

CYC Winter Gritting Policy – Interim Report

Background

1. In coming to a decision to review this topic, the Community Safety Overview & Scrutiny Committee agreed the following key objectives:
 - i) To review current policy in regard to cycle paths to:
 - understand the practicalities of gritting different types of cycleways and optimum timing for gritting and make available this information in order to control residents' and visitor expectations
 - draw up a priority list of cycle routes to be gritted where funding and resources allow, for inclusion in the manual
 - Consult cycling groups to raise awareness of the issues
 - ii) To review current policy in regard to council funded salt bins:
 - to understand the costs involved to the council of supplying and maintaining 200+ salt bins across the city, and filling / re-filling those salt bins
 - to compare the advantages and disadvantages of providing those salt bins i.e. does the provision of salt via salt bins only benefit a minority of residents, could the money be put to better use funding the gritting of secondary routes across the city e.g. rat runs / roads with gradients, and public areas such as outside schools, public car parks etc
 - iii) To identify:
 - current working practices not presently included in the manual e.g. working relationship with call centre to identify residents' concerns etc.
 - reasons why the council is unable to grit certain road, cycle and pedestrian routes within the city e.g. due to limitations in staff resources, suitable equipment and funding and make available this information in order to control residents' and visitor expectations
 - a list of secondary roads / routes for gritting where funding and resources allow

- iv) To review the Council's methods for raising awareness of the gritting policy and communicating with interested parties
2. The Committee also agreed a timetable for the review, which included for consideration of the third objective at this meeting.

Draft Recommendations Arising From This Scrutiny Review to Date

3. At a meeting of the Committee on 12 April 2010, the Committee considered information pertaining to the first two objectives of the review.
4. In relation to salt bins, the following draft recommendations were agreed:
 - i. That the current levels of supply of council funded salt bins be maintained
 - ii. That in times of severe and prolonged bad weather the council also provides self-help bags at various locations across the city.
 - iii. That a list of sites be identified for locating the self help bags – this list to be drawn up in consultation with Ward Committees and Parish Councils
 - iv. That criteria for the provision of the self-help bags and the list of sites be included within the Winter Gritting Policy.
5. Having considered information provided in relation to cycle paths, Members agreed that the key issues were:
 - raising public awareness of the reasons behind the council's policy on gritting cycleways
 - the need to provide up-to-date information on which main cycle access routes into the city centre are to be gritted, so that cyclists can make an informed choice on whether or not to use their bicycle and which route to take.
6. As these issues relate to the third objective of the review which is scheduled for consideration at this meeting, Members chose not to make any recommendations in relation to cycleways, at that stage.

Consultation

7. Members recognised the need to consult the following interested parties at relevant stages in the review:

Residents Associations
Federation of Tenants
Neighbourhood Watch Groups
Partner Agencies
Voluntary Organisations
Ward Committees / Parish Councils
Other CYC service providers e.g. Adult Social Services & Network Management
Other CYC Councillors
8. Information included in this report pertaining to the third objective has been provided by the Assistant Director of Maintenance Services and other CYC officers.

Information Gathered

9. Recent Working Practices Not Included In the Manual

During the severe weather period December 2009 - January 2010, additional procedures to those defined in the Winter Maintenance Manual were carried out on a reactive basis i.e. :

- Gritting of roads not on the defined network
- Manual clearance of footpaths not on the defined network
- Snow clearance within car parks
- Additional salt bins placed
- Daily updates were included on the front page of the Council's website and sent to some Councillors by email / text (at their request)
- Introduction of regular information releases to the media
- The use of a 'Control Room' was replaced by the introduction of a strategic Winter Maintenance Group. This group oversaw the implementation of the council's policy
- Changes to the way the council mixed salt and grit - in order to preserve the council salt supply

10. Subject to lessons learnt, it is suggested that the policy be amended to reflect these changes to working practices.

11. Secondary Roads

The proposal to define a list of secondary routes and a criteria under which these would be treated, is based on a number of issues. It is more cost effective than snow clearance and gritting on a reactive basis, it will assist the Council in communicating with residents and other stakeholders, and will help to achieve equality of treatment across the city.

12. Officers are currently carrying out work to identify a list of secondary routes based on the proposed criteria below i.e. those secondary roads that satisfy **all** of the following:

- a. accessible by gritting vehicles - roads with minimum width 5m that are not regularly obstructed by parked cars
- b. links between other roads i.e. no cul-de-sacs (the exclusion of cul-de-sacs is based on the use of single person gritters where reversing needs to be avoided wherever possible)
- c. serve areas of dense population e.g. care homes, schools etc

13. In addition, it is suggested that the following locations which do not meet the proposed criteria, also receive snow clearance treatment at the same time as the secondary routes:

- Whitecross Road - providing access to rehab unit
- Yearsley Bridge (Huntington Road) - providing access to ambulance station

14. Subject to the above criteria being approved, it is suggested that the treatment of these routes will consist of snow clearance only (rather than regular gritting as on the defined network), and that further reactive treatments will only be carried out in emergency situations.

15. Raising Awareness of the Council's Winter Maintenance Policy

Currently, information is made available in a number of ways:

- Leaflets placed in council libraries, receptions and community centres
- Information placed on the website, including maps of gritting routes, the footpaths treated and salt bin locations
- Press releases to local radio during severe weather

16. However, officers are now proposing a number of additional methods for raising awareness:

- An open day at the Eco Depot for Members and the public in September / October this year, to display the proposed routes and equipment used – a decision on whether to repeat this in future years will depend on the response and feedback from the open day this year
- Daily updates on the website and by email to all councillors, to be instructed by the Winter Maintenance Group - some councillors received update emails during the severe weather earlier this year and the suggestion is that these be provided to all, unless they request otherwise
- More detailed maps of primary and secondary routes on the website so that individual roads can be identified

17. Furthermore, in response to the severe weather last winter, a 'Talkabout' survey specifically on the winter maintenance of roads and footpaths was issued week commencing 19 April 2010. It included questions concerning residents' satisfaction with the existing advance and ongoing information, and invited suggestions as to how this could be improved. Responses are due by 14 May 2010 and the processed information is expected by mid June to be fed into the ongoing officer review.

18. In support of the Committee's work on the first objective of this review specifically, Members are asked to consider if they wish to recommend that up-to-date information on the gritting of 'main' cycle access routes be provided on the website (to be instructed by the Winter Maintenance Group), to enable residents to make an informed decision on whether or not to use their bicycle.

19. Finally, this Committee has already identified that more could be done to publicise the Council's Winter Maintenance Policy, including providing information on why the Council are unable (or choose not) to grit some road and cycle routes. Members are asked to consider whether they wish to recommend that this information be written into the policy in order to control residents and visitor expectations.

Options

20. Having considered the information contained within this report, Members may choose to:

- request additional information in support of objective (iii), or agree no further information is required
- identify alternative / additional recommendations in regard to objective (iii)

Corporate Priorities

21. A robust gritting policy will provide an environment which allows workers and visitors to travel freely and safely around the city in times of severe weather, therefore maintaining the city's economy. This supports the council's strategic aim to make the city safer and enabling it to thrive.

Implications

22. There are no known Financial, HR, Equalities, Legal, Crime and Disorder, IT, Property, or other implications associated with the proposed recommendations included in this report. Information on the implications associated with the draft recommendations arising from this review will be included in the draft final report.

Risk Management

23. Information on the risks associated with the draft recommendations arising from this review will be included in the draft final report. There is some risk associated with not keeping to the timetable agreed for this review, as it would affect the Committee's ability to feed into the officer review, thereby undermining the dual review process which may affect the future robustness of the policy.

Recommendation

24. In regard to the third objective of this review, Members are asked to
 - i) note the contents of the report and the views of those present at the meeting
 - ii) agree the inclusion of the following draft recommendations in their draft final report i.e. that:
 - the policy be updated to reflect all current working practices
 - information on why the Council are unable (or choose not) to grit some roads and cycle routes be included in the policy
 - up-to-date information on the gritting of 'main' cycle access routes be provided on the website, when instructed by the Winter Maintenance Group
 - the treating of secondary routes as detailed in paragraphs 12 – 14 above, be approved
 - the decision of when to treat secondary routes be the responsibility of the Winter Maintenance Group
 - the list of secondary routes (currently being identified by officers) and the proposed criteria be included in the council's Winter Maintenance Policy
 - the proposed methods of raising public awareness of the policy outlined in paragraph 15 above, be approved

Reason: To progress the review in line with scrutiny procedures and protocols

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Interim Report Approved **Date**

27 April 2010

Wards Affected:

All

For further information please contact the author of the report

Background Papers: Executive Report dated 10 September 2007