
Decision Session - Executive Member for Neighbourhoods and Housing

15 March 2011

Report of the Assistant Director of Communities and Neighbourhoods

Snow Warden – Functions and Funding

Summary

1. This report informs the Executive Member for Neighbourhoods and Housing of the advantages of the recruitment of snow wardens to enhance the city's winter maintenance resilience and to agree the scope of the role and method of funding.

Background

2. The idea of the Snow Warden scheme originated in Calgary in Canada, where a group of people known as Snow Angels commit to helping other more vulnerable members of the community in case of severe weather.
3. There is a long tradition of volunteering in York with over 3,000 organisations currently. There is also a continuous flow of new people coming forward to offer their time and look for varied opportunities to volunteer.
4. The economic challenges facing City of York Council and other public sector organisations coupled with the national drive to increase the role of volunteers make this an ideal time to build on the opportunities available to local residents.
5. Other councils, including the likes of Sheffield are trialling similar projects, but this is the first time it has been tried in York. The main objective will be to clear snow, hopefully with the assistance of their friends and neighbours, on minor roads, cul-de-sacs and those places where the council does not have the time or resources to deal with. The Snow Wardens will complement the work done by the council's winter maintenance teams and add to the city's resilience in extreme weather.

The principles on how it will work

6. Working with the Neighbourhood Management Unit and other partners, we would look to recruit a network of up to 50 volunteers through wards, parish councils, CANs Housing, housing associations and voluntary sector organisations who will spread salt and clear roads and pavement in their local area.
7. In the event of an over subscription, preference will be given to those areas which are close to the existing salt spreading routes so establishing a link to

the already treated part of the network, to areas with high numbers of vulnerable people or access to local shops and amenities.

8. Each Snow Warden will receive training from officers on working on the highway and the Government's Snow Code and the level of responsibility required in the event of heavy snowfall.
9. They will given a brief summary of the council's Winter Maintenance Manual and an insight into how the weather forecasting works. We would ask that they have access to a mobile phone or internet as they would become part of the flow of weather information and decisions on gritting during the periods of extreme weather.
10. They will be issued with a snow shovel, high visibility vest and gloves. Their location will be assessed, as where possible, when the bad weather comes, one-tonne bags of salt will be delivered to an agreed location. Alternative salt supplies will have to be considered on a location by location basis if the positioning of the salt bag is not possible.
11. Where access is possible and manoeuvrability can be carried out without risk, the snow wardens will be backed up by the council with tractor mounted snowploughs. These will not spread salt, but will, where possible, give the volunteers access to the treated network. This will be a road plough only, and not capable of clearing footpaths.
12. Additionally we will work with local residents physically unable to undertake snow clearance but keen to participate, by enabling them to act as a contact to receive and provide information.

Consultation

13. Consultation has been undertaken by the Neighbourhood Management Unit in partnership with the Street Based Volunteering Project (CVS). Voluntary groups, wards and parish councils are all very supportive of the idea. To date 42 volunteers have registered and further engagement is planned.

Corporate Priorities

14. Working with residents to deliver a service which best fits the area contributes to the council's strategic ambitions of creating a Safer City, Sustainable City, Healthy City and Inclusive City.

Financial Implications

15. It is estimated that the total cost of each individual set of equipment, plus the training and salt suppliers etc will be no more than £50. With a proposed maximum of 50 wardens, this will give a total annual cost of £2,500. It is proposed that this funding, plus the support of the tractor mounted ploughs will be from existing resources. This will have very little impact on the existing winter maintenance service, but will enhance the resilience at a local level. The funding made available to wards in 2011/12 for winter maintenance could contribute to addition wardens.

Human Resources

16. There are no human resources implications.

Equalities

17. The Equality Impact Assessment has been carried out for the provision of the Snow Wardens detailed in this report.

Legal Implications

18. After training, the snow wardens will be covered on the council's insurance policies. The only actions needed are:
 - Register name and address of volunteers with Insurance dept (must renew yearly)
 - Provide description of task/tasks to be undertaken
 - Get signed form from volunteer to confirm they have received the training and hold on record (will need to do refreshers periodically)
19. The council has also regularly reminded members of the public that there is no law stopping people from clearing snow and ice on the pavement outside their property, pathways to local public spaces and amenities. If an accident occurs, it is highly unlikely that the council or an individual would be sued as long as care is taken and common sense is used to make sure that pavements and pathways are no more dangerous than before. People using areas affected by snow and ice also have responsibilities to be careful themselves.

Crime and Disorder

20. There are no crime and disorder implications.

Information Technology (IT)

21. As part of the costings set out in paragraph 15 above, the cost of transmitting text messages to the volunteers has been included. The mobile phone numbers will require storing on the councils early warning system.

Risk Management

22. In compliance with the council's risk management strategy, there are no risks associated with the information in this report.

Recommendations

23. That the Executive Member is asked to agree the scope of the Snow Warden role and to approve the use of the funding as set out in paragraph 15.

Reason: To enhance the winter maintenance resilience at a local level.

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Report Approved



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Wards Affected:

All



For further information please contact the author of the report