

Cabinet Highways Committee

Meeting held 29 August 2014

PRESENT: Councillors Leigh Bramall (Chair), Isobel Bowler, Ben Curran and Jack Scott (Substitute Member)

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1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

1.1 An apology for absence was received from Councillor Harry Harpham, and Councillor Jack Scott attended as his duly appointed substitute.

2. EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS

2.1 No items were identified where resolutions may be moved to exclude the public and press.

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

3.1 There were no declarations of interest.

4. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS

4.1 The minutes of meetings of the Committee held 18th June 2013 and 4th June 2014, were approved as correct records.

5. PUBLIC QUESTIONS AND PETITIONS

5.1 *Petition Objecting to the Removal of 100 Miles of Road from the Gritting Network and Requesting the Restoration of the Volunteer Snow Warden Project*

Harry Matthews submitted an electronic petition containing 1,078 signatures, requesting the Council to reconsider its gritting plans and to restore the Volunteer Snow Warden Project.

RESOLVED: That the Committee:-

- (a) notes the receipt of the petition; and
- (b) agrees that the petition be considered as part of the consideration of Item 7 – Streets Ahead – Changes to the Winter Maintenance Service.

5.2 *Petitions Objecting to the Proposed Cuts to Gritting Services within the Bradfield Parish Council Area*

Petitions were submitted by (a) residents of Bradfield, containing 65 signatures, (b) The Keep Bradfield Parish Grittled Action Group, containing 411 signatures, (c) Keep Bradfield Grittled, containing 65 signatures and (d) Matt Dixon, on behalf of

residents of Bradfield Parish, containing 680 signatures.

RESOLVED: That the Committee:-

- (i) notes the receipt of the petitions; and
- (ii) agrees that the petitions be considered as part of the consideration of Item 7 – Streets Ahead – Changes to the Winter Maintenance Service.

5.3 *Petition Objecting to the Proposed Cuts to the Gritting Service on Redmires Way and in the Lodge Moor Area*

Barry Croxall and Jane Thompson submitted a petition containing 398 signatures, objecting to the proposed cuts to the gritting service on Redmires Way and in the Lodge Moor area.

RESOLVED: That the Committee:-

- (a) notes the receipt of the petition; and
- (b) agrees that the petition be considered as part of the consideration of Item 7 – Streets Ahead – Changes to the Winter Maintenance Service.

6. ITEMS CALLED IN FOR SCRUTINY/REFERRED TO CABINET HIGHWAYS COMMITTEE

6.1 There were no items called in for Scrutiny or referred to the Cabinet Highways Committee.

7. STREETS AHEAD - CHANGES TO THE WINTER MAINTENANCE SERVICE

7.1 The Committee considered a report of the Executive Director, Place, containing a number of proposed changes in how the Winter Maintenance Service will be delivered across the City, under the Streets Ahead contract, following a recently undertaken review. The proposed changes, which had been deemed necessary following reductions in funding from Central Government, would introduce clear justifiable criteria for the provision of the Winter Service, including precautionary gritting and grit bins, and deliver savings to aid the Council to meet its budget as approved by Full Council in March 2014. The report contained details on the current Winter Service, the development of precautionary gritting routes and grit bin criteria, the consultation process, including the evaluation of feedback, and the implications of the proposed changes, including financial, legal, equality and environmental.

7.2 Steve Robinson, Head of Highway Maintenance, introduced the report, referring to the requirement, under the Well Maintained Highways Code of Practice for Highway Maintenance Management, for the undertaking of the annual review in terms of the Winter Service, including details on the consultation process, which had been held between 2nd June and 25th July 2014. In terms of the consultation,

Mr Robinson stated that 1,133 responses had been received in the form of questionnaires, and six petitions had been received, as previously reported. The Service had also received detailed correspondence from the Keep Bradfield Gritted Action Group. He stated that the Winter Service was highly valued by the public and was viewed as being vital in keeping the City moving.

- 7.3 Dennis Frost addressed the Committee, expressing his concerns at the potential adverse effects of the proposed cuts to the Winter Service, referring specifically to the City's geographical and topographical nature and the potential for an increase in accidents. He referred to the City's industrial and commercial foundation, and the fact that it had a medical status of international fame, both in treatment and training, with two Universities and a student population of approximately 50,000 people. He expressed concern at the risk of adverse opinion about the City's civic reputation and responsibility during the winter months. Mr Frost queried the criteria used as part of assessing the Priority 1 and 2 routes in terms of precautionary gritting, and concluded by referring to the City's statutory responsibilities in terms of Winter maintenance.
- 7.4 Harry Matthews addressed the Committee in support of the petition he had submitted, indicating that there was a strength of feeling that residents in the west of the City had been abandoned to some extent in terms of Winter Service provision in that area. He stated that whilst he welcomed the fact that 139 streets had been re-allocated as either Priority 1 or Priority 2 precautionary gritting routes, he was still concerned with regard to the reduction in the number of grit bins and the withdrawal of the Volunteer Snow Warden Project. Mr Matthews stressed the importance of the Winter Maintenance Service, indicating that, in his opinion, budget savings could be made elsewhere in the Council.
- 7.5 No-one attended the meeting in support of the petitions submitted in respect of the Bradfield Parish Council area. Mr Croxall attended the meeting, but did not make any representations.
- 7.6 In response to the above representations, Steve Robinson stated that the Council was still ranked as one of the highest local authorities in terms of the percentage of roads gritted and number of grit bins, and that even after the proposed reductions, the City would still have six times the average number of grit bins per kilometre of road, as compared with many other local authorities. He did not believe that residents living in the West of the City had been neglected in any way in terms of the Winter Maintenance Service. The Council had consulted with a wide range of community and interest groups throughout the City, details of which were included at Appendix 'E' to the report. The Streets Ahead contract had allowed the investment of a number of gritting machines and the establishment of a number of weather monitoring stations across the City. In response to the concerns raised with regard to accident risk and other medical issues, Mr Robinson stated that the Council was in regular liaison with the NHS, and received daily briefings with regard to the addresses of patients requiring life-saving treatments and procedures. He also advised that the NHS had its own agreements in place to ensure that the consultants who would be required to undertake such procedures were available on site during adverse weather. In terms of the Volunteer Snow Warden Project, Mr Robinson stated that the Project was not being stopped, but that the Council would

not be recruiting any further Wardens, of which there were over 500 at present.

7.7 Members of the Committee raised questions and the following responses were provided:-

- As part of the consultation process, the Ambulance Service and the two Universities had been asked for their comments. In relation to liaison with the NHS, the Council received regular updates in terms of the addresses and current condition of priority patients. In terms of the Universities, the Winter Services to the main routes in the City would remain unchanged, as would the clearance of snow, on which they were both included.
- Due to the City's topography, the higher areas would always be gritted more frequently. In terms of the Council's legal responsibility with regard to precautionary gritting, the Council operated within the national Code of Practice for Highway Maintenance Management, details of which were set out in the report now submitted, as well as in accordance with the Highways Act 1980.
- It was confirmed that the Council had successfully defended all claims occurring on streets off the gritted network for the past five years on the basis that it was the drivers' responsibility to travel in a manner which is in accordance with the prevailing weather and surface conditions.
- The reasoning behind the consultation in the summer was to ensure that all the relevant plans could be made well in advance of the upcoming winter season, which would then allow the Service to concentrate on providing the best service possible during the winter months. In addition, the Code of Practice for Highway Maintenance Management recommends that local authorities should consult on any winter service changes outside of the winter maintenance period.
- The majority of people who returned the questionnaires, as part of the consultation process, did not comment on the criteria, but mainly commented on which road(s) they thought should be included as part of the gritting programme.
- By seeking the views of approximately 3,000 organisations in the City, as part of the consultation process, it was believed that all groups, including those which were traditionally hard to reach, had been given the opportunity of providing their views on the proposals. In addition to the questionnaires being sent, public events had been held in the Town Hall and meetings held with the Parish and Town Councils, as well as officers travelling to meet with a number of specific groups. The full list of the organisations who had been contacted was included in the report.
- There were no plans to review or amend the existing criteria used by the Service, with regard to the Priority 1 routes for both precautionary gritting and snow clearance. The Priority 1 routes covered the major arterial routes and busiest main roads across the City, whereas the Priority 2 routes, which were

subject to this review, historically did not have clear underpinning criteria.

- The proposed criteria for Priority 2 routes contained within the report included all bus routes, access to key public service facilities, such as schools, GPs' surgeries and care homes, inclines in excess of 10% in combination with traffic flow in excess of 3000 vehicles per day, as well as the introduction of a western access route serving less populated areas to mitigate congestion around key pinch points, such as Malin Bridge. The Council was confident that, by using these criteria, the best possible Winter Service, taking budget implications into consideration, would be provided for the residents of the City.
- The length of roads on the precautionary gritting routes, categorised as Priority 1 and Priority 2, would be reduced from approximately 710 miles down to a new gritting network of 621 miles following the proposed changes.

7.8 RESOLVED: That Committee agrees to:-

- (a) retain the Winter Service Priority 1 gritting routes as previously established and any future changes would be due to changes in the status of particular roads in the City;
- (b) the criteria for Priority 2 gritting routes as being:
 - (i) the road forms part of a SYPTE bus route; or
 - (ii) the road has a main entrance to a school, doctor's surgery, pharmacy, care home, residential children's home or other critical public facilities; or
 - (iii) the road carries over 3000 cars per day and has a significant gradient (in excess of 10% (ie 1:10)); or
 - (iv) the road constitutes a western access route for traffic travelling to Manchester Road avoiding causing congestion to other arterial routes;
- (c) the criteria for Priority 2 gritting routes being applied to the City's road network to establish a new Priority 2 gritting network;
- (d) the precautionary gritting routes being regularly reviewed by officers against the approved criteria as there will certainly be further changes in the future for example, as bus routes are updated;
- (e) the criteria for grit bin locations as being:

Assessment	1 point for each criteria met
Grit bin is situated:	
On a road that has a drainage problem	
On a road that has a steep gradient of 1 in 10 (10%)	

On a bad bend that has a radius of less than 50 metres	
On a junction	
On a road that has a main entrance to sheltered housing	
On a road that has a main entrance to a school	
In an isolated area	
Near traffic signals (within 20m)	
Near a roundabout (within 20m)	

- (f) the application of the criteria to the City's grit bin locations using a minimum score of 1 for the retention of a grit bin. Grit bins having a score of 0 will be removed.

It should be noted that the proposal also stated that regardless of the score achieved:

- if a road is included in the Priority 1 or Priority 2 precautionary gritting routes, then that location is unlikely to be considered for a grit bin; and
- if the potential grit bin location is within 200 metres of an existing grit bin, that location will not be considered for another grit bin;

- (g) the application of the grit bin criteria for future additional grit bin requests using a threshold of a minimum of two points and only if future reviews of grit bin usage identifies grit bins that are not used elsewhere for relocation; and
- (h) the snow warden scheme be continued without seeking future recruits.