

## **REGENERATION, COMMUNITY AND CULTURE OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

**6 AUGUST 2015**

### **SNOW WARDEN PROJECT – (YEAR 2 REVIEW)**

Report from: Richard Hicks, Acting Director of Regeneration, Community and Culture

Author: Phil Moore, Head of Highways and Parking

#### **Summary**

This report provides a review of the above project following the 2014/15 Winter Period and seeking approval to implement the scheme across the whole authority if considered appropriate.

The Snow Warden Project enables pavements to be cleared of snow and ice during winter conditions by enlisting the assistance of individuals and community groups on a voluntary basis.

#### **1. Budget and Policy Framework**

- 1.1 The first report was produced in response to an original suggestion made by Councillor Osborne at the Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 3 October 2013.
- 1.2 The report is an update on the pilot Snow Angels project which was in place over the 2014/15 Winter period.

#### **2. Background**

- 2.1 The Committee received a report setting out a response to an issue raised by a member in October 2013 as to the possibility of the Council introducing a scheme along the lines of the ‘Snow Angels’ project.
- 2.2 The basis of a ‘Snow Angels’ project was outlined as being a scheme to enable pavements to be cleared of snow and ice during winter conditions by enlisting the assistance of individuals and community groups on a voluntary basis.
- 2.3 Once registered, volunteers would be mapped into CONFIRM (the Council’s Asset management system) so that officers could maintain a list of footways which would be covered by the scheme, thus allowing officers to co-ordinate the clearance of entire lengths of pavements, subject to sufficient volunteers signing up.

- 2.4 Given the uncertainty of the take up of such a scheme, it was suggested that if supported, a pilot scheme be considered for three wards across the authority in an inner urban, outer urban and rural setting. This would enable Officers to gauge the potential of such a scheme going authority wide and the financial implications involved.
- 2.5 Details of costs based on 100, 250 and 500 residents were submitted.
- 2.6 The Assistant Director, Frontline Services confirmed that following consultations, the Council's Highway's term contractor, VolkerHighways had offered to sponsor the pilot project with the exception of the anticipated £7,500 costs associated with advertising and administration. However, it was confirmed that this funding could be met from existing budgets within the Directorate.
- 2.7 On the 10 April 2014 the Overview and Scrutiny Committee agreed that the snow angel scheme (which was renamed "Snow Wardens" for Medway) should go ahead as a pilot trial due to the uncertainty of take up for this type of scheme. The pilot scheme would be undertaken in three wards across the authority (Luton and Wayfield, River and Strood Rural) with 250 units and this would allow officers to gauge the potential of such a scheme and the financial implications before considering going ahead authority wide.
- 2.8 Medway Council's Term Maintenance Contractor VolkerHighways supplied a sea container, which was installed at the Civic Centre Depot site. 250 units of equipment including gloves, reflective vests (with Snow Warden logo) and bags of rock salt were purchased and stored.
- 2.9 The Snow Warden project was advertised in Medway Matters (Oct / Nov 2014 and Dec 14 / Jan 15 issues) together with information and application forms on the main Medway Council Website. A video was produced to advertise the project and another as a training video for volunteers. Links to the videos and website were regularly shared across media via Twitter and Facebook. Snow Warden information was also released through local papers and e-mails were sent to the parish Councils for their consideration.
- 2.10 Following this advertising a number of enquiries were made to Highways and this led to eleven volunteers signing up.
- 2.11 The customer enquiry module within Confirm along with external GIS systems were utilised to manage the day to day running of the Snow Warden programme over the winter maintenance period.
- 2.12 The (GISMO 2) corporate mapping system has been updated to visually display the Snow Warden information on the GIS section of the Medway Council website. Members of public can view this information to see if their desired area has already been allocated or is available.

### **3 Options**

- 3.1 It was not known how many volunteers would sign up for the Snow Warden Project and therefore cost options were provided for 100, 250 and 500 residents. Following the Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 10 April 2014, officers arranged for 250 Snow warden kits to be made available.

#### **Summary of Initial and ongoing costs**

<b>Estimated Breakdown of Costs for the 2 year period 2014 /2016</b>	
<b>Item</b>	<b>250 units</b>
Initial advertisement and administration costs	£7,500
<b>Ongoing advertisement and administration costs</b>	<b>£2,000</b>
Initial installation of sea container (Inc. depot costs, lighting & accommodation works)	£1,475
<b>Ongoing depot and lighting costs</b>	<b>£200</b>
Snow shovels	£1,688
Hand salt spreader	£897
Rock salt (25kg bags)	£800
PPE (High visibility vest with Logo and gloves)	£780
<b>Estimated Total Cost</b>	<b>£15,340</b>

- 3.2 This scheme was extensively promoted in the three trial areas. However, this resulted in a very limited take up by only 11 residents. As a result of the apparently limited popularity of the scheme one option would be to not progress the scheme any further.

### **4. Advice and analysis**

- 4.1 The take up of volunteers has been lower than expected. One possible reason why residents may not have signed up to the scheme is that the UK has experienced two winters where there has been very little or no snow.
- 4.2 It is likely that residents will want to make use of the scheme once snow has fallen, however officers at that time would not be in a position to administer the scheme because they will be fully engaged dealing with the snow event. This eventuality may result in potential reputational damage to the Council.

## 5. Risk management

- 5.1 The following table considers any significant risks we have foreseen with the Snow Warden project.

Risk	Description	Action to avoid or mitigate risk	Risk rating
Equipment misuse	Volunteers may just take and keep equipment for their own use.	Volunteer details to be recorded before hand.	C3
Volunteers	Volunteers may decide not to undertake snow clearance, once signed up.	Volunteer details to be recorded within confirm.	D3
Third party damage	Accidental damage to property e.g. private property, walls and vehicles	Volunteers to have training and covered by Council's insurance	E3
Liability for accidents	Volunteers who injure themselves and attempt to sue the council	Full and detailed information on personal safety will be issued to all volunteers.	E4
Manual handling	Injuries received undertaking snow clearance.	Volunteers to have an induction on safety issues when signing up to take part..	D4
Little take up prior to snow, with huge demand when snow falls. Council image on delivering service damaged	Facility advertised in Medway Matters, but take up could only happen after snow falls and staff cannot deal with demand, thus adversely affecting councils image	Staff in highways to be available during the working day when snow on ground	B2
Loss of depot facility	Depot facility must be retained to allow the stock to be made available to the public.	If highways are moved then depot facility must be provided as part of the move	C2

### Risk Rating Key

#### Likelihood

A - Very high

B - High

C - Significant

D - Low

E - Very low

F - Almost impossible

#### Impact

1 – Catastrophic

2 – Critical

3 – Marginal

4 – Negligible

- 5.2 Officers produced a video to assist with the training of volunteers to ensure that their health and safety is uppermost when carrying out this voluntary work.

## **6. Consultation**

- 6.1 Not applicable

## **7. Financial implications**

- 7.1 The costs are as tabled in section 3.

## **8 Legal implications**

- 8.1 The Council should have a system in place to identify and minimise risks associated with the project. Robust risk assessments should be carried out and appropriate training and equipment should be provided to the volunteers. Volunteers should have access to a single point of contact at the Council and regular monitoring and reviewing of the systems should take place.

## **9. Recommendations**

- 9.1 The Committee is recommended to expand the Snow Warden Project in 2015/16 across the whole of Medway and utilise the 250 units of equipment and materials for that purpose to be funded from the existing Highways budget.

## **Appendices**

None

### **Lead officer contact**

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### **Background papers**

Minutes from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting on the 3 October 2013.

Minutes from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting on the 10 April 2014.