

Neighbourhood Services

2016/17 Review

Service Plan Performance

Neighbourhood Services (NS) provides a range of key front line services including waste collection/recycling, street cleansing, parks and open spaces, off street car parking, a ranger Service, bereavement services, and oversees the operation of the one stop shops which are provided jointly with Warwickshire County Council.

There are over 4 million waste collections carried out each year, with over 99% of them completed on the scheduled day. In addition to the kerbside collection service, recycling is supported through the provision of bring sites, recycling from flats and schools and individual waste advice visits. The Council's recycling rate is approximately 56%, which is well ahead of the national target of 50% by 2020. Collections over the Christmas and New Year Period were carried out with very few issues reported.

The standard of street cleansing remains high due a variety of programmed cleansing regimes, and the work of the Rapid Response Teams removing graffiti, fly tipping etc. The Contract Services Team is also responsible for the removal of abandoned vehicles.

Some aspects of the grounds maintenance contract have not been delivered as required this year due to contractor staffing issues. This has resulted in a significant financial deduction and the request for a robust improvement plan for the coming year. Despite this the Green Flag and Green Heritage Awards have been retained for Jephson Gardens, and Warwick Town Council and Leamington Town Council were assisted in achieving the Britain in Bloom Gold Award. The contractor also plays a key role in providing the high quality bowling greens at Victoria Park where the men's and women's National Bowls competitions are held each year.

The Bereavement Services Team has continued to provide a high quality service and further service enhancements are currently being considered.

The One Stop Shops continue to provide a range of services to customers in Warwick, Leamington, Whitnash, Kenilworth and Lillington. The first stage of a review of the service has been completed, and the Executive have now agreed to work up more detailed proposals. The review will consider the potential benefits of introducing new technology into the One Stop Shops in line with the Council's Digital Transformation Strategy.

Risks

The future of two of the council's multi storey car parks continues to be an area of concern, although work is progressing to identify replacements. The impact on parking in the town centres is also being considered during the period that these car parks will be closed.

Internal audits of bereavement services and grounds maintenance were carried out this year, both receiving a "substantial" level of assurance.

Workforce Planning

The last 12 months have been extremely challenging for the Contract Services Team due to gaps in the establishment, long term sickness and covering issues relating to the multi-storey car parks. Additional resources are now in place including a second Senior Contract Officer, a Car Parks Project Manager, and other staff have now returned to work.

The restructure of Bereavement Services will be completed in 2017 as part of the broader review, designed to improve resilience, remain competitive and more flexible in the hours it operates.

A review of the Ranger Service has commenced and will be completed in 2017/18.

Budget

Neighbourhood Services achieved the 5% (£30k) saving on discretionary budgets in 2016/17.

Income from recycling credits is likely to be in line with budget estimates of approximately £440k.

Car parking income continues to remain strong due to the increased usage and no disruption as a result of bad weather, with anticipated income of just over £3m for this year.

The charging policy for waste receptacles has resulted in a significant saving, the details of which were included in a report to Overview & Scrutiny and Finance & Audit in February 2017.

Income from Bereavement Services has continued to increase with an anticipated income this year of approximately £1.5m.

Expenditure on improving playgrounds, parks and open spaces this year is approximately £550k

Work Streams and Projects 2016/17

The areas improved as part of the Council's Green Space Strategy include:-

Cubbington Waterworks
Redland Rec
Wych Elm Drive
Priory Pools
Dragons Cottage
Villiers Street
Millbank
Victoria Park Skate Park
Avonside Play Area

Work to procure the specialist contractors required to deliver the £1.4m Pump Room Gardens project has commenced, with work due to start later this year.

Green Space Projects Planned for 2017/18

Ebourne Rec
Clarendon Square
The Holt
Mason Avenue
Shrublands
Saltisford Common
Bates Memorial
Fieldgate Lane/ Golf Lane
Hawkes Meadow/ Harbury
Victoria Park
St Nicholas Park

A new ICT system is required to support the operation of Bereavement Services, which will be implemented in 2017/18 subject to Executive approval in March.

NS have been asked to carry out a review of the current approach to enforcement, with the aim to provide a briefing paper to the Executive in April 2017.

Any Changes Required to Service Area Plan

There are no changes required at this stage.