

TELFORD & WREKIN COUNCIL

CABINET - 26 JULY 2012

HIGHWAYS MAINTENANCE – WINTER SERVICE REVIEW

REPORT OF THE ASSISTANT DIRECTOR NEIGHBOURHOOD AND LEISURE SERVICES

LEAD CABINET MEMBER – CLLR SHAUN DAVIES

PART A) – SUMMARY REPORT

1.0 SUMMARY OF MAIN PROPOSALS

- 1.1 The report provides a review of the performance of the Winter Service with regard to operational and policy delivery during the 2011/12 winter season and the impact of amended salt spread rates to conserve salt stocks. Service efficiency proposals which reduce costs whilst retaining service standards are also included.
- 1.1 To identify a range of Co-operative Council opportunities and initiatives which will enhance winter service provision within the local community by way of Snow Warden Schemes, Parish Environmental Teams and Community Payback Schemes

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 That the recommended changes to the Winter Service outlined in **Appendices 1 and 2** of the report be adopted, namely:
- Existing treatment routes to remain the same for 2012/13 with the addition of one location-the slip roads off A4640 leading to Donnington Business Park and reduce the number of gritting routes from nine to eight without affecting network coverage and in turn delivering efficiency savings..
 - Existing Grit Bin Policy to remain for 2012/13 but to continue close working with Parishes and community groups for local co operative opportunities.
 - To provide ongoing resilience and efficiencies – continue with salt storage at the same capacity and the rate of spread of salt of 10g per m2 for frost prevention and 20g per m2 for snow events be adopted as ongoing service policy.
 - Continue to improve communication channels and access to information for residents, parish councils and businesses within the Borough and to promote Co-operative Council opportunities including the introduction of up to 50 volunteer Neighbourhood Snow Wardens

3. SUMMARY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

COMMUNITY IMPACT	Do these proposals contribute to specific Priority Plan objective(s)?	
	Yes	Environment plan – Winter resilience
	Will the proposals impact on specific groups of people?	
	No	Borough Wide
DELIVERY DATE	Winter Maintenance season commences 1st October 2012	
FINANCIAL/VALUE FOR MONEY IMPACT	Yes	<p>This report identifies a number of service efficiencies which will deliver the £50,000 savings required as part of the Budget Strategy for 2012/13.</p> <p>Proposed enhancements to the service include the inclusion of an additional location, the provision of additional grit bins in partnership with Parishes and the recruitment of volunteer Snow Wardens, and these will be delivered within existing budgets within the Neighbourhood and Leisure services unit. The adequacy of the ongoing revenue budget for winter maintenance will need to be considered as part of the annual service and financial planning process.JAC280612</p>
LEGAL ISSUES	Yes	<p>The Council is under a general statutory duty to maintain those highways in the Borough which are not trunk roads. The Council's duty in respect of snow and ice on the highway has been clarified (as mentioned below) in 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.</p> <p>In any action against the Council in respect of damage resulting from its failure to maintain a publicly maintainable highway (including addressing snow and ice), it is a defence to prove that the Council took such care as in all the circumstances was reasonably required to secure that the part of the highway to which the action relates was not dangerous for traffic.</p> <p>Review, amendment and proper implementation of policies for winter highways maintenance is an essential element of the Council's response to its statutory duties and would be referred to in any action against the</p>

		Council.
OTHER IMPACTS, RISKS & OPPORTUNITIES	Yes	The scope of the actions of the Winter Maintenance Service will impact on many aspects of life in the Borough including the environment, economy and community cohesion. The actions all impact on the Council's reputation.
IMPACT ON SPECIFIC WARDS	Yes	Borough-wide impact.

PART B) – ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

3.0 REPORT SUMMARY

- 3.1 In October 2003 the Government introduced an amendment to the Highway Act 1980 which placed a duty on Local Authorities to ensure, so as is reasonably practicable, that safe passage along a highway is not endangered by snow or ice.
- 3.2 Council policy extends to precautionary salting routes to include schools, transport interchanges, industrial estates and strategic footways and cycle ways. The Policy has been further amended and strengthened in July 2009, September 2010 and September 2011.
- 3.3 Due to difficult winter season conditions and previous national shortage and distribution problems with road salt in recent years, the council in order to protect its network has increased its storage capacity from 1400 tonnes to 2700 tonnes.

4.0 PREVIOUS MINUTES

- 4.1 18 September 2006, 21 July 2009, September 2010 and September 2011.

5.0 REVIEW OF THE LOWER SPREAD RATE

- 5.1 To increase resilience without increasing costs, the rate of spread for salt applied to the roads for the winter of 2011/12 was reduced to reflect national guidance and the experiences of other local authorities.
- 5.2 The reduced rates of spread have been monitored throughout the winter of 2011/12 to ensure that the treatments remained effective and suitable for our road network.
- 5.3 This change has been effective as we did not receive requests from the emergency services requesting additional gritting due to surface conditions. In addition there has been no apparent increase in the number of road traffic incidents that can be said to have occurred as a result of reducing the rates of spread.

- 5.4 The effectiveness of the reduced rates spread will continue to be monitored throughout the 2012/13 winter season as part of our out of hours service. Should the need arise, the service response by the contractor will allow for an increase in the rates of spread if we experience prolonged and severe weather conditions.

6.0 SERVICE EFFICIENCY PROPOSALS

- 6.1 As part of our drive for service and budget efficiencies, a review of all gritting routes has been undertaken and it has been found that the existing defined network coverage can be maintained, while reducing the number of gritting routes from nine to eight. This has been identified through a joint route optimisation assessment with TWS Ltd and Vaisala UK Ltd.
- 6.2 The existing fleet of nine gritters of 6 and 4 tonne capacities, treat 422kms of roads out of a total network of 1040kms, the routes comprise of urban and rural roads. The average time taken to treat all routes is in the region of 2 hours from the commencement of gritting..
- 6.3 The optimisation process compared the length of the defined network, the number of routes and the time taken to complete a route, amalgamating parts of routes and equalising as far as possible the coverage of the routes, while still remaining within the 2 hour time frame of completion.
- 6.4 A thorough validation of the results took place and confirmed the reduction from nine to eight routes was feasible without reducing the defined network coverage.

7.0 CO-OPERATIVE COUNCIL AND COMMUNITY INITIATIVES

- 7.1 The three harsh winters of 2009, 2010 and 2011 highlighted the pressures that Council experiences when providing the Winter Service for the community. It is not possible to provide resources for 100% coverage throughout the Borough in order to deal with snow events and prolonged freezing conditions.
- 7.2 The hazardous conditions can pose a threat to the well being of all residents and at times the elderly and infirm can potentially suffer real hardship, by not having access to local shops, doctor's surgeries, bus stops etc. In order to help members of the public with the effects of significant snow fall or adverse weather, it is proposed to introduce and support a Snow Warden initiative with the commencement of the 2012/13 winter service.
- 7.3 A number of Local Authorities throughout the country have already trialled **Snow Wardens** and actual methods and working practices vary from council to council. We have taken our Co operative model as the foundation for developing our proposed method and aim to establish a

network of up to 50 volunteer Neighbourhood Snow Wardens. Further information on how the scheme will work is detailed in Appendix 4.

- 7.4 A further Co Operative Council initiative which can be utilised is the newly created **Parish Environmental Teams** which are now serving the Parishes of St Georges & Priorslee PC, Great Dawley PC and Madeley PC. The teams can support existing resources at times of adverse weather, by clearing snow and treating footways and site plans will be agreed with the respective Parishes.
- 7.5 During the winter season 2011/12 **Community Payback** resources were utilised on a number of occasions to grit and clear snow from footways in various areas. Although these resources are only available on Mondays and Tuesdays they provide valuable support. This initiative will continue in 2012/13 with a view to expanding when possible.
- 7.6 In addition to the resources outlined above it is proposed to involve the **Council's Employee Commission Sub Group on Employee Volunteering** in order to explore and promote the possibility of becoming involved in snow clearing as and when required.
- 7.7 **Parish Charter:** Parishes will be informed of any changes to treatment routes and other changes that affect their areas. During the winter season contact will be via the nominated **Parish Council snow liaison representatives** and during heavy snow events local farmers may also assist operations in rural areas.
- 7.8 The grit bin inventory has been shared with Parishes to consider 'added value' grit bin locations. Any Parish can choose to provide additional grit bins if they should require them for local sites other than those provided for by Telford & Wrekin Council. As a partnership the council will fund the Bin installation and the Parishes will be expected to pay for the provision and salt replenishment of any additional bins.
- 7.9 A more detailed performance review of the 2011/12 Winter Maintenance season is summarised in **Appendix 2** and identifies a series of service strands and conclusions, including:
- Salting Operations
 - Grit Bins
 - Salt storage.
 - Communication and advice and guidance

Each service strand element carries a **service improvement recommendation**.

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