

Neighbourhood Services

Performance Review 2015/16

Service Plan Performance

Neighbourhood Services provides a range of key front line services including waste collection/recycling, street cleansing, parks and open spaces, off street car parking, bereavement services, and oversees the operation of the One Stop Shops which are provided jointly with Warwickshire County Council.

There are approximately 4 million waste collections carried out each year, with 99.9% of them completed on the scheduled day. The Council's recycling rate is approximately 56%, which is well ahead of the national target of 50% by 2020.

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 maintenance of parks and open spaces continues to improve by working closely with the Council's grounds maintenance contractor and other partner organisations. The Green Flag and Green Heritage Award have been retained for Jephson Gardens, in addition to the BALI National Landscapes Award. The NS team also supported Warwick Town Council in achieving the Britain in Bloom Gold Award, and Leamington Town Council in achieving Silver Gilt. NS also play 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 despite the challenges of operating in the centre of a construction site, due to the Crematorium building and car park improvements project, which has now been completed.

The shared Customer Service Centre with WCC ceased in 2016 due to concerns over performance and increasing costs. All WDC calls are now managed within each Service Area.

The One Stop Shops continue to provide a range of services to customers in Warwick, Leamington, Whitnash, Kenilworth and Lillington. A review of the service is currently underway to better understand customer needs, the services being provided, and potential benefits of implementing the Council's digital strategy.

Risks

The main risk identified by NS at present is the condition of two of the Council's multi storey car parks. Surveys have identified that Linen Street (Warwick) is coming to the end of its operational life, and may have to close in the next 6 to 12 months. Covent Garden (Leamington) which required a significant amount of investment is to be rebuilt as part of the Riverside House relocation project.

Workforce Planning

Over the last year recruitment to vacant posts has become more difficult, especially in relation to the Ranger Service. Even after numerous rounds of recruitment there are still two vacant posts, and the delay in employing the required number of staff has hindered the roll out of the new service.

Additional posts have been created and recruited to the Green Space Team, due to the increased work load and the number of projects that need to be delivered in the next three years.

The repatriation of staff from the Customer Service Centre has added two extra posts to the Business Support Team.

Due to the numerous issues currently affecting the car parking element of the service, it is anticipated that additional project management resources will be required over the next 2 years.

A review of the staffing structure for Bereavement Services will be carried out in 2016/17 to ensure that there is a resilient management structure, and that the range of services provided can be developed.

Budget

Neighbourhood Services achieved the 2.5% saving on discretionary budgets in 2015/16, and have identified a further 5% saving (£30k) for 2016/17.

Income from recycling credits is likely to be in line with budget estimates of approximately £425k.

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

The decision to take back the responsibility for WDC calls delivered savings of £170k, and avoided additional costs of £250k by continuing to operate a shared Customer Service Centre with WCC.

The cost of providing waste collection receptacles (wheeled, bins, boxes and bags) continues to rise as they begin to fail, are lost or damaged. Members have agreed to implement a charging policy from June 2016 in order to help fund this ongoing budget pressure.

Repairs to the multi storey car parks and ongoing maintenance costs are currently being evaluated, and are likely to become a significant budget issue.

It has been agreed to increase car park charges in 2016/17, with aim of increasing income by approximately £170k per annum.

Income from Bereavement Services out turned above expectations at £1.4m, even with the disruption caused by the building improvements to the Crematorium.

Work Streams and Projects

The £1.2million refurbishment of Oakley Wood Crematorium has been completed successfully, with improved chapel facilities and additional car parking capacity.

The Green Space Team has completed a number of projects as part of the roll out of the Green Space Strategy which include:-

St Johns Playing Field, Kenilworth
Eagle Recreation Ground, Leamington
Roxburgh Croft, Leamington
St. Michaels Open Space, Warwick
Stamford Gardens, Leamington

Other projects completed include:-

Jephson Gardens sensory garden, poppy memorial and Chelsea exhibit
Victoria Park irrigation system
Oakley Wood Crematorium Landscaping
Improved security measures at Shrublands Park

Green Space Strategy planned improvements for the next 2 years include:-

Ebourne Close, Kenilworth
Redland Recreation Ground, Whitnash
Cublington Waterworks, Leamington
Wych Elm Drive, Leamington
Villiers Street, Leamington
Priory Pools, Warwick
Shrublands Park, Leamington
The Holt, Leamington
Mason Avenue, Leamington
Saltisford Common, Warwick

Other planned projects:-

Pump Room Gardens project, Leamington

Country Park, Bishops Tachbrook
St. Nicholas Park, Warwick
Victoria Park skate park and play area, Leamington

Any Changes Required to Service Area Plan

The decision to end the shared Customer Service Centre with WCC has meant that the responsibility for taking WDC calls has passed to each individual Service Area, therefore no longer the responsibility of NS.