

Agenda Item 8

1. STREETS AHEAD PROJECT - WINTER REVIEW

- 7.1 Steve Robinson, Head of Highway Maintenance, gave a presentation on the review of the winter maintenance arrangements in terms of the 2014/15 winter season under the Streets Ahead Project. Mr Robinson referred to the consultation held in June and July 2014, in connection with the proposed reduction of the gritting network and the number of highway grit bins, and the changes made following such consultation. He reported on the present gritting route network and the current fleet used to undertake the work, as well as referring to the lessons learnt from operations in previous years. Mr Robinson also circulated a paper containing details relating to the gritting of the road network, grit bins, snow wardens and other issues, including City resilience, the position of the South Yorkshire Passenger Transport Executive (SYPTX) and bus companies, and communications, with regard to (a) the position prior to changes agreed at the Cabinet Highways Committee meeting in August 2014, (b) the position regarding the period up to December 2014, (c) the latest position following the actions implemented as part of the Winter Review, (d) the operation as compared with other local authorities and (e) the budget position.
- 7.2 Mr Robinson expressed his thanks and appreciation to Amey and local farmers for their service during winter.
- 7.3 He recommended the following, subject to the approval of the Cabinet Highways Committee:-
- Gritting routes to remain as they were after December 2014
 - Future gritting requests to be assessed using the criteria agreed at the Cabinet Highways Committee meeting in August 2014
 - Number of grit bins to be capped at current total
 - 158 grit bins on roads that had gritting removed, but now reinstated, should be collected and relocated to 155 locations requested by the public, and that met the grit bin criteria
 - Further snow shovels and reflective jackets be made available to volunteer Snow Wardens
 - Work to continue with the voluntary sector to establish co-ordination with community volunteers
 - Consideration be given to provide community volunteers with grit bags at key locations
 - A multi-agency City-wide winter resilience plan be developed in 2016
- 7.4 Also in attendance for this item were Councillors Terry Fox (Cabinet Member for Environment and Transport) and Tony Downing (Cabinet Adviser for Environment and Transport).
- 7.5 Members of the Committee raised questions and the following responses were provided:-
- Whilst there had been delays in the plans to introduce a new innovative multi-agency City winter resilience approach, which would include the Council working even more closely with a number of partners, including the National

Health Service, emergency services, South Yorkshire Passenger Transport Executive (SYPTE), bus companies, Veolia and Adult Social Care teams, plans had been delayed as a result of staff being forced to deal with other Streets Ahead issues. However, such an approach was viewed as a positive way forward, and every effort would be made to ensure such plans were introduced during 2016/17.

- Following concerns raised in connection with the previous Snow Warden scheme whereby the wardens had been provided with a one tonne bag of grit for use in their neighbourhoods, mainly regarding pavements or drives being blocked by the large bags and the contents leaking onto pavements, there were plans to provide community groups with smaller bags of grit, which could be stored more conveniently.
- Amey always encouraged members of the public to let them know when grit bins were close to being empty, with the Company making every effort to refill the bins within three days although, through improved communication methods, such as Twitter, in 2014/15, the bins had been refilled within 24 hours. To assist members of the public, there were plans for there to be a telephone number and an individual number for each grit bin. There were also plans to include a 'QR' code, which would enable people with smart phones to scan a code and send a message directly to Amey.
- The Council paid Amey a set monthly fee in terms of all its services, including winter maintenance services in the City, regardless of how bad the weather was.
- There was no change in the quality of the grit from when Amey took over the contract from Street Force, as Amey used the same suppliers. The caveat to this was that grit stored in the bins comprised a combination of salt and sand.
- In the event of particularly adverse weather conditions, the Council could call on staff of the Parks and Countryside Service to assist with clearing and gritting around schools and heavily pedestrianized areas.
- The wider snow ploughs were used in the first instance, rather than the narrow ploughs, on the grounds that they had the ability to clear the whole road, which would enable buses and other traffic to use the roads.
- Previously, there had been no criteria used to select which roads were gritted. In August 2014, the Cabinet Highways Committee agreed criteria for the gritting of Priority 2 routes. The criteria included SYPTE bus routes, access to school and GP surgeries, traffic flow of more than 3000 vehicles a day and the road having a gradient steeper than 1 in 10.
- The reason why 100% of roads were gritted in some rural areas, such as Bradfield, was because that was the service they had received for many years, rather than the roads meeting the agreed gritting criteria.
- Whilst the Council and Amey had an excellent relationship with the Police and

other emergency services with regard to winter maintenance, the Police did not attend the meeting arranged to discuss the introduction of a multi-agency approach, in May 2015. Every effort would be made to include them in the plans to introduce the approach in 2016/17.

- Any network changes, including new housing developments, such as the new housing development in Stocksbridge, or changes to bus routes, would be taken into consideration in terms of winter maintenance planning.
- The Council would continually review the location of grit bins across the City in order to ensure that they were in locations that achieved the most benefit. There were plans to undertake a usage survey during the coming winter, and those not being used would be removed and relocated to other areas.
- The Snow Code was available on the Met Office/Department for Transport website, as well as on the Council's website. This information clearly explained that people clearing snow from pavements could not be sued or prosecuted and that the Council encouraged residents to support its services.
- The Cabinet Member for Environment and Transport (Councillor Terry Fox) would invite all Members of the Council to the Streets Ahead event on Winter Preparedness to be held on Tuesday, 3rd November, 2015, at Barker's Pool.

7.6 RESOLVED: That the Committee:-

- (a) notes the information reported as part of the presentation, the contents of the paper now circulated and the responses to the questions raised;
- (b) thanks Steve Robinson for attending the meeting and responding to the questions raised; and
- (c) agrees that the minutes of this meeting be referred to the Cabinet Highways Committee, for consideration alongside the report on the review of the winter maintenance service to be considered at its meeting to be held on 8th October 2015.

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