

Subject:	Highways Winter Service Plan 2014-15		
Date of Meeting:	7 October 2014		
Report of:	Executive Director, Environment, Development & Housing		
Contact Officer:	Name:	Christina Liassides	Tel: 29-2036
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Ward(s) affected:	All		

FOR GENERAL RELEASE

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT AND POLICY CONTEXT

- 1.1 The Highways Winter Service is run by Highway Operations within the Transport division and is supported by Cityclean and Cityparks.
- 1.2 'Well-Maintained Highways', the national code of practice for highway maintenance management recommends that local authorities should formally approve, adopt and publish, in consultation with users and key stakeholders, a Winter Service Operational Plan based on the principles of the code. Brighton & Hove City Council has produced an annual Highways Winter Service Plan since it became a unitary authority.
- 1.3 The Highways Winter Service Plan 2014-15 builds on this code of practice alongside extensive work, experience and research carried out over previous years.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 2.1 That the Environment, Transport and Sustainability Committee approves the Brighton & Hove City Council Highways Winter Service Plan 2014-15 as attached at Appendix 1 to this report.

3. CONTEXT/ BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Context for Highways Winter Service Plan

- 3.1 The Highways 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.

Annual Review 2013-14

- 3.2 Last winter was remarkable for its inclement weather but this was in the form of storms and excessive rain rather than severe cold.

Nonetheless, 19 gritting runs were carried out over the winter period. Of these, 10 runs treated our gritting routes in the coldest areas of the city only (our 'Hilltops' routes), reflecting the marginal nights where the damp road surfaces ran the risk of becoming icy. 9 runs treated our gritting routes across all the city during the short periods of frosty weather that occurred.

In total, 230 tonnes of salt were used, compared to nearly 20,000 in the previous winter.

Snow events

- 3.3 There were no snow events in 2013-14.

Should snow occur during this coming winter, it is worth noting that the Code of Practice Code states that it is: "impractical to spread sufficient salt to melt more than very thin layers of snow and ice."

Under such circumstances, the essential treatment is ploughing and using a salt/grit mix to clear the layers of snow and compacted ice. These treatments take place during and after snowfall, where the aim is to remove the snow from the roads on our defined gritting routes as soon as is practicable.

Ploughing is a difficult task within the city due to a number of factors, such as roads having steep cambers, speed calming measures and tight corners. Cars may also block gritting routes, as the plough increases the width of the gritter. Nonetheless, all gritters plough in deep snowfall as well as treat with a salt/grit mix.

Service Provision

- 3.9 During our full runs, we grit nearly 192 miles, which equates to just under 50% of our entire road network.

Our defined routes are all main roads and all bus routes. This enables us to direct our available resources to keeping strategic links treated all across the city.

We have 7 gritter vehicles, all with plough attachments, and a pavement gritter.

Salt is stored at Hollingdean Depot.

Grit bins and grit drops are provided for public use.

Detailed information on the winter service and maps of routes and grit bins are contained on the council's website.

4. ANALYSIS & CONSIDERATION OF ANY ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

- 4.1 A Highways Winter Service Plan is recommended as good practice by central government. The alternative would be to have no strategic or operational plan.

5. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT & CONSULTATION

- 5.1 The Highways Winter Service Plan has been reviewed against the latest edition of the government's good practice guidelines (Appendix H of Well-Maintained Highways). Brighton & Hove City Council meets or is working towards best practice. However, there are some limitations such as the nature of our salt storage or the difficulties encountered when ploughing on steep, cambered city roads.
- 5.2 A copy of the plan and gritting routes are sent to relevant stakeholders such as transport operators, emergency services and major business continuity organisations in the city.
- 5.3 Brighton & Hove Head of Highways Operations is also part of a working group of local highway authorities – East Sussex, West Sussex and the Highway Agency – seeking to improve communications internally and to our public before and during severe weather events. This work is linked into the Sussex Resilience Forum's Transport Group.
- 5.4 There were no major cold weather events last winter and therefore no extensive operational review has taken place.
- 5.5 Highway Operations works closely with Cityclean, Cityparks, the Communications team and other council sections, particularly the Civil Contingencies team, to communicate and pool resources during extreme cold weather events.

6. CONCLUSION

- 6.1 This report recommends approval of the Highways Winter Service Plan 2014-15 in order that the council has an agreed strategic and operational framework for responding to freezing weather conditions.

7. FINANCIAL & OTHER IMPLICATIONS:

Financial Implications:

- 7.1 The cost of providing the Highways Winter Service Plan is funded from an existing revenue budget within the Transport service. The revenue budget for the 2014-15 financial year is £302,000.

- 7.2 The Highways Winter Service Plan is also supported by the Winter Maintenance Reserve. Any variance within the revenue budget each year is transferred to the reserve as contingency to fund future periods of extreme weather which result in a revenue overspend. At the end of the 2013-14 financial year the reserve had a balance of approximately £439,000 following a contribution from the revenue budget of approximately £19,000.

Finance Officer Consulted: Steven Bedford

Date: 07/08/14

Legal Implications:

The statutory duty referred to in paragraph 3.1 of this report is the duty specified in section 41(1A) of the Highways Act 1980, requiring the highway authority to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, that safe passage along a highway is not endangered by snow or ice.

The duty is not absolute but qualified by reference to what is reasonably practicable. This gives the council discretion to prioritise routes based on cost, strategic importance and operational capability.

Lawyer Consulted: Oliver Dixon

Date: 12/08/14

Equalities Implications:

- 7.3 The Highways Winter 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/maximum benefit. An Equalities Impact Assessment has been undertaken in 2013.

Sustainability Implications:

- 7.4 Salt has a negative environmental impact e.g. on the water table or vegetation. It is not possible for practicable quantities of salt to dissolve more than a minimum layer of snow or ice so usage must be balanced against impact. 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.

Any Other Significant Implications:

- 7.5 The objective is to provide a highways winter service, which will permit, as far as 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. There is a risk that roads will not be completely clear of snow, ice or frost and highway users should adjust their usage

accordingly. The opportunities are created by treating an agreed network across the city which helps the movement of people and goods.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

Appendices:

1. Highways Winter Service Plan 2014-15

Documents in Members' Rooms

None

Background Documents

1. Previous reports on Highways Winter Service Plan to Transport Committee
2. ECSOSC meetings – winter service review 2010, 2011 and 2012