

Review Committee – 8 July 2009

Minutes of the meeting of the **Review Committee** held on **8 July 2009** when there were present:-

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

Cllr K A Gibbs

Cllr M J Steptoe

VISITING MEMBER

Cllr M G B Starke

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs Mrs G A Lucas-Gill, P R Robinson and J Thomass.

OFFICERS PRESENT

A Lovett	-	Street Scene Manager
G Dawson	-	Parks and Open Spaces Officer
P Gowers	-	Overview and Scrutiny Officer
M Power	-	Committee Administrator

ALSO PRESENT

T Richardson	-	Connaught Environmental Ltd
D Cowie	-	Connaught Environmental Ltd

175 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 16 June 2009 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

176 CONNAUGHT ENVIRONMENTAL LTD

The Committee received a presentation from Terry Richardson, Assistant Regional Director and David Cowie, Contracts Manager – Grounds Maintenance at Connaught Environmental Ltd on the new grounds maintenance contract.

Members commended Connaught staff on their helpful attitude and how well they were working within the community.

In response to questions from Members, the following was noted:-

- The quoted sickness level of 0.14% over the last year equated to 24 working days in total in respect of the 28 core staff. Monthly meetings

between Connaught and Rochford District Council examined details of sickness levels for the previous month.

- A rural verge cutting programme was in place; however, the frequency and details of the cutting programme was determined by Essex County Council.
- Winter ditch maintenance was undertaken in the District's parks only.
- Connaught's Assistant Regional Director routinely undertakes driving assessments every 3 months for all Connaught's drivers. However, in the case of an accident the driver will be reassessed immediately. NVQ training for staff is provided by Badgehurst Training Ltd.
- 51 football clubs in the District had reapplied for pitch hire, together with an additional 12 clubs, making a total of 63 clubs this year.
- Prior to undertaking any hedge cutting in Swayne Park the area is checked for nesting birds. The aim is to ensure a balance between safety and the interests of wildlife in the area. It is hoped to establish a Friends of Parks group, which would include volunteers becoming involved in issues surrounding local parks and open spaces. The initiative would be piloted in the Swayne Park area.
- The results of the topographical surveys of various locations in the District would be referred to the Portfolio Holder for the Environment when completed.
- Connaught undertakes regular maintenance visits in all Rochford Housing Association (RHA) schemes. RHA would advise Connaught of any refurbishment of grounds that were required.
- The RHA standard for cleaning graffiti was 24 hours for offensive graffiti and 3 days for general graffiti. In the District's parks the 3 day standard could be adopted if complaints were received. However, because Connaught was reluctant to close play areas unnecessarily, unless it was offensive, graffiti was often not cleaned off immediately.
- All Connaught literature sent to the public contained the company's email and telephone details. This information plus the depot address was also on the Connaught website. A proposal to put a link to the Connaught website on the Rochford District Council website was being discussed.
- Dog waste bins in parks and open spaces were emptied twice a week. The most effective way of combating youth nuisance relating to a dog waste bin in Little Wakering would be removal of the bin, which would be relocated to another part of the park at a later date.
- Verge cutting was scheduled to take place approximately once every two weeks. Although there was provision in the contract for additional cuts, as

the contract was resource-based, doing this would take staff away from other jobs. It was noted that very few complaints had been received this year regarding removal of grass from footways. Grass on the verges around bulb planting is left uncut until the bulb stems had turned brown.

- There is one dedicated vehicle for use in the District's two cemeteries, which is used for transporting operatives to the cemetery. It was noted that there were very few burials in Rayleigh; most took place now in Hall Road cemetery.
- Although there were certain limitations to the use of electric vehicles on steep hills, their use over the relatively short distances in cemeteries was efficient.
- Connaught operatives were given fortnightly 'tool box talks' on Health & Safety and local issues. Each talk lasted 20-30 minutes and took place in the mornings prior to staff commencing work.

177 THE FORWARD PLAN

The Committee reviewed the contents of the Forward Plan and noted its contents.

178 REVIEW OF BUDGETS FOR AREA COMMITTEES

It was noted that the Project Plan date for recommendations to be passed to the Executive/full Council should be 9 December 2009, not 9 October 2009.

Following discussion, it was agreed that the Terms of Reference be amended to read, 'To examine the feasibility of providing a budget allocation to each of the Area Committees'.

Resolved

That the Terms of Reference be amended to read, 'To examine the feasibility of providing a budget allocation to each of the Area Committees'.

The meeting closed at 8.40 am.

Chairman

Date

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