

Silkstone Parish Council



SILKSTONE PARISH COUNCIL WINTER WEATHER POLICY 2024/25

Agreed Policy

- The Council will make all reasonable efforts to ensure that the Pavilion remains open as normal but will not do so at the expense of the welfare of employees and the safety of visitors.
- Following receipt of an Amber or Red weather warning from the Met Office the Pavilion and will be closed forthwith and strongly advise the Huskar Community Rooms to do the same.
- Where it is practicable to do so and, in accordance with relevant Risk Assessments and the Winter Policy; the main entrance to the Pavilion will be cleared and salted following an Amber or Red warning being issued by the Met Office. **Unless** neither the Clerk, Councillors nor Handyman are due to visit or where the decision to close the sites have been taken; in which case no gritting or snow clearance will take place.
- Where it is practicable to do so and, in accordance with relevant Risk Assessments and the Winter Policy; the main entrance to the Huskar Community Rooms and adjoining paths will be salted in advance of heavy snowfall, and regularly salted and swept when the snow lies. Except during days when the Huskar Community Rooms are closed to visitors.
- It is essential that all Councillors, Employees and Residents remember that they also have a responsibility to take due care in adverse weather so where there is a severe weather warning issued a notice will be posted in the villages and website/Facebook.

Introduction

One 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 Council, 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' 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 risks and benefits of clearance.

Method 1 - planning and authority

Salt gritting works by reducing the freezing point of water. However, on areas where there is little or no traffic 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 an Amber weather warning is received, so one Councillor will be given delegated power to support the Clerk in deciding to grit.

1.1 Appointment of delegated power

Where practicable upon receipt of an Amber weather warning the Clerk and/or Appointed Councillor (or Deputy) with delegated Authority will initiate the policy the power of delegation will allow them 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. The appointed Councillor and Deputy will be appointed at a meeting prior to the December Council meeting. They will be on standby throughout the winter and Councillor, or Deputy must ensure their availability when the Met Office publishes an **AMBER severe weather alert**.

These alerts are published widely and may be accessed through telephone, text message, iPhone app and the Met Office website or through RSS feed. The Clerk should automatically receive the alerts, and the Appointed Councillor should have a reliable way of receiving these alerts.

1.2 Priority of snow clearance

The priority is to maintain safe access and egress for the Clerk, Handyman and any Councillors into the Pavilion during the normal functions of the Council, so the areas to be cleared of snow and gritted are the main entrances to the Pavilion buildings, steps, and slopes. **If there is no Meeting planned or it is postponed and/or the Clerk, Councillors and Handyman are advised not to visit the Pavilion, then no gritting or snow clearance is necessary.**

At a lower priority and only to be gritted if required in accordance with the Risk Assessments are the entrance to the Huskar Community Rooms (HCR) and adjoining pathways. **If there is no Meeting or function planned or it is postponed and/or the Clerk, Councillors and Handyman are advised not to visit the HCR, then no gritting or snow clearance is necessary.**

The Car Park next to the Huskar Community Rooms will not be cleared of snow or gritted and users enter the car part at their own risk.

It is not the Council's policy statutory responsibility to grit public highways nor is it the policy of the Parish Council to clear snow or grit private properties, car parks or paths through the Woodlands 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 / procurement of snow shovel

The same meeting will also authorise procurement of sufficient grit to start the winter with a stockholding of two 10KG bags of grit salt with a delegated budget for the procurement of an additional five 10KG bags to be called-off if required. The Clerk 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 or Clerk. 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. The meeting will also confirm that sufficient equipment is available for snow clearance including the procurement of a snow shovel and grit spreading.

Method 2 – gritting / snow clearance

2.1 The decision to grit and snow clearance

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 (see Glossary at end of document) warning.

There will be an immediate communication by the Clerk and/or Appointed Councillor that the Parish Council building will close forthwith. Where this is not possible due to exceptional circumstances the policy provides for snow clearance and gritting to the immediate vicinity and entrance of each of the buildings only.

The Appointed Councillor and the Clerk of the Council will agree if it will be necessary to ask for volunteers to assist. 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 the Pavilion and HCR
4. The availability of grit
5. The likelihood of getting more if required.
6. The availability of volunteers.

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

2.2 Method of gritting / snow clearance

The grit will be applied at 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 as opposed to using mechanical devices.

Once the initial gritting has been done, further snow clearance depends on the availability of volunteers or handyman. 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 of the Council in consultation with the Appointed Councillor.

Social Media Communication

In the event of an Amber (or Red) weather warning a message will be posted on the parish Council Facebook page and where possible the website; reminding persons that 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 in the Parish 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.

Delegated Councillor: Richard Leech

Deputy Delegated Councillor: Peter Millar

Parish Clerk & RFO: Richard Bell

Chair of the Council: Meryl Liddell

Date of Meeting policy adopted: 1st November 2018

Updated at Meeting: 2nd December 2019

Updated at Meeting 2nd November 2020

Updated at Meeting 1st November 2021

Updated at Meeting 7th November 2022

Updated at Meeting 6th November 2023

Updated at Meeting 4th November 2024

Glossary

Yellow: Be aware. Severely bad weather is possible over the next few days and could affect people in the concerned area. Yellow means that you should plan ahead thinking about possible travel delays, or the disruption of your day-to-day activities. The Met Office is monitoring the developing weather situation and yellow means keep an eye on the latest forecast and be aware that the weather may change or worsen, leading to disruption of your plans in the next few days.

Amber: Be prepared. There is an increased likelihood of severely or extremely bad weather affecting people in the concerned area, which could potentially disrupt people's plans and possibly cause travel delays, road and rail closures, interruption to power and the potential risk to life and property. Amber means people need to be prepared to change plans and protect themselves, their family and community from the impacts of the severe weather based on the forecast from the Met Office.

Red: Act. Extremely bad weather is expected. Red means people in the concerned areas should act now to keep themselves and others safe from the impact of the weather. Widespread damage, travel and power disruption and risk to life is likely. You must avoid dangerous areas and follow the advice of the emergency services and local authorities.