

**BUSINESS PLAN FOR SOUTH MOLTON IN BLOOM (SMIB)
FOR SOUTH MOLTON TOWN COUNCIL (SMTC) WHICH WILL
BE FOLLOWED BY A PRESENTATION TO THE FULL
COUNCIL BY SUE HARRISON ON TUESDAY 23rd NOVEMBER
2021 AT 7PM IN THE AMORY CENTRE
(NB Draft ..if there are any additions or alterations as a result
of income or expenditure for example, Sue will inform you at
her presentation)**

INTRODUCTION

South Molton in Bloom emerged from the seed of an idea in February 2021 and after only five months, during which like-minded people gathered together, the volunteers' committed hard work was judged on Tuesday 13th July 2021. Much to the group's delight, at The RHS Award Ceremony at Weston-super-Mare on Thursday 7th October 2021, South Molton in Bloom were not only awarded Gold but also the AYRE CUP for 'best in category'. The Community Gardens also got awarded 'Outstanding' in the 'In Your Neighbourhood Scheme' category. The RHS publicly expressed their pleasure at South Molton rejoining the competition after a lapse of some years and congratulated the group on their achievement in such a short space of time.

This is not a grant application but a purpose prepared business plan, as requested by South Molton Town Council, to outline our future projects and the financial implications. SMIB are asking SMTC for a long term sustainable financial commitment, in order for the group to successfully plan and budget going forward. This is not just for South Molton in Bloom but has wider connotations. It is an organised project, giving free labour, to enhance the town whilst bringing style, colour and joy to residents and visitors alike. Like the planting, this is about long term sustainable funding which after the early years should plateau out, if not decrease. This is not to be confused or compared to grant applications for charities or small

voluntary organisations. It is innovative and has the potential to put South Molton on the map.

AIMS OF THE GROUP :

To make South Molton as pretty and colourful as possible in terms of planting but within the financial means of the group.

To bear in mind the environment: to maximise sustainable planting, plant trees and wildflowers, preserve bees and birds and wildlife wherever possible.

To work as a diverse community and a happy group towards the same aims within an atmosphere of friendship, care and respect for each other.

To do this for the well being of all residents and their environment.

We formed with a constitution and that and all the governance is on our website : www.southmoltoninbloom.co.uk , as well as a link to our portfolio.

THIS YEAR FEBRUARY/NOVEMBER 21

The judging criteria for South West in Bloom this year was: 40% of the marks were allocated to horticulture and 30% each to community and environment. This is why we focused not only on gardening but involving the whole community and thinking of the environment. This of course then benefitted the whole town.

We started with completely overgrown and uncared for beds such as behind The Pannier Market, East Street, the Enhancement, end

of North Road, entrance to Central Park, Church Walk, Library and Mural Gardens behind The Amory Centre and corner of New Road.

Then there was the rubbish dump at Old Lorry Wash that we cleared and have converted to a beautiful flower bed.

Liverot Walk, Raleigh Mead opposite Squires Court and The Entrance to The Gateway were just grass and the group dug them up and made beds from scratch. Not the easiest job but the residents' positivity both in person and on social media made it all worthwhile.

Central Park was bare, dull, uninteresting and the Skate Park was full of graffiti. Despite the issues we have had with minor vandalism, it still looks so much better and brighter. The Skate Park also looks truly amazing and the changes have been respected and not vandalised. We do not get the results for the 'Pride in Parks' Competition until next spring.

Fran Sendell took charge of the rewilding project at Sheep Fair Field. David Worden and Glenys Laws entered the Community Gardens for the RHS 'In Your Neighbourhood' award.

The town as a whole looked amazing in July and it was so obvious how the whole town had come together for this project. The businesses, not only financially supported us, but also focused on their window displays, individuals joined in The Front Garden Competition and the schools did some phenomenal displays for the Pannier Market, as well as focusing on gardening in their own grounds. Furthermore, we have involved a diverse group of South Molton residents from the home educated children, teenagers, the elderly and the disabled. We have also given three ladies, who have recently lost their long term partners, a lifeline and offered those who have recently moved to the town social and therapeutic

interaction, so avoiding social isolation for all in desolate and unprecedented times.

We have literally had thousands of positive comments from passers by and on social media by both residents of South Molton, nearby villages and visitors to the town.

We are independent of The Town Council with our own autonomy and fundraising but we need to work collaboratively with the Town Council, as well as all other agencies such as schools, clubs, businesses, voluntary groups and South Molton as a whole. The authority and approval of The Town Council is valued and important to the group, as many of the plots we work on are within their portfolio and are enhanced by the work we do, both now and in the future.

We have already planted ready for winter and spring, thanks to the Councillor Grants from David Worden, Matt Bushell and Paul Henderson and also Jeremy Yabsley's grant.

Furthermore we enjoyed adding colour to the Pannier Market, the centre and hub of South Molton, with all the schools' colourful displays and our portfolio.

We understand that the money coming from the public purse is up for internal and external scrutiny but all we do is also for the public sector and up for scrutiny and quite visual and transparent. Our finances are constantly available for open viewing on the website and our purchases are for all to see around the town!

FUTURE PLANS IN PREPARATION FOR JUDGING IN JULY 2022

Because we won our category this year, we will be in The Champions of Champions Cup next year, so we need to raise our game to win against

some of the big towns who are well funded. The group firmly believes we can win! We have the knowledge and the commitment.

Next year we also hope to involve businesses in the competition eg. Eastleigh Care Homes, Quince Honey Farm, The Coaching Inn and to get more groups involved in going for some of the subsidiary awards on offer by The RHS. There are also special awards available for schools and children doing artwork. As beginners this year, we did not realise just how many awards were available to compete for. This can only enhance the town.

The future plans have already been discussed with Andrew Coates and also The Estates Department in Barnstaple and met with approval.

We will continue with all the areas mentioned above, although the police have advised us not to do too much more in Central Park until CCTV has been installed.

We are extending the bank opposite Squires and in fact, having gained two young men in the group, they have already done half of it! That bank is already stunning, so hopefully the judge will be even more bowled over next year! During judging day, this was the second area after Liverot Walk that we took the judge to and it was quite emotional, as the residents of Squires Court all came out on their balconies, cheered and waved!

The area at the back of the Library Gardens at the top of Sheep Pen Car Park is also going to be planted by our group and we are to start that in the Spring.

The grassy area with a big tree by the sheep pens on the opposite side of the road by Stags is to be improved by us and we are going to use that to display our recycled goods with plants. It is essential next year that we focus even more on recycling and upcycling. We have already bought some old milk churns and various animal feeder pots.

David Worden is chasing County Council to see if we can care for the land opposite Market Vets, but we are yet to get that confirmed.

We would also like to do more in The Cemetery in front of the Chapels, as so far we have only planted up the four pots with roses. However there is the circular area which would look good with some colourful plants.

Our big project next year, provided we can fund it, as we have been unsuccessful with a lottery grant application, is to make the Courtyard Garden in The Amory Centre a sensory garden. Our aim is to put lots of pots around the edge and fill the garden with sensory plants. We have already installed a water butt in anticipation. It will look and smell stunning and this will benefit the council when hiring out the meeting room.

As it is The Queen's Platinum Jubilee next year, we also have plans to plant some trees in line with The Queen's Green Canopy and also help Matt physically with his Tree Garden Project, if we are needed. In fact we are already ahead of the game, as SMIB planted 10 trees in Central Park and nine more on The Gateway Pathway. Lady Arran is actively supporting SMIB and has requested that we mark all our trees on The QGC map in order that we can demonstrate how South Molton is getting involved. We have ordered three spindle trees for The Gateway Pathway, reserved a tree from The Woodland Trust, Lady Arran is going to fund and plant a tree at the top of Sheep Pen car park and Mike Jones from Estates in Barnstaple is planning one or more trees at Liverot Walk taking into account the fact that the Air Ambulance sometimes lands there.

We have already spent £500 vouchers from Mole Valley on mainly water butts to go around town, including the Courtyard Garden, as feel it is important not only to use rain water but also the group have been watering all the town beds from their own water supply and therefore at their own expense, as we are all on metered water.

We have found watering the three tiered planters on The Enhancement impossible because of their height and they do not provide an excellent display hence the request for two self watering precinct planters paid for by the town council. These planters would also further enhance The Enhancement as larger! The local Fire Service have agreed to refill the tanks to these planters and butts around the town as necessary. They would also be more environmentally friendly, as when watering the three tiered wire ones, the water just pours over the edges!

FINANCES

Attached are two pie charts showing the income and expenditure for South Molton in Bloom from February 21st to November 16th 2021.

Current bank balance : £1056.88

Current cash balance: £45.61

Total balance : £1102.49

Total Income

£12535.23

Individual contributions: £915

Business contributions: £7394.36

Grants: £2890

SMTC: £350

NatWest Compensation: £250

Fundraising: £735.87

PLUS £500 Mole Valley Vouchers, spent on water butts PLUS £50 given to Millwood Plants for SMIB to spend and £50 given to Ashmoor for us to spend on plants PLUS various free gifts of plants and compost. Also 10% discount given at Ashmoor, St John's and Old Well Garden Centre

THEREFORE TOTAL BUSINESS CONTRIBUTIONS ACTUALLY AMOUNT TO : £7994.36

AND THE TOTAL INCOME INCLUDING THE VOUCHERS IS :£13135.23

Total Expenditure:

£11432.74

Planting which includes anything to do with planting ie. compost, planters, fertilizers, plants and bulbs £9251.99

Skate Park and fence/furniture painting £630.15

Artwork/displays £564.52

Mens Shed Signs £235.56

Admin £11.85

Sundries including picnic table £251.09

Fundraising: £487.58 (we have spent £440 on calendars in an attempt to raise money)

Predicted Income over the next year:

WE CANNOT GUARANTEE ANY INCOME FROM THIS MONTH FORWARD.

It can be seen that the majority of the funding for this year's work has come from the businesses and that was obtained by Sue Harrison going around with the begging bowl mainly from March to June.

We cannot go back to the businesses in the same financial year and ask for more money, when businesses have probably had their toughest year on record and when, if asked, we have to say to date SMTC have given us £350.

We will not get NatWest compensation this year.

Grants can never be guaranteed and the £2890 achieved this year comprises of £1000 from South West Water for Central Park, £300 from

the North Devon Biosphere Project for Sheep Fair Field, £1400 from Councillor Grants and £190 from Paul Henderson's mayoral grant plus he arranged payment direct for our RHS insurance and our entry to Pride in Parks (£110), as we did not have a bank account at the time.

We will now increase our fundraising efforts, so predict to at least double the amount raised by doing various market stalls and selling crafts and plants.

Predicted Expenditure over the next year

Expenditure will be more than last year, as we not only have the existing beds to maintain and expand but also all the new areas to start from nothing. As we are a 'not for profit' organisation, we aim to put all our money to good use to improve the town. We try to keep around £1000 in our bank account to allow for emergencies and currently, the bank account stands at £1056.88.

Our anticipated expenditure for 2021/22 is:

£100/£150 for water tanks that we have on order

Entry costs for next year's competition which should be approximately £50.

The quote for the two precinct planters was submitted to The Finance Committee at a cost of £946.20 total.

Compost for the precinct planters, (24/30 bags), plus plants and bulbs immediately. This will take at least £75 for compost, if we get it at the preferential price from M Way, or at least double that price if not! For the planting, it will be an estimated cost of £500, perhaps more, and that is just for winter and spring planting.

We will then need summer planting on The Enhancement and East Street where we mainly use annuals, amounting to approximately £1500.

Planting up existing beds with more plants and making them look even better will be at least £3000.

Planting up the Courtyard Garden, including all the large pots required, was estimated at £2000.

Planting of other new areas as mentioned above will cost approximately £3000

Next year's art/recycling display will cost more than this year as the aim is to not only include the Pannier Market but also the bed near Stags sheep pens. £800

Mens Shed signs: £235 (we still have some signs to pay for and wood has increased in price). This is assuming the council goes ahead with this proposition. If we return to the businesses for more funding, we will need to do far more signs and therefore more money.

Admin, sundries and fundraising: £700

It is impossible for this type of work to give exact costs due to the nature of the work and the issues involved with transportation and supply to garden centres, but a close estimate based on what we have done to date and bearing in mind, we are aiming for gold in The Champions of Champions Cup, will be approximately £12956.

Proposed Contribution from SMTC

We are asking for SMTC to match the business contribution given to date i.e. £7994.36.

This will enable us to buy and plant up both precinct planters, as put to the Finance Committee at a cost of £946.20, plus we can completely refurbish the Courtyard Garden and build a sensory garden. Furthermore we can complete all other projects for this coming year and update and extend existing beds, if we top this amount up with fundraising, individual contributions and any grants we can secure.

If the SMTC were to do this, this would allow SMIB to go back to the businesses the following year in 2023. The council and the businesses would both see that each was equally contributing, pulling their weight and working together for the good of the town and community during 2021 and 2022.

This injection of funds is a long term investment. We are proposing to install three tiered economical and environmentally friendly self watering planters. We are installing water butts all over the town. We are mainly planting trees, perennials and shrubs and have filled the beds with winter bulbs which will return year after year. We have focused on long term sustainable planting, giving SMTC assurance that the town will benefit for many years to come. The proposed £7994.36 will be a justified spend by SMTC, as there will be recurring evidence for the community to see how the council spent the money for many years to come!

Our funding and accounts are always available for all to see and should the council help us financially, we would be happy to update on a regular basis as to how their money was spent. This can only be an estimate of costs but has been based on actual costs to date and proposals coming to fruition next year.

The shortfall of approximately £5000 needed to complete all planned projects for the coming year, would need to be met by SMIB fundraising and by individual contributions.

SWOT ANALYSIS

Strengths

The major strength of this group lies in the fact that we have a strong, active and willing group of volunteers. Unlike many other volunteer groups, who rely on 2/6 core people, we have a strong core of 15/17 core people. Since winning Gold, we have already attracted two young men to the group who have cracked on with digging over more of the bank opposite Squires Court. Furthermore, we have such a variety of skills within the group: horticulturists, a graphic designer, crafters, artists and those that purely enjoy physical hard graft.

The enhanced visual attraction of South Molton results in attracting more people to the town and consequently to businesses to spend their money. Involving the wider community as the group does, means the town builds a community who wants to take pride in their town.

Weaknesses

The biggest weakness is not enough evidence of funding direct from South Molton Town Council as opposed to businesses and individuals. Various town councils provide huge and stunning displays of baskets and containers, plus others fund big projects around towns. Baskets in South Molton are difficult because of the nature of the buildings. However when we went to the awards ceremony at Weston-Super-Mare, we learned that many town councils provided substantial funding and even employed people to do the work that us bloomers do in South Molton.

Opportunities

If we were to win The Champions of Champions Cup, we would have the opportunity to show off our town nationally next year and draw visitors in from far and wide. It would bring with it kudos and economic uplift to the town whilst lifting people's spirits. We have the cooperation of the press in that North Devon Journal, North Devon Gazette, local monthly magazines and local radio all report on us. We are developing a strong website and regularly post on social media.

Threats

If the council does not really back us financially compared to how much the businesses have got behind us this year, there could be a loss of confidence in the council by not only the businesses but by individuals in South Molton. Group members may also get disillusioned. This then may have another knock on effect, as businesses may not sponsor us again if they do not see the council supporting us energetically. After all, we as a group are all about civic pride and making the town look great.

The other threat is the majority of the group are over 50 and our hips, knees, back and ankles are not what they were! If the group does disband, not that this is by any means imminent, the town council can feel reassured that we are focusing on sustainable planting and any money left in our bank account automatically reverts to the council as per our constitution. We are trying to mitigate this threat by involving younger people and since winning Gold, three have already joined us.

CONCLUSION

It is difficult for the group to do a full business plan, as we are still in our first financial year...only nine months into it. Furthermore, with deliveries and transportation becoming increasingly difficult, nurseries and garden centres cannot predict prices for next year, let alone what they will actually have in stock. It is also impossible to say exactly what we will need in terms of compost, plants and bulbs. We have done our best to estimate the costs based on what we have spent so far this year and what is planned for the coming twelve months. We cannot work to a full and detailed business plan, as we have no clear insight as to how we can get income but this proposition would allow us to plan with more certainty in future years. We are totally reliant on the generosity of residents, businesses and the council but in return SMIB volunteers give all our hours and energy for free.

We have proved ourselves as a successful and competent group and one that the council can have full confidence in.

Essentially the group has the same aims as the Town Council, in that we want to promote the town and be proud of South Molton. We just need to show the town's residents and businesses that the council support us financially as they have done. This year, SMTC would match the generosity of the businesses who got us going and fully supported us. The following year after judging in July, we will return to the businesses for support.

In return, we will continue to work hard and give our hours for free, plus we will do our best to fundraise now that the covid restrictions are lifting. We will also give you our assurance that the group will give 100% in our aim to bring the Champions trophy home next year, whilst continuing to make South Molton a colourful, attractive, well manicured environment in which to live and visit.

FINALLY, WHEN YOU ARE CONSIDERING WHETHER TO SUPPORT SMIB, CAN WE ASK YOU TO VIEW US IN THE SAME CONTEXT AS THE WONDERFUL FIREWORKS OR CHRISTMAS LIGHTS THAT YOU PUT ON, EXCEPT WE ARE PUTTING ON A SHOW FOR 365 DAYS A YEAR!

ATTACHMENTS:

INCOME AND EXPENDITURE PIE CHARTS

BANK STATEMENT 11/2/21 - 15/11/21

