

Brixham Town Council

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| Report No: | 30-2019 | | |
| Report Type: | Public | | |
| Title: | Gardening Assistance Scheme | | |
| To: | Community Services | Date: | 12.08.19 |
| Contact Officer: | Deputy Town Clerk | Linda McGuirk | |
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Purpose of Report

To consider offering a subsidised Gardening Assistance Scheme to elderly or disabled residents in Brixham.

The Town Council can offer commercial services using the General Power of Competence. The General Power of Competence (GPOC) is intended to give local authorities (including parish and town councils) wider powers to deliver more for their communities. The GPOC will allow a council to do anything that individuals generally may do, except where other aspects of law may forbid them from doing.

Gardens are important to elderly and disabled residents who may not leave the house very often and in later life gardening can become more difficult.

The benefits of offering an assisted gardening service:

- Improve wellbeing in the community.
- Tidy gardens will help to reduce trips.
- Tidy neighbourhoods.
- Help to reduce elderly residents worries.
- Residents benefit from subsidised prices.
- Town Council reputation as a service provider is enhanced.

Background

During the Community Services committee meeting held on the 17th June 2019 members discussed the current committee projects and it was resolved to prioritise investigating a subsidised gardening service for elderly and disabled residents of Brixham.

The Town Council recognises the need for the Lengthsman service to expand and offer additional services to benefit Brixham residents and to meet one of its core objectives, to generate an income stream.

It must be noted that the assisted gardening scheme is a not for profit project and further investigation will be required to look at implementing commercially viable schemes i.e. current Service level agreement with Kingswear Parish Council.

Potential projects:

- Unrestricted gardening services open to ALL Brixham residents. Stroud Town Council currently do this, and Cwmbran Community Council scheme is open to all residents, but priority given to elderly or disabled.
- Handyman services.
- Additional Service Level Agreement with local Parishes.
- Shredding Service 'Shred On Spot'. A stand-alone service to shred green waste for residents who are unable to take their green waste to the recycling centre.

What are other Town Councils doing

Research has taken place into what other Town and Parish Councils are doing.

Stroud Town Council

Offer a gardening assistance service to residents of the parish who are elderly or in receipt of housing benefit, personal independence payments or higher-level disability living allowance. Residents who meet the criteria can access up to 10 hours of gardening maintenance per annum. The service is offered through a service level agreement with 'Down to Earth' valued at £3000. The cost to the tenant is £7 per hour.

All staff are DBS checked; experienced gardeners committed to environmentally sensitive methods of working.

South Gloucestershire Council

Offer a service called 'Handy Van' services to all residents of South Gloucestershire. The service is not subsidised and is charged at £29 per hour.

Gardening services include grass cutting strimming, lawn care and weeding, hedge trimming, patio and decking repairs, fence repairs, painting panels and sheds and gutter cleaning and repairs.

Cwmbran Community Council (CCC), Wales

Offer gardening and decorating services for residents in the parish who are unable to carry out tasks for themselves. Anyone can apply for the service, but priority is given to the elderly or disabled.

The scheme has been running successfully for several years and operates a long waiting list due to the popularity. They Mainly target the elderly, disabled or anyone who struggles to maintain their gardens themselves. The Task Force comprise of 2 men, with one vehicle.

It is a not for profit scheme and CCC only provides a basic gardening and decorating service e.g. the gardening service only provide mowing and strimming so as not to compete with other local gardening companies. Most customers are elderly and cannot afford the higher prices of landscape garden services.

Cwmbran gardening service takes place between April and September (the decorating service operates throughout the winter season). The gardening service includes mowing, strimming, lopping & pruning shrubs, bushes and small trees and general tidying up.

The service is charged at £10 per personnel per hour with a 50% reduction if the person is over 75 years old or registered as disabled/ infirm.

Madeley Town Council, Telford.

Provides a free of grass cutting service for elderly or disabled residents. A very popular service which currently has a waiting list.

South Kirby & Morpeth Town Council

The Town Council offers a garden maintenance service to all parishioners over the age of 65 years and/or registered disabled who have no younger or able-bodied person living at the same address. Garden Maintenance staff carry out this service twice a year and the charge is £10 per cut. Green waste is not removed.

What other Services are offered in Brixham?

Brixham Youth Enquiry Service

The Brixham Youth Enquiry Service based at the Edge is launching a new service on the 17th July 2019 as part of an Ageing Well initiative called 'Staying Put', the service will run until March 2021.

'Staying Put' will be for people over 50 (the age covered by Torbay Community Development Trust as part of their Ageing Well programme) and will offer Handy Man services to people in Torbay at a subsidised cost. A local Handy Man has been employed 3 days a week to co-ordinate volunteers who will carry out the work.

The Staying Put partnership includes Age UK, Healthwatch, SEAP (advocacy support for health & social care service users) and Ellacombe Community Cafe, their roles will be to ensure that older people are best linked in to services and receive advice and support around issues they may be facing, through creating a network with ourselves to identify people who may need each of our services.

The initiative is aimed at those people over 50 who might be at risk of being deemed as not being able to manage and so may have to leave their homes, where if they had a small amount of support from neighbours or local organisations they could remain independent in their homes for longer.

'Staying Put' will offer light gardening and household support with tasks charged between £3 to £10 each. The Gardening pricing schedule is shown in the table below:

| Task | Guide cost |
|--|-------------------|
| Mowing Lawn | £5 - £10 |
| Clearing Paths | £5 |
| Cutting Hedges | £5 |
| Clearing rubbish (putting it out for collection) | £5 |
| Fixing fences | £5 - £10 |

The Deputy Clerk has met with a representative from the Youth Enquiry Service (YES) to discuss the 'Staying Put' initiative. It was agreed the 'Staying Put' project is different to the gardening scheme proposed by the Town Council.

The 'Staying Put' volunteers will be *Disclosure Barring Service (DBS) checked as they are potentially dealing with vulnerable people and will be trained to look out for any issues that might arise during their visit and sign post the person to the appropriate service. The representative confirmed the future of the Staying Put project after March 2021 will depend on its success and generating sufficient income to pay a salary.

The staying Put project will operate across Torbay.

*A DBS certificate is not required for the Lengthsman to carry out garden maintenance work.

Brixham Does Care (BDC)

The Deputy Clerk has met with a representative of Brixham Does Care to discuss the proposed scheme. The representative confirmed that BDC does not offer a gardening service or similar, indicating the service would be very popular if introduced by BTC. Many of BDC's clients take great comfort from their gardens and worry when they can't keep on top of them. We discussed affordability and services required. It was agreed a subsidised hourly rate would be appropriate.

We are not aware of any other provider offering subsidised gardening services to the elderly or disabled.

Application

Applicants will be required to complete an application form. The form will be available from the Town Council website, by email, post or paper copies from the Council office.

Applications will be assessed by the Town Clerk or Deputy Town Clerk in absence of the Clerk. Successful applicants will be added to the list in date order.

See attached draft application form at the end of the report.

Eligibility

Careful consideration should be given to the eligibility of residents. Tenants in local authority or social housing have an obligation under their tenancy agreement to keep gardens tidy and in a manageable state. We are unable to find out whether Torbay Council or Devon Home Choice provide access to gardening services to their tenants.

Sanctuary Housing have explained that tenants who have gardens at their properties have the opportunity to "buy in" to an assisted gardening service, for which they pay an extra charge on an annual basis.

Those who do not "buy in" to the scheme are personally responsible for the maintenance of gardens at their rented accommodation.

Any scheme implemented by the Town Council should be as inclusive as possible in order to provide the maximum benefit for our community's elderly or disabled residents living within the Parish boundary either in their own property or with a private landlord.

To be eligible for the Town Council assisted gardening service you must be:

- A Brixham resident.
- 60 years of age and over or
- registered disabled and not living with an able-bodied person or

You may not be eligible if: -

- You live in a rented property where the landlord already provides a scheme that you may access.

Services and charges

The Garden assistance scheme is designed to help with the maintenance of grass areas, shrubs, bushes and hedges. An assessment of the garden will be carried out by the Lengthsman prior to works being commenced to give an indication of timescale to complete the work.

It is suggested that the Town Council assisted gardening service will be charged on an hourly rate of £10 for the first hour (£7.50 for a person over 75 years of age) and £5 for additional hours. Minimum of one hour. Any charged for service provided by the Town Council should be subject to VAT (net hourly rate £8.33 equates to £10 per hour).

Local gardening services vary and charge between £15 and £50 per hour, many gardeners have a minimum charge of 2 hours.

It is difficult to calculate running cost and depreciation of equipment and vehicle wear and tear. The cost of employment to the Town Council is £10.50 per hour.

| Services offered |
|--|
| Grass cutting |
| Grass Strimming |
| Hedge cutting |
| Weeding & pruning (hand weeding only) |
| Planting (plants provided by the resident) |
| Clearing paths |
| Removal of grass cuttings and trimmings |
| Water plants while on holiday or in hospital (only if customer has an outside tap) |
| Jet wash patios and decking |
| Refill and hang bird feeders (bird food and feeders to be provided by customer) |
| Shredding green waste |

The Lengthsman will not cut grass where pets have fouled the area and dogs must be kept inside the property while work is in progress.

No tree felling will be undertaken.

Advertising

The service will be advertised through the Town Council social media sites, website, notice boards and a regular advert in the Signal Newsletter. The Signal is distributed by Royal Mail to all residential properties in the TQ5 postcode, approximately 10,000 copies.

Brixham Does Care will promote the service through their monthly newsletter, subject to space.

Equipment

Most Town Councils offering a garden assistance scheme do not remove the green waste and leave it in the garden or put it in the garden waste collection bins provide by the local authority. Torbay Council do not currently offer a garden waste collection service and it is proposed that green waste should be removed by the Lengthsman as part of the service.

The Town Council has an agreement in place with TOR2 to dispose of green waste at their recycling centre. At the time of writing this report it is not known whether this agreement will be affected when TOR2 are not managing the recycling facility.

To reduce the number of trips to the recycling centre to dispose of green waste consideration should be given to the purchase of a chipper/ shredder. If purchased this equipment could be used to offer a shredding service 'SOS' as mentioned at the start of this report.

Shredded material can be used for:

- Mulching

Woody waste makes an excellent, long-lasting mulch for paths and borders and saves on costs from buying it in.

- Composted

Being rich in carbon but low in nitrogen, shredded woody materials will need to be mixed with nitrogen-rich materials such as lawn mowings to increase their decomposition rate. It will take typically 3-4 years for woody chippings to break down into crumbly compost. Shreddings with a larger proportion of greener/younger wood may reduce the time required. Once well-rotted it can be dug into the soil to improve structure.

Consideration should be given to the creation of a compost pile on an allotment site where shredded green waste from the garden service can be piled and turned into compost which in turn could be sold.

| Machine | Description | | Cost |
|--|--------------------|-----------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Feider FBT400 Heavy-Duty Petrol Chipper-Shredder | Engine capacity | 420cc | £832.50 +VAT Mowdirect |
| | Engine power | 15hp/ 11.kw @3600rpm | |
| | Cutting system | 2 x HS Steel Knives | |
| | Chipping capacity | 102mm | |
| | Collector | N/A | |
| | Transport wheels | Yes- pneumatic tyres | |
| | Weight | 93kg | |
| | Warranty | 2 years | |
| STIHL GH 460 petrol | Engine capacity | 190cc | £1,132.67 +VAT World of Power |
| | Engine power | 3.4kw | |
| | Cutting system | Multi-Cut 450 | |
| | Chipping capacity | Up to 60mm branch thickness | |
| | Collector | Unknown | |
| | Transport wheels | Yes- pneumatic tyres | |
| | Weight | 59kg | |
| | Warranty | 90 days | |

Administration

Offering a new service will have an impact on the workload of the Town Council office. There will be an increase in:

- Enquiries
- Advertising and promotion.
- Invoicing, banking and accounting.
- Implementing and managing a works request/ completed spreadsheet.
- Problem solving when issues arise i.e. extreme weather and re organising appointments etc.

The Town Council provides its current services by payment in advance. It is proposed that gardening clients are invoiced in the same way. Payment can be made by cash, bank transfer or cheque.

Down to Earth (Stroud Town Council) collect payment in cash at the time gardening is done. If the Town Council opts to collect cash at the start of the job the Lengthsman vehicle will require a safe and will issue receipts.

A programme of works sheet similar to the one below would be managed by the office.

| APP ref | DATE REC'D | CRITERIA | STARTED | DATE COMPLETE | MAN HOURS | TOTAL COST | COST INC.VAT | PAID | WARD | |
|---------|------------|----------|------------|---------------|-----------|------------|--------------|------------|--------------------|---|
| 1 | 01.09.17 | 50% | 04/05/18 | 08/05/18 | 4 | £16.67 | £20.00 | PAID | St Dials | Back/Front - Cut down very over grown garden, pick up |
| 2 | 05.09.17 | 50% | ////////// | ////////// | 0 | £0.00 | £0.00 | ////////// | Upper Cwmbran West | CANCELLED - PASSED AWAY |
| 3 | 06.09.17 | 50% | 04/05/18 | 04/05/18 | 3 | £12.50 | £15.00 | PAID | Llantarnam | Back/Front - strim border, mow lawns, cut hedges, pick up |
| 4 | 06.09.17 | 50% | 17/05/18 | 17/05/18 | 3 | £12.50 | £15.00 | PAID | St Dials | B/F - Cut long hedges, pick up |
| 5 | 06.09.17 | 50% | 11/05/18 | 11/05/18 | 2 | £8.33 | £10.00 | PAID | Llantarnam | F/B - strim borders, mow lawns, pick up |
| 6 | 07.09.17 | 50% | 18/05/18 | 18/05/18 | 1 | £4.17 | £5.00 | PAID | St Dials | Back - strim grass, cut small hedge, pick up |
| 7 | 07.09.17 | 50% | 10/05/18 | 10/05/18 | 4 | £16.67 | £20.00 | PAID | Llantarnam | B/F - cut grass, cut hedges, strim border |
| 8 | 08.09.17 | 50% | 29/08/18 | 29/08/18 | 3 | £12.50 | £2.50 | PAID | Two Locks | Back and front- cut long hedge, pick up |

Recommendations

Community Services Committee recommendations to Full Council that the Town Council:

1. Progresses with the implementation of a subsidised gardening assistance scheme for residents (over 60 years) or disabled residents of Brixham Parish who do not have an able-bodied person living at their premises.
2. Assisted gardening service be charged on an hourly rate of £10 for the first hour (£7.50 for a person over 75 years of age) and £5 for additional hours. Minimum of one hour.
3. Review's the project in 12 months' time.
4. Purchase a Chipper/ shredder from the Community Project Fund
5. Offer an additional 'Shed On Spot' service and create our own compost for sale.



Brixham Town Council

First Floor, Brixham Town Hall,
New Road, Brixham, TQ5 8TA

01803 859678 info@brixhamtowncouncil.gov.uk

Town Clerk: Mrs Tracy Hallett

Garden Maintenance Scheme Application Form

| Your name: | | | | |
|---|--------------------------|-----------------------------------|--------------------------|-------------|
| Address (including Postcode): | | | | |
| Telephone Number: | | | | |
| Email address: | | | | |
| I am over 60 years of age: Proof of age required. | | | | |
| Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> | No | <input type="checkbox"/> | |
| Are you registered disabled: Proof of disability required. | | | | |
| Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> | No | <input type="checkbox"/> | |
| Your property: Please the box which applies to you: | | | | |
| Private Tenant | <input type="checkbox"/> | Registered Social Landlord Tenant | <input type="checkbox"/> | |
| Housing Association Tenant | <input type="checkbox"/> | Owner/ Occupier | <input type="checkbox"/> | |
| Please list everyone who lives in your property: | | | | |
| Title | Forename | Surname | Age | Disability? |
| | | | | |
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CONSENT FORM

Your privacy is important to us and we would like to communicate with you about the council and its activities. To do so we need your consent. Please fill in your name and address and other contact information below and confirm your consent by ticking the boxes below.

Name

Address

Signature

Date

Please confirm your consent below. You can grant consent to any or all of the purposes listed. You can find out more about how we use your data from our "Privacy Notice" which is available from our website or from the council office.

You can withdraw or change your consent at any time by contacting the council office.

- We may contact you to keep you informed about what is going on in the council's area or other local authority areas including news, events, meetings, clubs, groups and activities. These communications may also sometimes appear on our website, or in printed or electronic form (including social media).
- We may contact you about groups and activities you may be interested in participating in.
- I hereby consent for Brixham Town Council to use images caught in photographs taken by Brixham Town Council for use in promoting their services for marketing and publicity related purposes and used in Brixham Town Council publications such as social media, website and the newsletter.

I understand that my images will be held in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulations and that I can ask the Town Council to stop using the images at any time, in which case they will not be used in future publications but may continue to appear in publications already in circulation.

I also understand that all Council meetings are open to the public and that I may be filmed, photographed or recorded by any individual attending the meeting.

Keeping in touch:

- Yes please, I would like to receive communications by email
- Yes please, I would like to receive communications by telephone
- Yes please, I would like to receive communications by post