

From: Stuart Pile [mailto:stuart.pile@hertsc.gov.uk]
Sent: 06 January 2010 15:16
Cc: Steve Dibben
Subject: Re: Highway matters relating to WGC

Thank you for your email.

As you will appreciate the exceptional weather we are currently going through is causing some difficulties, and I cannot say that officers are free at the moment to meet with you on an urgent basis. I am sure that someone will be in contact with you as soon as possible.

The situation between HCC and WHBC is one we are trying very hard to bring to a conclusion. I am as frustrated as you with the current arrangements, and the on-going agency agreement negotiations. I hope that the situation will be resolved very soon.

Regards,

Cllr Stuart Pile
Executive Member for Highways & Transport
Hertfordshire County Council

Dear Mr Pile,

I refer to our letter dated 26 November concerning the split of duties between County and Borough authorities as regards highways, pavements, and verges. I have today received your acknowledgement dated 31st December.

We are indeed hopeful of a meeting with officers of Herts Highways shortly but there is now added urgency to this issue with the arrival of bad weather and we would like to have this meeting as soon as possible. We are hopeful that this can be arranged.

In the meantime, we have subsequently heard from Durk Reyner who is the responsible manager at Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council for the execution of Serco contractors dealing with litter, ice and snow. He has apparently been requested to respond to us at the request of Councillors Gilding and Crouch of WHBC.

Based on our understanding of the County's position and that of WHBC, it is quite clear why this town gets a poor service. Basically, we do not see a clear agreement as to who should do what when on these issues. Some of the points that Durk has made are not just questionable but border on the absurd and we are surprised that Councillors of either authority are letting these muddles continue.

The Borough has a legal duty to clear roads of “litter” (including leaves) according to County. However, Mr Reyner implies that they are responsible for leaves only when these are turned into detritus. This explains an obvious area for inaction by one of the authorities and, frankly, borders on the absurd. This confirms that there is a difference between the two authorities that requires urgent resolution.

In this recent cold spell we saw the paths across Parkway cleared of snow and gritted whilst the pavements within the Town Centre were not similarly treated, nor the pavements across Howardsgate. How are residents to comprehend this absurdity?

Presumably, if one agreed with Mr Reyner’s line, it would reflect brilliant action by the Borough and inaction by County? We suggest that this position is untenable as neither authority is looking at the issue from the point of view of the resident who is both the customer and footing the bill.

Mr Reyner’s statement that “WHBC will clear paths and roads of leaves as they get there” seems to fly in the face of his previous statements and denotes a lack of management drive to prioritise areas for clearance. We would have thought that the Town Centres should be given priority by Borough staff, preferably with direction from County authorities, as these are areas of high pedestrian traffic.

The present state of affairs is unsatisfactory in practice. So could we suggest that Councillors of both authorities need to give their own attention to this issue as a priority? In the meantime, we are copying in your colleagues at Herts Highways and are seeking an urgent meeting with them.

Yours sincerely

Shaun O’Reilly
Vice Chairman
Welwyn Garden City Society