

Report to the Council

Committee: Cabinet

Date: 26 September 2006

Portfolio Holder: Councillor J Knapman

Item: 9(a)

1. SUPPLEMENTARY ESTIMATES – 2006/07

Recommending:

- (1) That a supplementary capital estimate of £15,500 be approved for the purchase of a portable skip-type compactor for the collection of trade waste and recycling material from the Civic Offices site;
 - (2) That a DDF supplementary estimate of £7,000 be approved to undertake remedial works to the Fisherman's Car Park in the Roding Valley Recreation Ground;
 - (3) That a DDF supplementary estimate of £10,000 be approved for the installation of a disabled toilet at Waltham Abbey Sports Centre in order to enable the relocation of the District Sportability Club;
 - (4) That a CSB supplementary estimate of £5,000 be approved to provide advice in relation to claims against the Council for subsidence to properties affected by preserved trees.
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Civic Offices – Refuse Collection and Disposal Arrangements

- 1.1 In order to enable a higher percentage of the waste generated to be recycled, the arrangements for refuse collection and disposal and paper recycling at the Civic Offices was changed last year and it was agreed, subject to the satisfactory outcome of a three month trial period, that eurobins be replaced with a portable compactor.
- 1.2 The trial period commenced in December 2005. There were initial problems with the compactor which had to be replaced with another machine which has remained on site longer than the three month trial period at no extra cost to the Council.
- 1.3 The compactor has worked well but three issues have arisen:
 - (a) the compactor needs emptying more frequently than originally estimated thereby increasing the transportation costs;
 - (b) there are limitations on the amount of bulky items that can be put into the compactor; and

(c) the agreement with the Council's existing waste contractor to take the compactor to its recycling facility has not worked because of their limitations in handling and sorting the material.

- 1.4 An alternative contractor has been identified who is in the process of constructing its own materials recycling facility which is closer to the Civic Offices. This contractor has guaranteed that the same percentage, between 80-90% will be recycled. The transportation and processing costs are less than the existing contractor which will help to offset the additional costs of the greater frequency of emptying that has been established. The purchase of a compactor is considered to be the most cost effective way to proceed and a supplementary capital estimate of £15,500 is sought. Savings on the annual revenue budget will be used to pay for the removal of bulky items that cannot be put into the compactor.
- 1.5 The change will enable a greater percentage of waste material from the Civic Offices to be recycled and will demonstrate the Council's commitment to improving its own performance on recycling at a time when asking residents of the District to do the same.

Fisherman's Car Park, Chigwell – Resurfacing and Maintenance

- 1.6 The Fisherman's Car Park in the Roding Valley Recreation Ground is used by members of the public wishing to visit the Roding Valley Nature Reserve.
- 1.7 Responsibility for the upkeep of the car park and the single-track roadway leading to it are the responsibility of the Council. However, no specific budget exists for the maintenance of these areas and consequently, only minor repair works have been undertaken in the past. As a result there has been a steady decline in the overall condition of the car park and it is now deemed essential that proper remedial works are undertaken to ensure that the car park is safe and fit for purpose. The access roadway is in good condition and no remedial works are currently required.
- 1.8 The level of usage of the car park does not warrant a properly constructed car park and a supplementary DDF estimate of £7,000 is sought in order to bring the area up to a more reasonable and acceptable standard.
- 1.9 Currently, the District Council is negotiating the terms of long leases with both Buckhurst Hill Parish Council and Loughton Town Council for the Roding Valley Recreational Ground areas within their boundaries. It is therefore anticipated that in future, maintenance of the car park will be transferred.

Waltham Abbey Sports Centre – Installation of Disabled Toilet

- 1.10 In October 2005, the Council in partnership with West Essex School Sport Partnership launched the District's first sports activity club for children and young people with learning and physical disabilities.
- 1.11 Currently, Epping Forest Sportability is based at Oakview School in Loughton and operates on a regular weekly basis on Saturdays. The sessions are delivered by qualified and experienced coaches and, in addition, a range of events, day trips and activities are provided during school holiday periods throughout the year.
- 1.12 All Sportability staff are currently employed by the West Essex School Sport Partnership through the New Opportunities Fund and Sport England Community

Sports Coach Funding. The Council's Leisure Services Sports Development Team provides support and direction for the programme.

- 1.13 Although the Oakview School was an adequate site for the initial Sportability programme, participation levels are limited due to the constraints of the building. The long-term aim for the club is to make it accessible to a much wider audience and to enable siblings and carers to be involved.
- 1.14 The Council has been successful in securing £7,000 revenue funding over the next two years from the Children's Fund Essex, to widen the opportunities available through Sportability. This could be achieved by transferring the club to a larger venue where a much wider programme of activities can be provided.
- 1.15 The Waltham Abbey Sports Centre is accessible for wheelchair users and provides facilities for trampolining, which is an excellent sport for disabled youngsters. The Centre does not currently have a disabled toilet and space for a new toilet facility is not available in the Centre's existing changing facilities. However, the Head Teacher of King Harold School, who currently have a joint use agreement with the Council, has agreed for the staff PE room located in the Sports Centre, to be converted into a disabled toilet facility.
- 1.16 The provision of a disabled toilet and subsequent full disabled access to Waltham Abbey Sports Centre would secure the transfer of Epping Forest Sportability and enable many more children with disabilities to access sports and leisure provision who currently do not have the opportunity to do so. A supplementary DDF estimate of £10,000 is sought for the installation of the toilet.

Preserved Trees – Claims for Subsidence

- 1.17 Where an application is made to fell or reduce a tree covered by a tree preservation order because the tree is claimed to be causing subsidence problems, and the application is refused (or approved) and the applicant claims that losses have been sustained, the Council may be liable to pay compensation if the losses can be shown to be directly attributed to that decision.
- 1.18 The Council's Landscape Officer has dealt with these issues in the past by ensuring that adequate professional advice is provided with such applications, and that this advice is properly assessed by an independent structural engineer to test the validity of the claim. Since the Council does not have access to such specialist advice in-house, the services of a consultant structural engineer are used to provide a detailed assessment and report. As a result, the likelihood of claims against the Council being upheld has been significantly reduced.
- 1.19 On average, the cost of using a consultant structural engineer to review the papers has been approximately £500 per case. There has never been any specific budget for this expenditure and in the past these intermittent costs have been met from the Development Control Consultants' budget.
- 1.20. It is estimated that there would normally be between five and ten cases requiring the input of a consultant structural engineer in any one year and a supplementary CSB estimate of £5,000 is sought. The provision of specialist external professional advice is considered to be essential in order to protect the Council from compensation claims.