management, local heritage, local environmental quality and pride of place. When considering community participation the key areas include development and continuity, communication and education, community involvement, year-round activity, and funding and support. The volunteers have to turn their hand to many different tasks in order to satisfy these criteria.

In order to continue to sustain Market Harborough in Bloom Volunteers we have to continually seek funding in the form of grants and the sponsorship of planters. There are also many businesses that help us by providing goods and services in kind. A full list can be found in our portfolio.

We have recently signed up to the Harborough Lotto and will promote this via our website and Facebook page.

To help protect the future of Market Harborough in Bloom Volunteers we hold at least one year's worth of funding in reserve allowing time to find alternative sponsorship should we lose a major income source.

## **Service Offer**

The volunteers meet twice a week on Monday and Wednesday mornings and more frequently during May and June as the East Midlands in Bloom judging day in early July approaches. Many hours are spent planning and designing planting layouts, preparing accounts, working with groups such as the Beavers and Scouts, planning the judging route, school visits, preparing and minuting meetings, and producing a portfolio.

We do record the number of volunteer hours worked and estimate that, with the current number of volunteers, over 3400 hours per annum are contributed by the team members. In financial terms this would be in excess of £28,000 per annum.

## **Cost of Service**

Copies of the 2019 accounts and the 2020 budget are attached.

## **Benefits of Service**

East Midlands in Bloom have stated that communities have reported the following benefits :-

- Increased civic pride through local people taking on the planning and management of their environment
- Long term improvement in their local environment through planting floral displays and improved cleanliness
- A boost to the local economy through increased visitor numbers
- Regeneration of neglected areas
- Stimulation of voluntary work and co-operation between community groups
- A means to address issues such as sustainability, recycling, minimising waste and conservation

## **Summary**

Market Harborough in Bloom Volunteers has an established network of financial support from Harborough District Council, sponsorship of planters from local businesses, and successful grant applications. This continued partnership with HDC has helped Market Harborough in Bloom to gain a deservedly successful reputation which is of benefit to the community as a whole and to HDC.