

Subject:	Highways Winter Service Plan 2011-12		
Date of Meeting:	4 October 2011		
Report of:	Strategic Director, Place		
Contact Officer:	Name:	Christina Liassides	Tel: 29-2036
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Key Decision:	Yes	Forward Plan No: ETSCMM23991	
Ward(s) affected:	All		

FOR GENERAL RELEASE

1. SUMMARY AND POLICY CONTEXT:

- 1.1 The Highways Code of Practice recommends that authorities should formally approve, adopt and publish, in consultation with users and key stakeholders, a Winter Service Operational Plan based on the principles of this Code. Brighton & Hove City Council has produced an annual Highways Winter Service Plan since unitary status.
- 1.2 The 2011-12 Highways Winter Service Plan builds on the extensive work, experience and research carried out over previous years and particularly following 3 years of severe winters. It incorporates existing good practice and any updates arising from implementation of ECSOSC and national recommendations.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 2.1 That the Cabinet Member for Environment & Sustainability approves the Brighton & Hove City Council Highways Winter Service Plan 2011/12 as attached at Appendix A to this report.

3. RELEVANT BACKGROUND INFORMATION/CHRONOLOGY OF KEY EVENTS:

Context for Highways Winter Service Plan

- 3.1 The Winter Service plan outlines the policy and operational mechanisms that this authority puts in place to meet its statutory requirement to take measures to prevent or remove accumulations of ice and snow from the public highway as far as is reasonably practicable.
- 3.2 The plan is reviewed annually in liaison with other sections and agencies, as part of continuous improvement to the service.

Annual review 2011-12

- 3.3 Following the detailed work that went into reviewing the 2010/11 plan, the Highways Winter Service was tested again during December 2010. This included the operation of the service, the accompanying communications strategy, the co-ordination of resources across City Infrastructure for snow clearance and the links with other sections and agencies.
- 3.4 Prior to and during winter 2010/11, considerable discussion and consultation took place with other council teams and partner services, including via the Sussex/Brighton Resilience Forum, the council's Major Incident Managers Team and individually with partners and providers, such as the bus company, schools and the NHS. Officers have also attended residents' meetings such as Local Action Team meetings. This ensures a good shared understanding of what the council's highways service can provide and how best to target this to support other services' priorities. Following the last winter, all representatives who had input into the 2010-11 plan were contacted for their feedback on this. Responses received are reproduced at Appendix B.
- 3.5 The plan covers the whole City Infrastructure delivery unit's response to cold weather.
- 3.6 An ECSOSC review of progress on the 2010 recommendations is scheduled on 5 September 2011.

Service provision

- 3.7 Through the Highways Winter Service Plan we endeavour to use the resources available to us as effectively as possible. We have a finite supply of materials and staff to carry out the work so it is simply not possible to keep all 2,700 of the city's public roads, pavements and footpaths free from ice and snow during a severe freeze.
- 3.8 Our defined routes are all main roads and all bus routes. The aim is to keep the important roads in the city open and to try and reach as many residential areas as possible (hence following bus routes). The routes include roads leading to emergency service premises, hospitals and bus depots.
- 3.9 The Highways Winter Service runs all through the winter, often going unnoticed but put into action regularly during frosty or icy conditions. The majority of focus on the service is usually during severe snowfall, when the response is escalated before, during and after these weather conditions. It should be noted that there are specific environmental factors that will reduce the effectiveness of salting/gritting. This means that although the council will continue to apply treatments to the identified routes, we cannot guarantee that the gritted roads will be free of snow and ice.
- 3.10 In 2010-11, the Communications strategy ensured that clear and comprehensive information about the council's winter service was given out both just before the start of winter and as regular updates during any bout of very cold weather. This involved the Head of Highway Operations working closely with the Communications team and with City Infrastructure Contact Centre and social media personnel.

- 3.11 The council provides 400+ grit bins throughout the city for self-help. Compared to other authorities, this is a high quantity within what is a relatively small geographical area. This is because we recognise that Brighton & Hove is a mainly urban area with steep hills serving a large population. We will also if required fill grit bins for emergency services, and can offer salt/grit in small quantities from our stockpile for schools, emergency services and other priority agencies for use on their own property.
- 3.12 Following an expansion over 5 years which has more than doubled the quantity of grit bins provided, we cannot issue any more grit bins on the public highway. This is because it would take far too long to fill them quickly during extreme weather and with finite resources we cannot keep expanding the number of grit bins that we then need to service.
- 3.13 In line with scrutiny recommendations, during last winter's snowfalls we carried out grit drops for self-help at specified locations round the city as an alternative to permanent grit bin provision.
- 3.14 City Infrastructure also carried out extensive pavement clearance utilising Cityclean, Cityparks and Parking staff as well as highway contractors. Staff could be deployed rapidly because of pre-season preparation with maps, equipment and key personnel. In accordance with the plan, there was clearance of snow in priority 1 areas (main city thoroughfares, hospitals, station) followed by clearance in priority 2 areas, which are local shopping parades and important local infrastructure.
- 3.15 The original budget was calculated on an average of 33 gritting operations per year plus one 2 day snow event.
- 2007-08 was above average, with 43 gritting operations in total for the winter season.
 - In 2008-09, a total of 62 gritting operations were carried out, of which 27 operations were full routes, i.e. our largest coverage of the city.
 - In 2009-10, a total of 112 gritting operations were carried out of which 62 were full routes.
 - In 2010-11, a total of 64 gritting operations were carried out of which 48 were full routes. Although the end of November to the beginning of January saw cold and extreme snow, the rest of the winter was very mild.

Vehicles

- 3.16 The council has purchased seven new gritter vehicles, all 4x4 and supplied with the latest technology such as stainless steel hoppers which will resist salt corrosion.
- 3.17 A pavement gritting machine which can also be utilised as a street sweeping machine has been purchased. This should enable quicker treatment where pavements are wide enough.
- 3.18 All the vehicle purchases have been funded through unsupported borrowing and so future winter budgets must take into account repayment costs for the next 7 years as well as Repairs and Maintenance overheads.

Salt Stock

- 3.19 The average amount of salt used per winter is about 800 tonnes. In 2010-11 the council used 1,500 tonnes of salt and a further 500+ tonnes of grit (sharp sand) on road gritting alone. Additional tonnages were used on pavement gritting and for grit bins/grit drops. Sharp sand is an accepted treatment for heavy compacted layers of snow and ice, often proving more effective than salt alone.
- 3.20 The council has a contract in place for the supply of salt. This is delivered by boat from one of the two salt mines in the country direct to Shoreham Harbour. The council has not run out of salt in any winter period.
- 3.21 We are continuing to use additional storage at a depot in West Sussex. In total, we should start the winter season with over 1,500 tonnes.

Reviews and recommendations

- 3.22 The recommendations from the Scrutiny Panel's review with officer comments and update as of summer 2011 are attached as Appendix C for information.

4. CONSULTATION

- 4.1 Working with the Civil Contingencies Officer, highway officers have held several planning meetings and maintain ongoing communication with members of the Sussex & Brighton Resilience Forums. This includes Category 1 Responders (fire, police, NHS, ambulance service), the bus service, schools service, housing management and other important city services/premises. Internally, winter plans have been discussed at Major Incident Management meetings.
- 4.2 There have also been meetings and ongoing liaison with the Communications team and Business Continuity Manager regarding the council's public response to winter weather events.
- 4.3 Highways, Cityclean and Cityparks have worked together on planning the Winter Service.
- 4.4 Local Action Teams and residents' meetings have been attended to discuss the Highways Winter Service.
- 4.5 A copy of the Winter Service Plan is sent out to the following stakeholders and any relevant comments incorporated into the plan/service as far as is reasonably practicable:
- Cityclean
 - Cityparks
 - Civil Contingencies
 - Insurance
 - Communications team
 - Police
 - NHS
 - Fire Service
 - Ambulance Service

- Brighton & Hove Bus Company
 - Schools
 - Other Brighton Resilience Forum agencies e.g. Brighton Marina
 - Seafront services
 - Southern Rail
- 4.6 Benchmarking and sharing of good practice has been facilitated through SE7 and SEASIG – the south East Authorities Service Improvement Group.
- 4.7 The Head of Highway Operations works closely with East and West Sussex highway managers, including joint contracts with East Sussex for weather forecasting and weather stations/winter IT systems.
- 4.8 Further information sharing will be made with the Economic Partnership and Business Forum to manage expectations with the business sector and where appropriate to co-ordinate planning.

5. FINANCIAL & OTHER IMPLICATIONS:

Financial Implications:

- 5.1 The costs of providing the winter maintenance service are covered by a revenue budget, which is £337,460 for 2011-12. This budget includes an additional annual investment of £100,000 which was provided out of contingency as part of the budget setting process for 2010-11. Any underspend in the revenue budget each year is carried over into the Winter Maintenance Reserve, as contingency for periods of extreme weather. This fund is used to pay for operatives, gritter fuel, gritter maintenance, contractors and other costs associated with an ongoing major operation. This reserve has been called upon in financial years 2006-7, 2008-9, 2009-10 and 2010-11. In recognition of the demands placed on the service in recent years, an additional sum of £204,000 was allocated to the reserve in 2010-11. The balance in the reserve is currently £430,000.

Finance Officer Consulted: Karen Brookshaw Date: 22/08/11

Legal Implications:

- 5.2 The Council as highway authority has a statutory duty to maintain publicly adopted highways. Since October 2003 this has included a duty to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, that safe passage along a highway is not endangered by snow or ice (s41.(1A) Highways Act 1980 as amended by the Railways and Transport Safety Act 2003). The proposed Winter Service Plan will assist the Council in complying with the duty.

Lawyer Consulted: Carl Hearsum Date: 26/08/11

Equalities Implications:

- 5.3 The Winter Maintenance service covers main routes and all bus routes. It is a service for the public highway, aimed at bringing the maximum benefit to the most used thoroughfares. It is not logistically or economically feasible to cover all roads in the city, so by treating bus routes and pavements on a priority basis we ensure that most

areas of the city have some accessible options for travel and target areas of highest usage first.

Sustainability Implications:

- 5.4 Salt has a negative environmental impact e.g. on the water table or vegetation. Sharp sand does not dissolve into solution and has a negative impact on drainage and appearance. Therefore resources are carefully deployed in order to provide a balance between network usability and detriment to the local environment.

Crime & Disorder Implications:

- 5.5 There are no crime and disorder implications identified in this report.

Risk and Opportunity Management Implications:

- 5.6 The objective is to provide a winter service, which will permit, as far as is reasonably possible, the safe movement of traffic on designated roads throughout Brighton and Hove and to keep to a minimum delays and accidents brought about by adverse weather conditions.

Public Health Implications:

- 5.7 There are no direct public health implications identified in this report although the council highways section works closely with the NHS, ambulance service and other health agencies in preparation for winter.

Corporate / Citywide Implications:

- 5.8 The winter service is an essential support service for the city's economy by helping to provide an accessible highway network.

6. EVALUATION OF ANY ALTERNATIVE OPTION(S):

- 6.1 The only alternative is not to produce or approve a winter service plan but this would be contrary to the Code of Practice. The plan also acts as information about what to expect from the service and as a business continuity tool which lays out detailed operational directions on how to run the service.

7. REASONS FOR REPORT RECOMMENDATIONS

- 7.1 The report ensures that the Winter Service Plan can be formally considered and adopted.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

Appendices:

- A Highways Winter Service Plan 2011-12
- B Responses to Head of Highway Operations' review of winter 2010/11
- C Scrutiny Panel recommendations & officer response
- D Map showing full gritter routes & grit bins

Documents in Members' Rooms

None

Background Documents

None

