

WINTER GRITTING SCRUTINY PANEL

26 MARCH 2009

Present – Councillors Critchley (Chairman), Hornby, Mistry (substituting for Ayub), J Walsh and D Wilkinson

Also in Attendance

Mr P Molyneux	-	Assistant Director – Highways and Engineering
Mr D Houghton	-	Head of Highways and Engineering Delivery Services
Mr J Martin	-	Highways Works Manager
Mrs D Williams	-	Senior Officer – Special Projects and Systems
Mr D Love	-	Senior Technical Supervisor - Projects
Mr S Croudace	-	Principal Officer – Projects
Mr I Franke	-	Work Experience
Mr T Jurgelucks	-	Work Experience
Mrs S Wootton	-	Senior Scrutiny Officer

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Chadwick

Councillor Critchley in the Chair

5. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

Resolved – That the minutes of the proceedings of the meeting of the Winter Gritting Scrutiny Panel held on 4 March 2009 be signed as a correct record.

6. SCOPING DOCUMENT

The Director of Legal and Democratic Services submitted a report regarding the direction the Scrutiny Panel would take during the course of the year.

Resolved – (i) That Members noted the report

(ii) That Members requested that the Scoping Document be made part of the folder provided for by the Highways and Engineering at the previous meeting.

7. TOUR OF ELLESMERE HOUSE

Members were taken on a tour of Ellesmere House by the Department and were shown the operation of gritters and how weather information was collated to ensure gritting took place around the Borough.

Members were shown the gritting bay and the different types of grit that was used, as well as the vehicles that were due to go out that night to grit the roads. Members were also shown the equipment used to communicate with the Met Office so that the service could operate effectively and with immediate effect.

Members raised questions about the service and its operations.

Resolved – That Members thanked staff at Ellesmere House for their time and informative tour of the premises.

8. GENERAL DISCUSSION

Members were given the opportunity to discuss various forthcoming ideas in relation to this Scrutiny Panel and to generate further items for consideration at future meetings.

Prior to the meeting, Members of the Panel were given a draft copy of the questionnaire that was due to be distributed to all Members and the public in due course. Concern was raised over the wording used and should be changed in relation to bus routes as it was made clear that not all routes were gritted, only what were considered as primary routes.

It was concluded that there should be more advice given to drivers when parking in narrow roads. Gritters were nine feet across, therefore access was paramount for effective gritting.

Members were informed of the following information:-

- All vehicles were fitted with trackers;
- Notes were made of those roads that were gritted;
- Maps would be distributed with questionnaire at the request of Ward Members; and
- An assessment criterion would be added to the questionnaire.

Members suggested that it would be beneficial if a copy of complete maps detailing the routes covered by gritters were made available for Group rooms and be of the same map plan that was used by the Transport Innovation Fund (TIF). The questionnaire would be available online in due course.

Members were concerned about the amount of grit bins in the Borough that were unused or not refilled. Grit bins were to be re-assessed and if they were not being used, they would be removed. Where there was a new development, the service would assess the area and place grit bins where

they would see fit.

Members of staff from the department then attended the meeting to provide Members with a short question and answer session.

Members asked staff if they thought the new type of salt being used worked just as well as mined salt. It was found that the salt now used was useful once traffic had time to work the salt into the ground. It was easy to spread across the borough and staff felt that in times of adverse weather, it would be beneficial if the salt could get onto the roads as quickly as possible in order for it to work well and that gritters could get around all the primary routes within the hour, which was deemed to be the most important time before the weather could get any worse. The routes never changed so staff were aware of the roads that needed gritting and how long it would take to complete.

Staff concluded that:-

- Correct information needed to be obtained from the Met Office;
- The Scrutiny Panel needed to look at the routes that were gritted and assess whether there were quicker ways of gritting the roads by changing routes;
- It would be useful to fill in the same questionnaire that Members were being given in order to relay their views;
- More should be done to alleviate issues such as Traffic Regulation Orders (TRO), car parking and water run off areas, by way of adequate signage for both the public and gritters.

Resolved – (i) That Members thanked staff for attending the meeting;

(ii) That Members be furnished with full route maps for their respective Group Rooms and individual Ward maps be made available at Members' requests;

(ii) That further investigation be made for funding for grit bins from the s.106 regulations

(The meeting commenced at 2.30pm and concluded at 4.15pm)