

PLYMOUTH CITY COUNCIL

Subject: Scrutiny Panel Task and Finish Group for Winter Maintenance
Committee: Cabinet
Date: 18 October 2011
Cabinet Member: Councillor Bowyer and Councillor Wigens
CMT Member: Directors of Development and Regeneration and Corporate Support
Author: Ian Ellis (Assistant Network Manager) Transport and Highways
Contact: Tel: 01752 304223
Email: ian.ellis@plymouth.gov.uk
Ref: IRE/0911
Key Decision: N
Part: Part 1

Executive Summary:

The Overview and Scrutiny Management Board approved in principle on 27 July 2011, the establishment of a Task and Finish Group to review the authority's winter maintenance preparation regime to ensure it was fit for purpose. The Task and Finish Group convened on the 8th and 15th September 2011 to consider evidence and hear from witnesses.

From the results of the evidence provided, the group made five recommendations. The recommendations are as follows:

1. That the Council make best use of the salt barn at Prince Rock and procure additional salt provision. This will guarantee greater capacity for the city wide gritting service and as a purchase of an asset should be regarded as a financial investment. The ability to treat areas of high footfall and high dependency will reduce the negative impact on the economy in the event of another harsh winter. The panel recommends that the salt be purchased soonest to secure the lower rates per tonnage and as salt is not perishable can be sold on a later date.
2. That the Directors of Corporate Support and Development & Regeneration, by delegation to officers, be responsible for the development of the business case for the actual salt procurement and the development and implementation of an operating model that will ensure optimum value for money This will include the responsibility and arrangements for the distribution and spreading of the supplies to non HMPE locations and the identification of corporate resources.
3. That PCC develop a Gritting Policy which will identify and prioritise needs over and above the existing Transport & Highways Winter Service plan that primarily deals with primary and secondary network routes. The policy which will be developed over time, will state criteria for the prioritisation of non HMPE and provide a clear transparent strategy for specific areas of the city to be treated ahead of others. To develop these criteria, officers will consider;
 - Areas of high footfall
 - Areas of high dependency
 - Ward Councillors feedback on specific hot spots within their wards, which should be considered as a priority and why
 - The views of residents at neighbourhood meetings

4. That Ward Councillors be asked to review existing grit bin sites in co-operation with the Transport & Highways partnership, and in accordance with the newly developing criteria. This will help determine the most appropriate provision for hot spot areas e.g. salt bins, salt bags or additional gritting to ensure the most costs effective treatment.
5. That PCC has a role in the strategic co-ordination and planning for gritting and supplies across the city by partner organisations such as NHS Derriford, Fire Service. That the appropriate PCC lead officer be identified to review previous ad-hoc demand for salt and to identify lead officers in partner organisations with whom we can work to ensure that key high risks areas across the city are identified.

Following consideration of the recommendations, officers' responses are as follows.

In the absence of a formally responsible officer for management of a winter maintenance service for the Corporate Estate, it is proposed that Corporate Property (the Facilities Manager) assume this responsibility. To this end the following arrangements will be made to support winter maintenance for winter 2011/12:

- To procure additional supplies of salt (circa 100 tonnes) to be stored initially in the salt barn at Prince Rock Depot.
- Provide security for salt supplies and manage the release and distribution of stocks around the Corporate Estate.
- To identify key secondary locations around the city, where salt supplies can be securely stored to enable better distribution at required times.
- Liaise with appropriate services to identify sources of labour to support with salt spreading in times of need.
- To review the Corporate Estate, liaise with and support building managers to ensure that supplies are distributed to buildings on a priority basis (initially buildings with public access and where access is required by service users from vulnerable sections of the community e.g. the elderly). These supplies to be sufficient to provide a minimum 6 days resilience for the clearance of a single pedestrian route from the curtilage of the site to main point of access and the areas immediately adjacent to emergency exits. Supplies to be distributed more widely within the limits of the resources available.
- Where premises/sites are not covered by the Corporate centralised maintenance budget costs to be recharged to appropriate departmental cost centres

In the medium term, Corporate Property will:

- Undertake a review of open land and grit bin locations, in coordination with the Transport and Highways partnership, to establish a methodology for the prioritisation, supply and distribution of salt for future years.
- Lead in the development of a strategy and policy for the effective winter maintenance of the wider Corporate Estate following the principles of the existing Transport and Highways winter maintenance plan.

The Transport and Highways partnership currently maintains approximately 400 grit bins as part of its Winter Service Plan; these have been installed ad hoc over many years. Whilst each of these are inspected and refilled annually in time for the winter period, no formal review has been undertaken to confirm that they are still properly located to best serve the needs of the community.

Officers will formalise the criteria for determining the location of grit bins before undertaking a full review of existing sites in consultation with Members. The review will coordinate with Corporate

Property to ensure that assets are not unnecessarily duplicated. Future requests for the provision of grit bins will be assessed against the criteria used in the review.

Preparation for the 2011/12 winter period is already underway; consequently, it is likely that changes proposed as a result the review will not be implemented until the following winter period.

Corporate Plan 2011 – 2014:

Providing a safe and well-maintained road network and corporate asset contributes to the economic well being of the City in support of the Growth priority.

**Implications for Medium Term Financial Plan and Resource Implications:
Including finance, human, IT and land**

Procurement of salt for the Prince Rock salt barn will be accommodated within existing resources. Further financial and resource implications are unknown until the proposed reviews are undertaken.

Other Implications: e.g. Community Safety, Health and Safety, Risk Management and Equality, Diversity and Community Cohesion:

Plymouth City Council's defence against insurance claims relies largely on its ability to demonstrate performance against its prescribed service levels for maintaining its assets. Consequently, the review of winter service provision will ensure that a defensible position against claims arising from winter conditions can be maintained.

Recommendations & Reasons for recommended action:

It is recommended that Cabinet approves and notes:

1. The proposed actions to be undertaken by the Facilities Manager in respect of the arrangements for the corporate estate, both in the short and medium term.
2. The proposal to undertake both a full review of existing grit bin sites and the criteria used to determine the provision of future grit bins, in consultation with Members.

These actions will improve winter readiness for the corporate estate for 2011/12, whilst ensuring that the authority is properly prepared to deal with future winters.

Alternative options considered and reasons for recommended action:

None – The Task and Finish group's review considered winter service planning across the authority and the subsequent recommendations are considered both positive and constructive.

Background papers:

Growth and Prosperity Overview and Scrutiny Panel Task and Finish Group Minutes for Winter Maintenance.

Sign off:

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| Originating SMT Member Clive Perkin | | | | | | | | | | | |