

Report to the Council

Committee: Cabinet

Date: 16 December 2008

Portfolio Holder: Councillor C Whitbread

Item: 11

1. SUPPLEMENTARY ESTIMATES

Recommending:

- (1) That a supplementary estimate of £64,000 for 2008/09 to be funded from the Housing Revenue Account balances be approved to clear the backlog of major tree work and undertake additional shrub maintenance on Council-owned land;**
 - (2) That a capital supplementary estimate of £6,000 for 2008/09 be approved to undertake a feasibility study for the provision of a new Sports Hall at Waltham Abbey Swimming Pool; and**
 - (3) That a capital supplementary estimate of £25,000 for 2008/09 be approved to purchase additional refuse bins which will be subsequently financed by a grant from Essex County Council.**
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Housing Tree Maintenance Budget

1. The actual budget outturn for major tree maintenance on the Housing Revenue Account land for 2007/08 was £114,000. The budget for the current year is £118,000. In addition to major tree works, some basic tree work and replanting is undertaken on housing estates, funded from a separate grounds maintenance budget of £33,000 within the Housing Revenue Account.
2. The amount of maintenance work required to trees on housing land throughout the District continues to increase and has resulted in a backlog of work valued at approximately £26,000. In addition, an urgent programme of tree work is needed on the Shernbroke Road side of the Ninefields Estate, Waltham Abbey which includes felling of a number of trees, many of which are in danger of causing subsidence to properties, and extensive maintenance works to shrubs at a cost of approximately £38,000.
3. We are recommending that a supplementary estimate of £64,000 be approved, funded from the Housing Revenue Account balances in order to undertake the backlog of work and the tree work required on the Shernbroke Road side of the Ninefields Estates.
4. The proposed works will substantially improve the environment for residents living on the Shernbroke Road side of the Ninefields Estate and by clearing the backlog of tree work it will be possible to improve and tidy up a number of areas throughout the District.
5. We recommend as set out at the commencement of this report.

Waltham Abbey Swimming Pool – Feasibility

6. Earlier this year we received a report setting out issues arising from the dual use agreement for the Waltham Abbey Sports Centre, and in particular the lack of investment in the facilities. The building is owned by King Harold School and the Centre is in need of major investment. There appears little or no prospect in the short to medium term of any investment being forthcoming. The Sports Centre has a net expenditure cost of £359,000 for the current year. The facility has the lowest levels of participation given its restricted public opening hours.
7. We have, therefore, considered an alternative proposal of transferring some of the facilities, namely the sports hall and changing facilities, to the site of the Waltham Abbey Swimming Pool, a facility owned by the Council and managed by SLM as part of the current contract for the management of Council leisure centres. The provision of a modern sports hall at Waltham Abbey Swimming Pool is seen as advantageous by SLM and should result in a reduction in management fees overall given the consolidation on one site, economies of scale and the ability to cross-sell between the existing pool and fitness users and new users of a new sports hall.
8. At our request the Overview and Scrutiny Committee have added this suggestion to the terms of reference of the Leisure Task and Finish Panel.
9. The Panel met on 23 September 2008 and resolved to seek the funding for a feasibility study to assess:
 - (a) whether given local planning and other constraints, the sports hall could be constructed; and
 - (b) the estimated cost of construction including associated fees.
10. The views of the Panel are supported by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and we agree with their conclusions. Accordingly, we are recommending that a capital supplementary estimate of £6,000 be approved for the funding of a feasibility study. This study will not include detailed or intrusive site surveys but will recommend what surveys should be undertaken should the Council be minded to take the project further.

Recycling Initiative – Additional Refuse Bins

11. We are recommending approval of a capital supplementary estimate of £25,000 to purchase additional refuse bins during the current financial year, expenditure which will subsequently be financed by a grant from Essex County Council.
12. The County Council has agreed to provide the District Council with a capital grant of £25,000 in 2008/09 to assist with a recycling initiative, ie, the provision of refuse bins for flats.
13. We recommend as set out at the commencement of this report.