

Report to the Council

Committee: Cabinet

Date: 21 February 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.

Grounds Maintenance

The grounds team had to take an unexpected break from their scheduled winter works to help clear the recent downfall of snow from paths and car parks at the Civic offices as well as at many of our Sheltered Housing units also badly affected by the recent cold snap. Armed with bags of grit, shovels and a tractor mounted snowplough the grounds staff worked hard to ensure safe access was maintained for our staff and visitors.

The autumn and winter months are when our main shrub & tree planting takes place, which this year, also included the planting of over 15,000 spring flowering bulbs. These new bulbs areas are located on various green spaces across the district and will provide a welcome splash of spring colour for many years.

Parking

We have had our first snow of the year and we had the car parks gritted when required. The snow and icy conditions have had no adverse impact on parking services. The pay and display machines have worked well, a few frozen money slots were quickly defrosted by Civil Enforcement Officers (CEO) from our partner contractor NSL. We will monitor the weather and grit car parks accordingly.

Due to the free parking on weekends in December we deployed CEO to Epping Forest Shopping Park to assist with the marshalling of the car park in the run up to busy Christmas shopping period. This worked well and we will consider doing the same next year.

Loughton Broadway Parking Review:

At the December meeting I informed Members that a meeting will be held once officers of the North Essex Parking Partnership (NEPP) have assessed and collated responses to the public consultation. I will call the meeting as soon as I have confirmation that officers are ready with the information, I am confident that this meeting will be soon.

Epping Town Parking Review:

The Epping Town Permit scheme became live on 21 January. The scheme is working well and has had the desired effect road safety and traffic flow has improved. I am pleased that we were able to accommodate local businesses by issuing Business Permits. As with all parking related schemes there has been the displacement effect. I have received complaints from residents where some displaced vehicles are now parking. We will have to consider these new roads very carefully and if majority of residents are in favour of new parking restrictions then I shall put these forward to NEPP.

Tariff Change:

In September last year the Council agreed to update its car parking tariff. This was to address pressure on car parks and assist local businesses. Notices advising of the changes have gone up in the car parks as well as in the local paper. The change will be coming into force on the 4th March 2019.

Countrycare

Since the last report Countrycare has worked on six different sites over eight days utilising on average 13 volunteers on each occasion.

At Chigwell Heath we spent a day eradicating the aspen and birch saplings and another creating glades in the woodland. In Linder's Field we continued with the fence erection which is now nearly finished. At All Saint's Church Nazeing we made a compost bin and planted up some gaps in the hedgerow. At Bobbingworth we renovated the hibernaculum making them more attractive for reptiles. Abbotts Wood received a new bridge connecting the wood to the recreation ground. And at Tree Top Meadow (the St John's development site) we planted a huge 424 trees with only nine volunteers on a very cold day.

On other sites without volunteers we have been doing routine maintenance of footpaths and strimming. The winter work plan is underway with coppicing and 225 trees are planned to be planted in February over four sites.

Leisure Management

I shall be able to give a verbal update as the Leisure Management Partnership Board would have taken place on 13 February.

Waste Management

Collections over the recent snowfall did not cause any significant disruption to services.

Biffa are considering rationalising collection routes in the coming months. This is normal practice to review collection arrangements every few years, for example to consider the growth in the District since the commencement of contract in 2014. The changes will result in a small reorganisation of collection routes (around 2,300 properties or 3.86% of all properties in the district). This could mean a change in the collection day for the affected residents. Members will be made aware of the relevant roads through the Bulletin. Affected residents will be informed through bin hangers which will give them details on the new collection arrangements. Biffa intend to introduce the change in collection towards the end of May.

At the last meeting I informed Members that there will be a change in the sub-contractor that Biffa employ to collect textiles from the door step. Once the new contractor has been appointed we are likely to see an increase in the collectable materials for example records, toys and books.

The district has again sold more compost bins via the ECC scheme than any other district. There will be a joint ECC/EFDC public information meeting on Saturday 2nd March at the civic offices on composting.