

Report of:	Meeting	Date	Item No.
Cllr Alan Vincent, Resources Portfolio Holder and Michael Ryan Corporate Director of People & Places	Cabinet	12 September 2012	8

<b>Ashdell Nursery, Thornton</b>
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**1. Purpose of Report**

1.1 To seek Cabinet approval to close Ashdell Nursery, Thornton.

**2. Outcomes**

2.1 That the nursery is declared surplus to requirements.

**3. Recommendation/s**

3.1 That Ashdell nursery is closed from 31 March 2013 and the site declared surplus to requirements.

3.2 That the Corporate Director of People & Places be authorised to arrange for the disposal of the Council's land ownership with the benefit of planning permission.

3.3 That the Corporate Director of People and Places arrange for services at Ashdell to be provided through alternative means.

3.4 That the Corporate Director of People and Places be authorised to carry out a staffing review as a result of the closure of the nursery facility.

3.5 That discussions be held with the Wyre In Bloom Steering Group regarding the Council's continued support and their future community requirements.

**4. Background**

4.1 At the meeting of the Cabinet on 26 October, 2011, it was agreed:-

(i) That Approval be given for the demolition of the existing depot at

Copse Road, Fleetwood and the construction of a new depot.

- (ii) That approval be given in principle for the disposal of the Council's land holding at Thornton Depot and Ashdell Nursery subject to a further report on the details of such disposals.

**4.2** The Appendix of the Cabinet report of 26 October, 2011 highlighted a gap in funding for the new depot of £1,026,965 and suggested that this could be met from the capital receipt arising from the sale of Ashdell Nursery and Thornton Depot.

**4.3** Ashdell Nursery is located in Thornton and supplies the following service on behalf of the Council:

- Production of annual bedding and other plant material including hanging baskets.
- Design and planting out of The Mount carpet bedding display.
- Planters and troughs for Wyre in Bloom.
- Interior displays within the civic centre.
- Decoration of Cenotaphs for Remembrance Sunday.
- Decoration at the Mayoral Ball.
- Maintenance of Ashdell Bowling Greens.

## **5. Key Issues and Proposals**

**5.1** The nursery has a gross cost of £155,000 per annum to run (original estimate 2012/13) with the costs being charged out across various cost centres where the service is used and includes three full time members of staff who are employed at the Nursery.

**5.2** The services provided by the nursery have been considered individually below with recommendations regarding future service provision:

Provision of bedding and other planting – Ashdell Nursery is rightly recognised for the quality of bedding plants produced and in previous years it has supplied bedding to a neighbouring authority. However Wyre Council has reduced its dependency on seasonal bedding over recent years by approximately 50% and it is the norm for councils to buy in bedding from specialist suppliers rather than grow their own. The nursery no longer supplies bedding to a neighbouring authority. It is therefore proposed that in the future seasonal bedding is purchased by the council from a specialist supplier.

Mount bedding – displays will comprise of bedding purchased by the Council.

Wyre in Bloom – The support provided to the In Bloom teams through the planting up of various containers could be provided in a number of ways. The Council could purchase the bedding as above and arrange for the planting to be installed as previously, or a larger

budget (funded through savings) could be provided to the groups who could source the service from local suppliers and in turn support local business.

Interior displays at the Civic Centre – The level of this service is minimal and it is proposed to cease the delivery of this service.

Decoration at the Mayoral Ball – This service has reduced from previous years and it is recommended that a suitable budget be provided to allow the service to be bought in as required.

Maintenance of Ashdell bowling greens – It is proposed that this work continue to be undertaken by the Council.

- 5.3** The disposal of the Ashdell Nursery site will also allow the Council to include other adjoining land in the Council's ownership as part of a comprehensive disposal package which with the benefit of planning permission should have a value in excess of £1million.

<b>IMPLICATIONS</b>	
Finance	The building of a new depot at Copse Road has already commenced at a cost of £1.6m with a funding gap of £1,026,965 already being identified. The estimated revenue costs for 2012/13 reveal a net cost of £134,420 which includes support service charges of £22,310 and notional charges for depreciation of £15,190. Alternative arrangements will be contained within the true cost per annum to the Council of £96,920.
Legal	None
Community Safety	None
Equality and Diversity	None
Sustainability	Alternative arrangements are to be put in place to deliver services from a central depot facility.
Health and Safety	None
Risk Management	There is a financial risk resulting in a funding gap if the nursery is not disposed of.
Asset Management	Disposal ensures the efficient use of council assets.
Climate Change	None

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<b>List of Background Papers:</b>		
Name of Document	Date	Where available for inspection

**LIST OF APPENDICES**

None

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