

Report to the Council

Committee: Cabinet

Date: 17 December 2019

Subject: Contracts and Technical Services

Portfolio Holder: Councillor N Avey

Recommending:

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

Car Parking

Officers met with colleagues at Canterbury Council to look at the potential for using Automatic Number Plate Recognition (ANPR) for car park management. At this stage the costs look prohibitive but further work needs to be considered as part of a District wide strategy.

Two pay and display machines were broken into at Cornmill Car Park Waltham Abbey. Both machines were irreparably damaged and replacement is subject to an insurance claim. Officers have decided to reduce the numbers of P&D machines in the car park from 3 to 2 as a result. This decision was based on the historical usage of machines and it is felt that 2 machines are adequate.

A meeting was held with regard to ongoing parking and traffic management issues at Ivy Chimneys in Epping. A solution was proposed by colleagues from North Essex Parking Partnership (NEPP) and local residents agreed to gain support from residents for the scheme. Installation of electric vehicle charging points has been agreed with the Council's leisure contractor at Waltham Abbey Leisure Centre and Loughton Leisure Centre subject to technical surveys.

Leisure Contract

The Leisure Contract Partnership Board met on 21st November and received a very positive report from the contractor in terms of usage especially at Waltham Abbey and Loughton Leisure Centres. Members asked for a number of timetable changes to be considered to address some local concerns. Individual customer forums for each centre are scheduled for early in the new year.

The grant from Fields in Trust mentioned in the previous Portfolio Holder report has now been signed off and the money will be used to support some Springtime outdoor activities at Waltham Abbey. Further information will be provided when available.

The Rotary Club Disability Games which Members may remember took place successfully at Ongar Leisure Centre in May, has been scheduled again for 19th May 2020. The Council and Places Leisure will be supporting the event in a variety of ways.

Waste Management

452 households signed up for the recycling rewards scheme in Epping Forest. The recycling rewards is part of increasing publicity around waste and recycling. The scheme encourages

encourage residents living in flats to recycle more through offering reward points. The aim of the initiative is; to reduce contamination of communal recycling containers, to increase recycling rates and to reward residents, who achieve this via a “Recycling Rewards” scheme.

To date there have been an average of 375 positive actions per month with Report Your Recycling and Food Waste Challenge being the most popular. The recycling rate Key Performance Indicator for quarter 2 has shown an increase from 58% to 62%.

Waste Management Task and Finish Panel

A Waste Management Review Task and Finish Panel has been set up by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, to look at five main items and would conclude in January 2020. If the Panel recommendations included a service change the proposals would be considered by, as per the process in the waste management contract, by the Waste Management Partnership Board before recommendations are made to Cabinet,

Waste Management Task and Finish Panel are looking at:

- Feasibility of introducing a third wheelie bin to replace clear recycling sacks;
- The future collection of food and garden waste in separate containers and the option to charge for the collection of garden waste;
- The possibility of not collecting garden waste in certain months of the year when demand was low;
- A review of street cleansing arrangements to achieve improvements in cleansing standards; and
- Improvements in the provision of waste and recycling containers and cleansing operations on the high street including the segregation of recycling materials.

Environmental Protection and Land Drainage

The work of the team is vital at this time of the year as they work to protect the district from flooding. The recent wet weather has meant the team has been investigating and working to resolve a peak in minor surface water flooding issues including several referrals to Essex Highways who are responsible for water affecting roads. The team are on call 24 hours a day and the out of hours flood response service continue to monitor water levels on sites and use telemetry in our Council managed Flood Storage Areas to reduce risk of flooding. The Team also provides advice to residents during this time. We recently undertook a successful prosecution against a landowner for land drainage and other offenses that could have increased localised flood risk. The flood risk has now been mitigated.

Officers continue to work with Thames Water to resolve misconnected properties in Chigwell. These misconnections cause pollution to rivers and watercourses often where an extension has plumbed grey or foul water systems such as a washing machine into a surface drain.

Cabinet approved a report in October to begin to charge property owners for statutory services in relation to regulating their private water supplies including wells and boreholes, this will be implemented in the new financial year, this will allow for the reasonable costs of routine and on-going assessments of supplies to be recovered. We are pleased to report that the majority of high-risk private supplies have been risk assessed, sampled and improved.

The Environment Agency led scheme at Shonks Mill Flood Storage Area, Stanford Rivers/Stapleford Tawney, to deliver a significant Flood Storage Reservoir on the River Roding straddling the boundary with Brentwood Borough Council, is continuing and a recent

government announcement indicated that central funds will be provided to enable the EA to progress the scheme.

Grounds Maintenance Service

Grass cutting operations are still ongoing; the mild autumn has resulted in the teams continuing to mow throughout November and this could even spill over into December! Once the grass has finally stopped growing and the mowers are stored away, the staff will move onto their 'winter works' programme. These tasks include: bed maintenance, hedge trimming and shrub pruning as well as the planting of spring flowering bulbs, hardy shrubs and over 100 new street trees.

The Grounds team were pleased to receive a note of thanks from Loughton Town Council for its contribution in helping them achieve the Certificate of Merit Class 1 award presented by the Essex Playing Fields Association for maintaining the Roding Valley Recreation Ground "to the highest standards". This award has been won by the Town Council for the third year running and is a real credit to the hard work and commitment of the staff at both Councils in managing and maintaining this prestigious site to such a high standard. We look forward to our continued partnership with the Town Council and achieving a fourth win in 2020!

Countrycare

The Arboriculture Team has now successfully moved to the Countrycare Team from Grounds Maintenance and tree planting has begun in the with 120 street trees planned for the winter. A project is also underway at Limes Farm to plant six trees.

Since the last report there has been managed volunteer tasks on seven sites. Church Lane twice, Thornwood Nature Area, Roughtallys Wood and lastly Thornhill, Abbots Wood and Nazeing Triangle all on the same day!

Tasks included raking the late summer cuts, creating footpaths, mending bridges, fences and boardwalks, reed clearance, hedge trimming and litter picking. A total of 172 volunteer days have been given during this time which is equivalent to £6,450. We also welcomed a corporate volunteer from a bank in London.

The Tree Warden Autumn meeting was well attended with a new Tree Warden representing Chigwell. Plans for hedgerow surveys are taking shape for the new year.

Wetland Bird Surveys (WeBS) are on-going with monthly surveys at Church Lane, Nazeing Triangle and Thornwood Common Nature Reserves. The broad findings are that these Reserves provide key habitats for species that include Snipe, Reed Warbler and Little Grebe. Commoner species are also found consistently, such as Mallard, Moorhen and the occasional Grey Heron. Although WeBS is more designed to look at wintering wildfowl movements, data gathered throughout the year will be useful to look at trends going forward.

Fleet

In the last month the Pool Car Club for staff has been implemented, we have 3 pool vehicles, 1 each for Building Control and the Revenue and Benefits teams and 1 for general use for all staff. In the first week over 80 staff signed up to join the scheme and are booking the vehicles to travel around the district carrying out their duties. We are piloting the use of the pool cars over the next six months in partnership with car-rental company Enterprise. Staff will be able to leave their private cars at home and use the pool cars as and when required. This six month pilot period will help us gain a better understanding of how pool cars may help with the Staff Travel Plan. This change will enable staff to take more sustainable transport to work, including, public transport, walking and use of bicycles – without worrying that they may need

their vehicle for an unscheduled visit. Staff are encouraged to use the Car Club for shared journeys, to reduce and minimize driving for council business.

The car club also has other beneficial effects; reducing parking at the Civic Offices, reducing congestion in the town, reducing pollution and improving air quality for everyone in the district.