

CHIPPING BARNET RESIDENTS FORUM

17 JANUARY 2011 AS AT 17 JANUARY 2011

ISSUES TO BE CONSIDERED AT THE FORUM MEETING

	Issues Raised	Response
1	<p>Gritting of Roads</p> <p>Who was responsible for ordering the grit and identifying roads to be gritted during the current winter programme. Concern raised that the provision was inadequate in his area.</p> <p>(Mr Ashwood)</p> <p>A COPY OF THE PRESENTATION AT THE MEETING WILL BE AVAILABLE UPON REQUEST</p>	<p>Interim Director of Environment and Operations</p> <p>The Council has a Winter Service Plan which defines the provision of gritting services in the Borough. All the public roads have been grouped into the following three priorities:</p> <p>Priority 1: Main commuter routes, bus routes and roads providing access to emergency services.</p> <p>Priority 2: Roads in the vicinity of shopping centres, public transport stations, public buildings and roads with steep gradients.</p> <p>Priority 3: Remaining roads</p> <p>In general, only priority 1 roads are regularly gritted. Priority 2 roads are gritted in times of snow and only after priority 1 roads have been gritted and found to be safe.</p> <p>Priority 1 roads have been split into 8 routes which are covered by the Council's 9 gritting vehicles. The Council's decision to grit is taken by dedicated officers after considering the weather forecast, specific to the Borough, provided by the Met Office.</p> <p>The Council's winter service is reviewed and revised every year.</p> <p>A list of priority roads will be available at the meeting</p>

2	<p>Gritting of Roads</p> <p>Request that the Acting Director is asked to attend the meeting with a view to feeding back on the gritting programme and to respond to his concern that Crocusfield was not gritted for seven days and subsequently a small amount of grit was delivered, for residents to spread themselves. Concern that many of the residents in Crocusfield are too elderly and/or infirm to be expected to carry out this task.</p> <p>(Mr Ashwood)</p>	<p>Interim Director of Environment and Operations</p> <p>Crocusfield is a Priority 3 and is therefore not gritted regularly. However, Dollis Valley Way/Drive and Mays Lane, being bus routes, are Priority 1 roads and have been gritted some 50 times so far this season.</p> <p>During the week before Christmas a lot of roads in the Borough were gritted to facilitate the Council's Refuge collection. Crocusfield was one of these roads that were gritted on 22 December to enable the important refuge collection before the Christmas break.</p> <p>A complaint about the state of the grit bins in Crocusfield was received from Mr Ashwood on 20 December. Our records show that three grit bins were refilled in the Crocusfield area on Thursday 23 December.</p>
3	<p>Gritting of Roads</p> <p>Where there had been no gritting during this winter period, are residents to be refunded part of their council tax as this service had not been delivered?</p> <p>(Mr Ashwood)</p>	<p>Interim Director of Environment and Operations</p> <p>The question of refunding council tax does not arise as the Council does not have a duty to grit all the public highways in the Borough. Such a duty would create an impossible task for all highway authorities and require the use of a disproportionate level of resources.</p> <p>The Council considers that it provides a cost effective winter gritting service. The Council provides some 380 grit bins, the highest amongst London Boroughs, and encourages residents to help themselves and grit the roads and pavements outside their houses.</p>
4	<p>Gritting of Roads</p> <p>Will Councillors be taking action to ascertain whether there had been a shortfall in the provision of gritting during this winter period and if there was, how would this be addressed?</p> <p>(Mr Ashwood)</p>	<p>Chris Chrysostomou/Engineer</p> <p>The provision of gritting service is regularly reviewed and reported to Council Committees. In July –August 2009, as part of the Council's Overview and Scrutiny arrangements, a Task and Finish Group made up of all party Councillors, was specifically set up to review the Council's winter gritting service. The results of this review were reported to Cabinet.</p> <p>Officers will be carrying another review of this year's winter gritting service looking in particular at the provision of winter gritting vehicles, salt storage facilities and the lessons learned from this winter season. The results of this review are expected to be reported to the Director's Group in March 2011.</p>

		As mentioned above, the provision of gritting service is governed by the Council's Winter Service Plan, which has been applied this winter period. This year's service attracted fewer complaints and more praise from residents and Councillors compared to last year. Therefore, the Council believes there has not been a shortfall in the provision of gritting so far this winter period. However, one has to bear in mind that, nationally, there is a shortage of salt and the government advice to all local authorities is to conserve as much salt as possible.
5	<p>Trott Road Allotments</p> <p>Request for clarification on who will be giving the Trott Road allotment project the 'go ahead' and when this would be happening. On behalf of the many residents who are awaiting this information, she asks how the Council is proposing to practically support this project and that an officer attends the meeting who would be able to supply a clear response.</p> <p>(Ms Linden Groves)</p>	<p>Interim Director of Environment and Operations</p> <p>Will be giving a verbal update at the meeting</p>
6	<p>Church Farm Swimming Pool</p> <p>Given that the leisure budget is being cut by £1.2 million over the next two years, can the Council please provide reassurances that Church Farm swimming pool will not be closed.</p> <p>(Mr Dix)</p>	<p>Interim Director of Environment and Operations/Leisure Contract Manager</p> <p>The council is working very closely with its leisure partner GLL to investigate different options to counter the reduction in budget. These discussions are still in the early stages of development and so the council is unable to say at this time if any services will be affected.</p>

<p>7</p>	<p>Highways Budget Cuts</p> <p>As the council plans to cut £1.5 million from the highway budget, what would be the impact in the East and New Barnet area?</p> <p>(Mr Dix)</p>	<p>Interim Director of Environment and Operations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At this time, the 2011/12 Highways Maintenance Budget has not been approved. The Council does not expect the £1.5 m reduction of the Highways Revenue Budget reported to Cabinet last month to result in a reduction of the highways maintenance budget by the same amount. There will be savings as a result of the proposed restructure of the Service and the Council expects a higher capital budget to offset most the £1.5 m. • Schemes for 2011/12 implementation are currently being drawn up on a priority maintenance list. This list is used as a priority list for spending the available budget and is based on the condition of the roads, as assessed by highway inspectors. • Whereas in previous years three lists were prepared, one for each constituency areas, this year only one list, based on the whole Borough, is being prepared. In this way the available budget will be spent on the worst roads in the Borough. • It is likely that a reduced highways budget will result in fewer roads having their whole length resurfaced and more roads being “patched” or resurfaced on a “worst sections” basis.
<p>8</p>	<p>Safety in Oakhill Park and Victoria Recreation Ground</p> <p>Given the proposed reduction of £200,000 in planned development works in parks may “result in increased insurance claims due to failing infrastructure” can the Council give local parents reassurance that their children will be safe when playing in Oakhill Park and Victoria Recreation Ground?</p> <p>(Mr Dix)</p>	<p>Interim Director of Environment and Operations/Open Spaces</p> <p>The reduction in planned development works in parks relates to the improvement and replacement of facilities. Parks and open spaces will continue to be maintained to safe standards, with budgets prioritised on health and safety works.</p>

9	<p>Bowling Greens</p> <p>With a ceasing of subsidy for bowling greens and a 20% increase in charges, can the Council give reassurances that the bowling greens at Oakhill Park and Victoria Recreation ground will not be closed?</p> <p>(Mr Dix)</p>	<p>Interim Director of Environment and Operations/Open Spaces</p> <p>The increases in charges are an initial step towards reducing the subsidy for bowling greens. Further works will commence in 2011/12 to determine an alternative management model for the bowling greens in which the Council are not involved. It is anticipated that the bowling greens will continue to function; however, in the absence of any management arrangement the Council will not continue to fund these facilities and the greens would close</p>
10	<p>Barnet Museum</p> <p>As the consultation document on the museums refers only to the intention to withdraw revenue support and he understands this support is valued at £28,000. If Barnet Museum can continue in operation in its current location without this funding, will it be allowed to do so?</p> <p>(Mr Massey)</p>	<p>Assistant Chief Executive</p> <p>Barnet Museum will cost the Council £23,000 this year in running costs. It is open for just 10 hours a week and has 3,087 visitors a year at a direct cost to the council of £7.49 per visit, excluding any opportunity costs related to the building. The consultation asked for responses to the current budget proposals and any suggestions for alternative management and/or use of both Council-supported museums, as well as asking for suggestions for the display and promotion of collections in the future. Any cost-effective proposals that preserve the history of the borough, make it widely available to the public, and provide value for money for Barnet residents will be considered</p>

<p>11</p>	<p>Basements</p> <p>'Why does Barnet Council website recommend design criteria for basement rooms (currently recommending that they should not extend more than three metres from the rear wall of the house) if they then allow a development very much larger than their own recommendations? Chipping Barnet Planning Sub-Committee have recently approved just such a development'. (Mr and Mrs Harihara)</p>	<p>Chipping Barnet Area Planning Officer</p> <p>The issue of basement extensions was raised at a previous Forum meeting in July 2010. As advised at that time the Council has guidelines in respect of basement development and these form part of the "Extensions to Houses" Design Guidance Note 5 – March 2010. The purpose of the guidelines is to assist in the delivery of appropriate forms of householder related development but each proposal falls to be considered on its own individual merits. It may sometimes be the case that whilst a particular proposal may not be fully in accordance with design guidance the individual site circumstances are such that the development would not result in demonstrable harm on planning grounds and as such refusal on those grounds would not be appropriate. The previous comments in respect of basement development can be accessed 20 July 2010 Forum: http://committeepapers.barnet.gov.uk/democracy/meetings/meetingdetail.asp?meetingid=6175</p>
<p>12</p>	<p>Cost of Public Consultation</p> <p>How much did Barnet Council spend on consultations with the public in an average year? The total figures for each of the last two/three years for which information is available, and the breakdown of this expenditure for the different Council departments, would be a useful and informative way of answering this question. Expenditure on consultations with the public should include the costs of all exercises designed to elicit public opinion within the borough (e.g., via questionnaires or qualitative exercises) and all costs associated with analysing and reporting such findings. Please include all consultations, irrespective of subject matter, in the total.' (Mr Robb)</p>	<p>Communications</p> <p>A full breakdown of public consultation for the year 2007/8 is available. This gives a useful breakdown of the range of consultation undertaken by the council. This financial information is no longer gathered centrally as the post responsible for collection was this information was deleted in 2008/9. However for the coming year a new on-line consultation portal will enable to the council to collect this figure centrally again.</p> <p>A report is available upon request for 2007/8.</p>

13	Contracts Over £500 In the supplier payments over £500, between April and September 2010, there have been 77 payments of counsel fees for a total of £182,116.55. One recipient is named, the other 76 are simply titled named individual. Please can you tell me what is the reason for not naming these legal representatives? (Mr Dix)	Legal A verbal update at the meeting
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