

Report to the Council

Committee: Cabinet

Date: 19 September 2019

Subject: Contracts and Technical Services Portfolio

Portfolio Holder: Councillor N Avey

Recommending:

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

Leisure Management Contract

The key performance indicators continue to trend upwards across all indicators except in Under 8's swimming. Following feedback from the Leisure Contract Partnership Board, KPI reporting is now taking place quarterly rather than monthly.

The replacement of the Sports Hall floor at Epping Sports Centre has been completed over the Summer. The subfloor was, as expected, in very poor condition due to historic water ingress. The new floor is expected to last for three to four years to hopefully coincide with the completion of a new centre at St Johns Road. The roof repairs at Epping Sports Centre have also been completed over the Summer.

The new Combined Heat & Power (CHP) unit has been installed at Loughton Leisure Centre and will be commissioned at the end of August. The CHP should result in significant reductions in utility costs, reductions in energy usage and better environmental performance.

The options appraisal work continues regarding Ongar Leisure Centre. The condition survey work is almost completed and a report is expected shortly. The overall options appraisal outcomes will be reported to the next Leisure Contract Partnership Board.

The new Waltham Abbey Swimming Pool and Gym continues to be popular although KPI numbers appear to have stabilised over the last three months.

Parking

The parking review is progressing several different elements to look at ways in which improvements, initiatives or new technology can have a positive impact on parking in the district. A programme of improvements to EFDC car parks is being developed, which will include LED lighting, CCTV and environmental improvements. Further feasibility work is also being carried out in terms of the installation of EV charging points.

A shortlist of nominations for new NEPP (North Essex Parking Partnership) improvement schemes has been selected and sent for consultation with Town and Parish Councils and members. The final selected schemes will be submitted to the October meeting of NEPP. EFDC can submit six schemes. The selected schemes will be published in the Member's Bulletin.

Waste Management

A Task and Finish Panel has been set up by the Overview and Scrutiny committee to review various issues. The recommendations of this review will be made available once the review has been completed. As part of the review the task and finish panel will visit the Materials Recycling Facility (MRF) in Edmonton in September, which is one of the UK's largest materials recycling facilities (MRF).

There has been an issue with the collection of waste from communal bin areas, where residents have been leaving batteries, Waste Electric and Electronic Equipment (WEEE) items and textiles in bags and placing them on top of the bins lids as instructed to do for collection. The issue is that on several occasions other residents place these bags in the waste bins believing these are rubbish. To try and alleviate this issue and make recycling of these items more prominent and easier in communal bin areas we are going to trial a new small wheeled bin liveried specifically for these items.

There has been a change in Biffa's textile bank provider on the districts bring bank sites. This has been caused by LMB (the previous supplier) ceasing trading. A new supplier based within the district have been engaged and the process of changing the banks is taking place. There will be a period of adjustment and any issues that arise will be minimalised.

Environmental Protection and Drainage (Formerly the Engineering, Drainage and Water Team)

Rabbit populations at Bobbingworth Nature Reserve have grown significantly in recent years and they have been burrowing through the walls of the legacy landfill site and compromising the remediation system. This has necessitated rabbit control measures on the site but unfortunately this has met with some resistance from some users of the site who have vandalised rabbit traps and meant traps had to be concreted into the ground at significant cost. We have engaged with the parish council and they have published a letter from us to residents and through social media explaining the need to reduce damage to the landfill site so it can continue to be enjoyed as public open space.

Proactive inspections of rural drainage systems have found numerous sewage plants causing pollution across the district prior to complaints of odour or pollution being reported. These have required owners to improve, repair or replace systems. Environment Agency guidance for discharges is being updated in January 2020 and aligns with the council's responsibilities regarding river water quality under the Water Framework Directive.

Inspection and enforcement for sub-standard private water supplies that pose a potential danger to public health remains on-going. In 2015 the Council received a letter from the Drinking Water Inspectorate (DWI) noting our failure to discharge our statutory duties and complete risk assessments of high risk private water supplies. This year two horticultural nursery site case studies inspected by the council were featured in the DWI Chief Inspectors report and a letter of praise from a local inspector was received acknowledging strong progress. The challenge was noted in improving supplies on complex horticultural sites with many workers and their families in residence. The team is considering charging for private water supply services in future in specific circumstances; these services are currently provided free of charge and EFDC are very unusual in this respect.

The Council flood response service is welcoming and training two officers who will be prepared to provide advice and assistance to residents in the event of a future flood. The district has not had a major flood event over the last three years or so, however the risk remains real and continues to be assessed and reduced through small and large-scale proactive work. This includes management of Council flood storage areas and assets, engaging with Environment

Agency flood storage schemes and on a smaller scale through responding to consultations from the planning department regarding Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems and land drainage applications. These systems slow the flow of water and reduce the peak volumes in rivers and ditches that can contribute to flooding.

Countrycare

Countrycare has project managed volunteer tasks on eight sites over eight volunteer days which include two extra volunteer days on Tuesdays. A total of 98 volunteer days have been given to Countrycare with an average of 12 volunteers per task. Countryside furniture has been replaced and maintained and there was much cutting and raking of meadows and removal of invasive species. Four new volunteers have been taken on in this period including a work experience student for the summer.

A Corporate Team Building day was arranged for a group that came from London wanting to do some conservation work. They set to raking Tree Top Meadow and erecting bat boxes. A guest speaker was invited to talk about Project Beeswax at Bobbingworth local nature reserve. This is a project that involves recording the buzzing frequency of bees to identify them to species level using computer software. Research on the software has taken place on Bobbingworth Nature Reserve.

Survey work on the Special Roadside Verges has taken place and butterfly and reptile surveys have been on-going. Four barn owl chicks were ringed that were discovered nesting in a box Countrycare had erected on one of the Reserves.

During the summer, Countrycare held a Teddy Bears' Picnic in Linder's Field local nature reserve which 16 children attended and was much enjoyed by the children, the parents and the staff. Also, a guided walk was organised from Epping to Toot Hill and 18 people attended.

Grounds Maintenance

The Grounds Maintenance teams have been kept very busy over the summer months as the long days and warm wet weather has encouraged continued vegetation growth. Hedge and shrub cutting continues at a pace with priority being given to highway site lines and sheltered housing accommodation. The fleet of ride on mowers continue to perform well with few breakdowns or mechanical issues. Additional contract work includes the maintenance of trees and verges along the newly adopted Meridian Way Estate, Waltham Abbey on behalf of Essex County.

At North Weald Airfield additional grass cutting by the Grounds Maintenance team in the former golf range has allowed the Model Aircraft club to continue flying as their previous home close to the runway is being developed by the National Police Air Service.

With the closure of the former Swimming Pool at Roundhill's in Waltham Abbey access to the Playing Fields behind is restricted and has prevented the Town Council from maintaining the site. Grounds Maintenance have assisted with the cutting of the fields as required and discussions are underway between all parties to find a more permanent solution.

New facilities for the Nursery are now in place at Town Mead Yard in Waltham Abbey, including a workshop, rest room, toilets, showers and a locker room. Additionally, a new tree and shrub storage area has also been developed with the fencing of the former Park keepers house. The team are busy moving equipment into their new home and are looking to move in permanently with the closure of the Pylles Lane site over the coming months.