

# ***Report to the Council***

**Committee:** Cabinet  
**Date:** 05 April 2022  
**Subject:** Environmental and Technical Services  
**Portfolio Holder:** Councillor Nigel Avey

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## **Recommending:**

**The report of the Environmental and Technical Services Portfolio Holder be noted.**

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## **Waste Management:**

This year we are hoping to bring together and recognise the work with the Epping Forest Community in getting involved in keeping Epping Forest Greener and Cleaner.

Keep Britain Tidy is encouraging us all to pledge to pick up one big bag of litter as part of the Great British Spring Clean 2022.

This year's mass campaign, **from 25 March to 10 April**, calls on families, neighbours, friends and colleagues to join forces and pledge to pick a bag of litter from nearby streets, beauty spots and beaches in order to protect our vibrant communities and precious wildlife habitats.

As well as polluting our streets, parks and beaches, litter harms wildlife, domestic pets and cattle, it also costs Epping Forest District Council a staggering £1.7 million a year to clean up.

Litter picking brings together individuals, community organisations, businesses and councils to make a difference to the environment on their doorsteps – and the charity is keen to stress litter picking can be accessible to everybody with the right resources.

Feedback shows a significant increase in the number of people litter picking in the great outdoors to help their mental wellbeing, following the additional pressures triggered by the pandemic.

We would like to recognise the hard work of our communities and have our special green awards to celebrate this.

How it works, simply

- Collect 10 Bags = Bronze Award
- Collect 20 Bags = Silver Award
- Collect 30 Bags = Gold Award

A special certificate will be awarded to those that take part. Certificate will be awarded for litter collected. Between 25<sup>th</sup> March to the 10<sup>th</sup> April.

For further information and to find out how to register and collect a litter pick pack please contact [Wastemanagement@eppingforestdc.gov.uk](mailto:Wastemanagement@eppingforestdc.gov.uk)

## **Leisure Management:**

Leisure centre usage trends are continuing to progress well in a positive outlook. There had been a slight decrease in usage trends in December 2021 which is normal for the time of year,

but good growth has been seen in the new year. Revenue from the leisure centres has improved due to leisure centre usage trends.

### **Procurement and Contracts:**

The team have been working on creating a new version of the Procurement and Contracts Checklist, which is a tool to help officers ensure they've considered all relevant factors before proceeding with their project. Following a recent Procurement Audit, it was highlighted that the current Checklist was not always being utilised by officers and it has now been overhauled to ensure that it is easy for officers to complete and it captures the relevant information at the right times in the process.

This will come into effect from 01 April 2022 and will be required to be completed for all projects where the spend is more than £25k and/or a contract is required to be put on place for the requirement.

**Social Value** – Social Value is being used in the majority of tender processes to award additional scores to those bidders who are based locally, use local supply chains, hire local people and/or make other commitments to the local community (such as charitable donations and providing work placements/apprenticeships throughout the duration of the contract).

We are liaising with Essex CC and other authorities to consider signing up to a Social Value Measuring Tool, also looking at other options. This will help us to measure the amount of Social Value we are creating through our procurement, which can sometimes be difficult to quantify.

**Contract Register** - we are currently updating EFDC's contracts register and will soon be bulk uploading the data onto our e-Procurement system where we will manage the data from then on. The system will then be able to issue reminders at specified points to prompt officers that decisions around re-tendering, extending or ending contracts etc. need to be made.

### **Environmental Protection and Land Drainage:**

The team continues to work on flood and pollution reduction through reviewing planning applications and reactive response work across the district. The team have provided input to ECC's Section 19 flood risk investigations following the flooding incidents in summer of 2021.

The private water supply charging regime has been successfully implemented and sampling is well under way across larger sites that are required to be sampled annually.

The Council Flood Storage Areas annual maintenance work has been completed, as well as essential works across other site including Bobbingworth Nature Reserve where a new ring path has been installed with a grant from ECC via the Countrycare Team.

### **Highway Rangers:**

The rangers continue to work on reported issues from both Essex County Council and those reported by Members and residents. Recent projects include district-wide road sign cleaning and repair, assisting with keeping roads moving during the recent storms by cutting damaged trees and providing traffic management for other teams.

The team installed a purpose made finger post in traditional style at the Mott Street, Church road triangle. The post was made by a local contractor based in Nazeing. The rangers have recently completed installation of four sets of purpose-made wooden oak gates in Sun Street and Market Square Waltham Abbey.

A new full time Highway Ranger has been recruited and joined the team on Monday 21<sup>st</sup> March which brings the team back to full strength.

Works for highway rangers can be logged with the following link, highway maintenance such as resurfacing, line painting, potholes and private hedges remain the remit of Essex Highways <https://www.eppingforestdc.gov.uk/environment/highway-rangers-service/>

### **Grounds Maintenance:**

The winter works program of shrub and hedge pruning is coming to an end as the new grass cutting season starts. The gardening teams have begun cutting on Council owned verges and open spaces across the district using the ride on machinery where conditions allow. Tractor work is limited at present due to soft ground conditions however as the weather warms the grass surfaces should harden allowing for maintenance cutting. Hand mowing of the communal back gardens is also underway and the weed spraying of obstacles within the grass is being undertaken to allow for reduced mechanical operations throughout the season.

The team have recently purchased 4 small electric vans to assist with operations throughout the district notably hand mowing and line marking. Residents have noticed the electric vehicles and been very positive about change and move to sustainable transport. EV charging stations have been installed at both the Oakwood Hill and Town Mead depots which are easy to use and require a swipe card for the vehicle being charged.

Car parking on soft grass verges continues to be an issue for residents and grounds have assisted with numerous reinstatement works around the district as required.

The spring bedding schemes planted by the Nursery team are providing a magnificent display at the moment and will soon be followed by polyanthus and pansy, and tulips to follow, bringing a welcome splash of colour across the district throughout the coming weeks.

The team provided assistance to Housing with planting of 500 tree-whips to create a wildlife hedgerow on the Limes Farm estate in Chigwell. This community project involved a number of Council departments working together with additional help provided by local residents and volunteers all of which, made the day a great success.

### **Fleet Operations:**

80% of the new electric vehicle fleet is now in service, the old diesel vehicles will be disposed of at a commercial vehicle auction. The new electric fleet has resulted in 50% reduction in expenditure since January 2022.

MOT income has increased again in the last month, with 95% of slots booked.

The team are currently new electronic vehicle inspections/servicing records, this will reduce administration time and the use of paper. 35 staff that have responsibility for driving Council vehicles have now been through the new driver training course to assess their competence and meet Council insurance requirements.

The recruitment of a new Apprentice is ongoing and currently we have a student who attends Harlow college and is a resident of the district is with us two days a week for a month on work experience.

The installation of a new large vehicle lift, and tyre replacement equipment is expected to be fitted by the end of the month to assist in external repairs and a tyre fitting service.

### **Countryside and Landscape**

Since last November the volunteering tasks have been very well attended, 20 volunteers per task not being uncommon. Winter tasks focus on woodland work. Three tasks were held in Chigwell Row Wood to improve the size and biodiversity of the heathland.

Four tasks were held at Linder's Field to improve the drainage, create new ponds, create habitat for amphibians and new hibernacula to increase the carrying capacity for slow worms that are being relocated onto the site. Some drainage solutions, which also constitute creating new ponds, are also being trialled at Home Mead and working successfully. In Abbots Wood Countryside mended the bridge and the residents were very pleased with the quick response. Other days were spent at Roughtalley's Wood and Norton Heath.

Recent storms have caused damage with trees down in Roughtalley's Wood and some of the other sites too. Most have been dealt with but a few (that are safe) remain to be cleared.

The circular path at Bobbingworth LNR has been completed and the next step is to plant up the edges with native wildflower where the soil has been disturbed during works.

The team assisted with the tree planting at Limes Farm where 500 whips were planted to make a hedge with the help of residents and schoolchildren.

### **Tree Team**

The team worked hard throughout the recent Storm Eunice, with help from the Highway Rangers and Environmental Protection team, they responded to in excess of 50 requests for assistance relating to fallen and damaged trees in district.

The team continue to respond to enquiries throughout the district, from Members, Councillors, Essex County council, Housing and members of the public.