

Review Committee – 22 September 2009

Minutes of the meeting of the **Review Committee** held on **22 September** when there were present:-

Chairman: Cllr Mrs J R Lumley
Vice-Chairman: Cllr M Maddocks

Cllr Mrs G A Lucas-Gill

Cllr M J Steptoe

VISITING MEMBER

Cllr M G B Starke

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs K A Gibbs, T Livings and J Thomass.

OFFICERS PRESENT

| | | |
|----------|---|--------------------------------|
| R Evans | - | Head of Environmental Services |
| P Gowers | - | Overview & Scrutiny Officer |
| M Power | - | Committee Administrator |

ALSO PRESENT

| | | |
|-----------|---|-----------|
| G Edwards | - | SITA Suez |
| P Madden | - | SITA Suez |

214 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 8 July 2009 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

215 BULKY HOUSEHOLD WASTE COLLECTION SERVICE - EVALUATION

The Committee considered the report of the Head of Environmental Services and evaluated the new charging scheme for the collection of bulky household waste.

In response to questions, the following was noted:-

- SITA confirmed that those residents who were eligible for assisted collections for recycling would also be eligible for assisted collection for bulky waste, as long as the Council is made aware of the need at the time of booking. It was recognised that now that the shared Rochford District Council (RDC)/SITA IT system was in place, officers would be able to cross reference information held by both the Council and by SITA. It was recognised that a training need for staff existed in respect of taking such calls from residents.

- The Council was unaware of percentages of callers declining bulky waste collection services in other Councils where charges are imposed; it was understood that Basildon and Harlow Councils did not impose a charge for the service. It was appreciated that some RDC residents were still not aware of the bulky waste collection service; others had been prepared to pay the £15 cost.
- There had been no noticeable increase in fly-tipping since the introduction of the charges for bulky waste collection. It was felt that the current economic situation had played a major role in reducing the number of items for collection as people were buying few newer goods, coupled with the fact that many retailers were now offering a reduced rate for taking the old appliances away.
- The percentage of callers opting not to use the service had declined over the 5 month period from April to August 2009. In SITA's view, the percentage of callers declining the service is now stabilising. It was stated that not only was the £15 charge lower than the amount charged by other Councils but that the SITA/RDC system was a good deal simpler to understand and administer than the systems in place in other authorities.
- If a resident declines to use the service there will be a corresponding loss of recycling credits. Although it was appreciated that a free service would be likely to result in receipt of a greater number of recycling credits, prior to the introduction of the charge there had still been instances of items left out for collection being taken by unlicensed waste collectors. At present, with a relatively high price being paid for scrap metal, this was a problem that seemed to be escalating.
- Bulky waste is collected on the scheduled refuse collection day. At the time of booking the resident is advised that no refunds can be made if, for example, the items are collected by unlicensed collectors. It is now proposed to introduce a voucher scheme whereby a resident who cancels a collection for any reason or reports an item as being removed by a third party, is credited with a voucher, to be used within 18 months, entitling them to a future collection free of charge. The voucher, which would be stored on the RDC/SITA IT system until redeemed, would be valid only for use at the address stated on the original booking.
- It was hoped that charging Rochford Housing Association £5 per item collected (the same agreement with Springboard Housing existed) would act as an incentive for them, as a larger landlord, to use the service. Without this incentive there may be an increased need for the Council to get involved in enforcement issues relating to fly tipping in common parts by tenants. The service would be offered to the landlord, not the tenants.
- Details of the new charging scheme for bulky waste, which was introduced on 1 April 2009, were first made known to residents via Rochford District Matters (RDM), which went out on 31 March 2009. However, there was

flexibility in enforcing the new system during the beginning of April. Call handling for the new service was moved from SITA to the RDC Administration team, which had resulted in a change to the contact number. The turnaround times for bulky waste collection had vastly improved since the introduction of the new contract with SITA in March 2008.

- In terms of promoting the system, the Council had the option of advertising the scheme on the sides of the refuse collection vehicles as well as putting information on the Council's website and promoting the system via roadshows, village fairs and libraries.
- Updated information/reminders relating to the waste collection could be published in Rochford District Matters, which went quarterly to every household in the District.
- The additional staff employed to manage the calls on the new system had also become involved in administering the Council's action plans to reduce instances of contamination of recycling bins. The Council's recycling team were spending time on the road with SITA crews to assist communicating the contamination message to residents and SITA operatives.
- It was recognised that partnership working was vital in assisting the investigation of the recent spate of thefts of bulky items awaiting collection by SITA and that Parish/Town Councils should be added to the Police and Environment Agency as agencies for joint working.

Recommended to the Executive:-

- (1) That the charging regime for bulky waste should be retained and that concessions should not be introduced at this time.
- (2) That the 'no refund policy' is endorsed together with the introduction of a voucher scheme in the situation where a service request is made and the item in questions is removed prior to the Council's contractor attending the premises. The request for a voucher shall be initiated by the customer and the voucher must be redeemed within 18 months.
- (3) That officers further investigate with the Police, the Environment Agency and Parish/Town Councils the recent spate of thefts of items awaiting collection by the Council's contractor. (HES)

216 THE FORWARD PLAN

The Committee reviewed the Forward Plan and noted its contents.

The meeting closed at 8.31 pm.

Chairman

Date

If you would like these minutes in large print, braille or another language please contact 01702 546366.