

REPORT TO ENVIRONMENT AND TRANSPORT COMMITTEE

KNUTSFORD IN BLOOM FUNDING

Report Reference ET-26-08
Meeting Date 7th September 2026
Agenda Item 6
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1.0 BACKGROUND

Knutsford in Bloom was established as an independent group in 2009. It was created to support the Town Council's annual floriculture work and expand the number of volunteers involved in its delivery. The group comprises a number of volunteers who maintain a number of the flower beds and planters within the town centre. It is recognised that without Knutsford in Bloom, the town council would have a greater range of responsibilities for the floriculture in the town centre which would likely increase its costs (as the volunteers provide their time to maintain their areas which would otherwise require staff time).

The group has received an annual grant from the Town Council since its establishment. In September 2023, it was agreed that a standing grant of £1,500 would be provided to the group, conditional on the group providing an annual account of the expenditure for the previous financial year to the satisfaction of the Town Clerk and the council's Knutsford in Bloom representative (currently Cllr Hartley). This system replaced requiring the group to apply for a grant annually under the council's small grant scheme.

2.0 REVISED FUNDING REQUEST

Via Cllr Hartley, Knutsford in Bloom has requested that the Town Council consider increasing the annual funding to £2,000 from 2027. The request is contained in the appendix. In summary, the group has found that the £1,500 grant is expended very early in the season and has presented challenges in the group's delivery.

3.0 DECISIONS REQUIRED

The committee should consider whether to increase the annual funding commitment to £2,000.

APPENDIX – REQUEST FROM KNUTSFORD IN BLOOM

CURRENT GRANT

Knutsford in Bloom received a grant of £1,500 for the current year and same for past five years. The full amount was used very quickly with the changing weather and guidance from last years In Bloom Judging. All grant used by June

APPROXIMATE SPEND

- £1,200 – Plants Approximately 800 plants were purchased for the town centre displays.
- £200 – Compost and soil conditioners Materials required to support planting and improve growing conditions.
- £100 – Sundries General planting materials and associated items.
- Over 500 hours of volunteers time maintenance collection etc

The costs were higher than anticipated due to increasing prices and changing weather conditions, which affected both the quantity and cost of plants and materials required.

Knutsford in Bloom was also able to keep costs as low as possible through the support provided by Rileys, which helped with the growing and supply of plants.

PLANS FOR NEXT YEAR

For the coming year, Knutsford in Bloom is looking at working more closely with Rileys to grow specific plants for the town's displays. This should provide greater certainty over the plants required and could help to manage costs while ensuring that the planting scheme is tailored specifically to Knutsford.

There is also an intention to build up the funds available to Knutsford in Bloom through specific plant-based events during the year. These events would not only help generate additional funds but would also encourage greater community involvement in the town's floral displays. Utilise raised funds for large scale project later in the year.

SUMMARY

The current £1,500 grant was fully utilised and provided a significant contribution towards maintaining the floral displays in Knutsford town centre. With rising costs, changing weather conditions and the need to continually replace and top up planting, the existing level of funding is becoming increasingly difficult to maintain.

The proposed arrangements with Rileys, together with additional fundraising through plant-based events, should help Knutsford in Bloom to make the grant go further and provide a more sustainable approach to the town's planting programme.

An increase in the annual grant would therefore provide additional support for maintaining and improving the town's floral displays.