

Brighton & Hove City Council

Environment, Transport & Sustainability Committee

Agenda Item 25

Subject: Highway Winter Service Policy

Date of meeting: 20th September 2022

Report of: Executive Director, Economy, Environment & Culture

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Ward(s) affected: All

For general release

1. Purpose of the report and policy context

1.1 This report seeks approval to adopt the new Highway Winter Service Policy. The policy in Appendix 1 sets out the council's approach to delivering the winter service specifically relating to public roads and footways. The service needs to meet the council statutory obligations contained within the 1980 Highways Act.

2. Recommendations

2.1 That Committee agrees to adopt the Highway Winter Service Policy as detailed in Appendix 1 of this report.

3. Context and background information

3.1 Brighton & Hove City Council will endeavour to provide a Highway Winter Service that ensures where reasonably practicable that safe passage on all its main roads, bus routes within the city, access to emergency service operational centres and footways and cycleways is not endangered by snow or ice. In normal winter conditions, this is achieved by pre-salting the road network to prevent ice or frost forming.

3.2 In snow conditions, it may be unachievable to spread sufficient salt to melt more than a very thin layer of snow and/or ice. Under such circumstances, the aim is to recover the network as soon as reasonably practicable. Footway and cycleway clearance will also be carried out during cold weather events.

3.3 To enable Brighton and Hove City Council to respond quickly and efficiently we are proposing to adopt this Policy and the associated standards for each of the winter service duties. The operational processes and more detailed standards are provided in a Highway Winter Service Plan, which complements this Policy Statement. Brighton & Hove City Council provide a Highway Winter Service which, as far as reasonably practicable will:

- Minimise the risk of loss of life and injury to highway users, including pedestrians, and prevent damage to vehicles and other property
- Keep the highway free from obstruction, thereby avoiding unnecessary delay to journeys

The winter maintenance period runs from 1st November to 31st March. The period may be extended by the Head of Traffic Management in cases of severe cold weather continuing into April or starting earlier in October.

4. Analysis and consideration of alternative options

4.1 Brighton & Hove City Council's Highway Winter Service policy follows the recommendations issued by the UK Road Liaison Group (UKRLG) and takes into account the recommendations contained in "Well Managed Highways Infrastructure" and National Winter Service Research Group guidance.

4.2 Winter weather conditions which are managed are:

- Snow – fairly rare, but it does cause great difficulties due to its infrequency, partial melts/refreezes, the topography of the city and the resources needed for clearance.
- Ice – occurs when conditions are freezing and wet.
- Hoar Frost – is formed from white ice crystals. We only deal with this when it forms on roads making them slippery. This should not be confused with low-level frost, such as the white frost that appears on car roofs or vegetation in the mornings.
- Freezing rain – is rain which freezes as soon as it hits the road surface. This is a rare occurrence but difficult to treat because of the timings between rain washing off the treatment and the roads freezing. It also creates very hazardous conditions which may not be easily visible e.g., black ice.

Extreme or severe winter conditions are defined as an event where the snow is over 50mm (2 inches) and is predicted to remain on the ground for longer than 36 hours.

4.3 The service carries out treatments on designated roads in advance of or during/after ice/snow. In extreme conditions it also carries out pavement treatment on designated public thoroughfares. Grit bins and grit drops are provided for local self-help.

The treatments are:

- Precautionary Salting - The application of salt to carriageways on routes usually in advance of frosty and icy conditions (often referred to as spreading, gritting or pre-salting).
- Post-treatment – ploughing, the application of salt, a salt/grit mix or grit (sharp sand) to carriageways following snow and depending on the depth and severity of the snowfall. Also refers to carrying out hand or machine clearance of pavements following snow.

4.4 Roads within the precautionary salting routes include:

- all of the following network classes
 - all A class roads
 - main distributors
 - secondary distributors
- links to hospitals, transport interchanges, emergency service stations and identified critical infrastructure
- links to schools
- primary bus routes with a substantial frequency have been prioritised based on their climatic location, that is, roads located within an area of Brighton & Hove that is susceptible to low temperatures and extreme winter weather throughout the winter season. Brighton and Hove naturally divides itself into two domains. Hilltops, which are at higher elevation and generally further from the climatic buffer provided by the sea, and remaining areas.

The policy is not to treat any of the footway network unless in extreme conditions and then only when resources are available. The aim is to use the resources available as effectively as possible and bring the greatest benefit to the most utilised roads in the network section 4.6 refers.

4.5 Routes

There are three levels of routes which the Council will treat depending on the severity of the weather conditions and the variables which can affect it. They are listed below in order of increasing severity according to climatic zones and weather conditions:

Level	Title	Treatment	Description
Level 1	Hilltop Routes	Pre-salt	Routes located in the highest areas of Brighton & Hove where frost is more likely to form in marginal conditions and where snow is likely to settle.
Level 2	Full Routes (Combined Hilltop and Low Routes)	Pre-salt	Routes located in the highest areas of Brighton & Hove where frost is more likely to form in marginal conditions and where snow is likely to settle, combined with routes in the lower areas of Brighton & Hove where frost is likely to form in extreme conditions and where snow is less likely to settle
Level 3	Priority/ Snow clearing Routes	Continuous salting and/or snow clearance (ploughing)	These are limited variations of the Full Routes. They are used when sustained snow or ice conditions are causing severe disruption and core routes need to be kept clear of snow and ice to

minimise severe disruption to strategic routes in the city.

Strategic routes are roads around the main hospitals and the main arterial routes. These routes may also be used if for any reason there is a reduction in the usual available resources, such as personnel, vehicles, or materials

Sustained snow and ice conditions prevail when snow is over 100mm (4 inches) and predicted to fall continuously or frequently within 24 hours or to remain for longer than 24 hours.

4.6 Footways and Cycleways

Footways

Brighton and Hove's primary objective during periods of severe winter weather is to ensure that main roads and important routes are safe for motorists to use. This being the case there are no precautionary treatments of footways. When resources become available footway treatment and snow clearance will be carried out on a priority basis as shown below:

Footway Categories

Category Description

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|---|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1 | Town centre pedestrian zones and shopping areas with high pedestrian flows |
| 2 | High volume pedestrian routes to/from train stations, bus stations (highway footways only) and schools |
| 3 | Near hospitals, doctors' surgeries, and schools |

Cycleways

As with footways there are no precautionary treatments in advance of severe weather. When resources become available cycleway treatment and snow clearance will be carried out on a priority basis as shown below:

Cycleway Categories

Category	Type	Description
1A	Cycle track	A highway route for cyclists not contiguous with the public footway or carriageway
2B	Shared	Either segregated by a white line or other physical cycle/pedestrian path segregation, or un-segregated footway

3C	Cycle lane	Forming part of the carriageway, commonly a strip next to the nearside kerb
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4.7 Equipment and materials

Brighton & Hove City Council have a fleet of winter service vehicles it uses to treat its network. Following a review in 2021/22, the fleet has recently been updated to include in-cab technology. This enable drivers to better manage grit application and guide them using current technology. Given the age of this fleet, as part of the council's continuous improvement to its services, a further review of the fleet is planned in 2026, so as to provide improved resilience and reduce its carbon impact by utilising green fuel alternatives.

The current equipment comprises:

- 7 gritters
- 7 ploughs for use with the gritters
- 1 machine pavement gritter
- Access to 3 tractors in severe weather conditions
- Use of 3 JCB's in severe weather conditions

The salt is currently stored at Hollingdean Depot along with the gritters. This storage is under review as the salt is stored in the open which leads to a high-water content, reducing the impact of the salt on the city's roads. A business case is being developed to provide covered storage.

4.8 Salt Bins

Brighton & Hove provide 420 Salt/Grit bins located across its Highway Network with some additional bins provided for important council or NHS community facilities. They have been situated at sites not normally near a gritting route with the coldest areas of the city particularly on steep hills being the priority.

The Salt/Grit bins are filled with a 50/50 mixture of 6.3mm Rock Salt and Sharp Sand and are replenished in October each year. As a guide the criteria for the provision of a salt/grit bin for strategic reasons is as follows:

- At junctions away from main (treated) roads with a gradient in excess of 1 in 10 (10%)
- On hills with gradients in excess of 15% (non-gritted roads), where vehicle flows are more than 200 vehicles a day
- On hills at locations with gradients in excess of 20% (1 in 5) whatever the vehicle flow and is not salted

In addition, there are a number of community grit bins. In comparison with other local authorities of a similar size the city has a high number of bins

deployed. A further expansion of salt bins is not possible within the existing resources. Grit Bins will be monitored and any not being used will be removed.

4.7 Budget

The service is revenue funded and fluctuates depending on weather conditions.

5. Community engagement and consultation

5.1 Consultation is not required as this is a statutory service

6. Conclusion

6.1 The council has a statutory duty under the Highways Act to provide a Highways Winter Service and the policy in Appendix 1 sets out the approach that the council takes in meeting this duty. The council has to have a formal policy so that it can defend any possible claims that may arise.

7. Financial implications

7.1 The budget for winter maintenance is reviewed annually and is managed by the Highways service. In 2022-23, the budget is £333,000

Name of finance officer consulted: Jill Scarfield Date consulted (25/08/2022):

8. Legal implications

8.1 Highway authorities have a statutory duty to maintain highways maintainable at the public expense. This duty is found in section 41 of the Highways Act 1980.

8.2 Section 41.(1A) of the Act contains a specific duty as regards snow and ice, stating that a highway authority is “under a duty to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, that safe passage along a highway is not endangered by snow or ice”. The Highways Winter Service Policy, the subject of the report, will assist the Council in complying with that duty.

Name of lawyer consulted: Hilary Woodward Date consulted 24/08/2022

9. Equalities implications

9.1 Keeping the roads clear will enable all users access to move around the city during the winter period.

10. Sustainability implications

10.1 None

Supporting Documentation

1. Appendices

1. Highway Winter Service Policy

