

## **SERVICETEAM – GROUNDS MAINTENANCE UPDATE**

### **1 SUMMARY**

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is for Members to receive the attached report from Serviceteam on the progress of the Grounds Maintenance contract in Rochford. (Appendix A). Garry Such, Serviceteam's Regional Manager will be present at the meeting to give a further verbal presentation to back up this report and also answer any questions that Members may have.

### **2. OPERATIONAL ISSUES**

- 2.1. Members are advised that during this summer season, Serviceteam have experienced supervisory and operational problems that have contributed to a degree of slippage from the work programme. An action plan has now been produced between Council officers and Serviceteam, to rectify the slippage during the winter months.
- 2.2 Whilst this action plan has addressed many of these issues, there is still some slippage to be caught up in the following areas:
- Shrub and hedge maintenance
  - Edging of grassed areas
  - Hard surface sweeping
  - Maintenance of park furniture
- 2.3 As part of the ongoing action plan, monthly meetings are held between Serviceteam's Regional and Local Managers and Council staff, to monitor the catch-up programme. It is anticipated that the programme will be back on course by the commencement of next Spring.
- 2.4 Quarterly partnership meetings are also held between Senior Managers from Serviceteam and the Council, to look at broader issues - the Chief Executive attends these meetings on an annual basis.
- 2.5 Serviceteam will provide a further grounds maintenance progress report at the Community Overview and Scrutiny Committee in June 2004.
- 2.6 It should be noted that the Council receives very few complaints in relation to the grounds maintenance contract, with complaints generally arising from the commencement of the Spring grass cutting season.

**3 RECOMMENDATION**

**3.1 It is proposed that the Committee RESOLVES**

That Members note the content of the progress report and answers provided by Serviceteam's Regional Manager, in relation to the grounds maintenance contract.

Roger Crofts

Corporate Director (Finance & External Services)

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**Background Papers:**

None

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**Appendix (A)**

**SERVICETEAM GROUNDS MAINTENANCE REVIEW**

**BRIEF OPERATIONAL REPORT 2003**

**1. Introduction**

Serviceteam have worked in partnership with Rochford District Council providing grounds maintenance services for 15 years. Much has changed in that time but the development of a coherent plan for the maintenance and management of the man-made and natural environment remains both important and relevant to both parties.

At a time when the pace of life has perceptively increased, people consider very carefully what they do in their leisure time and as importantly, where they do it. Decisions about where to live and work are also governed by a number of factors, not least of which, is the aesthetic impact and accessibility of green space whether in an urban or rural setting.

Increasing pressures around the availability of housing, economic expansion, visiting tourists (whether these be relatives of residents or football teams from other districts), access and transport make the co-ordinated planning of green space vitally important to us all.

The delivery of the service we provide requires constant review to keep up to date with the expectations of the residents of Rochford District. With this in mind Serviceteam have put into place a number of operational changes, which will improve our service delivery further.

**2. April – October 2003**

The season has been very dry with little rainfall over the last six months. This has brought with it a number of difficult operational issues:

- Ground cracking causing damage to playing fields, play areas.
- Difficult mowing conditions and weed growth.

The rain towards the end of October was long overdue but much appreciated for all those involved in horticulture.

Over the last six months Serviceteam have started to make some operational improvements to further improve the quality standards across the district:

- Recruited a new grounds maintenance supervisor, Dave Hunter, who has over 20 years experience on various grounds maintenance contracts.

- Started a training and development plan for our Rochford contract staff. This involves a yearly review between the operative and their manager where the operatives development is discussed. This review meeting is documented and forms part of our development plan for the Rochford contract, where the training needs for staff at Rochford are produced to meet the business needs and the training budget. This information is then passed to Steve Mayne (Serviceteam Training Manager) for action. All contracts operated by Serviceteam instigate the same procedure, which allows for visiting staff to be included on the Rochford development plan.
- Brought in new equipment and dedicated operators who use our specialist equipment like verti-drainers to aerate the football pitches to improve the playability of the pitch, tractor hedgecutters that are used on the playing field hedges to improve the cutting finish, sweepers like the Scarab Minor for sweeping open space footpaths and the smaller pedestrian sweepers used to sweep around the pavilions at sport field locations. The advantage of using dedicated operators allows for a professional finish and these expensive pieces of equipment get well looked after, resulting in less down time and more work occurring on the ground.

**3. November 2003 – March 2004**

We have a challenging 6 months ahead of us ready for the next growing season. Working closely with Officers from Rochford District Council, we will continue to implement our operational improvements. This will involve the Grounds Maintenance Supervisor re-scheduling our current round sheets to improve standards, evaluating all operations across the district and ensuring detailed works' programmes are actioned. We have also started joint monitoring on random inspections across our operation.

**4. The Future**

We are due an external assessment from Investors In People before Christmas and I hope to have further news at our next meeting. The external ISO 9001 assessment is set for February 2004 and the contract has already gone through two internal assessments, with favourable results. The training and development of grounds maintenance staff will continue with a shrub/rose pruning course in January 2004. We are in the early stages of trialling a green waste recycling programme with Cleanaway at Thurrock and I will give an update and presentation at our next meeting.