



London Borough of Hammersmith & Fulham

Environment and Residents Services Select Committee Minutes

Tuesday 8 November 2011

PRESENT

Committee members: Councillors Rachel Ford (Chairman), Robert Iggulden, Wesley Harcourt (Vice-Chairman), Ali De-Lisle, Lisa Homan, Jane Law, Matt Thorley and Gavin Donovan

Other Councillors: Nicholas Botterill (Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Environment and Asset Management)

Officers: Nick Boyle (Transportation and Development Manager), Chris Bainbridge (Head of Transport Policy), Mark Hodgson (Highways Maintenance Manager), Gary Marson (Principal Committee Coordinator) and Gordon Prangnell (Head of Highways and Construction)

23. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillor Greg Smith, Cabinet Member for Residents Services.

24. MINUTES AND ACTIONS

RESOLVED that;

- a) the minutes of the meeting of the Environment and Residents Services Select Committee held on 6 September 2011 be confirmed and signed as a correct record; and
- b) progress with the acceptance and implementation of recommendations be noted.

25. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

26. SCRUTINY TRANSPORT SUMMIT OUTCOMES

The Committee reflected on issues and themes arising from the public Scrutiny Transport Summit which had immediately preceded the meeting. A

panel of guest speakers comprising of representatives from Transport for London, BAA, Thames Water and the Council, including Councillor Nick Botterill, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Environment and Asset Management, had been questioned by Committee members and the public on a wide variety of transport related topics.

Issues raised at the Summit had included the new Barclays Cycle Superhighway Number 9 and the extension of the London Bicycle hire scheme, cyclist safety, the redesign of the Fulham Palace Road/Lillie Road junction, traffic congestion at Hammersmith Broadway, the management of utility roadworks and remedial works to Hammersmith Flyover. Public transport provision had also been addressed including the reliability of the 266 bus service, the closure of the River Taxi service at Chelsea Harbour and the reduction of services at Olympia station. A presentation had been given on trials designed to use the runways and airspace around Heathrow Airport more efficiently, resulting in questions being directed at BAA regarding the impact on local residents, the consultation exercise and evaluation measures. Discussion also took place on Government policies in respect of the use of the flight path, in particular the practices of 'Western Preference' and 'Continuous Descent'.

The Committee noted that all the individual questions and issues raised during the Summit would be noted and responded to.

27. WINTER SERVICE - CARRIAGEWAY AND FOOTWAY GRITTING SERVICE

The Committee reviewed the road and footway gritting service delivered during the winter of 2010/11 and gave consideration to the proposed arrangements for the service in the forthcoming winter, including the priority routes and sites for gritting.

Members noted that December 2010 had been the coldest in the UK for over 100 years. Other than a cold period of 7 weeks either side of Christmas the rest of the winter was, however, relatively mild. Heavy snow had fallen in the borough on three occasions in December. Priority one routes were gritted 58 times and priority two routes 35 times. Around 900 tonnes of salt were used and although the supplier was slow in responding to orders exceptional measures were not required to limit the amounts used. Since there were only two salt suppliers in the country there was limited scope to review the arrangements but the salt store was currently full with 1,100 tonnes in preparation for the forthcoming winter and resilience had been further enhanced by Transport for London's establishment of a 17,000 tonne strategic reserve.

The Committee was advised that all main roads had been kept open and clear throughout the severe weather and the contractors had delivered the service reliably. All side/residential roads had also been gritted. Weather forecasts were generally accurate and the new manual footway gritting barrows had proved successful, enhancing control of spread rates and increasing speed and productivity.

Members noted, however, that there continued to be a difference between public expectations of the gritting service and what was reasonably deliverable. It was also reported that the open salt store had been subject to weathering.

The Committee was consulted on the choice of priorities for carriageway and footway gritting over the winter ahead. The most important factor in determining priority was the risk of an accident occurring as a result of the wintry conditions. Risks were associated with the level and type of use, accessibility and the immediate local environment.

Councillor Wesley Harcourt, noting that policy required all footways to be gritted within 5 days of a snowfall, raised concerns at the possibility of elderly residents in locations such as the Old Oak Estate being rendered housebound in icy conditions, potentially for a period of several days. Councillor Nick Botterill responded that the Council did not have the resources to grit 200 miles of footway each day and residents needed to take responsibility for the lengths of footway in front of their own premises. He acknowledged that elderly residents were unable to do so but others could on their behalf. Mark Hodgson, Highways Maintenance Manager, added that the weather usually improved sufficiently to resolve the need for gritting within the five day period; the long lasting accumulations of snow and ice on the ground in the previous two years had been unusual.

The Committee gave consideration to maps of the existing road and footway priority sites in order to assess whether any high risk sites had been omitted. In response to a question from Councillor Lisa Homan, Mr Hodgson confirmed that the presence of elderly and vulnerable residents was already a consideration in the prioritisation process. The main sites identified in consultation with colleagues from Community and Childrens Services were included on the priority list and therefore gritted first. The Committee was also informed that the policy was flexible and could be adapted to need through the Service Resilience Group. The Group included Childrens and Community Services Officers and met to plan the Council's response during periods of severe weather. It was noted that Housing Associations were required to make their own arrangements for clearance of snow and ice although liaison took place with the Housing Department in respect of its estates.

The Committee agreed to recommend that all footways outside sheltered housing schemes should be considered for prioritisation whilst Members would provide details of specific locations which were particularly deserving of prioritisation to Officers for consideration. It was also suggested that the Council should liaise with housing associations in an effort to ensure that they cleared ice and snow on their own estates.

Members also examined the guidance given to residents with regard to self help in the clearance of footways. The Government had produced specific guidance to encourage residents to clear paths near their own properties and there was debate as to whether this provided sufficient assurances regarding freedom from liability in the event of an accident. It was noted that whilst

unequivocal assurance could not be given, residents were advised that it was 'very unlikely' that they would be liable for injuries or accidents. The Committee felt that the communication of this advice as widely as possible would help increase resident participation. The Council's website had already been updated to reflect the guidance and it would also be published in the local press.

RECOMMEND that;

- i) footways outside all Sheltered Housing schemes be considered for prioritised gritting;
- ii) Members submit specific recommendations for footway and carriageway gritting prioritisation to Officers for consideration, with particular reference to locations with large concentrations of elderly people;
- iii) the press office be requested to promote and encourage residents to 'self help' the gritting of local footpaths in accordance with government guidance in advance of the Council's own gritting operations; and

RESOLVED that;

- iv) the review of the 2010/11 winter service and the current delivery arrangements be noted.

28. WORK PROGRAMME AND FORWARD PLAN

The Committee reviewed its work programme for the 2011/12 Municipal Year. Members also noted details of forthcoming relevant key decisions which were due to be taken by the Cabinet and would be open to scrutiny by the Committee. The latest position in respect of Barons Court library would be presented to the next meeting, in January, following consideration at Cabinet on 5th December.

RESOLVED that;

the work programme be approved subject to updates at subsequent meetings.

29. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The Committee noted that its next meeting was scheduled to be held on Monday 16 January 2012.

Meeting started: 9.10 pm
Meeting ended: 9.33 pm

Chairman

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