

EAST AYRSHIRE COUNCIL

COMMUNITY SERVICES COMMITTEE – 9TH NOVEMBER 2005

INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITIES IN BLOOM 2005

Report by Executive Director of Neighbourhood Services

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To advise Members of the outcome of the International Communities in Bloom Competition and Symposium which was held in Saskatoon, Canada from 21st to 25th September 2005.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 Over the past three years, the village of Sorn has been extremely successful in Beautiful Scotland in Bloom and Britain in Bloom competitions. In 2004 they won two trophies in the Beautiful Scotland in Bloom, their class in Britain in Bloom, and the highest award of all, a gold medal, from the Royal Horticultural Society.
- 2.2 Sorn Cemetery has also been recognised by winning a number of national awards from the National Professional Association. As a result of the above the village was invited to participate in the International Communities in Bloom Competition and with financial assistance from Sorn Milk Ltd were able to enter the prestigious competition.
- 2.3 Judging took place on 3rd and 4th August 2005, and notification was received in early September that the village had reached the final.
- 2.4 Following a request for financial assistance from the Co-ordinator of the Sorn in Bloom Committee, the matter was considered at the meeting of Members' Services and Civic Ceremonial Sub-Committee of the Policy and Resources Committee on 7 September. The attendance of one Elected Member and financial assistance to allow a member of the community to attend the Award Ceremony and Symposium was approved at this meeting. The Chief Executive subsequently approved the attendance of the Executive Director of Neighbourhood Services using Delegated Powers.

3. DISCUSSION

- 3.1 The conference was attended by over 500 delegates from the United States, Canada, Japan, and the United Kingdom. It was based primarily in the Western Development Museum, Saskatoon but also included related visits to a Farmers Market and the South Saskatchewan River Valley. The programme covered a wide range of related topics and was supported by a number of community and trade exhibits.
- 3.2 Sorn competed in the category of towns and villages with a population of up to 20,000. The category was won by Wetherby Yorkshire but Sorn did exceptionally well for a first time entry and were awarded 'five blooms' which is the highest award in the grading system.
- 3.3 Sorn were also awarded a Special Mention for the regeneration of the Sornbank Plantation. As Members may be aware, Sornbank was a conifer woodland which for many years formed a backdrop to the village. It was felled for commercial reasons approximately four years ago and has now been planted with indigenous deciduous species.
- 3.4 During the conference various meetings were held with the judges and other competitors to learn about strengths and weaknesses and how other communities engage residents in initiatives such as this. The discussions with the judges were most helpful in identifying areas of criticism. For example, the judges felt that the nature of the street lighting columns in Sorn were not in keeping with the village, more youthful involvement would be beneficial and the cherry trees required attention. They were very positive and spoke highly of the cleanliness of the village and the standard of maintenance of the cemetery.

4. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 Nil.

5. POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 The competition results reflect in many ways, and provide independent corroboration that the aims and aspirations of the Community Plan in relation to improving the environment are being met.

6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 The cost of attendance at the conference was approximately £1500 per person. The entry fee was sponsored by a local business.

7. CONCLUSION

- 7.1 The village of Sorn and partner organisations are to be congratulated on this significant achievement. It is hoped that their success will be emulated by other towns and villages in East Ayrshire. The involvement in national and international competitions not only provides targets and rewards when successful but also provides support and guidance on improving the natural environment. Debriefings have been held with the Sorn in Bloom Committee and they are very appreciative of the assistance which they have received from the Council.

8. RECOMMENDATION

- 8.1 It is recommended that the Committee note the terms of this report.

William Stafford
Executive Director of Neighbourhood Services
WS/SD
24 October 2005

LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS

1. Report to Members Services and Civic Ceremonial Sub-Committee –
7 September 2005

Any person wishing to inspect the background papers above should contact William Stafford on (01563) 576561.

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