

Report to the Council

Committee: Cabinet

Subject: Contracts and Technical Services

Portfolio Holder: Councillor N Avey

Recommending:

That the report of the Contracts and Technical Services Portfolio Holder be noted.

Parking

Tariff Change:

The revised car parking tariffs in all Council car parks came into effect on 4 March 2019. The review of the new tariff will be starting soon to assess the impact of the changes and to see what, if any, further work needs doing.

Contract performance:

The last Parking Partnership Board meeting with our car parking contractor NSL took place on 11 April. The contract is performing well and all contractual performance indicators for this year have been achieved.

Loughton Broadway Parking Review:

At the last meeting with local Members and officers of the North Essex Parking Partnership (NEPP) a revised strategy was agreed. The main scheme has been put on hold as a result of the consultation and objections received. Surveys are being carried to assess junction protection needs and we are awaiting the outcome.

Epping Town Parking Review:

The implementation of the Epping Town Permit scheme on 21 January included Controlled Parking Zone, Business Permits and Pay and Display. By catering for the needs to residents, businesses, visitors and shoppers the scheme has enabled best use of public highway. As a result road safety and traffic flow has significantly improved.

There has been some displacement into surrounding roads and to deal with this new Traffic Regulation Orders are being prepared to introduce similar restrictions on the few roads identified.

As a result of objection received there will now be an Epping phase 2 scheme that will be advertised late Summer with implementation planned for early Autumn.

NEPP Scheme proposals

Nominations for new schemes will be submitted to the October meeting of NEPP. EFDC is allowed to submit six schemes. Consultation with Members will take place late August and into September.

Waste Management

I am pleased to report that the contract is working very well with performance indicators being met. The challenge around dropping value of recycling materials in the resale markets has continued and this means the Councils share of the income from sales is on a downward trend.

A Task and Finish Panel is being set up by the Overview and Scrutiny committee to review various issues:

- (a) the possibility of exploring the introduction of a third wheelie bin to replace the current clear recycling sacks for collection of dry recycling materials;
- (b) the consideration to collection of food and garden waste in separate containers and the option of charging for collection of garden waste;
- (c) the possibility of not collecting garden waste in certain months of the year when demand is low;
- (d) the pressure on the waste collection contract due to the issues around sale of recycling materials after processing;
- (e) a review of street cleansing arrangements with a view to achieve improvements in cleansing standards; and
- (f) improvements in provisions for waste and recycling collections on the high street including the collection of more recycling materials

Members may be aware that there was an accident in Loughton involving a Biffa refuse freighter. There was serious damage to a property and two vehicles. No one was injured and the accident is being investigated by the police and Biffa to ascertain the reason for the accident.

Leisure Management

The last Partnership Board meeting took place on 15th May where the focus was on centre performance. The leisure contractor demonstrated excellent growth at the new Waltham Abbey centre and at Loughton Leisure Centre which is now at its highest ever level. Both Epping and Ongar centres remain generally static in terms of membership numbers with the contractor trying various marketing strategies to maintain the situation at both centres. Given the age of both centres and the lack of clarity over their futures, the leisure contract manager is working with the contractor to spend only as much as is necessary to maintain the buildings and plant. However, a recent plant failure at Ongar has resulted in a number of closures of the pool.

The Sports Consultancy has been commissioned to produce an options appraisal for the Ongar Leisure Centre which will inform any decision making regarding the future of the centre. The options appraisal will be presented to the next Leisure Contract Partnership Board in late September.

Initial discussions with the leisure contractor have taken place with regard to the management fee arrangements for the proposed new leisure centre at St Johns Road. However, much depends on the outcome of the work being undertaken by Whyte Young and Green over the next few months.

Ongar Leisure Centre

A sum of £80,000 was received earlier this year from the Department of Education with regard to the reinstatement of the tennis courts at Ongar. Members may recall that the Ongar Academy had used the site for their temporary classrooms during the construction of the new school. It has been agreed to ringfence that money to help pay for any urgent repairs that may need to be undertaken to keep the outdated plant operating thereby limiting any loss of service as far as possible. To date a sum of £10,200 has been committed to replace parts of the air handling unit, a circulation pump and replace a leaking rooflight.

New signage has been installed at Ongar Leisure Centre to address problems with centre users parking in the disabled bays without displaying blue badges. The problems are mainly caused by a specific group of parents with children usually in the late afternoon. Parking enforcement will take place to send a message to non-conforming customers.

Epping Leisure Centre

As Members may know the sports hall at Epping suffers badly from water ingress and over the years the floor has degraded to a very poor state. Working with the contractor and bearing in mind the proposals for a new centre at Epping, a temporary floor covering is being installed from the 22nd July over three days. This should last around four years during which time, it is hoped that plans for the new centre are finalised.

Also, a temporary roof repair is being undertaken at Epping during August. It is hoped this will last until the new centre comes on stream. Both the sports hall floor and roof repairs are being funded from Capital underspends arising from savings made during the main leisure centre refurbishment works over the past two years.

Loughton Leisure Centre

As previously mentioned Loughton leisure Centre is performing at its highest ever level in terms of membership. Pool timetable changes and the refurbishment of the steam room and sauna have made a significant difference. The new gym extension is particularly well used.

The centre has had some security issues in the past year with two break-ins. Additional security shutters were installed as part of the refurbishment works last Summer. There have been a number of incidents involving locker break-ins and theft of charity boxes etc recently. Over the next few weeks additional internal CCTV will be installed to reduce these petty thefts (funded again from Capital underspends). Installation of a new Combined Heat and Power unit starts this month and will result in greater energy efficiencies.

Waltham Abbey Leisure Centre

The formal opening event for Waltham Abbey Leisure Centre took place on Saturday 15th June. The centre was opened by the Chairman and Olympic swimmer Sharron Davies. The opening ceremony was combined with an Oceans of Fun event where children were involved in swimming activities and first aid training.

Countrycare

Since the last report Countrycare has project managed volunteer tasks on ten sites. A total of 120 volunteer days have been contributed by our volunteers with an average of 13 volunteers per task.

Access improvements have been made on sites by mending fences and bridges, many sites had their first cut of the season of the meadow, some hibernacula have been erected and a tawny owl box installed on a site in Epping. On Tree Top Meadow Countrycare planted an oak sapling on behalf of The Nappy Library who had been awarded it by a local nappy supplier after the Library succeeded in encouraging 100 parents to use linen nappies instead of single-use plastic nappies. Grounds Maintenance donated a matching oak as a gesture of support and PR attended to publicise the Nappy Library and the site.

Reptile and butterfly surveys have been ongoing with a healthy population of both at two of our sites. A barn owl was discovered in a barn owl box we erected on a site last year. There was a high demand for the Easter Scavenger Hunt with 30 children and their parents attending on the Home Mead Local Nature Reserve (LNR).

In Chigwell Row Wood LNR Countrycare held a Conservation Education day for 25 children from year 7 of Chigwell School. Whilst carrying out conservation tasks they learned about the woodland, veteran trees, the flora and fauna and also did a biological survey of the hedge on the recreation ground.

The Shelley Rainbows and Brownies were awarded their 'go wild with bugs' badges after taking part in bug hunting and other bug themed tasks on our Bobbingworth Nature Reserve. Twenty-three Rainbows and Brownies attended.

The Tree Warden Scheme is ongoing with much interest in the Essex Green Infrastructure Strategy. The summer will see surveys of newts and the Special Roadside Verges along with a few family events.

Grounds Maintenance

The recent warm weather mixed with the odd rain shower has provided perfect growing conditions for grass and shrubs and this has certainly kept the grounds maintenance teams busy keeping them under control. Hedgerows too, have started to become straggly and we have a hedge maintenance programme in place to prevent vegetation encroaching onto roads and footways. In line with RSPB recommendations, we wait until later in the growing season before undertaking any significant hedge pruning to ensure nesting birds are not disturbed.

A small outbreak of the oak processionary moth (OPM) was recently spotted in the district. The caterpillars of OPM are pests of oak trees, and a hazard to human and animal health. This pest was accidentally introduced to England in 2005, and is subject to a government-led programme of survey and control to minimise its population, spread and impacts. The oak processionary moth is now established in most of Greater London and in some surrounding counties. The Forestry Commission is lead organisation on OPM in the UK and full information and advice can be found on their website.