

## **Neighbourhood Services Portfolio Holder Statement to O&S meeting 8<sup>th</sup> October 2013**

Over the last 12 months Neighbourhood Services has achieved its key performance measures and is on course to over achieve its KPI's for 2013/14. See attached KPI's.

Plans are in place to achieve the financial savings from the discretionary budgets already been included in the MTFS and to identify additional savings that can be delivered towards meeting the Council's budget deficit identified from 2015/16.

The highly successful retendering of the integrated waste and GM contract generated over £1m of savings per annum. That resulted in the mobilisation of two new contractors with Veolia and English Landscapes and the realignment of the SITA contract waste contract.

There were as we expected some issues regarding the demobilisation of the GM contract and the restructure between SITA and Veolia but we are through those now and all three contracts are working well.

There is still an outstanding issue with Glendale over our claim for the cost of dilapidations works carried out to the Stratford Road depot and these are now with our legal team to claim monies owed to WDC by Glendale. There were some minor issues when the new GM contractor started linked to the unseasonal weather but these were resolved quickly once they recruited the staffing numbers identified in the contract.

We have worked closely with SITA to reduce the number of weekly sack collections that were still operating and have now introduced a further 300 properties onto the AWC's. There were some issues with waste collections, but again these have been resolved and the number of queries during the first 3 months following the take on of the contract was 75% below the number of issues we had to deal with in 2008.

The introduction of Rapid Response Teams for GM has worked well and helped keep on top of the "events" taking place in our parks and open spaces during the summer months. This team is expected to come into its own in the winter months expanding the amount of sustainable planting across the District which has seen praise from Britain in Bloom judges.

Tree maintenance is now delivered by WCC Forestry Department. A service level agreement is in place and as we approach autumn when most tree work is carried out we will see the benefit of a tree gang operating in one area to undertake work.

With regard to parking we have as a result of the move to linear charges in Warwick and the excellent summer weather seen a significant increase in car park income. As a result revised budget for off-street income has been increased by £75,000 to £2.5m for 13/14. The 14/15 budget will remain at £2.5m which will mean there are no plans to increase off-street parking charges.

With regard on-street enforcement the WCC T&FG have recommended that the service be competitively tendered with the Cabinet is still to make a final decision on 17<sup>th</sup> October. Any future planning for this service is on hold until the decision of this meeting is known. If the move is to externalise the service through a private contractor the Council will be faced with the decision to include or exclude their off-street enforcement. There will be issues of TUPE and redundancies to a number of staff and moving forward this Council will have to decide on how it wants the car parks to operate for future years without putting our income at risk.

We recognise that there are challenging times ahead not just Neighbourhood Services but the Council given the budget position. We were the first service area to complete an intervention and drive out savings. We are now in the process of reviewing the service so as to identify efficiencies that can help generate further savings.

One of the key outcomes of the contract renewal was the council's decision not to continue to share the income earned from recycling with the contractor on a 50/50 basis but instead allow the contractor to take all the income and pay WDC a fixed sum each year. This gave the council financial certainty which is important at this moment in time.

In 2012/13 WDC earned £380k as our 50% of the total recycling income. SITA offered WDC £430k per year over the life of the contract. We are aware that recycling income is currently fallen due to reductions in the amount of paper collected and commodity prices being paid.

We have seen an increase in the level of plastic recycling since the introduction of the new service, which increased our costs by £200k a year. The increase in the plastic tonnage collected will be approximately 275 tonne per annum, which will result in additional recycling credit income of £11k per annum (also £30k for the 50% share of the additional plastic materials).

The risk register has been updated throughout the year. There is an increase in the risk associated with the transfer of on-street enforcement and but the risk of not meeting our car park income targets has been reduced, as has the risk relating to Ash die back.

The following projects have been successfully delivered in the last 6 months. Mobilisation of the new contracts for GM and Street Cleaning / New P&D car park at Abbey Fields / New play area Abbey Fields / Linear charging in Warwick / transfer of Public Conveniences to Property.

The following projects are planned over the next 6 months. Appointment and handover to new Head of Service / complete move to locality working in Warwick / complete savings review.

Overall it has been a challenging but successful 6 months for Neighbourhood Services with more and more challenges to come as we face up to the budget deficit in 2015/16.

## QUESTIONS

### **The Waste Management contract and how it is working out especially how and why things went so badly in Kenilworth and how much officer time was taken up with the problems?**

To put the level of service issues into context, the Council carries out over 4 million waste collections each year, with the service delivered as scheduled 99.9% of the time.

However we are aware that waste collection is an important front line service that affects every resident in the district, and any service issue causes concern and inconvenience.

Teething problems on the new contract were not limited to one part of the district, as there were a few issues in each of the towns, although Kenilworth had the fewest number of service issues.

The Contract Service Team and SITA did respond very quickly to service issues, although there were on-going problems in some areas for a short period of time which have now been resolved.

As waste collection is one of a range of duties of the Area Officers it is not possible to accurately calculate how much time was spent in relation to these issues.

### **Tree management and maintenance – since the work previously done by WDC team was handed over to WCC, is he satisfied or not with the service we are getting ?**

There have been operational benefits as the WCC Forestry Team has far more resources and specialist plant and equipment enabling them to better respond to a range of arboriculture work.

There are still some issues with communication and information from WCC on work completions and works programmes. A meeting is being held with WCC in October to discuss these issues and performance against the measures set out in the service level agreement.

WDC is not able to comment on the service relating to highway trees as this is the responsibility of WCC.

## The woodland at Oakley Wood as per Cllr Copping's queries

### Oakley Wood Update

Oakley Wood is now approaching 6 years in ownership and management by Warwick District Council. In that time a management plan has been written and is being implemented, funded through timber sales from thinning of the woodland, which exceeded expectations.

The current management plan was written in 2009 and sets out four key objectives. These are;

- **To maintain and enhance the visual amenity of the woodland as a feature within the local landscape.** This is being achieved through a management practice known as 'Continuous Cover Forestry' by thinning the trees to provide greater diversity in age and structure.
- **To safeguard and enhance the biodiversity value of the woodland and associated habitats.** Present and future management is improving the biodiversity value of the woodland, such as increasing the proportion of native trees and shrubs. Partnering with Warwickshire Wildlife Trust this will ensure that this is continued and enhanced even further.
- **To provide facilities for informal public access and environmental education and work with local interest groups.** WDC has formed a good relationship with the Friends of Oakley Wood and are to be consulted on any revision to the management plan. They wish to volunteer where possible and hope to hold more events and activities, including horse logging events. The Council have worked with the probation service on a number of projects within the wood. Ride management and tree works will ensure good public access that is safe to use.
- **To maintain the woodland as a renewable natural resource to be sustainably harvested in support of social and economic activities.** This has been achieved through the thinning of woodland to produce forest products and at the same time generate income that has been secured to fund many of the other objectives listed above. Through the sale of timber products and various grants available the management of the woods is self-funding.

Warwick District Council is now close to formalising a partnership arrangement with Warwickshire Wildlife Trust and at the same time continues its good relations with the Friends of Oakley Wood. The current management plan is being revised, with support from WWT, with input from the Friends. The objectives will remain the same but the action plan will reflect the next 5 years of work.

This winter programme of ride management clearance will ensure many of the objectives listed above will be achieved particularly with respect to improving biodiversity and public access.

It is envisaged that another large scale thinning will not be undertaken until 2018.

Further support to the Friends will continue and that there will be more future events and activities held within the woodland, together with better interpretation.

## **OVERVIEW OF CONTRACT RELET**

### **Pluses**

All contracts have been fully mobilised with implementation fairly seamlessly considering the scope and scale of the services involved.

Time critical services such as grave digging and bowling green maintenance were implemented successfully.

An improvement in the quality of the council's parks and open spaces has been achieved.

The high standard of street cleansing has been maintained, and cleansing of the council's destination parks has improved.

Better cover in parks in the evenings and at weekends due to the new Parks Teams.

The work required to increase the range of plastics recycled was implemented successfully.

The changeover of bring banks, schools and flats to comingled collections was implemented successfully.

The Council has held Partnership Meetings with all contractors, with commitments made by all parties to continue to improve services and deliver efficiencies.

Jephson Gardens retained its Green Flag status.

Leamington in Bloom and Warwick in Bloom both achieved gold with the support of WDC and its contractors.

Flexibility of contract resources is enabling the Council to work closer with forums, residents and the police, to improve environmental quality, and address local issues/concerns.

### **Minuses**

Demobilisation of the previous grounds maintenance contract has taken longer than expected due to legal issues relating to the councils depot, and financial deductions.

Self-monitoring by contractors is not yet embedded requiring greater than expected input by the Contract Services Team.

Implementation of the Waste Contract created more issues than expected due to the contractor reorganising resources.

Some issues with the watering of hanging baskets which will be addressed ready for next year.

Not as a result of the new contract, however even with the addition of mixed plastics there is predicted to be a fall in the level of recycling this year, mainly due to a significant fall in paper tonnage.

## **Risk Management**

### Key Risks Identified:-

Accidents / Health and Safety of Contractors

Failure of contractor to deliver service

Flooding

Direct injury or damage caused by trees

Ability to deliver green space strategy

Failure to renew partnership agreement for on-street parking.

### **Impact on FFF**

There is a need to continue to develop the skills knowledge and experience of contract and client staff to ensure they are able to operate the contracts in line with health and safety legislation and industry best practice.

Contract Services staff will need to continue to play a key role at least in the short term to ensure services are delivered to the required standards, work programmes developed and implemented effectively.

Flooding is a corporate risk which can impact on all services, which is being managed at a strategic level within the Health and Community Protection Service Area.

Trees are managed on behalf of WDC by WCC under a service level agreement which is to be reviewed shortly in order to ascertain the service improvements required.

The Green Space Strategy has funding for improvements on some sites although a further £5 million will be required to deliver the strategy between now and 2026.

The future role of Parking Services is dependent on the decisions that will be made by WCC in relation to procurement of the on street service.

### **Further Impact and Plans**

Should WCC decide to subject on street parking enforcement to competitive tendering , WDC will need to start to plan how this may impact on the management and delivery of the service, especially in relation to WDC's off street car parks.

Funding of services will be an on-going issue, balancing the need to invest in service improvements, maintain and replace assets, and deliver savings.

### **How We Will Make Future Savings**

Parking is aiming to operate a more efficient service by moving to a locality based method of operation, reducing travelling costs and down time.

Due to the transfer of all recycling income to SITA the Contract Services Team has changed the focus of some of the team, who will now look at service efficiencies, income generation, more effective communication with residents, and service innovation.

### **Future Strategic Plans and Strategy**

On-going reviews of the Green Space Strategy as a result of consultation feedback, expenditure of the Public Amenity Reserve, and progress against the initial Green Space Action Plan.

Review of youth provision such as skateboarding and BMX facilities as part of the work being undertaken by the Play Working Party.

Development of a Street Scene Strategy to include street cleansing standards, litter bin provision, vegetation control, tackling fly tipping/fly posting etc.

Continuing to play a key role in the Warwickshire Waste Partnership.