



Heybridge Parish Council

Winter Weather Policy

1. Policy

The Parish Council does not have a statutory duty to prepare for and deal with snow and ice (except around their own property) and although we do not have the resources to make a commitment to provide a snow clearing service the Parish Council will endeavour to assist where practicable.

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, the entrance to Plantation Hall 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.

2. 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 believe that it is our duty to the safety of 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 Council is responsible for ensuring that the means of access to their establishment is safe for both employees and visitors and that adequate arrangement is 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.

3. 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 the Clerk is delegated the power to support the caretakers in making a decision to grit. It should be noted that gritting will take staff from other work and therefore it can be a potentially expensive method of managing the problem.

3.1 Priority of Clearance

The first priority is to maintain the normal functions of the Council, so the areas to be gritted are the main entrance to Plantation Hall and fire exits.

It is not the Council's priority to grit public highways, private properties, car parks or paths.

3.2 Maintenance of salt stock

Procurement of sufficient grit for Council use before the start of winter will be delegated to the Clerk. Storage of grit will be within the yellow grit bin as well as within Plantation Hall.

4. Gritting

4.1 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, 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 Clerk and caretaker will agree if it will be necessary to divert the staff to gritting and specify which areas are to be treated. In making the decision the things to bear in mind are:-

- i) Expected severity of the weather
- ii) Predicted length of the freeze
- iii) Usage of the Hall
- iv) Availability of grit
- v) Availability of staff

After considering these factors, the gritting and clearance programme will be agreed.

4.2 Method of gritting

The grit will be applied at 60g/m² when using a measured spreader and 250g/m² (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 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 Clerk. 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.

5. Take Due Care

The presence of snow and ice presents 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.

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

6. Status of Policy

Presented to the Parish Council for consideration of adopting 19th December 2013.
Adopted 19 December 2013. Reviewed April 2016.

10 December 2013
Clerk