

Board/Committee:	Community Board and Environment Board
Date of meeting:	16 th November 2022
Title:	Review of Naturalised Flower Zones
Author:	Head of Streetscene
Status:	FOR DECISION

Purpose

The purpose of this report is to provide an update on the establishment of naturalised flower zones as agreed by the Community Board on Wednesday 8th September 2021 and seek approval to complete the 70,000 m² of naturalised flower zones proposed in that report.

Recommendation

That the Board notes the establishment of the initial 9,000^{m2} of naturalised flower zones and approves the continued changes to maintenance from managed amenity grass to naturalised flower zones at the locations in attached Appendices.

1.0 Background

1.1 The technical solution for the establishment of a Direct Services Organisation (DSO) at the Community Board held on 22nd January 2020 to deliver grounds maintenance included a move to the establishment of naturalised flower zones replacing approximately 70,000 m² (5%) of amenity grass.

1.2 Possible strategies for grass cutting and rewilding were discussed at the Climate Change Board held on 21st January 2021.

1.3 Approval to create approximately 9,000m² naturalised flower zones in identified locations were agreed at the Community Board held on 8th September 2021.

2.0 Report

2.1 The naturalised flower zones established over autumn and winter 2021/2022 have grown to provide a more biodiverse environment, as detailed in Appendix A - Naturalised Flower Zone Site Assessment Report. As noted in the report most of the zones were reasonably successful despite several less than ideal circumstances associated with establishment.

2.2 Appendix B details the proposed locations to complete the 70,000m² agreed at the Community Board held on 8th September 2021.

3.0 Risk Assessment

3.1 The risks are similar to those outlined in the report to the Community Board on 8th September 2021 and are as follows:

- A small number of complaints based on areas appearing to be 'a mess' or that an insufficient amount of naturalised flower zones have been created.
- A minor increase in littering, dog fouling and fly tipping may occur.
- Failure of seed to germinate.
- Extreme rainfall events washing out seed or newly established plants.
- Continuation of drought conditions affecting germination and plant establishment.
- Gradual loss of floral species due to vigorous grass growth.

3.2 Risk Mitigations:

Education:

It is intended to counter negative comments by providing details of the changes and why they are taking place via a web page on the Gosport Borough Council website and on site signage that includes a link to the web page.

Littering:

Continued enforcement of the areas selected for naturalised flower zones.

Seed germination:

The seed will be procured from sources that guarantee high seed viability and germination percentage and will be sown into moist undisturbed soil at the optimum time of year for sowing. Dry conditions occurring soon after germination will require the areas to be watered to ensure establishment.

Extreme Weather:

Extreme weather in the form of intense rainfall will only be an issue during the first two months following germination, should this occur more seed would need to be purchased and sown to fill any resulting gaps in vegetation cover. Drought conditions require sowing seed once sufficient rainfall has occurred to rehydrate the soil.

Loss of floral species:

Over time grasses will encroach into the naturalised flower zones, this will create a meadow and the grasses are unlikely to be excessively vigorous due to reduced nutrient levels. Where it is desirable to maintain a more cultivated floral landscape there will be a requirement to remove weed species and sow additional seed to ensure soil coverage is maintained as and when required.

Fire:

There is the possibility that in prolonged dry periods there is an increased fire risk associated with naturalised flower zones. This will be mitigated by siting the naturalised flower zones in locations that remove them from being close to other combustible materials and maintain a mown perimeter around the zone to reduce the possibility of fire spread.

4.0 Conclusion

Rewilding grass areas and sowing naturalised flower zones will increase biodiversity and provide greater amenity value, boost the health & well-being of the residents and provide the community with a landscape that actively offsets the causes and effects of climate change.

Financial Services comments:	No comment
Legal Services comments:	No comment
Equality and Diversity:	Contained within IIA
Climate Change implications:	Contained within IIA
Crime and Disorder:	Refer to risk assessment section 3
Service Improvement Plan implications:	Positive impact on service improvement plan as outlined in the Community Board Report The Establishment of Naturalised Flower Zones – September 8 th 2021
Corporate Plan:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Raising Aspirations – by improving the environment in which people live, socialise and relax they will subsequently feel more positive about their surroundings. • Enhancement of the Environment – by making positive improvements to the aesthetics of the environment and tackling climate change. • Empowering Residents – with the understanding that their council is taking positive action to militate against climate change and promote access to nature, it is

	<p>hoped that residents will feel empowered to do similar within their own gardens or take a more informed interest in tackling climate change.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developing the Economy – by improving the green spaces within the borough making it an attractive environment for business. <p>Delivering Effective Services – by utilising budgets and resources to have a positive impact on addressing climate change.</p>
Risk Assessment:	As per section 3 of the report.
Background Papers:	<p>Community Board 22nd January 2020 Climate Change Board on 21st January 2021 Community Board Report The Establishment of Naturalised Flower Zones – September 8th 2022</p>
Appendices:	<p>Appendix A – NFZ Assessment 2022 Appendix B Map of revised locations Appendix C Zone areas established Autumn/Winter 2021/2022 IIA</p>
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