

Tidy Towns Competition 2019

Adjudication Report

Centre: **Ballymun - Baile Munna**

Ref: **854**

County: **Dublin**

Mark: **297**

Category: **G**

Date(s): **17/07/2019**

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2018	Mark Awarded 2019
Community – Your Planning and Involvement	60	46	46
Streetscape & Public Places	60	37	38
Green Spaces and Landscaping	60	39	40
Nature and Biodiversity in your Locality	50	39	40
Sustainability – Doing more with less	50	26	27
Tidiness and Litter Control	90	43	43
Residential Streets & Housing Areas	50	31	31
Approach Roads, Streets & Lanes	50	31	32
TOTAL MARK	470	292	297

Community – Your Planning and Involvement / An Pobal - Pleanáil agus Rannpháirtíocht:

Cuireann an moltóir fáilte roimh Ballymun (Baile Munna) pairt a ghlacadh i gComórtas Náisiúnta Supervalu na mBailte Slachtmhara 2019. It is pleasing to see that your committee of 8 members is assisted by 14 volunteers but the 2018 adjudicator's report indicates that there has been a significant reduction in the number of volunteers who help you out. We are delighted to read that your committee are welcoming new residents as volunteers and that you are also engaging with local community groups. However, we urge you to grow the number of volunteers who take part as this will enable you to take on larger and more ambitious projects. In other tidy towns centres, sports clubs (like the GAA, soccer and athletic's) and social groups (like the active retired, historical societies and residents associations) have all proved to be excellent sources of new committee members and volunteers and we recommend that you approach them and ask if they would like to get involved. Try and also encourage residents to take part in your projects on an occasional basis. For example, some residents (particularly those who have young families) may be unable to give a commitment to help out on a continuous basis but they may be available to offer assistance from time to time and they should be encouraged to do so. This type of arrangement could be facilitated if your committee had a pre-prepared list of tasks that could be allocated to 'occasional' volunteers. Community cleanups and planting days followed by a sponsored social event (such as a picnic or barbecue) have also helped to boost levels of participation in tidy towns projects in other areas. It is great to see that your committee has built up strong links with a range of agencies and other bodies such as Dublin City Council, GAP Ballymun and SAFER Ballymun and we urge you to maintain these links in the years ahead. We wondered if Tus (the Community Employment Scheme) or your Local Partnership Company have been approached and asked for assistance? We are pleased to read that local businesses are appreciative of your efforts with Supervalu Ballymun and Ballymun 4 business providing you with sponsorship and support. Your comprehensive communication strategy is commended and this should serve you well in the years ahead. Your committee also deserves praise for engaging with the RECO (Youth Centre) and BRYR (Ballymun Regional Youth Resources) and involving them in your planting projects. We wondered if you had approached any of the secondary schools and asked if their transition year students would like to take part in any of your cleanups or other projects? Schools are normally happy to collaborate with tidy towns committees as many tasks under the green spaces and landscaping, nature and biodiversity and sustainability categories make excellent school projects. We are delighted to read that your committee (with your 13 years of experience in the competition) are now liaising closely with other tidy towns groups and providing advice and engaging in adjudication for competitions in your respective areas. Thank you for your submitted application form and map as they were useful during adjudication. However, the clarity of the map could be improved by including all residential areas, road names and key features like schools, churches and shops.

Streetscape & Public Places / Sráid-Dreach & Áiteanna Poiblí:

These are exciting times in Ballymun with a range of new developments either underway or scheduled to take place

soon. The construction of the new Lidl block and a mixed use block was progressing at pace and we look forward to seeing this structure completed in 2020. We are pleased to see that the demolition of the old Ballymun shopping centre will take place imminently (it was still in place at the time of our visit) and like your committee, we hope to see the redevelopment of this site in the near future. Existing shops and businesses deserve praise for their appearance. On the Main Street, Supervalu, Firehouse Pizza, the Post Office, Edward MacManus Pharmacy and Masseys impressed while the Travel Lodge and Macaris also looked very well. It seems clear that that their good standard of presentation is influenced by your local awards which we understand includes best presented commercial premises. Would it be possible to get a copy of the winners in 2020? Public and Community buildings also looked very well with the Garda Station and the modern designs of the Swimming Pool, the Civic Offices, the RECO and the Rediscovery Centre all standing out. The axis theatre also looked well. A number of other buildings drew positive attention. We liked the Church Building with its historical design on the grounds of St Pappins Nursing Home. Elsewhere, the Holy Spirit Boys National School, the Trinity Comprehensive School and the Poppintree Community and Sports Centre all impressed with their standard of presentation. We were particularly pleased to read that your committee are taking a positive and proactive approach to urban management issues with Dublin City Council and property owners. This is demonstrated by your communication with the Council and the property agents for the owners of the site of the former Youth Centre and your efforts to clean up the old hoarding at the Rediscovery Centre (and the waste behind it). Your efforts to improve the area around the gateway in conjunction with the City Council are also acknowledged. We are pleased to see that the main retail unit on the Hampton Building at Santry Cross has recently been sold and we hope that a productive use for this is found in the near future. The ongoing works to the Metro Hotel is acknowledged and we look forward to seeing these complete soon. We are pleased to hear that Dublin City Council are finalising plans to redesign the plaza (Cearnog an tSeachta Laoch) and look forward to seeing these works being completed in the years ahead. Be sure to continue to liaise with Dublin City Council in order to get the best design solution for this important central space. Perhaps a copy of the proposed design could be included with next years entry? The projects involving the planters along the Main Street are considered under landscaping category while the weekly cleanups are considered under the tidiness and litter control section.

Green Spaces and Landscaping / Spásanna Glasá agus Tírdhreachú:

The extensive use of pollinator planting throughout Ballymun was obvious during adjudication and it is clear that your committee are determined to make a very positive contribution to biodiversity through your landscaping schemes. The tiered planters all along Main Street looked very well and we are pleased to see that they included pollinator friendly varieties like lavender. You are also commended on your maintenance of the pollinator friendly flowerbeds outside Muck and Magic as they stood out for all the right reasons. The shape of two large permanent beds between the bus stop and Muck and Magic was observed and we wondered if these will be future landscaping schemes? Your revamping of the green space for wildflowers is also appreciated – we assume that this is the large bed with mature pollinator planting at the boundary of the community garden. The improvements to the landscaping at Santry Cross (opposite the Metro hotel) are noted and we were particularly pleased to hear that plants in your meadow (which will be a new LIDL) have been replanted to the front of the Shopping Centre in order to screen this construction site in the near future – this is a great initiative and these plants are arranged in 4 smart timber planters at the pedestrian crossing. We were particularly pleased to hear that there is a commitment to prepare a tree planting plan for Ballymun in order to increase the numbers of trees in your area. This also sounds like an excellent opportunity to involve the schools so why not ask the schoolchildren to suggest possible locations and native tree types for your tree planting? Your ongoing work with Dublin City Council to create pocket parks throughout the area at Coultney Road / Avenue, Belclare Crescent \ Balbutcher Lane, Orchard Park, Carton Estate, Knowth Court, Silloge Gardens and Sallowood view is noted and this seems like a very imaginative way to address sites that have been subject to illegal dumping. However, please note that it was not possible to find any of these locations on Map A which included no road names on it. A more descriptive map will be needed next year (which includes street names, significant buildings (such as schools, churches, shops etc) if you want your adjudicator to view the sites of these pocket parks. We are pleased to see that the standard of public spaces in Ballymun is generally high. Coultney Park is particularly impressive with its amenities (such as a playground), neatly trimmed grass, mature landscaping and tree planting. Balcurris Park also looked well and it was clear during our visit that both of these public spaces are maintained to a high standard. We were surprised to see a large area that is poorly maintained and fenced off between the RECO and Balbutcher Lane and we wondered what is its purpose and if there are any plans to improve it? We enjoyed seeing the upgraded space in front of the Library with its semimature trees, seating area, cycle stands and attractive paving. It is also noted that projects under this category include tree planting at the newly remodelled plaza.

Nature and Biodiversity in your Locality / An Dúlra agus an Bhithéagsúlacht i do cheantar:

We would like to commend your committee on their proactive approach to increasing the number of pollinator friendly plants in Ballymun. This is demonstrated by your Ballymun in Bloom event in which pollinator friendly plants are made available for sale to local residents. Be sure to take note of how many of these pollinator plants that you sell in order to give you an estimate of the impact that you are having. We were particularly pleased to see that your committee are leading by example with respect to pollinator planting. This can be seen by the extensive use of pollinator friendly plants in your tiered planters, in the beds at the Muck and Magic Community Garden and the extensive wildflower meadows which can be found throughout your green spaces in residential areas. Well done also on including managed for wildlife signs on many of these areas in order to raise awareness among the wider community. However, we would be interested to see if your extensive pollinator planting is having its desired effect. Why not ask the schoolchildren and the schools to undertake bee and butterfly counts in the vicinity of your pollinator planting as this would enable them to estimate how many pollinators the planting is attracting. This could be repeated at regular intervals in order to monitor the number of pollinators is changing. Full details on how to

undertake a bumblebee survey can be found on the www.pollinators.ie website. We were pleased to read that your committee have joined the Fingal North Dublin Beekeepers Association and acquired two hives and we look forward to hearing updates on this project next year. Well done on attending a sustainable gardening course for the local North West area and we would be interested to hear about how your attendance at this course is influencing your projects under this category. We are delighted to hear that you have undertaken a survey of the insect hotel and found evidence of solitary bees, plenty of woodlice and spiders and centipedes and slugs. Be sure to try and growing the number of bumble bees as they are particularly important to biodiversity. This can be achieved by continuing to engage in your pollinator planting and providing sand and earthen banks nearby to enable them to nest. Drilling holes in fence posts will also encourage solitary bees to make their homes close to food sources. We are pleased to note that additional 'managed for wildlife' areas are planned for around Ballymun. You are urged to consider mapping the current wildlife areas and to try and site new wildlife areas close to or adjoining existing wildlife areas. This will enable you to establish a network of wildlife areas (or corridors) throughout Ballymun and by doing so, it will enhance biodiversity. Perhaps some of the students in the school would like to take this on as a school project?

Sustainability – Doing more with less / Inmharthanacht - Mórán ar an mbeagán:

We read about the projects that were undertaken under this category for this year's competition with interest. We were delighted to read that the Rediscovery Centre in Ballymun has developed into a centre of excellence for developing the circular economy in Ballymun and there is no doubt that this is a valuable asset in your area. It is pleasing to see that your committee are aware of this and that you have welcomed Sarah Clear (from the Education Programme of the Rediscovery Centre) onto your committee. This is an exciting development and we would like to see the Education Programme of the Rediscovery Centre facilitate stronger links between your committee and the schools through sustainability projects that are relevant to this tidy towns category. Perhaps your committee could meet with transition year students from local schools to identify projects that you could collaborate on in the years ahead? Your plans to introduce sustainable gardening principles in your planting programme are welcomed and we note that these principles involve avoiding the use of chemicals, using perennial pollinator friendly plants and encouraging local people to do likewise. Be sure to introduce targets to monitor your performance in achieving these goals. For example, why not aim to completely avoid the use of chemicals in your planting programmes by 2021? You could also aim to have all of the landscaping schemes (and planters) in Ballymun comprised of 100% pollinator friendly plants by 2021. By setting and achieving these goals, your committee can clearly demonstrate that a more sustainable approach to planting has taken place. Consider going one step further by entering into a partnership with Muck and Magic community garden and growing all of your own pollinator friendly plants and avoiding all of the plastic waste and air miles associated with shop bought varieties. It is pleasing to see that a range of good initiatives are underway in Ballymun to avoid waste generation and they include; using waste coffee granules from Supervalu for composting, segregating and recycling litter collected, installing every can counts collection bins and using compostable paper cups at the Coffee Dock in the Civic Offices. These are all good initiatives and we urge you to continue and expand on them where possible. For example, would it be possible to get all outlets in Ballymun to supply compostable paper cups? Consider developing a 'conscious cup' scheme in your area with the Ballymun 4 Business network by asking all cafés to stock compostable coffee cups and promote reusable cups by offering a discount on refills? There's also an opportunity to 'green' the Ballymun in Bloom festival. Why not meet with the organisers to discuss ways in which the generation of waste could be avoided during the festival. We would appreciate updates on these suggestions next year.

Tidiness and Litter Control / Slachtmhairreacht agus Rialú Bruscair:

The standard of litter control was reasonably good during adjudication with a notably good standard observed along the Main Street and in the plaza. A small number of areas such as the area around the bus stop at the Muck and Magic Community Garden and the green area beside the Lidl block that is under construction will need additional attention and more regular monitoring as litter was evident in both of these locations. The standard of litter control in the residential areas was more variable but it was clear during the visit that regular litter patrols are taking place and aside from isolated items (which appeared to have been recently been dropped), no accumulations of litter were noticeable. We would like to commend the proactive approach of your committee to controlling litter and illegal dumping in Ballymun. It is pleasing to hear that the pocket parks have been a great success at the sites where dumping was regularly occurring and that the maintenance of the planting in these products is being undertaken by local residents. Well done also on using social media to promote litter control awareness and for your continued vigilance in preventing illegal dumping. It is heartening to weed that the litter control activities (and litter picks) now include local businesses like Supervalu, the Muck and Magic Community Garden volunteers and Dublin City Council. Your plan to place a great amount of your resources in dealing with the issue of litter control by engaging more with stakeholders is applauded. However, we were surprised to see that the schools are rarely mentioned in this section of your entry form and we wondered if any contact has been made with them on this issue. Why not ask the schoolchildren to take part in one of your cleanup days? If they are part of the green flag programme, they are normally happy to get involved. Transition year students may also be interested in taking part cleanups and litter picks. By directly involving the schoolchildren and youth groups in your litter picks and cleanups, it can significantly increase awareness of the need to dispose of litter responsibly. We are pleased to read that your committee are continually taking part in the national spring clean day and we urge you to keep this up. We are also pleased to see that very proactive approach has been taken to litter by undertaking surveys (and recording the amount of green waste and general waste being collected on a weekly basis) and collaborating more with other stakeholders on this issue to have a more effective response to dealing with it! We note your reference to a negative IBAL report but we are delighted to read that Ballymun are doing exactly what we expect you to do which is using it as a motivation to do better! Be assured that the tidy towns adjudicators are well aware of your hard work and determined efforts to combat litter in your area over the last 13 years. Your consistently good performance in the tidy towns competition

(and in the tidy neighbourhoods competition in Dublin City Council) is considered to be a far better barometer of your progress than a single negative report. While it is recommended that the findings of the IBAL report are discussed with Dublin City Council and taken into account in your future work programmes, the firmly held view of the tidy towns adjudicators is that its findings are not representative of your area.

Residential Streets & Housing Areas / Sráideanna Cónaithe & Ceantair Tithíochta:

We enjoyed seeing the range of different housing areas as their diverse architectural styles provided interest and variety. The different layouts of residential areas in Ballymun and their attractive green areas also impressed. A number of residential areas looked particularly well such as Coultry Road which set a high standard with its weed free roadsides and neatly swept paths. The tree planting along the perimeter of the Park also enhanced its appearance. We also liked some of the residential areas on Balbutcher Lane (to the rear of Termon Court) around the Poppintree Community and Sports Centre where the trimmed green areas, neat planters and colourful landscaping looked very well. Attractive landscaping beds can also be seen on the amenity area leading to Graigue Court. The standard of presentation of residential areas throughout Ballymun was reasonably good during our visit and we were pleased to see that the number of residential groups engaging with your committee is growing year on year and that it now numbers 17. Be sure to include a map next year that includes street names and key features like schools, churches and shops and which clearly indicates the areas in which residents groups are active. We would also like to hear if there are any local awards for best presented estates or best presented amenity areas in 2020.

Approach Roads, Streets & Lanes / Bóithre Isteach, Sráideanna & Lánaí:

Well done on clearly marking all approach roads into Ballymun with uniform and clear name signage. The standard of presentation of the approach from the north (Fingal) was generally good with its central planted strip and trimmed road verges. The name sign with planting at its base at Santry Cross also looked well. However, this approach could be further improved by ensuring that all of the sign poles with no signs on this approach are either removed or have signs fitted to them. The approach from the south was also impressive with its clipped grass medium strip, improvements to the Library space and high quality name signage with landscaping. The entrance to Ballymun along Santry Avenue also looked well with its neat grass margins and name sign with pollinator bed at its base. The approach along Balbutcher Lane was reasonable but it did not achieve such a high standard due to the untidy green area to the north and the visibility of some kerb weed and litter. However, we note that a major upgrade is planned for the Balbutcher Lane approach and we look forward to seeing this take place in the years ahead.

Concluding Remarks:

It was clear during adjudication that a number of new and positive developments are underway in Ballymun with new developments taking place along the Main Street and a new partnership being formed with the Education Programme of the Rediscovery Centre. These new developments should provide you with additional opportunities to make more progress in the competition and we look forward to returning to Ballymun in 2020 and seeing further improvements. Be sure to consider the suggestions made in this report in your work programme for next year and keep up the good work!