

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

8th November 2011

GRITTING AND SNOW CLEARANCE – REDDITCH BOROUGH COUNCIL APPROACH

Relevant Portfolio Holder	Councillor Brandon Clayton – Housing, Local Environment and Health
Portfolio Holder Consulted	Yes
Relevant Head of Service	Guy Revans – Head of Environmental Services
Wards Affected	All Wards
Ward Councillor Consulted	N/A
Key Decision	

1. SUMMARY OF PROPOSALS

This report details the Council's joint approach to gritting and snow clearance working with Worcestershire County Council (WCC) and Bromsgrove District Council and proposes the Council's policy in relation to gritting and snow clearance on its own land. Members are asked to note the actions which resulted from the O&S Task and Finish Review and subsequent meetings with WCC. The report also provides Members with information on how gritting and snow clearance is carried out and also information on how disruptions to waste collection services are handled during bad weather events.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

The Committee is asked to **RECOMMEND** that

- 1) **the following policy be adopted with regards to gritting and snow clearance:**

Redditch Borough Council will strive to keep the following areas clear of snow and ice and safe to use:

- a) **Crematorium and cemeteries to allow funerals to continue;**
- b) **Redditch Borough Council staff car parks to ensure that there are suitable parking areas for council staff who are getting into work to provide essential services;**
- c) **Key council sites like the Town Hall and district centres to assist local shops and businesses and enable residents to access services;**

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

8th November 2011

- d) **Gritting/snow clearance at other areas including Council sheltered accommodation will only be carried out subject to available resources; gritting/snow clearance at council owned sheltered accommodation will be to allow the Home Support Service access to residents;**
- 2) **the Council will not provide grit bins on any highway land but may provide grit bins on its own land to enable gritting to take place – e.g. at Leisure sites; and**
- 3) **further publicity is undertaken to ensure that residents are aware of how the Council will deal with gritting/snow clearance and what to do when bad weather affects their waste collection service; and**
- 4) **Officers purchase appropriate snow clearance and gritting equipment from within existing budgets.**

3. KEY ISSUES

Financial Implications

- 3.1 Gritting and snow clearance work is carried out using existing labour resources and an existing budget for purchase of rock salt which is purchased via Worcestershire County Council who have an effective procurement arrangement in place. Careful management of rock salt is needed to ensure that it is used effectively and lasts throughout the winter season.

Legal Implications

- 3.2 Redditch Borough Council has no responsibility for gritting or clearing snow from roads or footpaths, this falls to WCC as the Highways Authority. However, as an owner of land the Council needs to undertake reasonable endeavours to make that land safe.
- 3.3 Clare Flanagan has been consulted with regard to the legal implications.

Service/Operational Implications

- 3.4 Redditch Borough Council is not responsible for gritting roads and footpaths as this falls to WCC as the Highways Authority. The primary purpose of this report is to set out the Council's priorities in relation to gritting and snow clearance of Council land and the report recommends the adoption of the policy which outlines how the Council will approach gritting and snow clearance.

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

8th November 2011

- 3.5 Further to the O&S Task and Finish Review of gritting and snow clearance which was carried out in Spring 2011 and subsequent meetings, a number of actions have been carried forward. These include:
- i) Further improved communications between WCC and RBC regarding winter maintenance activities;
 - ii) Improved mapping of gritting route maps;
 - iii) Continued partnership working on salt supply and sharing of resources;
 - iv) Option of additional grit bins (see recommendation 2);
 - v) Sharing information on local contacts who may be able to assist with winter maintenance operations.
- 3.6 This report clarifies a number of issues in relation to gritting and snow clearance:
- a) Gritting Redditch Borough Council land – local policy;
 - b) Gritting of roads and paths;
 - c) Provision and filling of grit bins;
 - d) Partnership working with WCC and BDC;
 - e) Disruption to waste collection services.

Gritting Redditch Borough Council land

- 3.7 Carrying out gritting and snow clearance will always be subject to having available resources and in the first instance, operatives delivering services which cannot be delivered in snow and ice conditions – such as mechanical sweeping – will be diverted onto gritting and/or snow clearance. The table below summarises how resources are deployed onto gritting and snow clearance tasks:

Type of weather event	Resource available
Ice/frost	Mechanical sweeper drivers
Light snow	All cleansing operatives
Heavy snow	All cleansing, grounds maintenance, waste collection and housing operatives

- 3.8 The decision to undertake gritting and/or snow clearance is based on a number of factors including:

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

8th November 2011

- i) Information received via WCC;
 - ii) Local conditions/localities – e.g. crematorium site;
 - iii) Nature of the frost and prevailing weather conditions;
 - iv) Resources available;
 - v) Any previous gritting recently carried out (e.g. if was done the day before, may not need to be done again);
 - vi) Crews when on site will also make assessments about where gritting is needed – e.g. half a car park may have been thawed by the time they arrive there.
- 3.9 The Council treats a small number of areas either to allow safe passage of customers and visitors to key sites such as the Crematorium, to ensure that there are suitable parking areas for council staff who are getting into work to provide essential services or to carry out critical services like the Home Support Service.
- 3.10 It is recommended that the Council adopts a policy to clarify the gritting work that will be carried out:
- Crematorium and cemeteries to allow funerals to continue;
 - Redditch Borough Council staff car parks to ensure that there are suitable parking areas for council staff who are getting into work to provide essential services;
 - Key council sites like the Town Hall and district centres to assist local shops and businesses and enable residents to access services.
- 3.11 Gritting/snow clearance at other areas including Council sheltered accommodation and leisure sites will only be carried out subject to available resources; gritting/snow clearance at council owned sheltered accommodation will be to allow the Home Support Service access to residents.
- 3.12 Where gritting/snow clearance is carried out, this will be done to allow a sensible route for pedestrians and/or vehicles to access properties or facilities.
- 3.13 The Council is procuring specialist equipment to assist in gritting and snow clearance activities. This will be funded from within existing budgets.

Partnership working with WCC and BDC

- 3.14 Effective partnership working has developed between Redditch Borough Council, Worcestershire County Council and Bromsgrove

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

8th November 2011

District Council. During bad weather events, regular conference calls are held where information is shared with regards to weather conditions, priority work and resources available. The Council will continue to work in partnership with Worcestershire County Council and Bromsgrove District Council to co-ordinate the effective use of resources to enable gritting and snow clearance to take place at agreed prioritised locations.

Gritting of Roads and Paths

- 3.15 WCC carry out gritting of primary and secondary routes when there is the risk of snow or ice forming on the roads and detailed gritting routes are shown on the WCC website. With limited resources and available finance it is essential that the Primary Network is treated first and the Secondary Network will be treated in severe weather conditions and only after the Primary Network has been successfully treated. It is not reasonably practicable to provide the service on all roads or to ensure all surfaces are kept free of ice or snow at all times, even on the treated parts of the network.
- 3.16 WCC do not generally treat footways as priority is always given to the road network. However, in prolonged periods of adverse conditions footways in town centres will be treated after the road network has been successfully treated.
- 3.17 Redditch Borough Council does not carry out gritting of any roads other than at the request of WCC. Redditch Borough Council treats a small number of areas (see section 3.9 above) and will also carry out gritting/snow clearance through agreement with WCC at identified sites which WCC own, as part of our partnership working to maximise resources during bad weather events.

Provision and filling of grit bins

- 3.18 WCC provide grit bins at strategic points across the county and the locations are shown on plans which are available on the WCC website. In siting a bin, the County take into account various criteria such as proximity to a junction and gradient. During bad weather events, WCC may ask the council to fill grit bins as their resources may be deployed on other emergency works; these agreements are made on a day to day basis through regular conference calls. WCC make available additional salt supplies if the Council are asked to undertake any work on their behalf.
- 3.19 Due to the cost of providing and maintaining grit bins and a need to ensure consistency with the approach by WCC, Redditch Borough Council does not provide any grit bins on any WCC land (see

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

8th November 2011

recommendation). Grit bins may be provided at certain council owned sites – such as Forge Mill Museum – so that there is a ready supply of grit which on site staff can use as needed.

Disruption to Waste Collection Services

- 3.20 An effective decision making and communications process has been put in place when waste collection services are disrupted by bad weather events. Operational teams will make decisions as to whether it is safe to make collections based on a number of factors. We rely on being able to get from and to locations using specialised vehicles. We must think of the safety of other road users, pedestrians and our own staff and make sure we do not put anyone at risk. Refuse vehicles can have a weight of up to 26 tonnes and they are much bigger than most household delivery vehicles. It is essential that we do not drive on roads when drivers make a judgement that is not safe to do so.
- 3.21 Once decisions are made, regular updates are issued at 08:00, 10:00 and 12:00 daily. Information is provided to Members, customer service advisors, the communications team and senior officers with alerts and information being posted on the website, phone lines and other social media like 'Facebook' and 'Twitter'. It is important to give out a clear and simple message – often this will be to leave out your bin until we have been to collect it. Last year this process proved to be very successful and bad weather Frequently Asked Questions are provided on the website.
- 3.22 Further publicity is planned to ensure that residents are aware of how the council will deal with gritting/snow clearance and what to do when bad weather affects their waste collection service.

Customer / Equalities and Diversity Implications

- 3.23 There has been no public/stakeholder consultation or service sampling on this subject. However, when there are bad weather events of snow and ice, the Council will receive a large number of calls from residents and businesses. It is therefore important to have a clear approach to gritting and snow clearance and to provide as much information as possible through the Council's website. Frequently Asked Questions and information is available on the council's website and on the WCC website.
- 3.24 Direct.gov provides advice regarding clearing snow and ice from pavements as follows:

“Prevent slips

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

8th November 2011

Pay extra attention to clear snow and ice from steps and steep pathways - you might need to use more salt on these areas. If you clear snow and ice yourself, be careful - don't make the pathways more dangerous by causing them to refreeze. But don't be put off clearing paths because you're afraid someone will get injured. Remember, people walking on snow and ice have responsibility to be careful themselves. Follow the advice below to make sure you clear the pathway safely and effectively."

4. RISK MANAGEMENT

There are two key risks associated with this issue:

Business risk – failure to carry out effective gritting/snow clearance at prioritised agreed locations will result in a loss of business and negative impact, both financial and reputation.

Social risk – failure to carry out effective gritting/snow clearance at prioritised agreed locations can have a negative impact on local residents and communities – e.g. access to local shops.

5. APPENDICES

None.

6. BACKGROUND PAPERS

None.

AUTHOR OF REPORT

Name: Sue Horrobin
E Mail: sue.horrobin@bromsgroveandredditch.gov.uk
Tel: (01527) 64252 extn. 3706