

Winter Gritting Policy Review - Scoping Report

Purpose of Report

1. This report presents information on the council's response to the recent severe weather conditions, together with feedback from the Task Group set up to scope this scrutiny review. Members are asked to consider the information provided and agree methods for progressing the review.

Background

2. At the last meeting of this Committee, Members considered a topic registration from Cllr Bowgett suggesting a review of the council's current winter gritting policy, together with a copy of the council's 'Winter Maintenance Manual'.
3. The Committee acknowledged the excellent work carried out by officers in dealing with the recent period of prolonged snowfall, but recognised that although the work on clearing roads had been largely successful there may still be room for improvement in regard to other aspects i.e. gritting pathways and cycleways and the provision and re-filling of salt bins. Officers clarified that an annual review of the policy is carried out at the end of every winter, to understand any lessons learnt and to identify any required changes to working practices in time for the start of the next winter period.
4. Members agreed to proceed with a scrutiny review of the Council's Winter Gritting Policy quickly, to enable any findings to be fed into the forthcoming annual officer review process. With that in mind, a task group made up of three committee members was set up to scope the review. They met informally on 11 Feb 2010 to draw up their recommendations on how best to proceed.

Consultation

5. The task group met with senior officers from Neighbourhood services who made available a briefing paper detailing CYC's response to the winter conditions and their preparations for the remainder of the season – see Annex A.
6. The scrutiny officer also attended an officer meeting on 12 February 2010 with representatives from all the different CYC service areas that will contribute to the annual officer review of CYC's winter maintenance policy. It was noted that many of the working practices put in place during periods of severe weather, were also required when responding to other emergency situations e.g. flooding. Therefore a robust corporate approach involving all the relevant CYC Services was required. Officers discussed the elements which would make up their

review, which covered many of the issues previously identified when this Committee considered the topic registration form i.e.

- Resources (staff, plant, salt, bins)
 - Operations (policy)
 - Customer Contact
 - Vulnerable Residents
 - Members
 - Communications & Media
 - Budgets
 - Community Resilience
7. The scrutiny officer made known the agreed suggestions of the task group regarding the proposed focus of this scrutiny review. It was agreed that it would be possible for the two reviews to run along side each other without duplicating work, leading to two sets of recommendations which if implemented together, would create a more corporate and robust response to emergency situations.

Suggested Objectives & Scope For the Review

8. Having considered the information provided by officers at the meeting on 11 February 2010, the task group agreed the review should focus on four 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 i.e. due to limitations in HR 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 the following:

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
 Councillors

9. Having gathered the relevant information detailed above, the committee will need to meet formally to consider their draft final report and agree their recommendations for presentation to the Executive. The findings from the officer review, which is to be carried out simultaneously, are scheduled to be presented to the Executive at a meeting on 20 July 2010. It would therefore be beneficial if this scrutiny review could be completed within the same timescale so that both sets of findings and recommendations can be considered together.

10. With that in mind the following timetable for this review is suggested:

<u>Meeting Date</u>	<u>Tasks & Activities</u>
Meeting 1 – date to be agreed	Receive interim report detailing current policy in regard to cycle paths (see (i) above) – interested parties to be invited to attend
Meeting 2 – date to be agreed	Receive interim report detailing current policy in regard to council funded salt bins (see (ii) above) – interested parties to be invited to attend
Meeting 3 – date to be agreed	Receive interim report outlining current working practices not detailed in the manual and a proposed list of secondary roads (see (iii) above) - interested parties to be invited to attend
Meeting 4 – date to be agreed	Receive interim report suggesting additional methods for raising awareness of CYC policy and – see (iv) above
Meeting 5 – 29 June 2010	Consideration of the draft final report

Options

11. Objectives & Scope – Members may choose to amend and/or approve the suggested way forward, as outlined in paragraphs 8 – 10 above
12. Timescale for the review - bearing in mind the need to complete the review within three months as outlined above, a number of additional meeting dates will need to be agreed. In considering this, Members need to decide whether they want:
 - the work of the review to be carried out by the full committee or;
 - to form a task group to carry out the review on their behalf and produce a draft final report for the full committee's consideration.

Implications

13. There are no Financial, HR, Equalities, Legal, Crime & Disorder, property or other implications associated with the recommendations in this report.

Corporate Strategy

14. 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.

Risk Management

15. Not keeping to the agreed timetable 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.

Recommendations

16. Members are asked to:
 - a. approve the proposed objectives, scope and timeframe for the review as outlined in paragraphs 8-10 above;
 - b. agree additional meeting dates
 - c. agree who will carry out the review - see paragraph 12 above
 - d. amend the committee's workplan accordingly

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

Contact Details

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Scoping Report Approved

Date 18 February 2010

Wards Affected:

All

For further information please contact the author of the report

Background Papers: None

Annexes:

Annex A – Briefing Paper on CYC Response to the Winter Conditions & Preparation for Remainder of Season