To: Estates & Facilities Committee
From: George Brooker - Parks & Open Spaces Manager
Date: 16th October 2024
Subject: Estates & Facilities Update

1. Purpose of report
1.1 To inform the committee of any new projects, bookings, or changes to operations.

2. Recommendations
2.1 To accept the update report and note any new bookings/changes to operations.

3. Swanley Park background and information

3.1 Operations
The peak season has ended, so we are busy putting the park to bed for winter. The splash pool is closed; the deck chairs and waterslide packed away and, at the end of October, the bouncy castle will be placed into storage.

During the off-season we will be undertaking various landscaping works, including planting hedge rows, and having the pathways hardscaped.

To encourage visitors to the park during the autumn and winter months we will introduce two new incentives:

1. Cheaper parking tariffs for general visitors; and
2. Free parking during November, December, and January with a purchase from the café or booking for the soft play.

Awe & Wonder, who took over from The Great Outdoors, was opened by the Mayor on the 7th October. The opening day saw a great turn out with positive feedback. Wendy & Dean who are the new tenants have completely transformed the area over the past five weeks.



Lily Smith is now in position as Soft Play, Event & Marketing Coordinator. Lily has been with us for many years and has already made a positive impact to the park.

3.2 Maintenance
General repair and maintenance works are underway to ensure the park is operational come next spring. The remaining projects within the YR1 maintenance plan will be prioritised and completed during this time.

Repairs are scheduled for the grasscrete at The Birches car park. During these works we will close off sections to allow grass to grow through.

3.3 Events

Ticket sales for this year's Sen mornings were more popular compared to last year, raising an additional £98, which brought the total to £637. Additional dates are being added next year and will be phased throughout the year.

All proceeds were donated to We Are Beams. Swanley Park and Swanley New Barn Railway host the event and both open early to allow for the event to take place.

This year's annual fireworks display at Swanley Park commemorated Swanley Town Councils 50th anniversary. The event this year started earlier with performances and acts performed in the lead up to the main firework display. The event was well attended and lots of positive feedback received.





3.4 Swanley New Barn Railway

The summer started with our traditional grand summer gala, which was exceedingly well attended with not only visiting engines on the main line, but with over 30 craft and charity stalls, over 10 miniature traction engines, 1912 fire truck and Kent police doing a meet and greet in the park. The event is now gaining traction, and we look forward to next year's one already.

The main summer season, however, was disappointing. The required changes to the paddling pool had an impact on park attendance, with a knock-on effect of reducing our passenger numbers. The normal "rush hour" at home time has disappeared with now a new rush (although drastically quieter) at pool change over time. The Swanley Town Council 50th Anniversary evening was an absolute highlight of the summer with outstanding feedback from customers and our members. A huge thank you to the STC team who organised and delivered an amazing show.

The park security this year has been outstanding and noticeable step change in the reduction of anti-social behaviour.

We have some exciting news though; for the first time since 2014 we have purchased a new locomotive. This brand-new steam engine is going through some in-house modifications to meet our standards with the expectation it will enter service in 2025.

As ever, the end of summer means we now concentrate on planning our winter work schedule: with 120 metres of track to replace, along with more coaches needing a full overhaul. We are also waiting delivery of new wheel sets for some of our coaches. All our industrious engines will also get their winter maintenance scheduled planned and executed.



3. Open Spaces background and Information

4.1 Grounds Maintenance
The Estates department are coming to the end of their grass cutting for the year and will be focusing on hedge and tree works.

Three raised planters will be installed in Swanley Village by the end of October as part of the ongoing Swanley in Bloom.

4.2 Awards
Swanley Town Council participated in four categories of the 2024 South & South East In Bloom competition, with the results announced on 20th September at the Garden Room, Hilltop Centre, RHS Gardens Wisley. We are proud to share the following achievements:

Category	Location	Award
Small Nature Reserve	Swanley Nature Reserve (SWAN)	Silver Gilt
Large Town	Swanley	Silver Gilt
Large Park of the Year	Swanley Park	Gold
Commons and Open Spaces	Swanley Recreation Ground	Silver Gilt

Throughout the summer, Swanley Town Centre was awash with vibrant coloured flowers, thanks to the dedication of our team and volunteers.

George Brooker, Parks & Open Spaces Manager, expressed his delight:

"I am thrilled that our efforts have once again been recognised with these awards, which reflect the dedication we put into maintaining Swanley every day. I should like to extend my heartfelt thanks to the Swanley Town Council Estates Team who help keep our town clean, tidy, and wonderfully in bloom throughout the summer."

Mayor of Swanley, Cllr Rita Wood, added:

"Securing these four awards once again highlights the outstanding work by our community and Council in preserving our open spaces. The beautiful flower displays and hanging baskets across town truly make Swanley shine."



4.3 Maintenance
General repair works continue to be completed in-house across all Council owned buildings.

Inspections and remedial works are being carried out on all Swanley Town Council playgrounds to ensure they met ROSPA requirements.

A new fire alarm system in the Civic Centre and Alexandra Suite is now in place and commissioned by a BAFE (British Approvals for Fire Equipment) registered contractor.

The Oaks surgery has had all new LED lights fitted replacing the previous fluorescent lighting.

26 Springfield is undergoing some renovation works which is scheduled for completion by the end of October in readiness for occupation by the new tenant.

5. Conclusions
As highlighted in this report, we continue to aim to maximise the use of our facilities, whilst also generating additional income for the Council.

George Brooker
Park & Open Spaces Manager