

Contact Officer: Jodie Harris

KIRKLEES COUNCIL

ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE CHANGE SCRUTINY PANEL

Wednesday 8th October 2025

Present: Councillor Andrew Cooper (Chair)
Councillor Matthew McLoughlin
Councillor John Taylor

Co-optees

In attendance: Nick Jenkin , Buisness Development Manager
Tony Galloway
Rashid Mahmood, Head of Highways
Chris Johnson, Operational Manager

Observers:

Apologies: Councillor Musarrat Khan
Councillor David Longstaff
Councillor Will Simpson

10. Membership of the Panel

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Will Simpson, Musarrat Khan and David Longstaff.

Kevin Evans was welcomed to the Panel's membership as Co-optee to the Panel.

11. Minutes of the Previous Meeting

The Panel considered the Minutes of the meeting of the Panel held on 13th August 2025

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the meeting held on 13th August 2025 be approved.

12. Declaration of Interests

No interests were declared.

13. Admission of the Public

All agenda items were considered in public session.

14. Deputations/Petitions

No deputations or petitions were received.

15. Public Question Time

No public questions were received.

16. Snow Warden Winter 2025/26 Update

The Panel received a presentation from Nick Jenkin, Business Development Manager setting out an update on the Snow Wardens Scheme. The Panel were advised that:

- The Snow Warden Scheme was launched in winter 2021 as a two-year pilot to support community pavement clearing during winter conditions.
- Volunteers were equipped with a snow shovel, hand scoop, grit, and high-visibility clothing to assist local access to key facilities.
- The scheme experienced significant growth in 2024/25 due to multiple weather events and the involvement of community groups.
- Volunteer numbers increased from 12 in 2021/22 to 120 in 2024/25, with 37 individuals on the waiting list for 2025/26.
- Volunteer distribution across wards was recorded, with the highest numbers in Batley East (14), Holme Valley South (9), and Holme Valley North (6).
- Challenges during the 2024/25 season included:
 - Reduced management capacity due to competing demands on the waste and parks teams.
 - Delays in grit replenishment following the January weather event, as highways teams prioritised grit bin refills.
 - Delivery-only distribution led to delays in volunteers receiving full kits.
- Volunteer feedback indicated:
 - 64% satisfaction with equipment.
 - Issues with shovels reported by four residents; three preferred grit sprinklers.
 - 85% were willing to collect supplies from local points.
 - 89% felt confident in knowing when to apply grit.
 - 71% reported insufficient grit; 32% had storage difficulties.
- General feedback highlighted:
 - A need for centralised storage and coordination in areas with multiple wardens.
 - Suggestions for targeted communications to recruit more volunteers in covered areas.
 - Concerns about slow grit re-supply and delayed communications during severe weather.
- Updated guidance for 2025/26 included:
 - Clarification on grit usage (10kg covering approx. 250m of footpath).
 - Continued advice on effective clearing, safety, and reporting procedures.
- Planned changes for 2025/26 included:
 - Additional shovel stock to address equipment issues.
 - Option for volunteers to receive extra grit bags.
 - Introduction of a hybrid delivery and collection model, with scheduled slots at highway depots and new collection points.
 - The 2025/26 sign-up window was scheduled to open on 15 October via email.

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- A cap of 100 new volunteers was introduced to manage resources.
- Schools and nurseries were invited to join the scheme.
- 30 delivery slots and up to 80 collection slots were made available for new kits, with additional grit collection for existing wardens.
- Collection points would reopen after severe weather events if needed.

The Panel noted the presentation and, during the subsequent discussion, raised the following questions and points:

- In response to a question regarding the 64% of volunteers who reported being satisfied with their equipment, Nick Jenkin, Business Development Manager clarified that feedback from the remaining volunteers included comments about the grit, which was the main complaint. This had made it appear that more volunteers were dissatisfied. It was noted that future surveys would be amended to capture more accurate feedback.
- In response to a question about shovel breakage and the quality of replacements, it was confirmed that the Council had changed suppliers to provide more robust shovels. The Panel welcomed this update and recommended that guidance on correct shovel use be provided to reduce the risk of breakage, such as avoiding overloading with grit or shovelling ice.
- In response to a question regarding grit storage, it was advised that new non-porous bags would be provided to improve storage conditions.
- In response to concerns about accountability for the Snow Warden scheme, reassurance was given that the teams jointly managing the scheme worked closely together. Weekly meetings with snow wardens were due to commence imminently to ensure oversight throughout the winter period.
- In response to questions about new housing developments and the potential to prioritise snow wardens in areas without access to grit bins or network gritting, Rashid Mahmood, Head of Highways, acknowledged this as a broader challenge for the service. He welcomed the suggestion as a potential way to address the gap and agreed to consider it further.
- In response to further concerns about how residents in new housing areas would be supported during severe winter weather, Rashid Mahmood reassured the Panel that the service was aware of the issue and that initial discussions were underway to develop a solution. The Panel noted the response and recommended that the Portfolio Holder also consider this challenge and provide a follow-up response to the Panel.
- In response to questions about promotion of the scheme, Nick Jenkin advised that was promoted via social media (i.e- Nextdoor/ 'Gritter Twitter' etc...) The Panel welcomed the use of social media and noted that their previous recommendation to allow volunteers to join mid-season had been implemented. Nick Jenkin further asked for Councillors' support in promoting the scheme and agreed to meet with Councillor Cooper to discuss promotion in areas with low uptake.
- In response to questions about the use of a video to demonstrate how to apply grit, it was confirmed that a video was currently in development.
- In response to questions about measuring the impact of the scheme, it was advised that formal measurement was not undertaken due to the scheme's reliance on trust with volunteers. The Panel noted the response but recommended that positive feedback demonstrating the scheme's value be collected and shared with the Panel in future years.

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At the close of the discussion the Panel noted the presentation, and it was recommended that:

- (1) Guidance on use of shovel's be provided to volunteers.
- (2) The service give consideration to the prioritisation of snow wardens in areas without access to grit bins or network gritting, as a potential means of addressing service coverage gaps.
- (3) The Portfolio Holder provide a follow-up response to the Panel regarding how the Council intended to support residents of new housing developments during challenging winter weather.
- (4) Nick Jenkin, Business development Manager would meet with Councillor Andrew Cooper regarding the promotion of the Snow Warden Scheme in areas of lower take up.
- (5) Helpful feedback demonstrating the value of the scheme be collated and shared with the panel in future years.

17. **Work Programme 2025/26**

The Panel reviewed its Work Programme for 2025/26 and the following items were put forward for inclusion:

- Parking Enforcement
- A review of the impact of car park charging
- An update on the Huddersfield District Heat Network
- White Rose Forrest Update

RESOLVED: The Panel noted the Work Programme 2025/26 and it was agreed that Jodie Harris, Principal Governance Officer would liaise with officers with regards to the suggestions made by the Panel.