

<b>Subject:</b>	<b>Highways Winter Service Plan 2012-13</b>		
<b>Date of Meeting:</b>	<b>2 October 2012</b>		
<b>Report of:</b>	<b>Strategic Director Place</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 The Highways Code of Practice 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 this Code. Brighton & Hove City Council has produced an annual Highways Winter Service Plan since unitary status.
- 1.2 The Highways Winter Service Plan 2012-13 is the result of an annual review by the highways team and builds on the extensive work, experience and research carried out over previous years, particularly following 3 years of severe winters.

**2. RECOMMENDATIONS:**

- 2.1 That the Transport Committee approves the Brighton & Hove City Council Highways Winter Service Plan 2012/13 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, as part of continuous improvement to the service.

### Annual review 2012-13

- 3.3 Following the detailed work that went into reviewing the 2010/11 plan, the Highways Winter Service was tested again in snowfall conditions during 2010/11 and 2011/12, and reviewed again during the following summers. This review includes the operation of the service, the accompanying communications strategy, the co-ordination of resources across City Infrastructure for snow clearance, the performance of our equipment and the links with other sections and agencies.
- 3.4 Prior to and during previous winters, considerable discussion and consultation has taken place with other council teams and partner services, including via the Sussex Resilience Forum, the council's Major Incident Managers Team and individually with partners and providers, such as the bus company, schools and the NHS. Officers have also attended residents' meetings such as Local Action Team meetings. This ensures a good shared understanding of what the council's highways service can provide and how best to target this to support other services' priorities.
- 3.5 The plan covers the whole City Infrastructure delivery unit's response to cold weather and links to other council sections' and other agencies' winter service planning.

### Service provision

- 3.6 Through the Highways Winter Service Plan we endeavour to use the resources available to us as effectively as possible. We have a finite supply of materials and staff to carry out the work so it is simply not possible to keep all 2,500 of the city's public roads, pavements and footpaths free from ice and snow during a severe freeze.
- 3.7 Our defined routes are all main roads and all bus routes. The aim is to keep the important roads in the city open and to try and reach as many well-trafficked residential areas as possible (hence following bus routes). The routes include roads leading to emergency service premises, hospitals and bus depots. See Appendix 2.
- 3.8 In total, during our full runs, we grit nearly 192 miles, which equates to just under 50% of our total road network.
- 3.9 It should be noted that there are specific environmental factors that will reduce the effectiveness of salting/gritting. This means that although the council will continue to apply treatments to the identified routes, we cannot guarantee that the gritted roads will be free of snow and ice.

### Summary of 11-12 highway winter service

- 3.10 Although the winter was much milder than previous years, the gritter vehicles carried out several gritting runs, mainly in January and February. Several of these were our Hilltop routes (coldest areas of the city only), reflecting more marginal temperatures.
- 3.11 Snowfall came in early February followed by a week of very cold temperatures. However, even during the main snowfall, the majority of roads and pavements had almost no snow, or the snow melted very quickly.

- 3.12 Some streets in the city continued to suffer from snow and ice even once the majority was clear. These were roads and pavements on the north and eastern side of the city not on our identified gritting routes which do not get any direct sunshine in winter.
- 3.13 Whilst it must have seemed odd that we did not therefore deploy resources to the roads still affected, there was good reason for this. The gritter drivers, and those who clear snowy pavements by hand, are not staff especially recruited only for winter duties. They are permanent council employees normally employed as refuse truck drivers and street cleaners or are part of our highway contractors gangs. Because the majority of the city was clear of snow, we still had to carry out refuse, street cleaning and highway duties in those areas, so there were very few spare staff available to attend to areas of the city which still had snow lying.
- 3.14 However, we did divert some staff to snow duties. Some of these were making grit dumps by tractor to outlying areas, some were refilling grit bins and others operated the new pavement gritting machine or carried out hand clearance. We were very pleased with the pavement machine's performance, but it is less effective where snow has already compacted to ice.
- 3.15 In terms of road gritting, when drivers were available at night time, we had to keep going over our identified gritting routes as temperatures remained well below freezing and we needed to ensure that the main network remained accessible and did not re-freeze. However some roads not on our agreed list were gritted as an ad hoc measure, in recognition of the continuing problem in isolated areas and to enable refuse collection. This was possible because the refuse driver for that round is a trained gritter driver, and so could operate the gritter first to enable his refuse truck to get around.

### Communications

- 3.16 The Communications strategy ensures that clear and comprehensive information about the council's winter service is given out both just before the start of winter and as regular updates during any bout of very cold weather. This involves the Head of Highway Operations working closely with the Communications team and with Cityclean's Contact Centre/social media.

### Grit bins and self help

- 3.17 The council provides 420 grit bins throughout the city for self-help. Compared to other authorities, this is a high quantity within what is a relatively small geographical area. This is because we recognise that Brighton & Hove is a mainly urban area with steep hills serving a large population. We will also if required fill grit bins for emergency services, and can offer salt/grit in small quantities from our stockpile for schools, emergency services and other priority agencies for use on their own property.

- 3.18 Following an expansion over 5 years which has more than doubled the quantity of grit bins provided, we cannot issue any more grit bins on the public highway. This is because it would take far too long to fill them quickly during extreme weather and with finite resources we cannot keep expanding the number of grit bins that we then need to service.
- 3.19 Due to budget constraints following the 11-12 budget-setting process, grit bins will only be filled once at the start of the winter season unless there is heavy snowfall. This means that even if a grit bin is emptied immediately after being filled, there will be no further refills except during a severe weather event. This was agreed at Full Budget Council as part of Highway Operations budget reductions.
- 3.20 Grit drops at pre-identified locations may also take place during severe snowfall although these have not generally been used by local residents in the previous two winters.
- 3.21 Our communications strategy encourages local residents and businesses - where they are able to do so – to help 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 and is very hard to shift.

### Statistics

- 3.22 The original budget was calculated on an average of 33 gritting operations per year plus one 2 day snow event.
- 2007-08 was above average, with 43 gritting operations in total for the winter season.
  - In 2008-09, a total of 62 gritting operations were carried out, of which 27 operations were full routes, i.e. our largest coverage of the city.
  - In 2009-10, a total of 112 gritting operations were carried out of which 62 were full routes.
  - In 2010-11, a total of 64 gritting operations were carried out of which 48 were Full Routes. Although the end of November to the beginning of January saw cold and extreme snow, the rest of the winter was very mild.
  - In 2011-12, despite the milder weather compared to previous years, a total of 49 gritting operations were carried out. There was one major snowfall which mostly affected the north and eastern parts of the city, resulting in residual ice and snow remaining in some roads for a week.

### Vehicles

- 3.23 The council now has seven new gritter vehicles, all 4x4 and supplied with the latest technology such as stainless steel hoppers which will resist salt corrosion.
- 3.24 We have a pavement gritting machine which can also be utilised as a street sweeping machine. This enables efficient and quick treatment where pavements are

wide enough on our identified priority routes. However, it is less effective where compacted snow or thick ice is present.

- 3.25 All the vehicle purchases have been funded through unsupported borrowing and so future winter budgets must take into account repayment costs for the next 7 years as well as Repairs and Maintenance overheads.

### Salt Stock

- 3.26 The average amount of salt used per winter is about 800 tonnes. In 2011-12, we used 880 tonnes. (As a comparison, in the colder winter of 2010-11 the council used 1,500 tonnes of salt and a further 500 tonnes of grit). Sharp sand is an accepted treatment for heavy compacted layers of snow and ice, often proving more effective than salt alone.
- 3.27 The council has a contract in place for the supply of salt. This is delivered by boat from one of the two salt mines in the country direct to Shoreham Harbour. The council has not run out of salt in any of the previous winters.
- 3.28 We are continuing to use additional storage, outside of the city's depot. In total, we should start the winter season with over 1,500 tonnes.

### Reviews and recommendations

- 3.29 The recommendations from the Scrutiny Panel's review with officer comments and update as of 2011 are attached as Appendix 3 for information. The Head of Highway Operations attended the Environment and Community Safety Overview and Scrutiny Panel in March 2012 to give a further update on the Highways Winter Service Plan.

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

- 4.1 The Highways Winter Service Plan was reviewed as a result of recommendations by the Environment & Community Safety Overview & Scrutiny Committee following the first severe winter. It has been subsequently reviewed on an annual basis by ECSOSC including in March 2012.
- 4.2 Working with the Civil Contingencies Officer, highway officers have held several planning meetings and maintain ongoing communication with members of the Sussex Resilience Forum. This includes category 1 Responders (fire, police, NHS, ambulance service), the bus service, schools service, housing management and other important city services/premises. Internally, winter plans have been discussed at Major Incident Management meetings.
- 4.3 There have also been meetings and ongoing liaison with the Communications team and Business Continuity Manager regarding the council's public response to winter weather events.

- 4.4 Highways, Cityclean and Cityparks have worked together on planning the Winter Service for our city's public highway.
- 4.5 A copy of the Highways Winter Service Plan is sent out to the following stakeholders and any relevant comments incorporated into the plan/service as far as is reasonably practicable:
- Cityclean
  - Cityparks
  - Civil Contingencies
  - Housing and Social Inclusion
  - Social Care
  - Insurance section
  - Communications team
  - Police
  - NHS
  - Fire Service
  - Brighton & Hove Bus Company
  - Council Schools officers
  - Other Sussex Resilience Forum agencies e.g. Brighton Marina
  - Seafront services
  - Southern Rail
- 4.6 Benchmarking and sharing of good practice has been facilitated through SE7 and SEASIG – the south East Authorities Service Improvement Group.
- 4.7 The Head of Highway Operations works closely with East and West Sussex highway managers, including joint contracts with East Sussex for weather forecasting.

## 5. FINANCIAL & OTHER IMPLICATIONS:

### Financial Implications:

The costs of providing the winter maintenance service are covered by a revenue budget, which is £291,710 for 2012-13. Any underspend in the revenue budget each year is carried over into the Winter Maintenance Reserve, as contingency for periods of extreme weather. This fund is used to pay for operatives, gritter fuel, gritter maintenance, contractors and other costs associated with an ongoing major operation. This reserve has been called upon in financial years 2006-7, 2008-9, 2009-10 and 2010-11. In recognition of the demands placed on the service in recent years, an additional sum of £204,000 was allocated to the reserve in 2010-11. The balance in the reserve is currently £485,695.

*Finance Officer Consulted: Name Karen Brookshaw Date: 31/07/12*

#### Legal Implications:

- 5.2 The council as highway authority has a duty to maintain publicly adopted highways. Since October 2003 this has included a duty to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, that safe passage along a highway is not endangered by snow or ice (section s41 (1A) Highways Act 1980 as amended by the Railways and Transport Safety Act 2003). In addition, the highway authority is under a duty under section 150 of the Highways Act to remove any obstruction of the highway resulting from accumulation of snow or from the falling down of banks on the side of the highway, or from any other cause". Finally the council is also subject to the network management duty in section 16 of the Traffic Management Act 2004 which requires authorities 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 statutory duties.

*Lawyer Consulted:*

*Carl Hearsom*

*Date: 31/07/12*

#### Equalities Implications:

- 5.3 The Highways Winter Maintenance 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.

#### Sustainability Implications:

- 5.4 Salt has a negative environmental impact e.g. on the water table or vegetation. 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.

#### 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 adopted.

**SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION**

**Appendices:**

1. Highways Winter Service Plan 2012-13
2. Map showing full gritter routes & grit bins
3. Scrutiny recommendations and review

**Documents in Members' Rooms**

1. Full version of Highways Winter Service Plan (personal contact information redacted)



## **Background Documents**

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

