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## **WINTER GRITTING SCRUTINY PANEL**

**04 MARCH 2009**

Present - Councillors Ayub, Critchley, Walsh, Williamson  
(substitute for Chadwick) and D A Wilkinson

Also in Attendance

Mr P Molyneux - Assistant Director - Highway  
and Engineering

Mr D Houghton - Head of Highways and  
Engineering Delivery Services

Mr J Martin - Highways Works Manager

Mrs D Cooper - Principal Consultation and Research  
Officer

Mrs D Williams - Senior Officer - Special Projects  
and Systems

Mrs S Wootton - Senior Scrutiny Officer

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors  
Chadwick and Hornby.

Councillor Critchley in the Chair

### **1 APPOINTMENT OF CHAIRMAN**

Resolved - That Councillor Critchley be appointed  
Chairman for this Municipal Year

### **2 APPOINTMENT OF VICE CHAIRMAN**

**Resolved - That Councillor J Walsh be appointed  
Vice-Chairman for this Municipal Year.**

### **3 DRAFT SCOPING DOCUMENT**

The Director of Legal and Democratic Services submitted  
the draft scoping document which set out the aims and  
objectives of the Scrutiny Panel.

Resolved - That the report be noted

#### **4 INTRODUCTORY REPORT ON WINTER GRITTING**

Mr D Houghton attended the meeting to give a presentation to the Panel regarding winter gritting. Members were informed of the previous recommendations set by the last Winter Gritting Scrutiny Panel which took place in 2002, and were established as follows:-

" The service adopted a new route strategy based on the previous 25 routes;

" The Director would present a financial report to the Executive on funding the improved service;

" The service would undertake publicity campaign;

" The Director would investigate the possibility of engaging with partners;

" An examination of the location and design of grit bins, including footways, town centres and civic areas would be undertaken and reported back to the Executive Member; and

" A look at the implications of severe weather on refuse collection would be carried out and reported back to the Executive Member.

Members were given some facts and figures for road gritting. Over 2 million tonnes of salt was spread on to the roads in the UK each year and as a result, the cost of this was estimated at £150 million per annum. Bolton Council's budget currently stood at £690,000, however, the current total to date was £914,000. Winter maintenance covered seven months of the year with 25 gritting routes being covered (totalling 430km gritted miles). At present, 4000 tonnes of salt had been spread and 30-40 tonnes of salt were used each time the routes were gritted.

There were 533 grit bins in use and had already been filled four times this year to date. Salt was sold to schools, other Council Departments, the Emergency Services, local companies and via Heaton Fold to the public.

Bolton Council currently had a contract with the Salt Union (the rock supplier in Winsford Cheshire) who would store 6000 tonnes of salt, which would last for an estimated two years, for Bolton if they so needed it.

The future for road gritting meant further environmentally safe methods. Bolton Council had begun to use Safecote, which was blended from natural, environmentally friendly ingredients, such as molasses and was also found to reduce corrosion in vehicles, reduced the spread rate and had the same effect and it was found that it lasted longer on the roads.

In terms of resources, there were 27 drives, four duty officers (who should be Senior Managers), six Duty Inspectors and six Duty Controllers. Staff would follow a three week rota to ensure they were meeting statutory guidelines in terms of hours worked, and much liaising was made with Met Office with the Duty Officer at times of extreme weather. This enabled the Duty Officer to keep Senior Officers and Members up-to-date and also to help determine the appropriate course of action.

Members were given further information regarding the use of grit bins. It had been concluded that most members of the public used grit bins incorrectly. Grit bins should be used solely for the purpose of clearing the carriageways. It was thought that the best course of action would be to produce a questionnaire via the Citizen's Panel. As a direct result of this Panel being established, there would be no further allocation of new grit bins, until recommendations had been made at his Scrutiny Panel's final report. Members noted that the service had further options for consultation, including:-

" Consulting with (larger) local businesses to determine whether they were satisfied with the level of service being provided, how the service compared to other areas and whether any other suggestions could be made to carefully improve the service; and

" Consultation with Members for recommendations for roads being gritted and possible locations for salt-bins.

Members were provided with a comprehensive service review pack containing the legal context in reference to winter maintenance, general service information, relevant reports including the Corporate Business Planning Process (CBPP), benchmarking, routes taken by the lorries when gritting and the placement of current grit bins,

bus routes that were covered by gritters, process charts and technical information on Safecote, as aforementioned.

Resolved - (i) That Members noted the presentation

(ii) That Members welcomed the questionnaire and looked forward to its results

(iii) That further information be required as to how other countries fared in times of extreme weather conditions

(iv) That information be sought from other Greater Manchester Authorities as to their winter maintenance performance records

(v) That the Local Government Association (LGA) be approached to assess any guidelines that were in place

(vi) That the Bolton News be invited to the final meeting to see how the Panel had produced its recommendations and in the meantime, be invited to the operations section at Ellesmere House.

(The meeting commenced at 10.10am and concluded at 11.00am)

*Attached Reports:*

[Draft Scoping Document \(Enclosure\)](#)

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