

# Best Service Awards 2016 Parks and Horticultural Services



# Bournemouth – Service of the Year

- 2011 Restructure saw 25% of posts lost – common throughout most of finalists.
- Responsible for wide variety of green space, ranging from listed and unlisted formal gardens, parks and playing fields, through to protected nature reserves, allotments, cemeteries, amenity spaces, farms and highway verges
- By 2015/16, and as a result of boosting existing and creating new income streams, changing working practices, and greater volunteer engagement, the net cost of the Service reduced to £2.9m, a decrease of 47% from 2010/11.



# 'More for Less'

- 130 staff with a one team' ethic, whose skill base has been developed to include marketing, financial and contract management, fine horticulture, landscape design and even cattle management.
- 2015/16 there were six apprentices; in 2016/17 there will be 11. (Over the last three years, 50% of apprentices have gone on to take up permanent positions in the Service).



# Commercialisation/ Skills base



- Created a sales, marketing and contracts team, who successfully grew revenue through Plant Nursery, Golf Course, Street Food Market, Visitor Centre Shop and other facilities;
- Maintain horticultural skills and standards, retained own plant nursery,
- Supplies all of Bournemouth's public gardens, as well as several neighbouring authorities and a number of private sector clients.
- Sell bedding, shrubs, bulbs and hanging baskets to public.
- Nursery moved to biomass heating, powered mostly by chippings from tree works waste. Reduces CO<sub>2</sub> emissions, generates Renewable Heat Initiative payments and saves approximately £15,000 annually in gas bills.
- Reduced peat usage, and introduced water saving initiatives



# Community Involvement

- Working with community groups, have supported community groups in park, neighbourhood and town entries In Bloom and Entente Florale. attaining Gold Standard in all.
- In 2015 at South & South East England in Bloom awards the town achieved 12 Gold Awards, five category wins and nine Community Group Awards.
- Bowls clubs (11 in total) a phased approach was taken to clubs undertaking their own maintenance; machinery has since been handed over together with green maintenance - saving is over £250,000 pa
- Community projects - providing space for adults and children with learning disabilities to grow flowers and vegetables





# Partnership Working

- The Service proactively seeks out joint working opportunities. For example, we work in partnership with the RSPB on events and grant applications that contribute to common goals of education and nature conservation. Through joint work playgrounds have become bigger, wilder and more adventurous, one recently developed in partnership with the RSPB in an urban park, with £150,000 of public health funding to bring more deprived children closer to nature.
- Close partnerships with Natural England, Historic England, Active Dorset, Sport England and BH Live (the Council's Leisure Trust).
- £1.1m Heritage Lottery project on old thatched barn depot. The centre has a shop, archaeological and nature exhibition, wildlife garden and web-cams. Centre runs on a no-net cost basis and is manned with one additional part-time member of staff and 150 registered heritage volunteers, providing valuable work-experience opportunities
- Paths and shared use schemes with Sustrans and Bournemouth's Transport Teams, bringing better cycling and walking routes through Parks.

# Innovation



- Selected nationally as part of the Heritage Lottery's and Big Lottery's Rethinking Parks programme. **Bournemouth Parks Foundation** was formed in 2015, and is an independent charity set up to allow legacies, donations and grants to improve and add value to Bournemouth's parks. Since inception and with just one member of staff, it has attracted £150,000 of grants and donations.
- nationally recognised as a project with promise, scalability and transferability.
- increased levels of customer satisfaction, higher productivity, and lower costs
- create a regional nature park in partnership with neighbouring authorities and all the major nature conservation bodies - wild beavers to Bournemouth in ten years!



# Common themes amongst finalists

- Need to show value of parks and greenspaces to council and partners.
- Have clear plans showing vision and future aims for greenspaces – **strategies**.
- Consult, listen, identify real needs and agree priorities and deliverability.
- Quality, quantity, accessibility and functionality – **appropriate standards**.
- Targets – realistic rather than aspirational – more likely to receive support.
- Action plans – ideally costed and identifying sources of income /support.
- Ensuring appropriate skills-base (staff, volunteers and partners).
- Apprenticeships/ succession planning.
- Monitoring and benchmarking
- Recognition – external awards







# Reduced service costs/Self Funding aspirations

- Income Generation – HLF , grants, commercial ventures, franchises, plant sales.
- horticultural and planning services to other departments/councils/private sector etc.
- Rationalisation – improved machinery/fuel use, management and staffing structures, assets e.g. buildings and trees.
- Community involvement – maintenance, fund raising, education, staffing buildings, award submissions,
- Asset transfers – allotments, bowling greens, playing fields and play grounds
- Partnerships – complimentary funding, in-kind, project support.
- Service reviews – integration of services
- Meeting green corporate agenda – biodiversity plans, bee and hedgehog plans
- Staff Training – flexibility of roles.