

29 November 2017	ITEM: 10
Council	
Report of the Cabinet Member for Environment	
Report of: Councillor Aaron Watkins, Portfolio Holder for Environment	
This report is Public	

I am very proud to be presenting to you my first annual report. It has been a true honour to be in this role and I would like to believe my excitement, passion and drive to ensure we have the best Environmental Services has been clear.

Clean It, Cut It, Fill It; I believe has been helping to make Thurrock a place we are proud to live in, setting out clear principles. It was this Administrations task to clean this borough up, invest in the department and make sure our hard-working staff had the required equipment to get the job done. This year, Keep Britain Tidy announced our first scores which were better than their minimum threshold and showed that the investment and hard work was paying off.

Today, I can report that this hard work is continuing and I would briefly like to touch on some past achievements, from the Clean It, Cut It side; Clean It, Cut It has cut over 9,000 acres of grass, we have collected over 1000 tonnes of rubbish, we have issued over 2,400 fines for littering and prosecuted over 100 people for not paying their fines. Alongside this, there has been countless investment across the Environment department. Firstly, an additional £1,000,000 was invested in the 2017/2018 budget for Clean It, Cut It, Fill It. Along with this, we purchased, 10 brand new ride on mowers and 28 new refuse vehicles to replace the existing ageing fleet. Enforcement has played a key role, and alongside the additional enforcement on the streets for those littering, we have started a programme removing un-taxed vehicles across the borough, going after those who either do not have or cannot produce trade waste documents and instructing our enforcement officers to go after those who seek to non-comply with our PSPO's. From April next year, we will also have the powers to go after those who litter from their cars.

When I took on the role, I laid out some clear expectations that we would be working to ensure we had a service which worked for everyone in Thurrock. I instigated the Public Street Bin review for us to have the first holistic look at how we can improve the bins across the borough. I ensured we had the right number of waste vehicles available for our waste team to use every day and I was fully aware of disparities within the service on recycling and instigated a full review into how we communicate with residents. Whilst of course I am happy with the changes we are making, I am fully aware that some of the targets we should be reaching, we currently are not. At a national level waste disposal costs are increasing and now more than ever we need to encourage our residents to recycle. I am aware that for some, they may not see

the hard work which this Council has done over the past year and for some they see the same old issues every day. I am happy to announce that a series of measures will be enacted upon over the coming months to continue to transform the Environmental department, to continue the great work of Clean It, Cut It and take it to the next level, to ensure all residents can see the positive impact and changes we are making.

I would also like to mention Sport as; I do have a passion for sport and would love further engagement by the residents of our borough. Having only recently acquired the brief, I have held meetings with Impulse Leisure who continue to have a strong relationship with the Council. I would like us to be working closer with the many sports providers across this borough and I want us to have an active role in getting Thurrock residents more active.

I would like to take a moment to thank all community groups who take pride in their area and work to make it better. Along with this, I would like to thank all those who work within the Environment Team, out on the streets or in the office every day. I would also like to thank the senior team for their hard work, patience; dedication and commitment to this Council and for listening to me speak constantly.

Key Service Outputs

Service Area	Function	Annual Output	Weekly cost per Household.
Waste Management	No. of domestic bin collections per year.	10,422,828	Collection £1.49 Disposal £1.81
	Annual domestic tonnage collected and disposed of.	70,801 tonnes of household waste collected and disposed of in 2016-17	
	% of domestic bins collected on time.	2015-16 98.5% 2016-17 98.3% 2017-18 ytd 97.6%	
Street Cleansing	Annual cleansing miles of highways.	622 miles of road swept on a 3 weekly cycle.	£0.50
	Number of Litter Bins emptied	579 litter bins across the Borough	
	Tonnage of Street Cleansing waste collected.	In 2016-17 combined Grounds Maintenance and Street Cleansing teams disposed of a total of 3,457.51 tonnes of street waste. 286.3 tonnes of that was composted.	
Greening (incl Parks & Open Spaces, Country Parks, Burial Grounds, Outdoor Sports etc.)	No. of Playgrounds maintained.	71	£0.67
	Overall grassed areas maintained.	518 hectares	
	No. of Urban Parks maintained.	91	
Winter Maintenance	Tonnage of salt used.	30 tonnes per gritting run	£0.04
Cemeteries	Burials in 2016-17	294	
Enforcement	FPN's Issued (Jan-Oct 2017)	2,444	
	Prosecutions Undertaken (Jan-Oct 2017)	83	
	Abandoned Vehicles Inspected (Jan-Oct 2017)	1,623	

Environmental Services Introduction

The Environment Portfolio is unique, in that the services it delivers are the only Council services that are provided to all residents in the Borough every week. Waste collections are made from every household as an active interaction. Less directly but no less valuable, the levels of street cleanliness and the presentation of our parks, open spaces and verges have impact on all residents and visitors to the Borough as they go about their daily business.

Our leisure services, managed by Impulse Leisure, continue to provide facilities for our residents in three key locations across the borough and in order to aid health and wellbeing, our green areas need to be inviting and encourage use and activity.

The core services covered by the portfolio and delivered by the Environment Department are:

- **Clean It** Street Cleansing
- **Cut It** Parks and Open Spaces (including Country Parks, Playgrounds, Cemeteries and Allotments)
- **Bin It** Waste collection and disposal (including Commercial Waste)
- Household Waste and Recycling Centre
- Environmental Enforcement
- Operational aspects of Highway Repair and Maintenance
- Fleet Management and Maintenance
- Sports & Leisure

This report has been prepared to provide an overview of the projects and programmes which have been delivered in 2017/18 and outline plans for the coming year.

1. **‘Clean It’ - Street Cleansing, Parks and Open Space (Delivered)**

The “Clean It, Cut It, Fill It” programme was introduced during 2016/17, dedicating additional resources to enable performance of the Street Cleansing function to be improved.

Following the success of the initial pilot, members approved the continuation of this programme and committed £1m (including the ‘Fill It’ element of the programme).

The reintroduction of the barrow beats and additional cleaning has received very positive feedback from residents and community groups and anecdotal feedback suggests an improved level of street cleanliness has been recognised, this has more recently been supported by the findings of Keep Britain Tidy (KBT) in their first of three inspections this financial year. Operational changes have been made to the roads covered by the barrow beats and two additional charge-hands have been introduced to increase the standard of cleanliness across the borough, along with the reintroduction of the Major routes litter picking team. This team focus on litter picking the major routes in and out of the borough, as well as some of the rural roads which are not appropriate for barrow beats. The team’s schedule focuses on a ten working day cycle for these areas.

The reintroduction of this approach enables the service to better focus on known 'hot spot' areas for litter and has allowed for an increased frequency of cleaning to a minimum of every ten days, in areas where the barrow beats are situated, and a daily frequency to areas such as the Town Centre.

From this financial year street cleanliness inspections are being carried out by Keep Britain Tidy (KBT). This is a change from practise in previous years when the inspections were completed by a trained Council employee. Keep Britain Tidy are the key body responsible for the collation of data on Street Cleanliness from all Councils, for maintaining the standards and providing training. By having our inspections completed by KBT not only are we able to ensure that the results are comparable with other Councils, but any of risk bias is removed. The first tranche of inspections were completed in June 2017, the results were better than the annual target as detailed in the table below.

	Target	Tranche 1 Inspection scores
Litter	10.00	8.50
Graffiti	5.00	3.00

There were a number of land types where the scores for the first tranche were particularly good; this included main retail and commercial sites and main roads and the team will continue to seek enhancements and improvements to continually improve these areas.

The additional 'Clean it, Cut it' funding has enabled the introduction of an additional grass cutting schedule for a tractor mounted grass cutting unit, bringing the total to three. This allows for all grass in the parks and green spaces, which are accessible to tractors, to be cut at three weekly intervals. In addition the service has purchased two new grass cutting units to replace the aging and less reliable units, improving operational efficiency. Two teams of four operatives have been introduced to cut the grass in areas which are not accessible to tractors on a three weekly basis. The introduction of these teams has also enabled litter picking, more frequent emptying of bins and inspections of play equipment, on a weekly basis.

2. Vehicle Procurement (Delivered)

Previously the new Street Services crew cab caged vehicles were 3.5 tonne. This caused the service some vehicle capacity issues, the weight of the cage and the operatives inside the vehicle meant that the pay load of the vehicle is 30kg, restricting operations and increasing time of travel, e.g. two journeys required instead of one, one to drop off staff and the other to manage equipment/waste. The new vehicles purchased (at a cost of £345k), are 4.5 tonne and have a payload of 1.5 tonne; the new vehicles provide increased reliability and flexibility to react to daily operational challenges. Ten new Kubota ride on mowers have been purchased (at a cost of £160k, including a maintenance package from the supplier), again providing increased reliability and improved service delivery.

3. 'Cut It' - Parks and Open Spaces Capital Works (In progress)

An improvement programme to promote greater use and enjoyment of the parks and open spaces and encourage positive activity is underway. This programme is specifically intended to support the Council's priorities of: a) to "promote and protect our clean and green environment"; and b) the Health and Well-being Plan objective of 'creating open spaces that make it easy for residents to be active'.

To fund the required improvements the Council has allocated the provision of £500,000 for open space enhancements within the 2017/18 Capital Programme. A further £725,000 has been allocated for 2018/19 and £125,000 for 2019/20.

Officers have reviewed the approach and prioritised investment in the parks and open spaces on the basis of the following:

- Quality and value findings from the Active Place Parks and Open Space needs assessment (draft)
- Parks and Open Space public consultation
- Residents survey
- Health data
- Known operational requirements and issues
- Areas of Vandalism and Anti-Social behaviour

The highest priority parks that will receive investment in 17/18 are Dilkes, Koala, West Thurrock Memorial Ground and Bonnygate Wood. A programme of work and minor repairs continues in other parks.

As part of the ongoing improvements we will be assessing and improving accessibility in our parks and open spaces. Full engagement and consultation will take place, with active encouragement for community groups to participate in the design, promotion and well keeping of the parks. We will be asking the community to assist us with watching over the parks and reporting antisocial behaviour, the more reporting of such activity aids in the resource allocated to address such issues.

Enhancement of the website will take place, outlining the offer in each park and the equipment in place. Where there is outdoor gym equipment etc., guidance on the usage of this equipment will be available via the web, all part of encouraging people to get active.

4. Winter Parks Programme (Ongoing)

A heavy pruning programme will commence in December through to March in parks, open spaces, cemeteries, verges and road sides. This work is carried out on a 3 yearly cycle, pruning in some locations may appear to be quite severe, this work is necessary for the future maintenance of these shrub areas and communication with residents will take place to assure them of regrowth in the spring.

Out of season maintenance will also be carried out on bowling greens and Cricket wickets in preparation for the start of next season.

5. Land Strategy (Ongoing)

A review of the land the Environment Team maintain will take place next year and a bid for capital funding to support this activity has been submitted. The purpose of the review would be to consider high cost of maintenance versus the quality of presentation. There are small sections of land across the borough that are operationally challenging, due to their land type and locations. An example of this might be a grass roundabout at the far end of the borough which requires traffic management in place to be able to cut the grass safely. The cost of the traffic management, as well as the amount of times the team need to attend to cut the grass could be eradicated by enhancing the roundabout, potentially with themes linked to the local area. These changes would be made with a view to reducing the amount of maintenance required to the roundabout and improving/enhancing presentation to what is essentially one of our gateways into the borough.

Another example may be a single small grass verge located in a cul-du-sac which requires regular grass cutting, by changing the area into a paved area, maintenance wouldn't be required, allowing resources to be used elsewhere.

6. Capital Spend Winter Works (Ongoing)

Work will be carried out during the winter on some of the pathways, improving accessibility, in our parks and open spaces. Some paths have minor potholes and cracking forming in them and these will be dug out and new paths laid. Additional seating will be added to some of the parks and open spaces in the form of benches.

'Bin It' - Waste Collection and Disposal (Including Commercial Waste)

The current domestic waste collection function has been run by our in-house team since 2010 following a successful competitive tender exercise. The service provides a weekly collection of residual waste, dry recycling and kitchen and garden waste. The disposal of all waste collected is controlled through a suite of 6 external contracts. These have been in place since 2010 and cover the various strands of treatment and disposal as well as the provision of a Household Waste & Recycling Centre (HWRC) at Linford.

Over the course of the year the collection teams empty 10 million wheeled bins, disposing of 70,000 tonnes of household waste.

7. Route Optimisation (Ongoing)

With effect from 8th of May 2017 completely new domestic collection rounds for all 3 streams of domestic waste were implemented. This shifted the waste collection pattern to a sweep of the Borough from east to west and provided an opportunity to ensure balanced and achievable workloads for all rounds each day of the week. The changes impacted 79% of residents in the Borough.

The route optimisation program was delivered relatively smoothly with above target performance in the first couple of months of operation. In general the new sweeping

system is working very well and is considered a success. It has been recognised that during the summer months a range of operational issues affected performance and, as with any new service implementation of this scale, there have been some teething problems which have impacted on collection rates, in particular towards the later part of the week and some communal areas. Continual monitoring is taking place and with the introduction of the new Bartec System, referred to later in this report, will improve information available to both the crews and our residents. The service continues to work hard to address any ongoing issues to improve collection rates for all our residents.

8. Procurement of new Waste Vehicles (Delivered)

The existing refuse collection vehicles (RCVs), having reached the end of their economic life, are being replaced in the first quarter of 2018 following an extensive cross-department procurement project and EU-compliant tender arrangement. Twenty-eight new vehicles have been ordered (at a cost of £4.5m) incorporating the latest technical standards aimed at improving fuel economy, reliability and environmental impact. Four current RCVs recently fitted with new engines are also being retained and upgraded to provide a robust back-up to the service. This will increase the fleet by two vehicles, a total of 32, which will assist with the growth in both residential properties and Commercial Waste.

9. Recycling Education (Ongoing)

Increasing recycling rates within Thurrock provides a range of benefits including lower disposal costs. A project group has been formed to identify actions that will be taken to increase the rates of reuse, recycling and composting.

Key actions include:

- Education campaign with clear targetted messaging, using data available from the new domestic collection round structure, focus key messages to address specific issues in specific areas of the borough, e.g. where recycling rates are particularly low on a given day, the targeting will advise on key household items which can be recycled.
- Renewed Waste Strategy and Policies which will enable the commencement of a campaign to tackle contamination of recycling, ensuring residents understand why bins haven't been emptied due to them containing non recyclable materials and what needs to be done to remedy this in future
- Actively working with Landlords and Managing Agents, with targeted campaigns to multi-occupancy buildings and communal properties that currently have low levels of recycling. This will include better sign posting, clear sided recycling bins for bin stores and addiitonal support for recycling from management companies and groups.
- A review of signposting and messaging about the re-use of items through bodies such as TRUP and the Household Waste and Recycling Centre
- Messaging to schools to ensure that clear and consistent messages regarding recycling can go home with pupils.

10. Public Bin Review (In progress)

To follow on from the work that has already been carried out to improve the cleanliness of the borough, through the program of Clean It, Cut It Fill It. October's Cleaner, Greener, Safer Overview and Scrutiny committee agreed a report which provides details of a review which will be carried out on the public litter bins throughout the borough.

The review focuses on the location and style of the current litter bins, the process for installing new litter bins, the change of the current individual litter and dog fouling bins to the introduction of standard dual purpose litter bins, including where appropriate the opportunity to recycle. This process will require the Council to purchase new litter bins and a capital bid has been submitted.

11. Big Belly Bins Pilot (Delivered)

Ten "Big Belly" bins have been purchased and are located at strategic locations across the borough, as follows:

- 1 bin located at the lay by opposite Sainsburys, A1306 Arterial Road, West Thurrock
- 1 bin located at the lay-by by Arena Essex, A1306 Arterial Road, West Thurrock
- 1 bin located at King George V playing field, Blackshots
- 1 bin located at Grays Beach Park
- 1 bin located by the sea wall at the end of Thames Road
- 1 bin located in Crown Road by the bus stop
- 1 bin located in Orsett Road
- 1 bin located in the lay-by in Conways Road, Orsett
- 1 bin located by the taxi office, next to Kings Street car park, Stanford le-hope
- 1 bin located in London Road Stanford le-hope opposite Runnymede Road

Litter inside the big belly bins is compacted by the bin and the bin sends an alert when it requires emptying.

The location of each of these bins has been selected to address particular site challenges and to maximise the opportunity to test their resilience and usage.

Monitoring the success of the pilot will be through analysing the data produced from the big belly bins; this will include information on the frequency of emptying the bins. There may be the need to relocate these bins if they are not getting the high usage anticipated and a further capital bid for more bins will be submitted, subject to the success of the pilot being realised.

12. Increased Commercial Waste Service (Delivered)

The Commercial Waste Service offer waste collection and disposal services to businesses and organisations within Thurrock who do not qualify for a domestic collection under the Controlled Waste Regulations 2012. The service offer a wide range of collection sizes across residual waste, composting and recycling disposal methods in order to meet needs of small, medium and large businesses across the borough.

Commencing in May 2016 the Authority embarked on an ambitious drive to expand the Council's Commercial Waste offer. Revenue has grown from £190k in 2015/16 to a projected outturn of £303k in 2017/18. In addition to an increased level of income the service has taken measures to provide a wide range of smaller waste receptacles in order to support local independent businesses. This has the added benefit of reducing waste dumping and migration of Commercial Waste into the Domestic stream. Our enforcement team continue to provide advice and, where necessary, enforce inappropriate commercial waste disposal.

13. Procurement of new Waste Disposal Contracts (Delivered)

The Council disposes of in excess of 78,000 tonnes of waste material generated by 66,000 households per year. To ensure that the Council's waste management requirements are met there are 6 waste contracts in place including: Energy from Waste, Landfill, Composting and Recycling. Five of the six contracts expired in 2017 and a full OJEU compliant procurement process has been undertaken to put in place new contracts that meet the required specification at the best available market rate. The new contracts are scheduled to go-live on 11/12/2017 and will run for up to 5 years.

14. Waste Policy & Strategy Refresh (In progress)

The last strategy covers the period up to 2018 and so a refresh is due. The Council has an opportunity to undertake a review of the policies surrounding the collection and presentation of Waste in the borough. Updating the policy will allow for an increased emphasis on recycling and responsible waste disposal. The new Strategy will underpin the 'Clean it, Cut, It Fill it' agenda ensuring that collection, disposal and enforcement activity surrounding these services contributes to a cleaner and greener borough.

Additionally, the introduction of the new waste collection rounds (route optimisation), the development of the Environment Enforcement team and the more detailed and accurate data that should be available from the Bartec system mean that we are well placed to start to clarify some of the policies and working procedures. This started with the introduction of the new rounds and reminders to residents that bin lids need to be closed in order for the crews to safely tip the bins, and has continued with the current review and renewal of the assisted collection process.

By carrying out a full Policy and Strategy refresh the service can ensure that all aspects of the waste collection service are dovetailing effectively with other parts of

the department and providing residents with a clear and comprehensive overview of the service that they can expect to receive and the actions they need to take to support domestic collections.

15. Household Waste and Recycling Centre (Delivered)

The Council has a statutory obligation under section 51 of the Environmental Protection Act to provide residents with a facility for the disposal of bulky household waste. The Council currently operates a single site at Buckingham Hill Road in Linford. Due to the rising cost of waste disposal and the layout and condition of the site the incumbent contractor declined the opportunity to extend the site contract. With limited viable options for contracting out and a clear understanding that the site is in need of imminent redevelopment the Council was left with no option but to insource the site with effect from June 2017. Taking the site into Council control has allowed the Authority to undertake a number of interim quick wins to improve the site operations, introduce new avenues for recycling and take measures to reduce rapidly increasing waste disposal costs.

16. Redevelopment of HWRC Site and Permitting (In progress)

The current HWRC is not in keeping with modern facilities at other boroughs. The size of the site is struggling to meet current demand and will not be able to support the boroughs projected growth agenda. Proposals for redevelopment and enhancement of the site were outlined and discussed with ward members at a meeting on 19th September and were very positively supported by Cleaner Greener Safer Overview and Scrutiny Committee in October 2017.

Since the site was bought back in house it became evident that trade waste activity was taking place, recent investigations into usage has highlighted abuse of the site and during the week commencing 30th October a number of users were cautioned as to their attendance and inappropriate disposal of waste. Having identified and acted upon this behaviour, it is imperative that stricter controls be put in place as quickly as possible, while ensuring safe working isn't compromised. A further report on permitting options was considered by Cleaner Greener Safer Overview Committee on 15th November.

Subject to Cabinet approval in December, Planning permission will be sought with a view to redevelopment within 18 months and a permitting scheme will be put in place as soon as possible early New Year.

17. Environmental Enforcement (Ongoing)

The Environmental Enforcement Team transferred from Public Protection to the Environment Service. The team are now closely aligned with the Domestic and Commercial Waste Team and also the Street Cleansing Service. Closer working relationships with the waste and cleansing service provide Enforcement Officers with the intelligence required to better address Environmental Concerns within the borough.

18. Enforcement Pilot (Delivered Littering, Abandoned vehicles and prosecutions)

The Council has introduced a zero tolerance approach to Environmental Crime. Between December 2016 and October 2017 over 2,444 Fixed Penalty Notices have been issued for Environmental Offences, a total value of £218k in fines. In addition 100 individuals either prosecuted or listed for prosecution for Environmental Crime at both Basildon and Southend Magistrates Court, resulting in court awards of a value of £33k to date. Members approved the introduction of the maximum fines available for Enviro Crime Offences setting Fixed Penalty Notices at their top level with all early repayment discounts removed.

The Government has announced plans to ensure that from April 2018 the fine for littering will increase to £150 and new powers will be introduced to allow Council's to fine the registered keeper of vehicle for littering from that vehicle. In addition permission was sought and granted to name and shame the offenders prosecuted in court and this has been widely publicised. These new powers conferred by government and approved by members will be enforced to ensure that our streets and green spaces are respected and that those who flout the rules are held to account. As is currently the case any monies raised from enforcement will be invested back into cleaning and greening services.

In September 2017 Officers entered into a delegated authority agreement with the DVLA to obtain powers to enforce against untaxed vehicles. In the first 2 weeks of operation 39 untaxed vehicles were removed from the streets of Thurrock and the team continue to respond to reports.

The success of the Litter Enforcement pilot has led to a four year contract for a wide range of Environmental being procured. The contract is currently being evaluated with the new contract scheduled to go live on 07/12/2017.

19. Target Hardening (In progress)

Capital funding was approved and is in place for the target hardening of areas subject to fly-tipping and unauthorised encampments. A programme of evaluating the measures at regularly targeted sites is ongoing and priority has been given to sites which have received the higher number of reported incidents:

To date the following works have been completed or are in progress:

- Stanford-le-Hope, Manorway. Installation of Earth Bund to prevent access to grass area.
- Corringham, Shell Field/Park Road. Installation of new heavy duty gate. Tender for install of bollards along front edge is ongoing.
- South Ockendon Bonnygate Wood. Installation of additional bollards to prevent future access following unauthorised encampment.
- South Ockendon, Buckles Lane. Installation of CCTV to prevent ongoing fly-tipping.
- Orsett Recreation Ground. Installation of heavy duty gate to prevent unauthorised access and related anti-social behaviour.

- Tilbury, Low Street. Road Closure to prevent ongoing and persistent fly-tipping.
- Grays, Kilverts Field. Out for tender - Installation of full perimeter heavy duty bollards to prevent future access following unauthorised encampments.
- Little Thurrock, Woodview Slip. Out for tender - Installation of full perimeter heavy duty bollards to prevent future access following unauthorised encampments.

The Council understand the impact these incidents have on residents and continue to look for new and innovative ways, with our partners, to be both reactive and proactive to reduce future incidents.

20. Operational Highways Maintenance and Repair (ongoing)

Although not responsible for the strategic aspects of the Highways Network, the Environment portfolio includes the service that carries out the on-street work such as maintaining footpaths, verges and sightlines, repairing potholes and winter gritting. The service have procured five multi-purpose highways/ gritting vehicles and 1 dedicated fly tip removal vehicle at a cost of £1m. These vehicles will be delivered in February 2018. For the upcoming winter gritting period 3 dedicated gritting vehicles have been hired to cover the risk of inclement weather. The past 2016/17 winter was notable in that it was again relatively mild and our gritting operations were only mobilised on 41 occasions. However, we are still prepared to deal with the harshest winter conditions that may occur, deploying frontline capacity from across the Department to ensure the delivery of a high quality service to keep Thurrock's highways safe and passable.

21. Bartec Procurement and Implementation (Ongoing)

In 2017 a tender process concluded that resulted in the Environmental Department procuring the Bartec Collective system for Street Cleansing, Grounds Maintenance, Domestic Waste Collection and Trade Waste. The system provides a back office scheduling and reporting tool that will ensure improved data, task allocation to each team on a daily basis and the recording of completion of those scheduled tasks. The system can integrate with both units that are installed in refuse Collection vehicles and hand-held mobile devices (such as smart phones and tablets). The implications of this for the department are significant; signalling a movement away from the paper based daily worksheets that have been issued to members of staff to digital work records. In addition to ensuring robust data enabled fact based management decision making, the schedules and completion reports will allow the service to respond to customer queries more quickly and accurately.

The implementation project is underway and has started well. It is anticipated that the system will be available to the Grounds Maintenance and Street Cleansing staff early in 2018, with the intention being that the Waste Collection crews will be able to use the new in-cab devices from the time that the next refuse collection vehicles are delivered.

22. Fleet and Facilities (Delivered)

The in-house Fleet Management team provides a flexible, crucial role to our frontline services in overseeing the procurement, servicing and maintenance of all Council-owned vehicles and plant, covering some 150 HGV and smaller trucks, vans and large plant and around 200 items of smaller plant and machinery. These fleet items are deployed across the range of Environment-delivered services including Waste Collection, Grounds Maintenance, Gritting and Street Cleansing, as well as a number of functions delivered by other Council departments, for example Social Care.

The team works closely with functional service management to ensure that the specification of vehicles and plant meets the operational requirements and that overall fleet size and configuration are optimised, minimising the need to source short term hired items and ensuring compliance with related regulations, including environmental impact, as well as delivering value-for-money.

As a licenced Testing Station, the vehicle maintenance team carries out approximately 400 MoT tests on both the in-house fleet as well as for a limited number of other customers, avoiding the service disruption and costs associated with external providers, and the team also undertakes about 320 licensing compliance checks on Thurrock's Taxi and Private Hire vehicles. These activities generate a valuable income stream of around £35,000, which helps to fund other frontline services.

The cost-effectiveness of the in-house vehicle maintenance and fleet management team and its vehicle procurement approach has been demonstrated as part of the recent EU-compliant formal tendering exercise linked to replacement of the Council's fleet of Waste Collection vehicles, which represent the majority of the activity of the Fleet team.

Specific fleet achievements over the past year include:-

- Replacement of the Waste Collection vehicle fleet .
- The majority of the Council's sub-5-tonne vehicles, street cleansing vehicles, and six large gritting/multi-purpose Lorries, including a dedicated Fly Tip response truck are also being replaced via EU-compliant tendering processes during 2017/18. The specification of the new vehicles will address services' current load capacity requirements and meet the latest environmental prescriptions and their increased reliability and improved running costs will enhance productivity and reduce budget pressures for frontline teams.
- Vacation of Curzon Drive Depot and redevelopment of Blackshots Depot - Redevelopment of the Oliver Close / St Clements site in 2016 provided the capacity to relocate the majority of office-based and frontline teams based at Curzon Drive. We have now refurbished the Blackshots depot (previously occupied by the Council's Building Maintenance contractor), and transferred the remaining Curzon-based operational team, freeing up the Curzon site for demolition. As well as providing a much smaller operational base with better links across the borough, the move will deliver financial savings relating to the servicing and maintenance of premises that are no longer meeting service needs.

Ongoing delivery for the Fleet team over the coming year will include:-

- Consolidation and optimisation of the mostly-new fleet across services, reducing the incidence of supplementary hiring's, and providing operational managers with appropriate performance management information to enable fleet deployment and productivity to be monitored.
- A continued focus on improving service efficiency and frontline productivity through reduction in vehicle downtime.
- Maintaining effective levels of workshop capacity in the light of recruitment and retention pressures experienced as a result of local market conditions.

23. Sports & Leisure

Work continues on developing strategies which ensure Thurrock has a future sports and leisure facilities infrastructure which meets the needs of its residents and addresses some the issues regarding the aging stock of some current facilities. These strategies will link to the local plan and encourage residents to be active by regularly taking part in sport and physical activity

The needs assessments for: indoor sports; playing pitches; and parks have previously been undertaken as part of this work. Further work is ongoing to translate this into strategy and action plans. It is anticipated to be in a position to present a final strategy to Cabinet early in the New Year for approval.

The partnership between the Council and Impulse Leisure Charitable Trust continues to flourish and the Council has this year invested £430,000 in replacing mechanical, electrical and heating and plant at Blackshots Leisure Centre.

Furthermore, the Council is investing £1.2m at Belhus Leisure Centre to replace the swimming pool roof and mechanical plant equipment. This will complement the £850,000 that Impulse Leisure has recently invested in the facility.

24. Financial Performance

A considerable amount of progress has been made in reviewing the Environment Portfolio in a commercial way, identifying those discretionary services to ensure they move towards full cost recovery.

In February 2017 the Deputy Leader oversaw and guided the Thurrock Commercial Principles and the portfolio works towards delivery of the principles.

The forecast financial performance for the year is summarised below.

Service	Budget 17/8	Forecast 17/18	Variance
Greening Services	2,496	2,496	-
Multi Skilled Area Teams	397	397	-
Street Services	735	735	-
Waste Mgmt Collection	5,094	5,094	-
Waste Mgmt Disposal	6,311	6,631	320
Mgmt, Fleet & Enforcement	43	43	-
TOTAL	15,076	15,396	320

Regretfully the Environment Portfolio is impacted with pressure on Waste Disposal budgets. This is not a unique problem to Thurrock it is a pressure that is seen at a national level.

As the Portfolio Holder one of my priorities will ensure that Thurrock does all it can to mitigate this risk and plans and strategies will be in place to address this national issue.

Summary

The Environment Portfolio is operating both effectively and efficiently, as evidenced in the recent accreditation of ISO9001.2015. The service has delivered well against a number of key projects outlined above, as well as maintaining existing service delivery. Further work to enable route optimisation; increasing collection rates; recycling promotion/ education; fleet procurement and zero tolerance enforcement policy and pilot are areas the service needs to give focus to going forward and again key activities of planned work are outlined in the report.

Very few authorities would plan to deliver so many projects in one service; route optimisation, waste disposal contracts renewal and HWRC back in-house all in one year, but this authority did and has achieved very well and to a good standard.

The leisure part of the service is key to getting people active, the environment plays a key part in this whether activity is walking or cycling in our parks, using outdoor gym equipment or our sports pitches it is imperative that the services are provided well for our residents.