

Discussion Paper

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

25th June 2018

Arle Nursery Strategic Review

This note contains the information to keep Members informed of matters relating to the work of the Committee, but where no decisions from Members are needed

1. Why has this come to scrutiny?

- 1.1** Several significant emerging factors (captured below) have prompted the need to consider the long term future and viability of Arle Nursery.
- 1.2** The business case for options in relation to the asset has now been prepared for consideration by the overview scrutiny committee.

2. Summary of the Issue

- 2.1** A Cabinet decision was taken in December 2017 to adopt a mixed public realm planting scheme within the borough. As a result, there will be a reduced requirement for annual bedding plant stocks to be grown at Arle Nursery.
- 2.2** Commercial revenue from the nursery has reduced year on year as organisations move away from bedding plant regimes, and public sector cuts drive reductions in contract values. Reduced income means there is less to subsidise the Council's bedding plants, and therefore the cost to the council for its own planting is increasing.
- 2.3** An independent site inspection has identified the need for substantial investment in the Nursery to ensure that the existing buildings are fit for current purpose, in order for the facility to continue to operate well in the future and satisfy its commercial contractual obligations.
- 2.4** In addition to the premises maintenance programme, and in view of the mixed planting approach, operational equipment requires replacement and has been assessed in developing the options contained in the business case.
- 2.5** As part of the recently approved Gloucester, Cheltenham and Tewkesbury Joint Core Strategy (JCS), the area of land at the nursery site has been removed from green belt designation. This opens up options for its redevelopment which will result in a substantial increase in the commercial value of the land. In December 2017, the Planning committee approved an application for 90 homes on land adjacent to the nursery site.
- 2.6** The business case outlines the financial and none financial evaluation of each option for consideration by the committee.

- 2.7** The business case and evaluation has been developed with the support of Publica working with the existing service provider Ubico.
- 2.8** The project team welcomes feedback from the committee on the options being presented which are set out in the attached Cabinet report (please note the business case in Appendix 2 is exempt).

3. Next Steps

- 3.1** The Cabinet is due to make a decision in July 2018.

Contact Officer

Mark Sheldon

Director of Resources & Projects

01242 264123

mark.sheldon@cheltenham.gov.uk

Accountability

Councillor Rowena Hay

Scrutiny Function

Overview and Scrutiny committee