

PARKS NURSERY REFURBISHMENT, NEWMILLS ROAD	3rd May 2016
TO: ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES COMMITTEE	
FOR DECISION	

Linkage to Corporate Plan	
Strategic Priority:	Protecting & Enhancing our Environments and Assets
Objective	Protect and enhance Council Facilities in support of staff providing front line services
Lead Officer	G Doyle
Cost: (If applicable)	£225,000

1.1 Background

The Parks Nursery base in Newmills Road was the hub from which all of the floral and horticultural requirements were met for the legacy Coleraine Borough Council. These included the spectacular displays of flowers throughout the Borough over the summer months which led to many plaudits and awards (*Britain In Bloom* and *Ulster In Bloom*). However, under investment in the facility is compromising its ability to continue the good work by staff. Not only is work required to meet Council's responsibility for workplace health, safety and welfare of its employees, but there now exists an opportunity to expand to accommodate the needs of the other legacy Councils (Ballymoney, Limavady and Moyle). This would reduce the dependency on external contractors/suppliers, reduce costs and improve flexibility within the new Council.

1.2 Detail

An audit of the current facility has identified a number of deficiencies, namely:

- 1) Electrical issues in storage sheds
- 2) Inadequate storage of flammables
- 3) Issues with working at heights within storage sheds
- 4) Workplace transport hazards in relation to surfacing (trips), separation of vehicles and pedestrians and access to and from the site
- 5) Deficient outdoor and indoor lighting
- 6) Significant drainage issues with ponding and water ingress to sheds
- 7) Leaking roofs

- 8) Inadequate parking for staff and visitors
- 9) Deterioration of perimeter fencing leading to security concerns
- 10) Inadequate signage

1.3 Options

It has been calculated that £182,000 (Option 1) is required to fully address these issues to ensure compliance with Workplace Health & Safety Regulations and provide a facility fit for its current purpose.

However, for another £43,000 the provision of additional polytunnels and upgrade of the water supply would allow the site to satisfy the horticultural requirements of the 4 legacy councils (Option 2). There are a number of benefits to expanding the site operations. The short growing season results in external suppliers providing small (less robust) plants requiring additional weeding and feeding once planted. In house production of bigger plants reduces aftercare and allows the planting of big bold plants which establish and create colour more quickly. In house production means greater control and has been a key factor in CBC success in floral competitions. The additional investment in 'In house' production for all legacy areas should save Council in the region of £17,000 per annum.

The 'do nothing' option (Option 3) would leave Council in a precarious position under Workplace Health & Safety Regs so is not a realistic option. Closing the facility (Option 4) would require the relocation of staff and equipment to an alternative location at significantly greater cost and result in increased annual costs as all floral and horticultural requirements would need to be met by external suppliers ('buy in' of plants would cost of £64,000 per annum).

The budgeted £225,000 for Option 2 is included within the capital project proposals for 2016/17.

1.4 Recommendation

It is recommended that Members approve Option 2 to progress to Stage 2 of the Capital Programme Management & Procurement System.