

Council – 12 November 2018

Portfolio holder report for Clean and Green

Clean and Green are made up of two elements, Green Spaces and Operations that consist of waste collection and disposal, cleansing, grounds maintenance & fleet services

Key Achievements

Over the last 12 months, Clean and Green have:

In Parks and Green Spaces

- Produced and adopted the Green Space Strategy 2018-22 and associated action plan.
- Revised the Open Water Safety Policy, with an officer appointed to help implement the actions.
- Retained Green Flag Awards for Blackwood Park, Palfrey Park, Willenhall Memorial Park, Merrions Wood and Rough Wood & Bentley Haye. Chuckery and Old Hall Pocket Parks were successful in achieving their first Community Green Flag awards.
- Worked with Staffordshire County Bowls Association who are now leasing and managing bowling greens at Anchor Meadow, Palfrey Park, Pelsall Community Centre, Pleck Park and Willenhall Memorial Park to ensure bowling continues within the borough.
- Succeeded with an application to the Replication award stream of Rethinking Parks, worth £200,000 over two years to encourage corporate volunteering at Aldridge Airport, Kings Hill Park, Palfrey Park, Reedswood Park, Walsall Arboretum and Willenhall Memorial Park.
- Secured a European Regional Development Fund grant for the Black Country Blue Network Project, which includes habitat, access and interpretation improvements in Reedswood Park.
- Secured a £50,000 Landfill Tax Grant from Cory Environmental Trust to support a WW1 Project at Willenhall Memorial Park for 2018. The improvements include an Art Feature, Memorial Garden, woodland sculptures, improved shrub borders, a re-organisation of storage space and improved access to areas.

- Installed People Counters in Palfrey Park, Reedswood Park and Willenhall Memorial Park, with funding from Public Health. Similar counters installed in the Arboretum with HLF funding have shown that 913,000 people visited the historic core from early February 2017 to 2018.
- Submitted an application for Fields in Trust status for Palfrey Park, Reedswood Park and Willenhall Memorial Park.
- Together with The Canal and River Trust and City of Wolverhampton Council agreed to declare the Wyrley and Essington Canal and some adjacent land as a Local Nature Reserve – this would be the first along a navigable canal in the country.
- In association with The Birmingham and Black Country Bat Group (BrumBats) commenced a programme of surveys at Cuckoo's Nook & the Dingle, Mill Lane, Park Lime Pits, Stubber's Green and other sites across the region.
- Improved the Arboretum Visitor Centre, including the creation of a bigger conference room, new interpretation space and a shelter over the terrace.
- In conjunction with The Wildlife Trust for Birmingham and other Black Country authorities secured National Lottery funding for a Natural Prospects programme that will provide 24 one-year practical conservation training placements. Walsall's placement package will have a particular focus on the benefits of green space for improving mental and physical health.
- Installed new recycling bins in strategic green spaces to improve waste management. This new recycling initiative is being promoted through Walsall's Green Spaces Forum.
- Resurfaced Car parks at Park Lime Pits and Pleck Park.
- Completed drainage improvements on the Arboretum events field to allow events to take place throughout the year.

In Operations

- Re introduction of free fortnightly collections of brown bins for garden waste from April 2019
- Introduced free a free bulky collection from kerbside trial from 5 November to determine the impact of fly tipping within the borough

- Worked with Community Protection to reduce unauthorised encampments with the introduction of bunding and injunctions.
- Increased the Household Waste Recycling Centre opening times during peak periods (Bank Holidays) with an increase in summer opening hours.
- Additional litter bins placed in key strategic locations including Walsall Town Centre to encourage appropriate behaviour in disposal of litter.
- Introduced a Tackling fly tipping – Fly tipping hotline into the Contact Centre to allow easy access for residents to report environmental crime.
- Secured £30k funding from the Equalities and Diversity team to deliver communications on recycling and contamination too hard to reach groups within the community.
- Continued support to the voluntary sector in community litter picks and removal and disposal of the waste.
- Appointed a Customer Communications Officer to improve the customer experience around waste collection and street cleansing.

Significant Issues

- The long-term sustainability of the Fryers Road Transfer Station following the fire last year is still an issue with a remaining life of circa 4 years.
- Recycling contamination continues to be an issue with current levels around 14% - 15%
- Fly Tipping – There has been 2,230 recorded incidents in the first half of 2018/19 costing in the region of £200k. This is slightly down on the same period last year.
- Ongoing integration of Clean and Green, Public Health Lifestyles contracts and Sports and Development resources
- Finalisation of Allotment Leases

Major projects / proposals

- EU Black Country Blue Network Project – A phase 2 bid for the project based around Reedswood Park, is underway. This is an ERDF grant and co-ordinated by City of Wolverhampton Council. Any further development through European funding will be subject to identification of an equal match element.
- An expression of interest has been submitted to the Integrated Communities Innovation Fund for £72,000 to contribute towards the Rethinking Parks initiative. This would seek to address social inclusion of women and ethnic minorities in environmental volunteering and the systemic lack of involvement of specific communities with the management of public spaces.
- A proposal is being developed to support additional community engagement across the Parks and Greenspaces. The grant would be awarded to voluntary and community organisations, social enterprises or local authorities for up to five years. It would fund project activities, operating costs, organisational development and capital costs.
- Skip days – January to March 2019. Skips will be deployed for 10 Saturdays across 20 wards as trial to determine whether the collection of Bulky Items free across the borough reduces fly tipping.
- A trial to increase the opening hours at the Household Waste Recycling Centre will commence on 1st April 2019 to allow greater public access and determine whether this will positively reduce fly tipping.
- We have started the recruitment for a Voluntary Sector co-ordinator who will liaise Community Groups and the voluntary sector to assist in the cleansing of their area, taking pride in the local environment.
- We have started the recruitment for additional Environmental Operatives to provide additional cleansing in Walsall Town Centre.
- A review of the delivery of the markets service is proposed to increase efficiencies and deliver savings.

Councillor Harrison
Portfolio holder for Clean and Green
2 November 2018