

# REPORT TO ENVIRONMENT AND TRANSPORT COMMITTEE

## WINTER PREPAREDNESS

**Report Reference** ET-25-16  
**Meeting Date** 17<sup>th</sup> November 2025  
**Agenda Item** 9  
**Prepared by** Town Clerk

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### 1.0 BACKGROUND

In January, the committee discussed winter preparedness following a period of prolonged freezing conditions in winter 2024/25.

### 2.0 GENERAL PREPAREDNESS AND COMMUNICATIONS

In January, it was agreed that the council should lead on some winter preparedness measures, namely:

- Public awareness
- Checking grit bins
- Promoting useful contacts
- Refilling grit bins

Based on this direction, the following is planned for winter 2025/26:

#### Grit Bins

- 1) All grit bins in the town will be inspected in late November to ensure rubbish is removed and grit bins are fully stocked
- 2) After any periods of icy weather, grit bins will be inspected to identify if refilling is needed. Where refilling is needed this will be reported to Cheshire East Council and reinspected after a week (or sooner if further icy weather is forecast).
- 3) Where Cheshire East Council is unable to refill a grit bin within the required timescale, the council will refill bins where practicable

#### Public Awareness

- 4) A number of social media posts and infographics will be prepared to publish during icy weather (and generally as we approach winter), these will include messages such as:
  - a. where gritting takes place
  - b. how gritting works
  - c. where grit bins are
  - d. how to report empty grit bins
  - e. where grit bins can be used
  - f. contacts for issues

Post will make it clear that road gritting etc is undertaken by Cheshire East Council, and CEC

social media posts will be shared.

- 5) An article will be prepared for the council website, social media and Knutsford Guardian
- 6) This information will also be included in the council's resident newsletter

### **3.0 PAVEMENT GRITTING**

In January, the committee discussed whether the Town Council should undertake gritting on pavements, noting that Cheshire East Council does not. Guidance from the Town Council's insurer is as follows:

*Salting roads and paths is a great way to reduce the build up of snow and ice. Being proactive by laying salt before frost settles in the evening, or salting high traffic/pedestrian areas before peak time may reduce the number of accidents on your property.*

*If gritting is a regular practice as part of your winter risk management, it's important to think about what happens if this gets interrupted.*

*If the designated person is unable to carry out their work through sickness or absence, you may want to consider having a back up plan in place to implement the necessary precautions.*

*This is particularly important as, if you have taken responsibility for salting the roads or pathways but, for whatever reason, skip a day and an accident occurs, you may be seen as liable, even if you have no legal responsibility.*

*Maintenance and Inspections Regular inspections and maintenance should form part of the winter risk management plan in order to identify and address potential hazards promptly. Create a maintenance schedule and checklist to ensure all areas are regularly checked.*

If the Town Council is to undertake gritting of any pavements, it would need to have clear criteria for doing so and a plan to ensure that it was undertaken comprehensively during the defined period. Last year, the main issue followed snowfall and a prolonged period of freezing temperatures.

Based on this, it could be the council's policy to:

- a) Grit identified pavements in advance of snow being forecast where the temperature is forecast to remain below 0° or
- b) Remove settled snow on identified pavements and gritting where the temperature is forecast to remain below 0°

This may require the temporary redeployment of operational staff, and subject to the policy direction set by the committee this will be discussed with them in the following week. Once the policy is determined, this would be clearly communicated as part of the above.

If the committee is minded to proceed with this, it should identify which pavements should be part of the programme i.e. the town centre streets.

Alternatively, the council could buy a number of grit bins to temporarily deploy in the town centre / problem areas when icy weather is forecast to enable people to grit themselves. The precise locations

would need to be agreed with Cheshire East Council to ensure their siting did not obstruct the highway. Grit bins cost around £90 (60L), £125 (90L) or £190 (160L).

## **4.0 LINK TO STRATEGY**

### **4.1 STRATEGIC PLAN**

Ensuring the safety of pedestrians supports the council's strategic aim of promoting walking as a mode of transport. Ensuring pavements are clear in the town centre supports the council's strategic aim of supporting the town centre.

## **5.0 DECISIONS REQUIRED**

The committee should consider:

- a) Is there anything else the council should do in general preparedness and public awareness?
- b) How does the committee wish to approach gritting of pavements e.g. in the town centre