

Agenda item 5

For decision – FTC Grit Bin Policy

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Summary and recommendation

There is no law requiring Town and Parish Council's to provide grit bins. Through discretion they may choose to provide them to deliver community benefit and to provide local support to the Highways Authority in its effort to, as far as reasonably possible, ensure safe passage along public highways.

Currently FTC do not have a policy covering the installation of a new grit bin meaning that decisions can be based on personal judgement and unknown criteria with consequent risks for consistency.

To provide clarity and consistency this Grit Bin policy sets out the criteria for assessing whether a new bin might be approved and sets expectations about how the process is managed. The policy draws on best practices and qualifying criteria from the policies of other town councils.

The recommendation is to adopt the proposed Grit Bin Policy setting out the criteria and process to be used to assess applications for new grit bins

Background

Parish councils do not have a legal obligation to provide grit bins on roads or public land. There is no law that compels them to install, refill or maintain grit bins. The provision is voluntary and discretionary, based on local decisions and resources.

Councils *can* provide grit bins using the legal powers under the Highways Act 1980 — Section 185 which gives a *power* (not a duty) to provide and maintain storage bins in streets for materials including grit/salt. National guidance recognises that councils cannot guarantee surfaces free of ice even on treated parts of the network; refilling is prioritised during severe events to maintain reasonable practicability. [local.gov.uk]

Permission is required from the Highways Authority (Somerset Council) to be allowed to place a new bin on a pavement. Once FTC install a new bin FTC is then responsible for its management and maintenance, although SC currently do a minimum of one round of refilling all grit bins at the start of winter.

It should be noted that grit bins are solely for use on public highways and are not for use on private drives. Use for private land constitutes theft.

Provision of grit bins is separate to responsibility for the gritting of roads which lies with the Highways Authority.

Although FTC has discretionary powers to install new grit bins there is currently no clear criteria explaining when a new grit bin might be appropriate and likely to qualify for being installed. Likewise there is also no guidance as to when an application is *not* likely to be agreed. To provide clarity and objective consistency in the decision making this policy is proposed.

Figure 1 - Existing Grit bin locations across Frome



What criteria can demonstrate grit bin need?

Clearly grit bins cannot be placed on every street corner, which poses the question where do grit bins offer the greatest community value? They have particular community value for access routes on slopes, where there is no other grit bin nearby or where many people use an access route to reach a community organisation such as a school or care home.

Based on these principles of community value, and the limits of their intended use, the policy proposes that a criteria for approving a new bin requires that ALL of the following specific conditions be met:

- A bin would serve a public road or footway (not private drives/land)

- A bin would be over 200 m from the nearest grit bin (measured along the pedestrian route). 150 m may be accepted if local geography is particularly challenging
- The location does not already lie on a route of priority gritting by the Highways Authority
- The location would not obstruct the path/road (1.5m footpath clearance)

Additionally the policy would require that ONE (or more) of the following conditions is met:

- A gradient over 5% (1 in 20 slope)
- Documented history of snow/ice related incidents
- A high concentration of vulnerable users
- Areas of documented recurrent localised icing due to water run-off

Figure 2 - Example of existing grit bin on slope



Application Process

An application would be made using a form which collects the information needed to assess an application against the criteria above, [this can be viewed on the website here at Appendix 5.1](#)

Once received the application would be reviewed and the decision, together with reasons if refused, communicated back to the applicant.

Links to Council Plan and Medium-Term Financial Plan

This policy is aligned with aim four of the Council Plan to improve assets and Frome's physical infrastructure to enable the community to have essential access to the grit needed to improve the ice conditions of their local road.

Financial and Risk Implications

A 200l grit bin costs in the region of £200 to purchase. Staff time is needed to apply for permission and to install the bin. There may be a fee for obtaining permission.

Legal / HR Implications

Highways Act 1980 — Section 185 provides the council with the power (not a duty) to supply grit bins

Equalities Implications

In applying the policy the council will have due regard to the **Public Sector Equality Duty**, considering the needs of disabled people and older residents—especially where bins could materially reduce risk for vulnerable users (e.g., near sheltered housing).

Community Safety Implications

Community need, notably for vulnerable groups, is part of the application criteria

Climate Change and Sustainability Implications

None

Health and Safety Implications

Grit bins can help with enabling access on some roads during wintery conditions but FTC is not legally required to provide grit bins, is not responsible for managing ice/snow on pavements or roads and is not legally liable for any slips or trips as a result of wintery conditions.

Report sign off

Peter Wheelhouse, Acting Town Clerk 03/03/26

Recommendation

1. To adopt the proposed Grit Bin Policy setting out the criteria and process to be used to assess applications for new grit bins