

## READING BOROUGH COUNCIL

### REPORT BY DIRECTOR OF ENVIRONMENT AND NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES

<b>TO:</b>	<b>STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENT PLANNING AND TRANSPORT COMMITTEE</b>		
<b>DATE:</b>	<b>21 NOVEMBER 2018</b>	<b>AGENDA ITEM:</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>TITLE:</b>	<b>WINTER SERVICE PLAN 2018/2019</b>		
<b>LEAD COUNCILLOR:</b>	<b>COUNCILLOR A PAGE</b>	<b>PORTFOLIO:</b>	<b>STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENT, PLANNING AND TRANSPORT</b>
<b>SERVICE:</b>	<b>TRANSPORTATION AND STREETCARE</b>	<b>WARDS:</b>	<b>BOROUGH WIDE</b>
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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 2017/2018.
- 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 2018/2019.

#### 2. RECOMMENDED ACTION

- 2.1 That the Strategic Environment Planning and Transport Committee note the outputs delivered by the Winter Service Plan 2017/2018.
- 2.2 That the Strategic Environment Planning and Transport 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 2018/2019.

### 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 2017/2018 and Updated Winter Service Plan 2018/2019**

- 4.1 This report outlines the review of the Winter Service Plan 2017/2018 and the changes incorporated within the Winter Service Plan 2018/2019, which the Council produce and agree on an annual basis through the Committee process.
- 4.2 The 2017/2018 winter season proved to be cold overall with two severe and prolonged snow events; the latter one in March was referred to as the '*Beast from the East*'.
- 4.3 The contract with Vaisala, for providing the weather forecasting service to the Berkshire Consortium was extended in 2015/16 for two years and therefore the 2017/2018 winter season was the second year of the extension.

The Berkshire Consortium have agreed to extend the contract with Vaisala for a further two year period. The 2018/2019 winter season will be the first year of this further extended period.

- 4.4 The joint arrangement/agreement with Wokingham Borough Council, through their Consultants, Balfour Beatty, for providing the Decision Making Service, (the decision on whether to grit or not, based on the prevailing conditions and forecast information), continued in 2017/2018 and overall provided a good service. Balfour Beatty will continue to provide the decision making service for 2018/2019.

*Note: The official/formal winter decision making service, currently provided by Balfour Beatty, operates from 1<sup>st</sup> November 2018 until 31<sup>st</sup> March 2019. An informal agreement/service has been provided by Balfour Beatty to Reading Borough Council for the 2018/2019 winter season, since 1<sup>st</sup> October 2018.*

*Balfour Beatty's current contract with Wokingham Borough Council ends March 2019. Wokingham Borough Council will confirm arrangements in place for providing an informal winter decision making service in April 2019, should this be required.*

- 4.5 During the severe and prolonged snow events, particularly the one in March 2018, the 'Duty Officer resource' was, at times, stretched. This was attributed to the fact that there were only two Balfour Beatty staff covering the rota for the winter season on an alternate weekly basis, which proved demanding.

At the 'Winter Maintenance Review/Pre-Season Meeting' in September 2018, the Duty Officer Rota was discussed with Wokingham Borough Council and Balfour Beatty. Balfour Beatty agreed that a reserve/standby Duty Officer would also be added to the rota for the 2018/2019 winter season to assist/support during any prolonged severe weather events.

- 4.6 The Winter Service Plan 2017/2018 provided a robust service for the duration of the winter period with minimal disruption to the primary and secondary road network during the 'normal' winter weather. Inevitably there was some unavoidable disruption to the road network during the two snow events, but the Winter Maintenance Contractor coped well considering the severity of the weather at the time.

- 4.7 The availability of salt for the Council's Winter Maintenance Contractor to maintain salt stock levels during the 2017/2018 winter season was achieved for the majority of the winter period, except towards the end of March 2018, at the time of the '*Beast from the East*', when there was some pressure on salt delivery. This ultimately did not affect the delivery of the winter service in Reading.

- 4.8 A review of the Winter Service Plan 2017/2018 has been undertaken. The main points, including updates for the Winter Service Plan 2018/2019, are summarised below:

- It had been proposed to remove all Council grit bins from the public highway network as part of a package of budget savings for 2018/2019. This budget saving was identified some time ago, prior to the implementation of the 'Well-managed Highway Infrastructure: A Code of Practice' in October 2018. The emphasis is now on a 'risk based approach' for the delivery of a winter maintenance service. Looking again at the grit bin saving offered up and after assessing the 'risk' to the Council in removing all 47 grit bins, Officers considered that the risk in removing them was not acceptable under the new Code of Practice. Over the years the number of grit bins for use on the public highway network in the Borough has reduced considerably, down to 47 which have all scored highly using the Council's 'Grit Bin Risk Assessment Proforma'.
- The Council has also negotiated a reduced rate for the supply of the grit bins with the Winter Maintenance Contractor as part of the mitigation of the required savings.

- The contractual salt stock held by the Council's contractor will continue to be 750 Tonnes throughout the 2018/2019 winter service period, all of which is stored by the contractor at their Aldermaston site, (under sheeting cover).
- Agreement was reached with the Winter Service Contractor to purchase the 600 Tonnes of salt owned by Reading Borough Council, which had been held in reserve for several winter seasons and was of deteriorating quality. The majority was mixed with new / fresh salt and used during the 2017/18 winter season. The Winter Service Contractor will use the remaining stock by the end of the 2018/2019 winter season.
- 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 at the pre-season meeting with Wokingham Borough Council and Balfour Beatty. It has been agreed that both Borough Councils will continue to use a spread rate of 8g/m<sup>2</sup> when appropriate/conditions dictate, (standard winter conditions). It was agreed that Reading Borough Council will increase the spread rates from 11g/m<sup>2</sup> to 15g/m<sup>2</sup>, when conditions dictate, (during prolonged colder conditions), given that the salt is stored outside covered under sheeting. Wokingham Borough Council will increase their spread rate from 11g/m<sup>2</sup> to 16g/m<sup>2</sup> during these conditions given that their salt is stored outside but uncovered (not sheeted). This was to ensure that both Councils can guarantee the required minimum spread rates.
- Bus routes continue to be on primary or secondary salting routes. Reading Buses have confirmed two bus route changes:
  - *Marchwood Avenue/Phillimore Road/Tower Close* - No longer a bus route. Action: Removed from Secondary Precautionary Salting Route.
  - *New Lane Hill/Hogarth Avenue* - No longer a bus route. Action: Remains on Secondary Precautionary Salting Route as this route is a link road with gradient between The Meadway and Bath Road.
- Island Road has been added to the Secondary Precautionary Salting route for access to RE3 Waste/ Reclamation Site.
- There are no changes to the Primary Precautionary Salting Route for the 2018/2019 winter season.
- 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.
- The Town Centre ‘core area’ footways have been treated with ‘urea pellets’ for some years, when snow is predicted to lay for a prolonged period. However, there is now some difficulty in sourcing this product or anything similar. It was further noted that this product had been limited in its effectiveness during the severe/prolonged snow events and, as a result, was supplemented with traditional grit/salt to help treat the Town Centre footways, which proved to be more effective. Traditional grit/salt will therefore continue to be used on The Town Centre footways, when snow is predicted to lay for a prolonged period, until such time that perhaps a suitable alternative proprietary product can be sourced. The Town Centre footways are listed in Appendix E of the 2018/2019 Winter Service Plan and shown on a plan ‘Town Centre Winter Maintenance - Treated Footway Areas 2018/2019’ (Drawing Number RBC/WM/001) which forms part of this Appendix.
- The Council’s advice for cyclists using the Borough’s public highway network during the winter season has been reviewed, including the Council’s Network Management Team and the wording updated accordingly. Section 7 ‘Footways and Cycleways’ (paragraph 7.5) in the 2018/2019 Winter Service Plan refers:

*‘You can continue to cycle in winter but dress appropriately, use mudguards and lights, consider your tyres (the wider the better) and commuting by bike can be comfortable and efficient. It is important that you make your own 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’.*

- 4.9 Following the review of the 2017/2018 Winter Service Plan, Transport and Streetcare Services have produced the 2018/2019 Winter Service Plan.
- 4.10 The updated 2018/2019 Winter Service Plan and map showing the primary/secondary routes and grit bin locations is available as a background paper.

- 4.11 The plan showing the Town Centre footways to be treated, when snow is predicted to lay for a prolonged period, is available as a background paper (Drawing No. RBC/WM/001 refers).

## **5. CONTRIBUTION TO STRATEGIC AIMS**

- 5.1 The Winter Service Plan 2018/2019 will contribute to the Council's Corporate Plan 2018-21 objectives of:

- Securing the economic success of Reading
- Keeping Reading's environment clean, green and safe
- Ensuring the Council is fit for the future

## **6. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND INFORMATION**

- 6.1 The Winter Service Plan 2018/2019, (including the Winter Salting Routes 2018/2019 map and the Town Centre Winter Maintenance - Treated Footway Areas 2018/2019 map), 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 2018/2019 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 2018/2019.
- 10.2 Winter Salting Routes 2018/2019.
- 10.3 Town Centre Winter Maintenance - Treated Footway Areas 2018/2019.
- 10.4 Grit Bin Evaluation Sheet of current 47 No. approved grit bin locations.
- 10.5 Press Release regarding retention of 47 No. approved grit bins - 15<sup>th</sup> October 2018.
- 10.6 Winter Service Plan 2017/2018 - Strategic Environment Planning and Transport Committee - 22<sup>nd</sup> November 2017