

Cabinet Portfolio Presentations to Council – 26 March 2007

Culture and Leisure

- Leisure Centre membership continues to grow. Prices have been increased from 1 March by an average of 10% to meet the demands of the 2007/8 budget. At this stage it is not clear what if any effect this may be having on customer demand.
- The Overview and Scrutiny Committee's Task and Finish Group on leisure services will shortly be reporting its findings, which will help to set the agenda for developing strategy in this area.
- The whole of the leisure and culture service is to undergo a process of self assessment and external validation known as 'Towards an Excellent Service' (TAES) developed by IDeA and Sport England and supported by the regional Government office. Consultation on this is underway.
- Within arts and events the focus is on creating attractive events which will generate sufficient income to cover their costs. This means seeking major sponsorship and charging for events where appropriate. Financial commitments to other events have been scaled back.
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- Credit is due to the enthusiasm and willingness displayed by staff at Lings Forum preparing for the potential evacuation of hundreds of people from Billing Aquadrome due to flooding on 5/6 March. With staff from homelessness and neighbourhood wardens, they ensured that we would have been ready if the evacuation had been necessary.

Northamptonshire Waste Partnership

The NWP has been created to bring together Northamptonshire County Council and the 7 Districts and Boroughs within Northamptonshire as partners to reducing the amount of waste that goes to landfill in the most efficient, effective, economical and sustainable manner.

Recycling

The recycling rate seems to have bottomed out at 38%, which is still above the national target set at 30%. We are working on initiative to recycle from flats and to encourage those that do not recycle at present, to do so. We are doing this through the partnership we have with Northamptonshire County Council's "Slim Your Bin" group and the NWP's Waste Education Team.

Trade Waste

Due to the uncertain long term viability of our trade waste service, particularly following the introduction of additional taxes in relation to LATS, the Landfill Allowance Trading Scheme, something which is not levied on our external competitors, we have made the decision to commence the process to sell this discretionary service.

Property Maintenance

Following the formation of the GMB for Housing, work has commenced on the development of a comprehensive Service Improvement Plan.

Voids continue to improve.

Development Control

Progress is continuing with processing planning applications. A report is being presented to Council tonight.

Building Control

As Councillors will be aware a report was brought to Cabinet in December regarding the future of Building Control. Partnership Approach being explored.

Environmental Health

Introduction of dog control orders progressing.

Smoke free legislation scheduled for 1 July this year, work is underway on advising businesses of their duties and responsibilities under the act.

We signed the Nottingham declaration on climate change last year and have pledged to reduce our carbon emissions with a carbon management scheme that is currently being developed corporately across the Council.