



Title	WINTER SERVICE PLAN 2023/2024
Purpose of the report	To make a decision
Report status	Public report
Report author (name & job title)	Sam Shean, Highways & Traffic Services Manager
Lead Councillor (name & title)	Councillor Karen Rowland, Lead Councillor for Environmental Services & Community Safety
Corporate priority	Healthy Environment
Recommendations	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. That the Committee note the outputs delivered by the Winter Service Plan 2022/2023.2. That the Committee note the Winter Service Plan review carried out to ensure compliance with the Highways Act 1980 and 'Well-managed Highway Infrastructure: A Code of Practice'.3. That the Committee note and approve the Winter Service Plan 2023/2024.

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 To inform the Housing, Neighbourhoods and Leisure Committee of the outputs delivered by the Winter Service Plan 2022/2023.
- 1.2 To inform the Housing Neighbourhoods and Leisure 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 the Housing Neighbourhoods and Leisure Committee and to approve the Winter Service Plan 2023/2024.

2. Policy Context

- 2.1 The Council approved Shaping Reading's Future – our 3-Year Corporate Plan 2021/2022 to 2023/2024. The Plan reflects the Council's priorities for Reading and provides direction for staff in delivering services to meet the needs of communities within the Borough whilst working to a budget and Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) and updated to include the current Year-3 priorities.
- 2.2 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.
- 2.3 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.
- 2.4 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.

3. The Proposal

Background

- 3.1 The Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy is informed by and supports delivery of the Council's Corporate Plan priorities including its commitment to address the climate change emergency and seeks to ensure that the Council is "fit for the future", with sound finances that allow the Council's future funding challenges and spending pressures to be met in as sustainable a way as possible.
- 3.2 The underpinning rationale of the Medium-Term Financial Strategy is to deliver a balanced and affordable budget that ensures the Council's finances are sustainable in both the short (one year) and medium term (three years). The Strategy is also informed by the Council's Vision: "to ensure that Reading realises its potential – and that everyone who lives and works in Reading can share in the benefits of its success", as well as its Corporate Plan priorities:
- Securing the economic success of Reading.
 - Improving access to decent housing to meet local needs.
 - Protecting and enhancing the life outcomes of vulnerable adults and children

Current Position:

Overview of Winter Service delivery during 2022/2023, review of Winter Service Plan 2022/2023 and updated Winter Service Plan 2023/2024

- 3.3 This report outlines the review of the Winter Service Plan 2022/2023 and the changes incorporated within the Winter Service Plan 2023/2024, which the Council produce and agree on an annual basis.

Overview of Winter Service delivery during 2022/2023

- 3.4 The 2022/2023 winter season was relatively mild overall although interspersed with colder spells including one brief snow event. However, there were numerous occasions when the temperature reached the trigger point for precautionary salting action, (below 1°C and predicted to go below freezing), resulting in 51 primary runs and 5 secondary runs. The colder spells, including the single snow event, were not severe nor prolonged enough for activation of the Snow Plan.
- 3.5 There were no issues with salt supply / delivery which enabled the contractor to maintain stock levels throughout the winter season.
- 3.6 There were no issues with the contractor replenishing the grit bins as and when required.
- 3.7 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.
- 3.8 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 2022/2023 winter season.
- 3.9 The Winter Service Plan 2022/2023 provided a robust service for the duration of the winter period with no disruption to the primary and secondary road network during the season, except for some inevitable disruption during the snow event.

Options Proposed:

- 3.10 A review of the Winter Service Plan 2022/2023 has been undertaken. The main points, including updates for the Winter Service Plan 2023/2024, are summarised below:
- The existing 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 2023/2024.
 - New grit bin requests received for public highway roads have been assessed using the Council's 'Winter Service Assessment Pro-forma' but have not scored high enough to qualify.
 - A review of Christchurch Footbridge has been carried out and taking into account its priority use by cyclists and pedestrians, as well as the construction make up, it has qualified for a new grit bin at a suitable location on the south side of the bridge for use by the public.
 - The contractual salt stock held by the Council's contractor will be 900 Tonnes throughout the 2023/2024 winter service period up to the 31st March when it will reduce to 600 Tonnes. All of the salt stock 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 2018/2019 winter season following the National Salt Supply Review continues to prove successful and will continue for the 2023/2024 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 2023/2024 winter season. However, the new Active Travel Cycle Lane on Shinfield Road will receive precautionary salting with an additional 'pass' by the gritting vehicle whilst Shinfield Road receives its primary precautionary salting run. The same will apply when Bath Road Active Travel Plan is implemented.
 - 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 2023/2024 and shown on a plan 'Town Centre Winter Maintenance - Treated Footway Areas' (Drawing Number RBC/WM/001A) which forms part of this Appendix.
 - 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 2023/2024 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, (this includes the Shinfield Road Active Cycle Lane). 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.

- 3.11 The updated Winter Service Plan 2023/2024 and map showing the primary/secondary precautionary salting routes and grit bin locations are available in Appendix 1 and on the Council's website.
- 3.12 The Berkshire Winter Service Consortium (includes the six Berkshire Unitary Local Authorities) agreed to jointly tender the 'winter forecasting' service and the supplier was appointed before the 2021/2022 winter season commenced. West Berkshire Council continues to be the lead Local Authority for the administration of this contract on behalf of the Berkshire Winter Service Consortium.
- 3.13 Risk assessments and method statements will be updated and agreed by the Council's Winter Maintenance Contractor, J.H. Cresswell and Sons Ltd. To take account of the lessons learnt from the Covid-19 Pandemic and the ongoing associated risks. The situation will be actively monitored, and any further Government advice will be acted upon.
- 3.14 A Berkshire wide road sensor temperature data collection trial is being deployed during the 2023/2024 winter season and is being funded by the Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP). This will improve road temperature data collection which will enable better decision making, leading to reduced number of precautionary salting runs and provide further opportunities to only treat those colder areas during certain circumstances, thereby further reducing the overall precautionary salting runs required, reducing vehicles and salt/grit use and less waste that ultimately will lead to lower carbon emissions and efficiency savings in future winter seasons.

Other Options Considered

- 3.15 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 our term gritting contractor J. H. Cresswell & Sons Ltd.

4. Contribution to Strategic Aims

- 4.1 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.

- 4.2 The Winter Service Plan 2023/2024 will contribute to the Council's Corporate Plan 2022 – 2025 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.

- 4.3 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 & traffic assets.

Make a Difference – Providing a safe inclusive public highway network for all users.

5. Environmental and Climate Implications

- 5.1 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. A climate impact assessment of this decision has been conducted which suggests a 'net low negative' impact. Highway maintenance, including road gritting/salting, is an energy intensive activity and some carbon emissions from the process are inevitable, but a number of steps are being taken to mitigate these impacts as far as possible as set out below.
- 5.2 The Berkshire Wide Road Sensor Temperature collection trial will improve local road temperature data to provide better decision making. This will lead to reduced number of gritting runs and provide further opportunities to only grit / treat those colder areas during certain circumstances, thereby further reducing the overall number of precautionary gritting runs, reducing the amount of grit / road salt use, reduced vehicle use and reduce waste that will ultimately lead to lower carbon emissions and efficiency savings.
- 5.3 The Tender for the Winter Service Term Contract 2022-2027 provision invited tenderers to submit Environmental Implications proposals. which formed part of the quality element of the tender evaluation. A social value quality submission was also submitted with tenders and evaluation carried out.
- 5.4 Tenders also included carbon reduction targets and improved sustainability. The intent was to reduce the amount of carbon used to produce the materials at source, using recycled materials, reducing the uncontrolled waste in the environment to reduce pollution of the natural environment, use of electric vehicles and plant, sourcing green energy alternatives, carbon off-setting, as well as how they will achieve their own carbon reduction targets.
- 5.5 A Climate Impact Assessment has been conducted, which considers a net 'low-positive' impact as a result of the Winter Service Term Contract 2022-2027. There will be a decrease in the amount of carbon compared with the previous Winter Service Term Contract 2016-2022.
- 5.6 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.

6. Community Engagement

- 6.1 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".
- 6.2 The public and national bus operators can report accumulations of snow and ice on the public highway and strategic network and all requests for additional grit bins and roads to consider for gritting will be brought to Committee for consideration and approval should they meet the assessment criteria.

6.3 This report and the Winter Service Plan 2023/2024 will be available on the Council's website following Housing, Neighbourhoods & Leisure Committee approval processes.

7. Equality Implications

7.1 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.

7.2 The Winter Service Plan 2023/2024 will result in improving access for all users of the public highway. There is no overall reduction to service delivery at this time only how those service requirements are met. Should any future updates/amendments be required, which result in service delivery changes, an equality impact assessment will be carried out.

8. Other Relevant Considerations

8.1 Procedural requirements – There are no current departures from established procedures planned at this time.

8.2 Risk management implications – All risk management requirements will be met as part of the Winter Service Plan 2023/2024 and Highway Winter Maintenance Contract 2022/23 – 2027/28.

8.3 Health and Safety risk assessments – All included within the Winter Service Plan 2023/2024 and Highway Winter Maintenance Contract 2022/23 – 2027/28.

8.4 Transparency of information and freedom of information implications – Applies.

8.5 Effects on the Armed Forces Community (Armed Forces Act 2021) – Included within the Social Value requirements of the Winter Service.

8.6 Privacy Impact Assessment – Not Applicable

8.7 Impact on Human Rights Act duties – included within the Social Value requirements of the Winter Service.

9. Legal Implications

9.1 The Borough Council, as Highway Authority, has a duty under the Highways Act 1980 Section 41 (Clause 1A) and Section 150 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 Winter Service Plan 2023/2024 will be fully funded by the Council's existing Highways & Traffic Services Revenue Budget.

10.2 Revenue Budget and risk assessment, refer to Appendix 2.

11. Timetable for Implementation

11.1 The Winter Service Plan 2023/2024 will come into operation on the 1st October 2023 and continue throughout the winter season until 31st March 2024, and will be extended as necessary.

12. Background Papers

12.1 There are none.

13. Appendices

13.1 Appendix 1: Winter Service Plan 2023/2024

13.2 Appendix 2: Financial Implications

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Appendix 2

The financial implications arising from the proposals set out in this report are set out below:-

1. Revenue Implications

Use this Table in the report or as an Appendix to set out the revenue implications:

	2023/24 £000	2024/25 £000	2025/26 £000
Employee costs (see note1) Other running costs Capital financings costs	410	418	426.5
Expenditure	410	418	426.5
Income from: Fees and charges (see note2) Grant funding (specify) Other income	0	0	0
Total Income	0	0	0
Net Cost(+)/saving (-)	410	418	426.5

The net cost of the proposal can be funded from (specify service and approved cost centre budget).

Note 1: Specifying any one-off early retirement and redundancy costs. **N/A**

Note 2: In a separate table/appendix set out detailed fees and charges proposals and sensitivity analysis. **N/A**

2. Capital Implications

Capital Programme reference from budget book: page line	2023/24 £000	2024/25 £000	2025/26 £000
Proposed Capital Expenditure	0	0	0
Funded by Grant (specify) Section 106 (specify) Other services Capital Receipts/Borrowing	0	0	0
Total Funding	0	0	0

Note: where more than one option /proposal is being made it may be easier to set out the above information in an Appendix. **N/A**

3. Value for Money (VFM)

Given the continuing need to demonstrate VFM please include evidence that the proposal offers VFM (e.g., benchmarking data): **Term Contract awarded October 2022 for 3-years with an**

option to extend for a further 3 years subject to contract compliance and meeting the KPI criteria.

4. Risk Assessment.

Include relevant comments around any key financial risks associated with the proposal(s): **Risk Assessments and Snow Plan included in the Winter Service Plan 2023/2024.**