

READING BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT BY DIRECTOR OF ENVIRONMENT AND NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES

TO:	STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENT PLANNING AND TRANSPORT COMMITTEE		
DATE:	22 NOVEMBER 2017	AGENDA ITEM:	15
TITLE:	WINTER SERVICE PLAN 2017/2018		
LEAD COUNCILLOR:	COUNCILLOR A PAGE	PORTFOLIO:	STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENT, PLANNING AND TRANSPORT
SERVICE:	TRANSPORTATION AND STREETCARE	WARDS:	BOROUGH WIDE
LEAD OFFICER:	SAM SHEAN	TEL:	0118 937 2138
JOB TITLE:	STREETCARE SERVICES MANAGER	E-MAIL:	sam.shean@reading.gov.uk

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 To inform the Strategic Environment Planning and Transport Committee of the outputs delivered by the Winter Service Plan 2016/2017.
- 1.2 To inform the Strategic Environment Planning Committee of the Winter Service Plan 2017/2018.

2. RECOMMENDED ACTION

- 2.1 That the Strategic Environment Planning Committee note the outputs delivered by the Winter Service Plan 2016/2017.
- 2.2 That the Strategic Environment Planning Committee note and approve the Winter Service Plan 2017/2018.

3. POLICY CONTEXT

- 3.1 To provide a service to reduce, as far as possible, the effects of adverse weather on the public highway during the winter period.
- 3.2 To provide conditions that are as safe as reasonably practical having regards to financial constraints and our statutory duties.

3.3 To secure the most effective use of resources in the delivery of high quality, best value public service.

4. THE PROPOSAL

Review of Winter Service Plan 2016/2017 and Updated Winter Service Plan 2017/2018

4.1 This report outlines the review of the Winter Service Plan 2016/2017 and the changes incorporated within the Winter Service Plan 2017/2018, which the Council produce and agree on an annual basis through the Traffic Management Sub-Committee.

4.2 2016/2017 was the first winter season under the Winter Maintenance Service Term Contract 2016-2019 awarded to J H Cresswell and Sons Ltd.

4.3 The contract with Vaisala, for providing the weather forecasting service to the Berkshire Consortium, continues. The 2016/2017 winter season was the first year of a 2 year extension to the contract.

4.4 The joint arrangement/agreement with Wokingham Borough Council, through their Consultants, Balfour Beatty, for providing the decision making service, commenced in 2016/2017 winter season.

4.5 The 2016/2017 winter season proved to be relatively quiet overall with colder spells where temperatures dropped below freezing, requiring salting action. It was also a relatively dry winter season overall with no prolonged snow events to report.

4.6 In accordance with the '*Well Maintained Highways - Code of Practice (Appendix H)*', during the 2016/2017 winter season there was a tendency to take salting action in marginal temperature situations. This resulted in 52 primary route gritting decisions and 4 secondary route decisions.

4.7 The Winter Service Plan 2016/2017 provided a robust service for the duration of the winter period with minimal disruption to the primary and secondary road network.

4.8 There were no reported problems with the availability of salt or maintaining salt stock levels during the 2016/2017 winter season.

4.9 A review of the Winter Service Plan 2016/2017 has been undertaken. The main points are summarised below:

- A review of the existing 47 No. grit bins was carried out confirming their on-going requirement for the 2017/2018 winter season.

- One grit bin request for a new location was received during the 2016/2017 winter season. This request was for a grit bin on George Street (Reading Bridge) footway. An assessment has not been carried out as George Street (carriageway) is already designated a Primary Route and treated accordingly. The Council does not salt footways.
- The contractual salt stock held by the Council's contractor will be 750 Tonnes for the 2017/2018 winter service period, all of which is stored by the contractor at Aldermaston (under sheeting cover).
- The 750 Tonnes includes what remains of the 600 Tonnes of salt owned by Reading Borough Council which has been held in reserve for several winter seasons. Given its deteriorating quality, the Council is currently negotiating the sale of this salt to the Winter Maintenance Contractor, J H Cresswell and Sons Ltd.
- Confirmation has been obtained from Salt Union (the salt supplier) that there are adequate National salt stocks available to cope with a severe winter season.
- A further review of salt spread rates for the 2017/2018 winter season has been carried out following discussions with the Berkshire Consortium and a decision has been made to amend spread rates as follows: 8g/m² for standard salting treatment (increased from 7g/m²) and 11g/m² (decreased from 15g/m²) for prolonged cold weather events.
- Bus routes continue to be on primary or secondary salting routes. Two new bus routes for the 2017/18 winter season which have been added to the salting network are as follows:
 - Bus Route 42 - Kenavon Drive roundabout (added to secondary precautionary salting route).
 - MRT (remote) Bus Lane A33 - South Oak Way Roundabout (added to primary precautionary salting route).
- All cross-boundary primary and secondary salting routes correspond with neighbouring Authorities routes.
- When the Snow Plan is activated (during prolonged adverse weather events) footway snow ploughs continue to be available for use in the Town Centre and on primary pedestrian routes such as the Reading / Caversham Bridges and Christchurch Bridge.

4.10 Following the review of the 2016/2017 Winter Service Plan, Transport and Streetcare Services have produced the 2017/2018 Winter Service Plan.

- 4.11 The updated 2017/2018 Winter Service Plan and map showing the primary/secondary routes and grit bin locations is available as a background paper.
- 4.12 The salting of bridges, specifically pedestrian/footbridges, has been raised and discussed with the other Berkshire Consortium Authorities and none of the Berkshire Authorities pre-treats pedestrian/footbridges in isolation.

Some of the main logistical, operational as well as practical problems with salting footbridges were identified as follows:

- Treatment would need to be carried out on foot using a hand-pushed spreader with a nearby mobile salt stock.
- Working time directives preclude operational staff who work late nights from being available for work the following day.
- Unpredictable timing for when treatment is required. The Decision for primary and secondary precautionary salting is taken by Wokingham Borough Council consultants, Balfour Beatty. Weather forecasts are monitored and of course can change with minimal notice, perhaps as a result of a change in cloud cover, timing of rain, or a minimal temperature change all of which could have logistical and practical implications for the Council in arranging for Operative Staff to be available to hand treat at the required time. Conversely, it could also prove to be abortive, resulting in time wasting / inefficient use of resources.
- Consideration to material suitability for footbridge decks given that rock salt (used on the carriageway) would not be appropriate. Proprietary products such as urea pellets used on the block paved town centre core area (as defined in Appendix F of the Winter Service Plan 2017/2018), would be a costly option. 'Solution type' treatments, again, would be costly, require mixing tanks, appropriate storage facility for preparation and specialist spraying/application equipment.
- It should be noted that the town centre core area is only treated with urea on occasions when snow is predicted to lay for more than 24 hours to prevent snow and ice forming. In a 'typical winter season' this may number just a few occasions requiring such treatment.
- Christchurch Bridge could not be treated in isolation. Consideration would have to be given to treating all footbridges in the Borough so as to provide a consistent service and meet the public's expectations. Furthermore, consideration would need to be given to the treatment of the complete length of a designated 'pedestrian/cycle route', again, to meet public expectations and not just treating a bridge in isolation. All

of which would have considerable logistical, resource as well as financial implications for the Council.

5. CONTRIBUTION TO STRATEGIC AIMS

5.1 The Winter Service Plan 2017/2018 will contribute to the Council's Corporate Plan objectives of:

- Keeping the town clean, safe, green and active.
- Providing infrastructure to support the economy.
- Remaining financially sustainable to deliver these service priorities.

6. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND INFORMATION

6.1 A Winter Service Plan is produced and made available on the Reading Borough Council Website outlining the Council's decision making process. This is subject to review annually taking into account comments from the public, media, Government and Councillors.

6.2 Salting decision/action updates are available on social media via Twitter.

7. EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

7.1 In addition to the Human Rights Act 1998 the Council is required to comply with the Equalities Act 2010. Section 149 of the Equalities Act 2010 requires the Council to have due regard to the need to:-

- eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act;
- advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
- foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

7.2 The Winter Service Plan 2017/2018 includes minor updates/amendments as required in readiness for the coming winter season. There is no overall change to service delivery at this time. Should any future updates/amendments be required, which result in service delivery changes, an equality impact assessment will be carried out.

8. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

8.1 The Borough Council, as Highway Authority, has a duty under the Highways Act 1980 Section 41 (1A) to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, that safe passage along a highway is not endangered by snow or ice.

9. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

9.1 The cost of winter maintenance is fully funded from the Transport and Streetcare Revenue Budget.

10. BACKGROUND PAPERS

10.1 Winter Service Plan 2017/2018.

10.2 Winter Salting Routes 2017/2018.

10.3 Grit Bin Evaluation Sheet of current approved grit bin locations.

10.4 Winter Maintenance Service Term Contract 2016-2019 - Delegated Authority for Contract Award - Policy Committee 13th June 2016

10.5 Winter Service Plan 2016/2017 - Traffic Management Sub-Committee Report 3rd November 2016.

10.6 Well Maintained Highways - Code of Practice (Appendix H).