

NEWCASTLE-UNDER-LYME BOROUGH COUNCIL
EXECUTIVE MANAGEMENT TEAM'S REPORT TO THE
CABINET

Date: 16 October, 2019

1. **Report Title** **Bedding Plant Contract**
- Submitted by:** **Head of Operations – Roger Tait**
- Portfolio:** **Environment and Recycling**
- Ward(s) affected:** **All**

Purpose of the Report

To seek approval for the future procurement of spring and summer bedding plants, hanging baskets and troughs for the Council's floral displays.

Recommendations

That Cabinet authorises the Head of Operations to undertake an open procurement exercise for the provision of bedding plants on a three year contract extendable by single one year extension up to March 2023 commencing November 2019 and following consultation with the Portfolio Holder, accept the most economically advantageous tender within the existing approved budget provision.

Reasons

- (i) **To secure the supply of seasonal bedding plants, hanging baskets and floral troughs until March 2020.**

1. **Background**

- 1.1 The provision of good quality bedding plants, hanging baskets and floral troughs is required to ensure we are able to create colourful floral displays within a number of key locations within the borough and town centres. The floral displays created are a key component to sustaining the attractiveness of our town centres, strategic gateways and crematoria.
- 1.2 Our approach to creating attractive bedding schemes has also gained considerable recognition and significant success in Britain in Bloom, playing a crucial role in our achieving a gold standard for the past 18 years, and winning both regional and national competitions. Perhaps more significantly we receive regular compliments from our residents with regards to the attractiveness of our bedding schemes, underpinning the pride our residents have within the borough and with Newcastle Town Centre in particular.

1.3 Expenditure for the purchase of annual bedding plants; hanging baskets and floral troughs currently is contained within the £50,000 annual revenue budget. This budget has been incrementally reduced from £90,000 over recent years by closely reviewing the number and location of bedding plants with reductions being made with our formal parks in particular, where no bedding plants are now used. Further reductions have been achieved in annual plant use within our bereavement services sites with annual plants or baskets now being displayed at Bradwell Crematoria and Newcastle Cemetery only. We have additionally introduced more sustainable planting in key locations with excellent effect, most notably on our roundabouts in Newcastle Town Centre and Queens Gardens. Further expansion of herbaceous planting use is currently being considered.

1.4 Our previous contract has now expired, meaning we now need to invite tenders for a new contract to meet our needs for the next 3 to 4 years.

2. **Issues**

2.1 It is anticipated that the cost per unit of bedding plants will have increased from our previous contract. We have recently undertaken a mini tender with regards to our 2020 spring bedding plants and have been able to compare submitted tenders. While it is anticipated there will be an increase in costs this will be manageable within the existing revenue budget with continued careful management and prioritisation of planting schemes.

2.2 There is a balance between being able to create attractive annual displays within our key locations and budget pressures in an environment of increasing costs. It is clear from our residents and BID partners that floral displays, particularly within Newcastle Town Centre is an important provision which plays a significant part in ensuring the town centre is an attractive place to shop, socialise and sustain businesses.

3. **Options Considered**

3.1 (i) Undertake a tender exercise to attract the most competitive and economically advantageous tender. This would ensure that we demonstrate the achievement of affordable bedding plants to enable us to continue with our considered approach to creating colourful key bedding plant schemes, displaying hanging baskets and railing troughs.

3.1 (ii) Cease sourcing bedding plants, hanging baskets and floral railing troughs and introduce a basic maintenance scheme. This would have a significant and detrimental impact on the attractiveness of Newcastle and Kildgrove town centres, undermine the sustainability and revival of the town centres and have a negative impact on our ability to attract business sponsorship for the Britain in Bloom campaign and the associated high profile recognition achieved.

4. **Proposal**

4.1 It is proposed to expose the bedding plant, hanging basket and floral trough provision to a competitive tendering process utilising an existing framework..

5. **Reasons for Preferred Solution**

5.1 To secure the supply of good quality bedding plant provision to enable us to continue to provide annual bedding schemes to key locations, underpinning our reputation with residents

and businesses and supporting the economic revival of Newcastle and Kidsgrove Town Centre, sustainment of Kidsgrove Town Centres.

6. **Outcomes Linked to Council Plan**

- 6.1 Local Services that Work for Local People
- 6.2 Growing Our People and Places
- 6.3 Healthy, Active and Safe Borough
- 6.4 A Town Centre for All

7. **Legal and Statutory Implications**

The council must comply with Public Procurement Directives, deliver a transparent procurement process and evidence value for money solutions

8. **Equality Impact Assessment**

- 8.1 It is considered that there are positive equality impacts for residents and visitors who are able to appreciate the floral displays

9. **Financial and Resource Implications**

The cost of the provision of bedding plants is met from within the approved General Fund Revenue Programme for Streetscene. The current annual budget is £50,000 with the actual cost of providing annual bedding plants, hanging baskets and troughs being approximately £47,500 per annum.

The previous long term contract expired on 31st March 2019 and the recommended procurement option will obtain a cost for delivering these services for an initial 3 year contract period, with an option to extend the contract for a further 1 years beyond this time up to 31st March 2023.

There is also a requirement for staff time involved in preparing and administering the procurement process and managing the contract which has been programmed into the Streetscene Business Unit work plan for 2019/20.

10. **Major Risks**

In respect of the recommended preferred solution

- No suitable contractor is identified that can supply all the needs of the contract – in this event of this scenario, some elements of the contract may be procured separately

11. **Sustainability and Climate Change Implications**

The contract has a limited impact on climate change. With a reduction in bedding areas and the introduction of herbaceous planting schemes there is a resultant reduction in vehicular movements and less use of petrol driven machinery. The contract specifies that plants are grown in a peat-free medium.

12. **Key Decision Information**

This report is a key decision due to the level of expenditure involved and it is included in the Forward Plan.

13. **Earlier Cabinet/Committee Resolutions**

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14. **List of Appendices**

None

15. **Background Papers**

None .