

**Cabinet Member response to the recommendations of the Grit bins and non-priority routes scrutiny task and finish group report**

**18 January 2018**

**General comments**

I welcome the report from the Internal Scrutiny Committee on the important subject of winter service planning and its review of grit bin provision and support from volunteers on gritting secondary routes.

I would also like to thank the members of the grit bins and non-priority routes task and finish group for the time and commitment that they invested in the thorough research that they undertook as part of the group's work.

I have considered each of the recommendations adopted by the Internal Scrutiny Committee and my responses are as follows:

**Recommendation 1:**

Address the inconsistency of grit bin location data held in MapZone/MARIO/Highways Asset Management System and the spreadsheet data retained by the Highways Teams.

**Response:**

*I support this recommendation. There should only be one source of information which should be HAMS (Highways Asset Management System); there should not be spreadsheets in the district offices; all alterations should be done via HAMS.*

*The definitive layer is the one in HAMS, which was created earlier this year to incorporate Gaist (Solutions company) Survey data with the previously mapped GIS layer.*

*There will be a piece of work to make sure that the MapZone/Mario layer is updated from HAMS. This will be built into the work programme.*

**Recommendation 2:**

Permit the sponsorship of grit bins.

**Response:**

*The sponsorship of grit bins is possible however further discussion will be needed with district council officers to see how they would view any proposed sponsorship arrangement in accordance with legislation before the council could confidently press forwards with any policy changes/introductions. If the sponsorship of grit bins was*

*permitted, it may be prudent for this to be in relation to existing grit bins on the network rather than introducing new grit bins.*

**Recommendation 3:**

Amend the grit bin policy so that the views of the county councillor are sought on new/move or remove requests.

**Response:**

*I am happy for councillors' views to be taken on board, and will ask for the policy on the provision of grit bins (WS 7) be amended to include this point for new and move requests. The policy already includes that "removal can only take place following consultation with the relevant local councillors (County, District and Parish) and approval by an appropriate senior officer."*

**Recommendation 4:**

Review and act on the findings of the grit bin survey.

**Response:**

*I can confirm that officers will review the councillor grit bin requests submitted as part of the survey, but as expected this will be a substantial exercise and will take time. I note within the correspondence from councillors that requests have been made to extend gritting routes and other winter related issues. These will be responded to accordingly.*

**Recommendation 5:**

Review grit bin locations every two years.

**Response:**

*I wouldn't be in favour of this due to staff time needed. What we need to ensure is that the policy is adhered to, which will mean reviews would only be needed if the policy changed.*

**Recommendation 6:**

Review alternative grit bin designs available, with particular focus on more robust lids/access/design.

**Response:**

*I support this recommendation. At present the council has no contract in place for the supply of grit bins and no standard grit bin specification has been agreed. Ordering*

*through procurement has been on an ad hoc basis and the number of orders placed is low.*

*There are numerous types of grit bin available and these consist of different types of build and capacity, and this is reflected on the network across Lancashire and confirmed by the scrutiny review.*

*A review of grit bin designs available will be conducted to agree a standard specification for a grit bin (this may consist of an agreed specification for two or three types of grit bin to allow for location and capacity requirements). However, whilst the council could put in place a contract arrangement to ensure standardisation, I am not sure that the spend would be sufficient to do so.*

**Recommendation 7:**

Write to all Lancashire district councils to consider including the purchase of grit bins through Section 106 Agreements in relation to new housing developments.

**Response:**

*The benefit of contacting individual Local Planning Authorities (LPA's) to consider purchasing grit bins through Section 106 (Town and Country Planning Act) agreements as part of development has been examined. On investigation it has been found that purchasing grit bins in this manner would not comply with the rules and regulations governing Section 106, specifically the element which relates to Community and Social Infrastructure provision. Consequently LPA's would be unable to support our requests and I therefore recommend that the option to contact the District Councils on this matter should not be progressed.*

**Recommendation 8:**

Explore the opportunity to utilise external contractors for treating secondary routes.

**Response:**

*This was already covered by the snow clearing contract which went out for re-tender in September 2018.*

**Recommendation 9:**

Implement a voluntary snow warden scheme for community groups and parish and town councils in Lancashire to sign up and assist with snow clearance, gritting and grit bin monitoring.

**Response:**

*I support this recommendation and have asked officers to implement a volunteer scheme in place for 2019/20 season. A national survey of local authorities took place through the Association for Public Service Excellence (APSE) to gauge what was happening in the industry. A total of 21 authorities responded. Out of the 21, 6 do not run a volunteers service and the majority of the others operate the service via the Town or Parish Council. Those that operate a service provide training, materials, tools and PPE (Personal Protective Equipment).*

*Officers are now working with the council's Community Resilience and Public Rights of Way (PROW) teams to establish what groups are available. However there is still a significant amount of work to be done to establish these volunteer groups and to determine the following points:*

- *What service do we require?*
- *How is it triggered?*
- *What do we provide?*
- *How do they apply?*
- *What insurances are required?*
- *Preparation and acceptance of a Winter Resilience Plan*

**Recommendation 10:**

Explore the opportunity to implement a time credit scheme to support volunteers, should a voluntary snow warden scheme be implemented.

**Response:**

*I support this recommendation. This will be incorporated in to the volunteer scheme as referenced in my response to recommendation 9 above.*

**Recommendation 11:**

Explore opportunities with the Youth Offending Team and Safer Lancashire Community Payback Teams to assist with snow clearing and gritting.

**Response:**

*I support this recommendation. Officers have engaged with Lancashire Volunteer Partnership and Lancashire Probation Service, and are in the process of establishing a procedure and a list of locations that can be attended to. It's hoped to have this scheme up and running early in the New Year. As above, training, materials, tools and PPE (Personal Protective Equipment) will need to be provided.*

**Recommendation 12:**

Invite all county councillors to promote the snow clearing contract tender once published on the county council's website.

**Response:**

*I support this recommendation. All county councillors were asked to promote the tender within their divisions. Due to the low number of returns, the deadline for submissions was then extended to 23 October 2018. On 9 October 2018, all county councillors were advised of the deadline extension and were asked to continue to promote the tender in their divisions.*

**Recommendation 13:**

Work with the National Farmers Union/NFU Mutual and farmers to address and allay concerns around liability.

**Response:**

*I support this recommendation. Whilst we have a reduced number of contractors who signed up this year, we are happy that we have countywide coverage if assistance for snow clearing is required.*