

## **Great Baddow Parish Council**

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### **Great Baddow Parish Council Winter Weather Policy 2011**

#### **Policy**

1. The Council will make all reasonable efforts to ensure that the facilities remain open as normal, but will not do so at the expense of the welfare of staff and the safety of residents.
2. Where it is beneficial to do so, paths will be salted in advance of snowfall, and regularly salted and swept when the snow lies.
3. Time and resources are limited and only key areas will be managed. Therefore it is essential that all Councillors, Employees and Residents remember that they also have a responsibility to take due care in adverse weather.

#### **Introduction**

Of the many problems that winter throws at us, snow is probably the most inconvenient and the Parish Council suffers as much as anyone when snow falls and it is difficult to get to work. Although the Council has no statutory obligation to clear snow from public highways, we think that our duty to the safety of our employees and residents requires us to take some basic precautions when there is snow or ice underfoot. After all, the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 and the Occupiers Liability Acts place a responsibility upon the employer, so far as is reasonably practicable, that the means of access to its premises are maintained in a condition that is safe and without risk to either its employees or other persons.

It is a popular misconception that an occupier cannot be held liable for failing to clear snow and ice, but can be held liable once an attempt at clearance has been made and then someone is injured. The true position is that an occupier can be held liable for 'failing to act reasonably' in order to prevent accidents. So it is important to recognise that the Councillors are responsible for ensuring that the means of access to their establishment is safe for both employees and visitors and that adequate arrangements are made to ensure that the risks from snow and ice are minimised. It is recognised that it is not possible to remove every piece of snow or ice. It does however, require those responsible for premises to exercise careful judgement and prioritise de-icing and salting of key access routes.

The approved code of practice which supports the Workplace (Health, Safety and Welfare) Regulations states that "arrangements should be made to minimise risks from snow and ice. This *may* involve gritting, snow clearing and closure of some routes.....". However, each fall of snow is different, and in some circumstances it may be better to let the snow lie

whereas other times will require the snow to be cleared. So, at no stage will we guarantee to keep our property free from snow but this document outlines the actions we wish to take to balance the costs, risks and benefits of clearance.

## **Method 1 - planning and authority**

Salt gritting works by reducing the freezing point of water. Traffic is essential to move the salt and grit granules around and eventually melt the ice. On more lightly trafficked roads the surface will remain icy for some time after salting. The spreading of salt does not mean the surface will be ice free. Bearing this in mind, a higher concentration of salt will be required to prevent ice forming on pathways and to be fully effective it must be applied in advance of the expected snowfall. It may not be possible to consult widely among Councillors when snow is imminent, so one Councillor will be given delegated power to support the Clerk and Grounds Manager in making a decision to grit.

### **1.1 Appointment of delegated power**

As gritting must be started in advance of snowfall and will take staff from other work, it can be a potentially expensive method of managing the problem, so the decision to grit will be made by a Councillor with delegated power (in consultation with the Clerk of the Council) to authorise the work. The power of delegation will allow them to redirect Council Staff to snow clearance duties and to procure such additional material and assistance as may be necessary to deal with the problems, but the power of delegation will also include a financial cap, over which they may not spend. This Councillor will be appointed at the first full Council of Autumn, along with a Deputy. They will be on standby throughout the winter and Councillor or Deputy must ensure their availability when the Met Office publishes a severe weather alert that the risk of snow is 60% or greater (Met Office yellow alert). These alerts are published widely and may be accessed through telephone, teletext, text message, iPhone app and the Met Office website or through RSS feed. The Clerk automatically receives the alerts, and the Appointed Councillor should have a reliable way of receiving these alerts.

### **1.2 Priority of clearance**

The meeting will also review the priority given to the areas that will be gritted and approve a map that marks the areas for attention.

The first priority is to maintain the normal functions of the Council, so the areas to be gritted are the main entrances to buildings, steps, and slopes thus;

1. The access to the grounds staff hut & the machinery store,
2. The disabled access to the Parish Council Offices and the emergency exit. Note- in icy weather, the front gate will be locked and the only access to the hall will be on the disabled access.

At a lower priority and only to be gritted if required are

3. The access to the Bell Centre
4. A limited area of the cemetery for embarkation.

It is not the Council's policy to grit public highways, private properties, car parks or paths through the park, or access to sporting facilities. It is unlikely that anyone would want to access the allotments in these circumstances, but even if requested, the approaches will not be gritted as the salt will leach into the ground and may damage overwintering crops. For the same reason, paths through grassed areas will not be gritted.

### **1.3 Maintenance of salt stock**

The same meeting will also authorise procurement of sufficient grit to start the winter with a stockholding of one tonne in 25kg weatherproof bags and will allocate a budget for the procurement of an additional two tonnes of grit to be called-off if required. The Grounds Manager will identify a reliable source of grit from which such purchases may be made, and this will be noted. Within the two tonne limit, additional grit may be purchased by the Appointed Councillor, Clerk or Grounds Manager without further consultation. Bearing in mind that grit is often in short supply when most needed, so the Council's stock is for the Council's use only. In exceptional circumstances and with the express permission of the Appointed Councillor in consultation with the Clerk of the Council, it may be applied sparingly to non-Council land, but it is not for distribution to residents or for general use. The meeting will also confirm that sufficient equipment is available for snow clearance and grit spreading, authorising expenditure for replacements if equipment has been lost or damaged in the previous year.

## **Method 2 - gritting**

### **2.1 The decision to grit**

The Met Office issues severe weather alerts up to 72 hours in advance of an expected snowfall and these are updated twice daily. The Clerk's computer receives these alerts automatically through RSS feed, and the information is widely available through other channels. When the Met Office has issued an amber or red alert for the region that states there is an 80% or greater chance of snow in the next working day, the Appointed Councillor and the Clerk of the Council will agree if it will be necessary to divert the grounds staff to gritting and specify which areas are to be treated. In making this decision the things to bear in mind are –

1. Expected severity of the weather,
2. The predicted length of the freeze
3. Usage of Halls and facilities
4. The availability of grit
5. The likelihood of getting more if required.
6. The availability of staff.

After considering these factors, the gritting and clearance programme will be agreed and the grounds staff directed to their work.

### **2.2 Method of gritting**

The grit will be applied at 60g/m<sup>2</sup> when using a measured spreader and 250g/m<sup>2</sup> (about a quarter shovelful) when applied by hand. Note – the inaccuracy of spreading by hand will

require a greater quantity of salt to compensate for poor coverage obtained by this method.

Once the initial gritting has been done, further snow clearance depends on the availability of the grounds staff. If inclement weather prevents them getting to work, there is little to be done, but assuming they arrive, they will be available for snow clearance as directed by the Grounds Manager or Clerk of the Council in consultation with the Appointed Councillor. Consideration should be given to the problems that staff may face when going home, and it may be necessary to operate a reduced service using only the staff that live locally. Although gritting in advance of snow may be done by individuals, lone working is not permitted once snow has fallen, repeat applications and snow clearance will be done by at least two staff working together.

### **2.3 Where to Grit**

The autumn meeting will approve a map marking-out the areas for gritting which will be available for the Grounds Manager to direct the work of initial gritting, repeat gritting and snow clearance. The areas will be done in the order-

- Access to snow-clearance material
- Access to the Council Office
- Access to other areas

If time is limited, then the areas will be treated in that order.

### **Finally**

The presence of snow and ice does present health and safety risks, as the potential for slips, trips and falls increases significantly. It is important all persons on Council property to adhere to common sense protocols such as:

- Walk, don't run.
- Wear footwear with a non slip sole.
- Try where possible to leave hands free to aid balance and or in the event of a fall you will be better able to minimise the effects of a slip, trip or fall.
- Allow more time for your journey.
- Be mindful of slipping while walking, using ramps and steps.
- If driving be mindful of skidding when leaving car parks as they are not gritted.

In short, gritting may help, but it is no substitute for care and preparedness on the part of the individual.

14<sup>th</sup> March 2011