

Report of the Assistant Director (Transport, Highways and Waste)

Winter Maintenance Review for the 2013/14 season

Summary

1. The aim of the review is to provide a safe, efficient and effective winter maintenance service that is fit for purpose. The Council's budget setting process has identified target savings of £60k in 2014/15 from the current winter maintenance allocation of £180k. This report details the proposed amendments to the winter maintenance services following a review and public consultation of the road gritting and grit bin provision.

Background

2. It is the duty of the Highway Authority under the Highways Act 1980 to ensure; so far as is reasonably practicable, that the safe passage along a highway is not endangered by snow or ice.
3. The winter maintenance service review has focused on the road gritting and grit bin provisions on the highway network. The grit bin review analysed the highways and ward bin ownership only. The provision and maintenance of housing, parking, resident association and parish owned grit bins was not affected by this review.
4. The gritting of the footway and cycleway network has been reviewed recently and is proving to be performing well. It is therefore the intention that the service will remain the same as that provided in 2012/13.
5. The City of York Council maintains 796km of road network of which 363km (45.6%) was gritted as part of the primary route treatment in 2012/13. The primary route network is treated when the road temperature falls below zero degrees centigrade and the road surface is wet.

6. In addition to the primary route a secondary network is treated by an instruction from the Winter Maintenance Group. The group is convened in severe weather conditions defined as:-
 - When snow is lying on the ground which is a minimum of 50mm deep and the weather forecast is for severe conditions to last for more than 3 days.
 - A prolonged cold spell is forecast, where temperatures remain below freezing for at least 5 days.

The 2012/13 secondary gritting route is 65km long and represents 8% of the road network and is in addition to the 45.6% of the primary route treated. This equates to a minimum of 53% of the road network being treated with grit in times of severe winter conditions.

7. There are currently over 400 grit bins that are owned by either the highways (145) or the ward committee's (255). The ward committee's are no longer able to support the provision of grit bins and it is therefore necessary to rationalise their locations in line with current budget levels and to provide a fair, clear and transparent system rather than the current ad-hoc approach.
8. The Council derived a scoring criteria taking into account information received from both North Yorkshire County Council and the East Riding of Yorkshire Council's assessment method. The criteria adopted by the Council include - vehicle and pedestrian traffic volume, gradient, bend, junction, proximity to emergency locations and locations where there are vulnerable people. A copy of the assessment form and guidance notes can be found in annex 1.
9. A survey of all the highway and ward grit bins was carried out during August and September 2013 to provide an unambiguous assessment and create a ranking table for analysis. The process identified 158 grit bins that scored 75 and above and gave a good distribution of bins throughout the Council area. The location of the 158 grit bins formed part of the consultation with options and recommendations forming part of this report.
10. The charge for installing a grit bin is £300 and refills at £50 a visit. Since the consultation started a number of organisations have identified ward grit bins they have or wish to adopt and the process is still ongoing.

11. As part of the Smarter York initiative, volunteering opportunities have been identified to encourage local residents and businesses to get involved with the delivery and planning of their local services, one of these are snow wardens, which have been introduced to the winter maintenance service. Snow wardens give up time to clear snow and treat ice during wintry conditions. The Council provide them with training, high-visibility clothing and snow clearing kit and grit so that they can contribute towards assisting their community during wintry conditions.
12. As part of this review an exercise was undertaken to synchronise the primary gritting route (PGR) in line with the Authority's road hierarchy. It is proposed to amend the PGR to include all level 1 and 2 hierarchical categories plus any 2012/13 PGR that are on a slope that would otherwise have been excluded.
13. The Council's road hierarchy incorporates 3 categories which have been derived from the 'Well-maintained Highways, Code of Practice for Highway Maintenance' and are detailed below:
 - Level 1 – The city centre footstreets and important routes from car parks and the railway station.
 - Level 2 – Principal roads and other main important distributor roads, plus unclassified roads carrying frequent bus services of at least one every 20 minutes in one direction.
 - Level 3 – All other roads
14. It was also proposed in the consultation to increase the Secondary Gritting routes (SGR) to include those 2012/13 PGR excluded from the consulted 2013/14 PGR's. The proposed changes to the PGR and SGR were detailed in the consultation with options and recommendations forming part of this report.
15. The treated length of the 2012/13 PGR was 363km which represents 45.6% of the road network. The proposed consulted 2013/14 PGR length will reduce the road network treated to 285km equating to 36% network coverage.
16. At the time of writing this report officers were using a route optimisation software package to determine the number of rounds required. For the purpose of this report it is envisaged

that a saving of two rounds will be made by implementing the consulted PGR of 285km.

Consultation

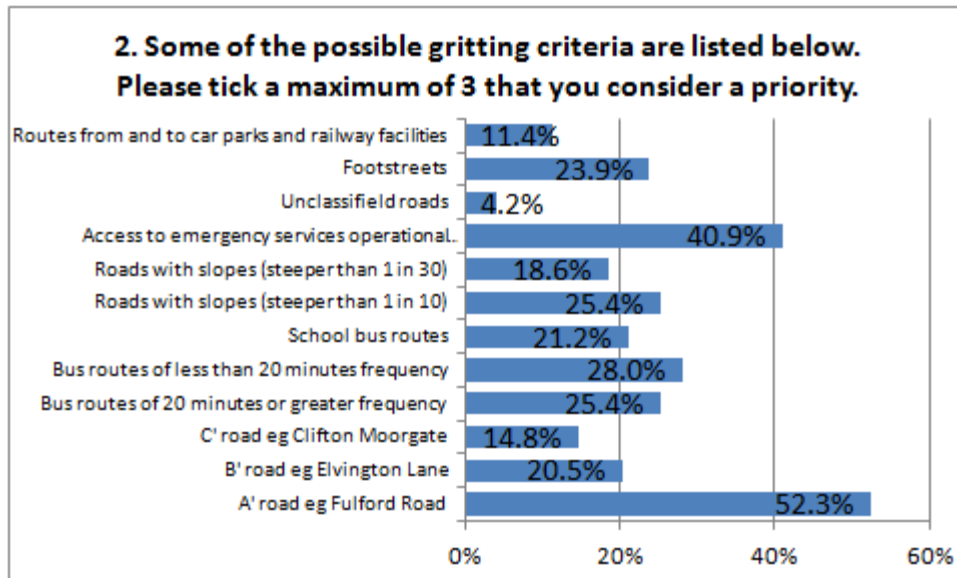
17. A public consultation was carried out between 12 August 2013 and 15 September 2013. In addition to the public the emergency services partners, councillors, Chamber of Commerce and other business groups, bus companies, resident associations and parish councils were invited to take part. The York Council for Voluntary Services received details to circulate to members in its publication, Voluntary Voice and the Council tweeted details of the consultation several times.
18. The consultation was undertaken on the Council's web site and a display was also placed at the public entrance to the West Office building where there were facilities to complete the questionnaire either by the internet or hard copy. During the consultation there were 285 questionnaires completed as well as one letter, 11 additional email comments and 10 call centre cases. A copy of the questionnaire, comments from the consultation and additional correspondence can be found in annexes 2, 3 and 4 respectively.
19. In addition to the winter maintenance service consultation the Council undertake an annual Big York Survey. The survey is an opportunity for people to give feedback and views on how improvements can be made to deliver services across the city. The results of the last survey indicate that 10% of people that responded to the question on volunteering said they would be interested in becoming a snow warden.

Outcome of the Consultation

20. *Q 1. Do you agree that City of York Council should prioritise gritting to where it is needed most?*

Almost 83% of respondents agreed with our approach that gritting should be prioritised.

21. *Q2. Some of the possible gritting criteria are listed below. Please tick a maximum of 3 that you consider a priority.*



22. The most popular criteria identified by those participating in the survey are the principal 'A' road network (52.3%) and access to emergency services operations (40.9%) which are included in the proposed PGR. Also included in the PGR are footstreets, roads with slopes steeper than 1 in 10, bus routes of 20 minutes or greater frequency, and 'B' roads that all received more than 20% support as a priority consideration. There are two priorities that received more than 20% support that was not included in the consulted PGR; they are school bus routes and bus routes of 20 minutes or greater frequency.

23. *Q3. Is there any other criteria which you think should be included?*

See annex 3 for details of comments received during the consultation period. They were 146 valid responses received relating to the consulted gritting route proposal. The majority of comments relate to the gritting of less frequent bus routes especially those of 30 minute intervals in one direction and is reflected in the graph of results from question 2 above. These buses travel on routes that connect residential and commercial areas to the main highway network and link to local and community services.

24. *Q4. Which existing grit bin location(s) would you change and where to? (including grit bin reference number).*

See annex 4 for details of comments received during the consultation period. They were 107 valid responses received relating the proposed grit bin provision. In addition to the

consultation the Council received a further 12 comments through the call centre, emails and a resident association meeting. Of those that responded to the question eight people said retain all current grit bins, and two responses said retain all in Strensall. The Council received a number of emails from resident associations and parish councils on the proposed provision of grit bins. In all cases the comments were objecting to the removal of grit bins in specific locations.

25. There were 25 possible moves suggested in the consultation but with little commonality. In addition there were 12 requests for new bin locations with no suggestions for moving a proposed grit bin. Of the 25 move suggestions bin reference 136, 192 and 136 were mention twice with bin references 270 being three times. Of these bins only reference 270 and 136 had the same suggested move location mentioned twice. Both recommendations are not located where a bin has been removed therefore the Council will consult with residents and elected members in the area on the suggestions.
26. *Q5. Are you a snow warden? Q6 Are you interested in joining a community group to help with snow clearing/spreading grit? & Q7 If No how could the council encourage you to join one?*

The majority of respondents to the consultation were not volunteer snow warden for their neighbourhood. There are 15 respondents that have volunteered to be snow wardens and they will be contacted to be registered and receive the appropriate training. See annex 4 for comments on question 7 of the consultation.

Options

27. Option 1 – Maintain the road gritting regime and highway and ward grit bin provision the same as that of the 2012/13 season.
28. Option 2 – Implement the PGR, SGR and grit bin provision (158 no) published in the winter maintenance consultation proposal.
29. Option 3 – Implement option 2 with the addition of bus routes of 30 minutes frequencies or less in one direction and school bus routes not included in the proposed PGR. This option will reduce the number of grit bin provision to 150 due to the extension of the primary grit route.

Analysis

30. Option 1 – Maintaining the existing PGR the same as the 2012/13 winter maintenance service will not achieve the desired savings. The 2012/13 percentage of road network treated by the PGR is 45.6%. To maintain the existing number of highway and ward grit bins will require an additional budget of £38.8k. The existing grit bin locations have been derived by an ad-hoc basis rather than a process of need by assessment. Respondents to the consultation also indicated strong support for the Council to prioritise the gritting routes to network where it is needed most, also largely agreeing with the proposed criteria for doing so.
31. The Association for Public Service Excellence (APSE) collate data from over 300 councils throughout the United Kingdom. Data is collated and analysed for the winter maintenance service and the latest information available is for the year 2011/12. The Council is grouped with other councils of similar size and nature and the average length of network treated for the group is 40.6%. This indicated that the PGR for option 1 is higher than the family groups' average.
32. Option 2 – The best available information suggests implementing the PGR and SGR that was proposed in the consultation will reduce the number of gritting rounds by 2. The estimated cost saving for the reduction of 2 gritting rounds is £40k but this will be dependent on the number of PGR runs required each season. The percentage of road network treated by the PGR for option 2 is 35.8% which is less than the average APSE family group value of 40.6%.
33. The proposed location of the combined highway and ward grit bins were ranked in accordance with the adopted criteria as shown in annex 1. The ranking process identified 158 grit bin locations that had a score of 75 and greater and provided an even distribution throughout the Council area. The current number of highway grit bins is 145 and therefore there is an additional 13 bins to fund and these will be absorbed within the winter maintenance budget.
34. Option 3 – Analysing the consultation data and responding to the feedback from residents this option addresses the majority of the gritting route concerns. The revised PGR adds bus routes

with intervals of 21 to 30 minutes in one direction and school bus routes to the consulted route. Adding both these criteria to option 3 will result in an additional 32km of road network being gritting but reduces the saving of a gritting round to one.

35. The estimated cost saving for the reduction of 1 gritting round is £20k but this will be dependent on the number of PGR runs required each season. The percentage of road network treated by the PGR for option 3 is 39.8% which is in line with the average APSE family group value of 40.6%.
36. The increased length of PGR has the affect of reducing the number of grit bins provision from 158 to 150. This is because the assessment process takes into account the proximity of the bin location to the PGR network.

Council Priorities

37. The City and Environmental Services directorate supports delivery of the create jobs and grow the economy, protect the environment, get York moving and build strong communities themes from the Council's key priorities.

Implications

Financial

38. Implementing Option 1 will result in no saving on the gritting route treatment, while requiring a £38.8k increase for the maintenance of the existing grit bins. Applying option 2 will have the potential to save £40k and option 3 £20k. To mitigate the shortfall in the saving requirements and closing the financial gap the Council is working on income generation through charging the service to other organisations and service transformation. Work will also continue to develop the gritting rounds by the use of route optimisation software.
39. Whichever option is chosen will leave a shortfall in the savings requirement. However since the £60k budget saving is required from 2014/15 this will allow additional time to identify further savings or income generation. It is essential that these are clearly identified by April 2014, and if the shortfall is not achievable within this service area, alternative savings will be required from elsewhere within the directorate.

Human Resources (HR)

40. Options 2 and 3 have the potential to reduce the number of operative on standby and labour cost for gritting on overtime. This will not affect the number of fte's within the service.

Equalities

41. A Community Impact Assessment (CIA) has been carried out identifying the following changes and arrangements to monitor the impact:
42. The review has reduced the length of the primary grit route by 46km following a consultation to produce a safe, efficient and effective winter maintenance regime. All primary grit routes removed from the 2012/13 regime will be added to the existing secondary routes that will be treated in severe wintry condition of prolonged frost and snow.
43. Snow wardens have been introduced to the winter maintenance service. Snow wardens are residents who have volunteered to give up time to clear snow and treat ice during wintry conditions. The Council provide volunteers with training, high-visibility clothing and snow clearing kit and grit so that they can contribute towards assisting their community during wintry conditions. This service will be used to mitigate the reduction in the number of grit bins provided.
44. It is the intention to monitor and review the new routes each year and adjust the treatment where it can be identified there is a potential issue. A communication plan is required to inform residents and public the revised gritting regime so that individuals can take alternative routes in wintry conditions.

Legal

45. It is the duty of the Highway Authority under the Highways Act 1980 to ensure; so far as is reasonably practicable, that the safe passage along a highway is not endangered by snow or ice.

Crime and Disorder

46. There are no crime and disorder implications.

Information Technology (IT)

47. There are no IT implications in this report.

Property

48. There are no property implications.

Other

49. There are no other implications in this report.

Risk Management

50. In compliance with the Council's risk management strategy, the main risks that have been identified in this report are:

- Strategic Risk, arising from judgements in relation to medium term goals for the service
- Physical Risks, arising from potential accidents arising from untreated road and footway surfaces.
- Financial Risk, from pressures on budgets
- People Risks, affecting staff if budgets decline

51. Measured in terms of impact and likelihood the risk score for all of the above has been assessed at less than 16. This means that at this point the risks need only to be monitored as they do not provide a real threat to the achievement of the objectives of this report.

Recommendations

52. The Cabinet Member is recommended to:

- (i) Approve the grit bin assessment process
- (ii) Approve option 3

Reason: By undertaking a review and consultation on the gritting and salt bin provision the Council has taken residents

feedback and recommends option 3 to provide a safe, efficient and effective service.

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Report Approved

Date

25 September 2013

Wards Affected:

All

For further information please contact the author of the report

Background Papers:

There are no background papers

Annexes:

- Annex 1 Grit Bin Assessment form and guidance
- Annex 2 Copy of Consultation Questionnaire
- Annex 3 Consultation Comments – Gritting Routes
- Annex 4 Consultation Comments – Grit bin and Snow Wardens
- Annex 5 Map Showing Gritting Route Options