

Neighbourhood Services
Portfolio Holder Statement
2017/18

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, a Ranger Service, bereavement services, and oversees the operation of the one stop shops which are provided jointly with Warwickshire County Council.

Waste Collection

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. Unfortunately collections over the Christmas Period were disrupted this year due to the bad weather, with some green waste and recycling collections cancelled to enable all residual waste collections to be completed. All services were quickly returned to normal in early January.

Street Cleansing

The standard of street cleansing remains high across the District due to a variety of programmed cleansing regimes, and the work of the Rapid Response Teams removing graffiti, fly tipping etc. The Council is working with an organisation called Clean Up Britain to deliver a high profile campaign to try to reduce littering over the next 12 months, and also working with Rugby Borough Council to use enforcement powers more effectively.

Green Spaces

Green Flag and Green Heritage Awards have been retained for Jephson Gardens, with an additional Green Flag being awarded for Oakley Woods in 2017. The Council also supported Warwick Town Council and Leamington Town Council in achieving the Britain in Bloom Gold Award. The Service Area 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.

Bereavement Services

The Bereavement Services Team has continued to provide a high quality service, and has now moved to operating the Oakley Wood Crematorium six days a week. This gives customers greater flexibility when arranging a funeral, and provides additional income to support the delivery of the service.

One Stop Shops

The One Stop Shops are operated in conjunction with Warwickshire County Council, and have been subject to review over the last 12 months. Due to the fall in demand for face to face services, and the implementation of the Council's Digital Transformation Strategy, it is proposed to change the way WDC services are delivered at Whitnash and Lillington Libraries.

Off-Street Car Parking

The Council operates 3 multi-storey car parks and 24 surface car parks, and also provide a managed service on behalf of the Royal Priors Shopping Centre. The provision of parking enforcement and a range of other site assurance work is undertaken by the Ranger Service.

Risks

The concerns relating to the Council's multi-storey car parks are being addressed with the proposed rebuilding of Covent Garden Car Park in Leamington, and an options appraisal being carried out for Linen Street Car Park in Warwick.

Internal audits of waste collection and street cleansing services were carried out in 2017, both receiving a "substantial" level of assurance.

Funding has been secured to implement a new ICT system for Bereavement Services as the current system is unlikely to be supported effectively in coming years.

Workforce Planning

The redesign of Bereavement Services was completed last year, to provide the necessary resources to operate the crematorium 6 days a week.

The redesign of the remainder of Neighbourhood Service was completed in 2017, with additional posts added to the establishment in order to increase capacity and improve resilience. Unfortunately the last few months have been extremely challenging for the team due to difficulty filling some posts, long term sickness and some staff leaving the Council. Three new Area Officers and a Car Park Manager have now been recruited, and funding secured to appoint an additional Green Space Development Officer.

Budget

Waste Collection

Income from recycling credits is likely to be in line with budget estimates of approximately £450k.

Green Spaces

Expenditure on improving the security of parks, open spaces and car parks this year is approximately £182k

Expenditure on improving playgrounds, parks and open spaces this year is approximately £781k, with further expenditure of £545k planned for 2018/19.

The Pump Room Gardens project has an estimated value of £1.4m, funded by Heritage Lottery Fund, the Council and the Friends of the Pump Rooms.

Car Parking

Car parking income continues to remain strong even with some disruption as a result of bad weather, with anticipated income of just over £3m for this year.

The estimated capital costs to increase car parking capacity in Leamington as part of the displacement strategy are in the region of £674k.

Bereavement Services

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

Work Streams and Projects

Green Spaces

The areas improved as part of the Council's Green Space Strategy for 2017/18 include:-

- Castle Farm (new play equipment)
- Abbey Fields (surfacing)
- Fieldgate Lane (new play area)
- The Holt – (new play equipment)
- Shrublands – (tree work and natural play area)
- Ebourne Rec – (new play equipment)
- Bates memorial – (new play equipment)
- Hawkes Meadow (new play area)
- Mason Avenue (new play equipment and footpath)
- Saltisford Common – (new play equipment and footpath)
- Kennedy Square – (new play equipment)
- Clarendon Square – (footpath and landscape improvements)

Green Space Projects Planned for 2018/19

- Saltisford Common
- Victoria Park
- Newbold Arms
- Midland Oak
- Othello Avenue

Ophelia Drive
Rushmore Street
Mander Grove
Glendale Avenue
Sabin Drive
Twycross Walk

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

Work to improve the security of a number of parks, open spaces and car parks will be completed by the end of March this year.

The project to deliver a new country park is in the early stages, with a specialist consultant being procured to assist with stakeholder engagement, design proposals and phasing of works.

A tender has been awarded to measure and digitise all of the Council's parks and open spaces.

Car Parking

Plans are being progressed to help mitigate any disruption caused by the planned closure of Covent Garden car parks in early 2019. Proposals include increasing parking capacity at Court Street, Princes Drive and Victoria Park, in addition to public parking at Riverside House, and dedicated short stay parking at St. Peter's multi storey car park. In addition a comprehensive communications plan is being developed and ongoing dialogue with a number of key stakeholders.

Work will commence shortly to procure new parking machines to improve the range of payment methods available to customers.

There are proposals being developed to increase car parking capacity at St. Mary's Lands, plans to improve the pedestrian infrastructure and links to the town centre.

Consultation on the draft Car Parking Strategy has now been evaluated, which will allow the final strategy document to be considered later this year.

Any Changes Required to Service Area Plan

At the end of March 2018 the responsibility for One Stop Shops will move to the Finance Service Area.