

# Report to the Council

**Committee:** Cabinet  
**Date:** 28 February 2023  
**Subject:** Contracts and Commissioning Portfolio  
**Portfolio Holder:** Councillor Nigel Avey

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## Recommending:

The report of the Contracts and Commissioning Portfolio Holder be noted.

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## Waste Management:

- Officers and members continue to work with Biffa to resolve the missed collections issues as swiftly as possible. We are continuously applying pressure on the waste contractor to resolve the issues and work with them to improve the situation. Biffa have provided extra crews and were collecting waste on Saturday, Sunday, and Monday to clear the backlog. Biffa are continuing to make progress on replacing and repairing their waste vehicles which should eliminate the number of breakdowns.
- **Booking system planned for all Essex County Council recycling centres**  
*From Monday 13 March 2023, residents visiting Essex County Council recycling centres will need to book in advance.*

Essex County Council (ECC) will be introducing a booking system that will be trialled for all vehicles visiting Essex County Council recycling centres to help manage waiting times, reduce congestion, and improve the customer experience. The booking process has already been trialled for all vehicles using Rayleigh Recycling Centre, and for large vehicles using the nine van-friendly sites. Both trials have been effective in smoothing the pattern of demand across operating hours and reducing queues and congestion both in and around the sites. Residents will be able to book their slots in advance via a link on the [Love Essex website](#). Site users visiting by foot do not need to book a slot. Blue Badge holders do not need to book a slot and can visit any recycling centre in any vehicle, including vans at any ECC recycling centre.

For full details, please visit the Love Essex website at [www.loveessex.org](http://www.loveessex.org).

## Leisure Management:

- **Energy Saving Initiatives**

Places Leisure is continuing with the good work in reducing gas and electric consumption through good housekeeping. Comparing 2019/20 and 2022/23 energy consumption, total electricity consumption has reduced by 7.89% and total gas consumption has reduced by 27.55% across all centres.

The Council is working with Places Leisure to further reduce energy consumption at the leisure facilities to reduce operating costs and carbon emissions. Energy saving initiatives being explored are pool covers and Waltham Abbey and Ongar, a new Building Management System at Loughton, variable speed drives and LED lighting improvements.

- **Contract Performance**

December 2022 swimming membership and lessons are showing an increase across the centres when compared to pre-pandemic figures, however fitness membership levels are showing a decrease when compared to pre-pandemic levels. The decrease in fitness membership levels is primarily due to cost-of-living concerns, as new research shows leisure centre users are cancelling memberships due to the rising cost of living. As a result, Places Leisure is offering discounts or promotion codes on monthly membership prices.

- **Health and Wellbeing**

A new 12-week physical activity intervention programme that offers low impact exercise-based class for under-represented groups, such as those with learning difficulties is being introduced. The programme is funded through Epping Forest Health and Wellbeing Public Health Community Grant and will run at Epping Sports Centre, Loughton, and Ongar Leisure Centre.

Places Leisure have been successful in securing additional funding to run more 6-week water-based exercise on referral programme for people with a range of mild to moderate health conditions.

The trampolining session at Ongar Leisure Centre delivered as part of Community, Culture and Wellbeing's disability inclusion project will continue as the Community, Culture and Wellbeing team has secured a further 3 years funding for the disability inclusion project for children and young people with special educational needs and disability.