

## READING BOROUGH COUNCIL

### REPORT BY DIRECTOR OF ENVIRONMENT AND NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES

<b>TO:</b>	STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENT, PLANNING AND TRANSPORT COMMITTEE		
<b>DATE:</b>	16 <sup>th</sup> NOVEMBER 2021		
<b>TITLE:</b>	WINTER SERVICE PLAN 2021/2022		
<b>LEAD COUNCILLOR:</b>	COUNCILLOR PAGE	<b>PORTFOLIO:</b>	STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENT, PLANNING AND TRANSPORT
<b>SERVICE:</b>	ENVIRONMENTAL AND COMMERCIAL SERVICES	<b>WARDS:</b>	BOROUGH WIDE
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#### 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 2020/2021.
- 1.2 To inform the Strategic Environment, Planning and Transport Committee of the Winter Service Plan review carried out to ensure compliance with the Highways Act 1980 and 'Well-managed Highway Infrastructure: A Code of Practice'.
- 1.3 To inform and seek approval from the Strategic Environment, Planning and Transport Committee for the Winter Service Plan 2021/2022.
- 1.4 Appendix 1: Winter Service Plan 2021/2022  
Appendix 2: Financial Implications Report

#### 2. RECOMMENDED ACTION

- 2.1 That the Committee note the outputs delivered by the Winter Service Plan 2020/2021.
- 2.2 That the Committee note the outcome of the review carried out on the Winter Service Plan to ensure compliance with the Highways Act 1980 and the 'Well-managed Highway Infrastructure: A Code of Practice'.
- 2.3 That the Strategic Environment, Planning and Transport Committee note and approve the Winter Service Plan 2021/2022.

#### 3. POLICY CONTEXT

- 3.1 The aim of the Winter Service Plan is 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 make travel more secure, safe and comfortable for all users of the public highway and 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. Our Local Transport Plan outlines investments in walking and cycling initiatives, public transport, and electric vehicle infrastructure that will make it easier for residents to make healthy choices, and feel the benefits of clean, green neighbourhoods.

## **4. THE PROPOSAL**

### **4.1 Current Position:**

#### **Overview of Winter Service delivery during 2020/2021, review of Winter Service Plan 2020/2021 and updated Winter Service Plan 2021/2022**

- 4.1.1 This report outlines the review of the Winter Service Plan 2020/2021 and the changes incorporated within the Winter Service Plan 2021/2022, which the Council produce and agree on an annual basis.

#### **Overview of Winter Service delivery during 2020/2021**

- 4.1.2 The 2020/2021 winter season was relatively mild overall although interspersed with colder spells. However, there were numerous occasions when the temperature reached the trigger point for precautionary salting action, (below 1<sup>0</sup>C and predicted to go below freezing), resulting in 85 primary runs and 2 secondary runs. The cold spells were not severe nor prolonged enough for activation of the Snow Plan.

By comparison during 2019/2020 the primary precautionary salting routes were only treated on 46 occasions and on 57 occasions during the 2018/2019 winter season.

- 4.1.3 There were no issues with salt supply / delivery which enabled the contractor to maintain stock levels throughout the winter season.
- 4.1.4 There were no issues with the contractor replenishing the grit bins as and when required.
- 4.1.5 The winter decision making process to determine when to salt worked well during the last winter season. The Vaisala weather stations provided the correct data for informed decisions to be made.
- 4.1.6 The joint arrangement/agreement with Wokingham Borough Council, through their Consultants, Volker Highways, for providing the decision- making service, worked well and delivered against the set key performance indicators during the 2020/2021 winter season.
- 4.1.7 The Winter Service Plan 2020/2021 provided a robust service for the duration of the winter period with no disruption to the primary and secondary road network during the season.

### **4.2 Options Proposed:**

- 4.2.1 A review of the Winter Service Plan 2020/2021 has been undertaken. The main points, including updates for the Winter Service Plan 2021/2022, are summarised below:

- All 47 highway grit bins, which have scored highly using the Council's Grit Bin Risk Assessment Pro-forma, continue to be justified and form part of the Winter Service Plan 2021/2022.
- No new grit bin location requests were received for public highway roads.
- The Council negotiated a reduced rate for the supply of the grit bins with the Winter Maintenance Contractor 2019/2020 Financial Year. This saving remains in place for the 2021/2022 winter season.
- The contractual salt stock held by the Council's contractor will be 900 Tonnes throughout the 2021/2022 winter service period, all of which is stored by the contractor at their Aldermaston site, (under sheeting cover), as set out in Section 8 of the Winter Service Plan.
- Confirmation has been obtained from Compass Minerals (the salt supplier) that there are adequate National salt stocks available to cope with a severe winter season.
- Review has shown that the updated spread rates introduced in the 2018/19 winter season following the National Salt Supply Review continues to prove successful and will continue for the 2020/21 winter season.
- Bus routes continue to be on primary or secondary precautionary salting routes.
- There are no changes to the primary and secondary precautionary salting routes for the 2020/2021 winter season.
- All cross-boundary primary and secondary precautionary salting routes correspond with neighbouring authorities precautionary salting routes.
- When the Snow Plan is activated (during prolonged adverse weather events), footway/pavement 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 footbridge. The Snow Plan is available as a background paper.
- The Town Centre 'core area' footways will be treated with a propriety material when snow is predicted to lay for a prolonged period. Traditional grit/salt may also be used on these Town Centre footways, as an alternative when snow is predicted to lay for a prolonged period. The Town Centre footways are listed in Appendix E of the Winter Service Plan 2021/2022 and shown on a plan 'Town Centre Winter Maintenance - Treated Footway Areas' (Drawing Number RBC/WM/001A) which forms part of this Appendix and is available as a background paper.
- The Council's advice for cyclists using the Borough's public highway network during the winter season remains the same as for last winter season (Section 7 'Footways and Cycleways' (paragraph 7.5) in the Winter Service Plan 2021/2022 refers as follows:

*Cyclists can continue to cycle in winter but are advised to dress appropriately, use mudguards and lights, consider tyres (the wider the better) and commuting by bicycle can be comfortable and efficient. It is important to make a safety assessment particularly during periods of prolonged hazardous conditions, (refer to Council's Snow Plan). The Council does not precautionary grit / salt shared footways and remote cycleways when frost, ice or prolonged hazardous conditions are forecast, with the exception of shared carriageway / cycleway routes on the primary and secondary salting network. Being part of the carriageway, shared carriageway/cycleway routes on the primary and secondary precautionary salting route networks will be salted by default in accordance with the Winter Service Plan.*

*Should individuals make the decision to cycle during hazardous winter conditions the Council recommend that they take the necessary precautionary measures for the prevailing conditions.*

- 4.2.2 The updated Winter Service Plan 2021/2022 and map showing the primary/secondary precautionary salting routes and grit bin locations are available in Appendix 1 and on the Council's website.
- 4.2.3 The Berkshire Winter Service Consortium (includes the six Berkshire Unitary Local Authorities) agreed to jointly tender the 'winter forecasting' service and a new supplier will be appointed before the 2021/2022 winter season commences. West Berkshire Council will continue to be the lead Local Authority for the administration of this contract on behalf of the Berkshire Winter Service Consortium.
- 4.2.4 Risk assessments and method statements have been updated and agreed with the Council's gritting contractor J. H. Cresswell and Sons Ltd to take account of the Covid-19 pandemic and will be actively updated as Government advice is made available.
- 4.2.5 A review of the proposed 'Active Travel Plan' schemes has shown that they are primarily situated on the existing 'primary/secondary' precautionary salting routes. Any future Active Travel Plan schemes brought forward will be evaluated to determine whether they should be added to the precautionary salting route.
- 4.2.6 A review of the National Covid-19 Temporary Testing Stations/Sites has been carried out and they are primarily situated on or adjacent to the existing primary/secondary precautionary salting routes. The access to other new sites will be included within the primary precautionary salting route on a needs basis when any station/site is operational.

### 4.3 Other Options Considered

- 4.3.1 The Highways Team have explored options to join an existing framework contract with nearby Local Authorities to deliver the Winter Maintenance Service within the Borough, however, the framework access fee and high delivery costs are in excess of what we currently have secured with term gritting contractor J. H. Cresswell & Sons Ltd.

## 5. CONTRIBUTION TO STRATEGIC AIMS

- 5.1 Reading Borough Council's vision is:

To help Reading realise its potential - and to ensure that everyone who lives and works here can share the benefits of its success.

- 5.2 The Winter Service Plan 2021/2022 will contribute to the Council's Corporate Plan 2021/2022 objectives of:

- **Healthy environment** - Keeping the town clean, safe, green and active
- **Inclusive economy** - Enabling the infrastructure to continue to support the economy
- **Thriving Communities** - Remaining financially sustainable and to ensure everyone has an equal chance to use the public highway

- 5.3 TEAM Reading values:

**Together** - Collaborative working approach between the Council, consultant, contractors and the public

**Efficiency** - Continue to explore efficiency savings within the contract

**Ambitious** - Investing into the public highway

**Make a Difference** - Providing a safe inclusive public highway for all users

## **6. ENVIRONMENTAL AND CLIMATE IMPLICATIONS**

- 6.1 The Council declared a climate emergency at its meeting in February 2019 and as such recognises the need to minimise the climate impacts of its decisions. To this end, Council on 15th October 2019 formally adopted the 'Unite Construction Charter' where the Authority supports the 'Get Britain Building' campaign, which is aimed at supporting and sustaining the British construction industry. All relevant construction contracts will be required to comply with the Authority's Sustainable Buying Standard for Highways and Construction Materials, which requires structural steel and other relevant materials to be covered by BES 6001 Responsible Sourcing of Construction Product certification, or equivalent.
- 6.2 Tenders for any subsequent contracts that are necessary will be invited to submit Environmental Implications proposals.
- 6.3 Tenders will need to include carbon reduction targets and improved sustainability within tender returns. The intent is to reduce the amount of carbon used to produce the materials at source, using recycled materials and reducing the uncontrolled waste in the environment to reduce pollution of the natural environment.
- 6.4 The Reading Climate Emergency Strategy, which was endorsed by the Council in November 2020, highlights the importance of adapting to climate impacts as well as reducing the emissions which are driving climate change.

## **7. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND INFORMATION**

- 7.1 Section 138 of the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 places a duty on local authorities to involve local representatives when carrying out "any of its functions" by providing information, consulting or "involving in another way".
- 7.2 The public can report and request new grit bins which are assessed and included in the annual review of the Winter Service Plan and brought to Strategic Environment Planning & Transport Committee for consideration and approval should they meet the assessment criteria.
- 7.3 The public and national bus operators can also request additional precautionary salting routes to be added and they will be assessed and included in the annual review of the Winter Service Plan and brought to Strategic Environment Planning & Transport Committee for consideration and approval should they meet the assessment criteria.
- 7.4 The Winter Service Plan 2021/2022 will be available on the Council's website following Strategic Environment Planning & Transport Committee approval processes.

## **8. EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

- 8.1 Under the Equality Act 2010, Section 149, a public authority must, in the exercise of its functions, 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.

8.2 The proposed Winter Service Plan 2021/2022 consists of precautionary salting the Council's existing public highway network. There is no overall change to service delivery at this time and all users will have a safe public highway. Should any future updates/amendments be required, which result in service delivery changes, an equality impact assessment will be carried out.

## **9. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

9.1 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.

## **10. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

10.1 The proposed Winter Service Plan 2021/2022 will be fully funded by the following:

- The cost of the winter maintenance service is fully funded from the existing Environmental & Commercial Services Streetcare Revenue Budget
- Revenue budget and risk assessment, refer to Appendix 2

## **11. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

11.1 Winter Service Plan 2021/2022.

11.2 Winter Salting Routes 2021/2022.

11.3 Town Centre Winter Maintenance - Treated Footway Areas.

11.4 Grit Bin Evaluation Sheet of current 47 No. approved grit bin locations.

11.5 Snow Plan.

11.6 Winter Service Plan 2020/2021 - Strategic Environment Planning and Transport Committee Report - 18<sup>th</sup> November 2020