

Subject:	Highways Winter Service Plan 2016-17		
Date of Meeting:	11 October 2016		
Report of:	Executive Director, Economy, Environment and Culture		
Contact Officer:	Name:	Christina Liassides	Tel: 29-2036
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Ward(s) affected:	All		

FOR GENERAL RELEASE**1. PURPOSE OF REPORT AND POLICY CONTEXT**

- 1.1 The national Code of Practice and associated guidance states that local 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 and undertakes an annual review of this Plan.
- 1.2 The Highways Winter Plan and budget are specifically targeted at dealing with cold weather events (i.e. ice, frost, sleet and snow); however, the identified gritting network (the city's 'critical road network') and operational policy also helps inform the highway authority's response to other severe weather events such as storms or flooding.
- 1.3 The Winter Service Plan 2016-17 has been thoroughly updated and re-written in a more concise and accessible style.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 2.1 That the Environment, Transport and Sustainability Committee approves the Brighton & Hove City Council Highways Winter Service Plan 2016-17 as attached at Appendix 1 to this report.

3. CONTEXT/ BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 3.1 The Highways Winter Service is managed by the Asset and Network Management section within the Transport division and is supported by Cityclean and Cityparks.
- 3.2 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.

- 3.3 Winter maintenance is often referred to as 'gritting.' However, this term is misleading because the process usually involves spreading salt at an appropriately determined level from calibrated vehicles in advance of frost, ice or snow forming. The salt lowers the freezing point of water when in solution, and thereby melts or prevents ice and frost forming on the highway. Salt is affected by weather conditions such as wind, dryness and depth of ice. It becomes much less effective as temperatures start dropping to around -5 degrees centigrade and is not effective with heavy snowfall.

Annual Review 2015-16

- 3.4 Last winter was mild, with stormy rather than cold; however, there were cold spells during the later winter months, with the first weeks in April bringing sleet and hail.
- 3.5 28 gritting runs were carried out over the winter period, mostly in January and February.

Snow events

- 3.6 There were no severe snow events in 2015-16.
- 3.7 Should snow occur during this coming winter, it is worth noting that the Code of Practice states that it is: "impractical to spread sufficient salt to melt more than very thin layers of snow and ice."
- 3.8 This means that the salt will not prevent anything but very light snow from settling (the salt acts as a de-bonding layer rather than a preventative treatment).
- 3.9 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. As with all severe weather events, the aim is to rectify the problems on our defined gritting routes as soon as is practicable.

Service Provision

- 3.10 During our full runs, we grit nearly 192 miles, which equates to just under 50% of our entire road network.
- 3.11 Our defined routes are all A roads, most B and C roads and all bus routes. This enables us to direct our available resources to keeping strategic links treated all across the city. These routes are reviewed annually and changes are made where the network or the bus routes have altered or been increased. The team is currently working towards electronic management and optimisation of the gritting routes, utilising software technology.
- 3.12 We have 7 gritter vehicles, all with plough attachments, and a pavement gritter. Salt is stored at Hollingdean Depot. Grit bins and grit drops are provided for public use.

- 3.13 Detailed information on the winter service and maps of routes and grit bins are contained on the council's website.

4. ANALYSIS & CONSIDERATION OF ANY ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

- 4.1 A Highways Winter Service Plan is recommended as good practice by central government. The alternative would be to have no strategic or operational plan.

5. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT & CONSULTATION

- 5.1 There has been no extensive consultation this year due to the mild winter. However, a copy of the plan and gritting routes are sent to relevant stakeholders such as transport operators, emergency services and major business continuity organisations in the city.
- 5.2 The Highways Winter team work in close liaison with the bus companies during severe cold weather events to ensure a resilient core network is established and to support access to outlying communities which are often badly affected by snowfall.
- 5.3 The Highways Winter team work closely with Cityclean, Cityparks and other council sections, particularly the Civil Contingencies team, to communicate and pool resources during extreme cold weather events.
- 5.4 At the beginning of each winter, the council's Communications team meet with the Highways Winter team to provide public information based on this Winter Service Plan, using a dedicated webpage as well as other forms of media. Communications via all forms of social media are updated regularly in advance of and during cold weather events.
- 5.5 The Winter Service team also support community groups that wish to undertake snow clearance in their local area, providing advice, guidance, shovels and materials such as grit e.g. in Queen's Park, Woodingdean and Ovingdean.

6. CONCLUSION

- 6.1 This report recommends approval of the Highways Winter Service Plan 2016-17 in order that the council has an agreed strategic and operational framework for responding to freezing weather conditions.

7. FINANCIAL & OTHER IMPLICATIONS:

Financial Implications:

- 7.1 The costs associated to the actions identified in the Highways Winter Service Plan will be funded from an existing winter maintenance revenue budget. The revenue budget for the 2016-17 financial year is £0.309m.

- 7.2 The Highways Winter Service Plan is also supported by a Winter Maintenance Reserve. Any cost variance to the annual revenue budget is transferred to/from the reserve as contingency to fund periods of extreme weather which may result in a revenue overspend. The current reserve balance is £0.498m following a contribution of £0.047m at the end of the 2015-16 financial year. Reserves are maintained as a matter of prudence to enable the authority to provide for unexpected events and thereby protect from overspending should such events occur. The level of reserves are reviewed annually as part of the budget setting process taking into account an appropriate assessment of financial risks.

Finance Officer Consulted: Steven Bedford

Date: 18/08/16

Legal Implications:

- 7.3 The Council as highway authority has a statutory duty to maintain publicly adopted highways. Since October 2003 that statutory duty has included a duty to ensure, so far as is reasonable practicable, that safe passage along a highway is not endangered by snow or ice (section 41(1A) Highways Act 1980 as amended by the Railways & Transport Safety Act 2003). The actions set out in Appendix 1 to this Report will assist in demonstrating that the Council will be able to comply with its statutory duty.

Lawyer Consulted: Stephanie Stammers

Date: 18/08/2016

Equalities Implications:

- 7.4 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 was undertaken in 2013.

Sustainability Implications:

- 7.5 Salt has a negative environmental impact e.g. on the water table or vegetation. It is not possible to spread enough quantity of salt to dissolve more than a minimum layer of snow or ice so usage must be balanced against impact. Sharp sand (grit) 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.

Any Other Significant Implications:

- 7.6 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.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

Appendices:

1. Highways Winter Service Plan 2016-17
2. Review of Winter Service 2015-16

Documents in Members' Rooms

1. None

