

<b>Subject:</b>	<b>Highways Winter Service Plan 2013-14</b>		
<b>Date of Meeting:</b>	<b>8 October 2013</b>		
<b>Report of:</b>	<b>Executive Director Environment, Development &amp; Housing</b>		
<b>Contact Officer:</b>	<b>Name:</b>	<b>Christina Liassides</b>	<b>Tel: 29-2036</b>
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<b>Ward(s) affected:</b>	<b>All</b>		

**FOR GENERAL RELEASE****1. SUMMARY AND POLICY CONTEXT:**

- 1.1 *Well-maintained Highways*, the national Code of Practice for Highway Maintenance Management recommends that authorities should formally approve, adopt and publish, in consultation with users and key stakeholders, a Winter Service Operational Plan based on the principles of the Code. Brighton & Hove City Council has produced an annual Highways Winter Service Plan since it became a unitary authority.
- 1.2 The Highways Winter Service Plan 2013-14 is the result of an annual review by the highways team in partnership with other council sections, East and West Sussex, the Highway Agency, the Sussex Resilience Forum and other transport operators. The plan builds on the Code of Practice alongside extensive work, experience and research carried out over previous years.

**2. RECOMMENDATIONS:**

- 2.1 That the Environment, Transport and Sustainability Committee approves the Brighton & Hove City Council Highways Winter Service Plan 2013-14 as attached at Appendix 1 to this report.

**3. RELEVANT BACKGROUND INFORMATION/CHRONOLOGY OF KEY EVENTS:**Context for Highways Winter Service Plan

- 3.1 The Highways Winter Service plan outlines the policy and operational mechanisms that this authority puts in place to meet its statutory requirement to take measures to prevent or remove accumulations of ice and snow from the public highway as far as is reasonably practicable.
- 3.2 The plan is reviewed annually in liaison with other sections and agencies, and against established best practice and government guidelines, as part of continuous improvement to the service.

## Annual Review 2012-13

- 3.3 Although individual temperatures were not as low as those in 2009-10, the 2012-13 winter season saw the most prolonged period of cold for several years, starting in late November and lasting into April.
- 3.4 The road network was treated for ice and frost throughout the winter season. The network was also treated in advance of and during snow, which occurred at the end of January and the beginning of March, with some additional flurries in February and April.
- 3.5 A total of 88 salting/gritting/ploughing runs were carried out. The largest proportion of these runs was pre-treatment in advance of frost, ice or snow, but with several runs per day taking place during or after snowfall. Prior to snowfall, all road gritting routes were pre-salted as well as pavements in the main city centre.
- 3.6 A total of 1989 tonnes of salt were used compared to 880 tonnes during the last winter season. 254 tonnes of grit (sharp sand) was also used.
- 3.7 In the January snow, treated roads held up against the majority of the snowfall but the north-eastern part of the city was badly affected by a heavy snowstorm during afternoon rush hour towards the end of the period.
- 3.8 In March, roads across the South East were overwhelmed by persistent snowfall and freezing high winds, again just before rush hour in the afternoon. The problems included the strategic road network operated by the Highway Agency, where blockages on the A27 and A23 impacted on Brighton & Hove, causing gridlock within the city. High snowdrifts on the A259 in East Sussex may have also affected people leaving the city.
- 3.9 Work is being undertaken with neighbouring authorities and other transport operators to improve co-ordination of resources and communications during such incidents.
- 3.10 Although the network was severely affected due to gridlock and snow conditions, all highway authorities had carried out pre-treatment prior to the snow and continued to carry out gritting and ploughing until the network was clear again, working round the clock to do so.

### Snow events

- 3.11 On behalf of the government, the National Winter Service Research Group (NWSRG) has researched and updated the sections of the Code of Practice that give national guidelines on highway winter service.
- 3.12 **The latest edition of the Code states that it is: “impractical to spread sufficient salt to melt more than very thin layers of snow and ice.”**
- 3.13 Other factors that can affect salting treatments are whether air conditions are very dry, the strength and temperature of the wind and the amount of traffic.

- 3.14 Under such circumstances, the essential treatment is ploughing and using a salt/grit mix to clear the layers of snow and compacted ice. These treatments take place during and after snowfall, where the aim is to reclaim the network as soon as is practicable.
- 3.15 Ploughing is a difficult task within the city due to a number of factors, such as roads having steep cambers, speed calming measures and tight corners. Cars may also block gritting routes, as the plough increases the width of the gritter. Nonetheless, all gritters plough during snowfall as well as treat with a salt/grit mix.
- 3.16 In the snowfalls of January and March, the majority of the gritted network was in service again by morning of the next day.

#### Service Provision

- 3.17 In total, during our full runs, we grit nearly 192 miles, which equates to just under 50% of our entire road network. This compares favourably with other local authorities, and with the Audit Commission's recommendation of covering between 25% - 38% of the total network.
- 3.18 Our defined routes are all main roads and all bus routes. This enables us to direct our available resources to keeping strategic links treated all across the city.
- 3.19 We have 7 gritter vehicles, all with plough attachments, and a pavement gritter.
- 3.20 Salt is stored at Hollingdean Depot. It is not an ideal location due to its size and accessibility, which limits the amount of salt which can be stored and makes turnover of stock logistically more complex. However, the winter season starts with a minimum of 1,000 tonnes in stock. There is a contract in place for the supply of salt with a provision for additional storage at the contractor's strategic depot in Shoreham Harbour.

#### Communications

- 3.21 Pre-season advice and information, as well as regular severe updates were available at [www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/snow](http://www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/snow) and on other forms of social media such as Twitter. This information will be in place ready for this coming winter. The Highways team work closely with the Communications Team, other council sections, other highway authorities and transport operators to ensure that relevant information is shared and delivered to our customers.

#### Grit bins and self help

- 3.22 The council provides 435 highway grit bins, and an additional number are provided by Housing for use on estates and other housing areas.
- 3.23 Grit bins are checked and refilled before the start of each winter season.
- 3.24 Grit/salt drops are also undertaken during prolonged severe cold weather to pre-designated locations.
- 3.25 Due to budget constraints, it was agreed last year that grit bins will no longer be re-filled during winter unless there is a severe snow event. A severe snow event is defined as an event where the snow is over 50mm (2 inches), and is predicted to remain on the ground for longer than 36 hours.

- 3.26 During the snow events in January, grit bins were refilled starting prior to the snowfall and continuing during and after the snowfall. It took over a week to reach all the grit bins in the city, which is why the highway section no longer place additional grit bins out – it is not possible to service any more within any reasonable timescales.
- 3.27 Our communications strategy encourages local residents and businesses – where they are able to do so – to clear snow outside their property as soon as possible. This is because we cannot reach every pavement on our priority list immediately and certainly cannot clear every pavement in the city. Fresh snow is much easier to clear both by hand and by machine than compacted snow or heavy ice which has been in situ for a while.

#### **4. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND CONSULTATION**

- 4.1 The Highways Winter Service Plan has been reviewed against the latest edition of the government’s good practice guidelines (Appendix H of Well-Maintained Highways). Brighton & Hove City Council meets or is working towards best practice. However, there are some limitations such as the nature of our salt storage or the difficulties encountered when ploughing on steep, cambered city roads.
- 4.2 A copy of the plan and gritting routes are sent to relevant stakeholders for consultation during the summer period.
- 4.2 Brighton & Hove Head of Highways Operations is also part of a working group of local highway authorities – East Sussex, West Sussex and the Highway Agency – seeking to improve communications internally and to our public before and during severe weather events. This work is linked into the Sussex Resilience Forum’s Transport Group.
- 4.3 Learning from experiences of snow occurring at evening rush hour, work is also being undertaken with Brighton & Hove Bus Company to improve messages to the public when transport networks are disrupted.
- 4.4 Highway Operations works closely with Cityclean, Cityparks, the Communications team and other council sections, particularly the Civil Contingencies team, to communicate and pool resources during extreme cold weather events.

#### **5. FINANCIAL & OTHER IMPLICATIONS:**

##### Financial Implications:

- 5.1 The cost of providing the Highways Winter Service Plan is covered by a revenue budget, which is £297,210 for the 2013-14 financial year. This budget covers the costs of the service plan including operatives, vehicle fuel and maintenance, contractors and borrowing associated with the capital costs of the service.

The Highways Winter Service Plan is also supported by the Winter Maintenance Reserve. Any underspend in the revenue budget each year is carried over into the reserve as contingency to fund future periods of extreme weather which result in a revenue overspend.

As a result of 2012-13 events, the reserve was called upon by £66,051 during the 2012-13 financial year to contribute to the revenue budget. The balance of the reserve is currently £419,644.

*Finance Officer Consulted: Steven Bedford*

*Date: 05/08/13*

Legal Implications:

- 5.2 The Council is the local highway authority for Brighton & Hove and has a duty under the Highways act 1980 to maintain publicly adopted highways. This includes a duty to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, that safe passage along a highway is not endangered by snow or ice. The Council is also subject to the network management duty under the Traffic Management Act 2004, which requires it to do all that is reasonably practicable to manage the road network effectively to keep traffic moving.

The proposed Winter Service Plan will assist the Council in complying with these duties and in demonstrating that it has taken into account the relevant guidance in doing so.

*Lawyer Consulted:*

*Carl Hearsom*

*Date 06/08/13*

Equalities Implications:

- 5.3 The Highways Winter Service covers main routes and all bus routes. It is a service for the public highway, aimed at bringing the maximum benefit to the most used thoroughfares. It is not logistically or economically feasible to cover all roads in the city, so by treating bus routes and pavements on a priority basis we ensure that most areas of the city have some accessible options for travel and target areas of highest usage/maximum benefit. An Equalities Impact Assessment has been undertaken.

Sustainability Implications:

- 5.4 Salt has a negative environmental impact e.g. on the water table or vegetation. It is not possible for practicable quantities of salt to dissolve more than a minimum layer of snow or ice so usage must be balanced against impact. Sharp sand does not dissolve into solution and has a negative impact on drainage and appearance. Therefore resources are carefully deployed in order to provide a balance between network usability and detriment to the local environment.

Crime & Disorder Implications:

- 5.5 There are no crime and disorder implications identified in this report or within the Highways Winter Service Plan.

Risk and Opportunity Management Implications:

- 5.6 The objective is to provide a highways winter service, which will permit, as far as possible, the safe movement of traffic on designated roads throughout Brighton and Hove and to keep to a minimum delays and accidents brought about by adverse weather conditions. There is a risk that roads will not be completely clear of snow, ice or frost and highway users should adjust their usage accordingly. The opportunities are created by treating an agreed network across the city which helps the movement of people and goods.

Public Health Implications:

- 5.7 The Highways Winter Service Plan outlines a service which will endeavour as far as is reasonably practicable to provide for safer movement of pedestrians and other road users on the city's public highway. Through our winter communications strategy, the council also provides a range of information on how to stay healthy and safe during severe cold winter, and how to access care services if required.

Corporate / Citywide Implications:

- 5.8 The winter service is an essential support service for the city's economy and ability to function by helping to provide an accessible highway network.

**6. EVALUATION OF ANY ALTERNATIVE OPTION(S):**

- 6.1 The only alternative is not to produce or approve a winter service plan but this would be contrary to the Code of Practice. The plan also acts as information about what to expect from the service and as a business continuity tool which lays out detailed operational directions on how to run the service. The routes and priorities are based on well-established criteria that seek to provide the best possible accessibility within available resources.

**7. REASONS FOR REPORT RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 7.1 The report ensures that the Winter Service Plan can be formally considered and, if agreed, adopted.

**SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION**

**Appendices:**

1. Highways Winter Service Plan 2013-14
2. Graphs on salt/gritting runs/cost

### **Documents in Members' Rooms**

1. None

### **Background Documents**

1. Highways Winter Service Plan reports 2010-11, 2011-12 and 2012-13
2. ECSOSC meetings – winter service review 2010, 2011 and 2012

