

ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL

COMMITTEE	Operational Delivery Committee
DATE	17 September 2019
EXEMPT	No
CONFIDENTIAL	No
REPORT TITLE	Roads Winter Service Plan 2019-2020
REPORT NUMBER	OPE.19.337
DIRECTOR	Rob Polkinghorne – Chief Operating Officer
CHIEF OFFICER	Mark Reilly
REPORT AUTHOR	Angus Maciver
TERMS OF REFERENCE	2 & 5

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

To present Members with the proposed Roads Winter Service Plan and to explain changes from previous years.

The report also seeks to address the issues raised during the budget setting process for 2019-20.

2. RECOMMENDATION(S)

That the Committee:-

2.1 Approve the “Roads Winter Service Plan 2019-2020” at Appendix 1 including the changes made to the priority hierarchy for roads treatments;

2.2 Delegate authority to the Chief Officer - Operations and Protective Services to, following consultation with the Chief Officer – Finance, continue to deliver the Winter Maintenance Service.

3. BACKGROUND

3.1 Aberdeen City Council's Roads Winter Service Plan has evolved over many years and is amended to reflect both national and local requirements. This year's amendments have been made to reflect the budget and additions to the network.

a) Policy

The carriageway priority treatment regime has been based on three tiers.

The priority 1 routes - principal roads or other classified roads serving as main routes or major traffic distributors carrying heavy traffic flows or serving as major bus route or give access to public or emergency facility providing an essential public service. These routes were not to become impassable to traffic except in abnormal conditions.

The priority 2 - routes were principal roads or other classified roads, not included in priority 1 routes, serving as main routes or traffic distributors carrying a medium traffic flow or give access to community or public facilities of a non-essential nature. These to be treated on an area basis as resources allow.

The priority 3 locations - access roads, service roads, cul-de-sacs and minor roads where it could be expected that residents, etc could make their way with some difficulty to the nearest higher priority roads in all but abnormal conditions. These routes are not treated except in exceptional conditions, medical emergencies, funerals, etc.

In addition to the above two night shift routes were operated during marginal condition to treat local spots where icing problems had historically been identified.

To accommodate the revised budget, additional roads added to the network and gritting vehicle availability restrictions, the Roads Winter Service Plan incorporates a revision to the policy that has been in place for many years

Each public road on the network has been assigned one of the maintenance hierarchy category descriptions summarised in Appendix 2 in line with the guidance from the Well-Managed Highway Infrastructure Code of Practice.

In line with the assigned hierarchy category it is proposed to revise the treatment priority such that

Priority 1 routes to be split between Priority 1 Gold and Silver.

The priority 1 Gold routes to contain all the Strategic Roads and all the Main Distributor Roads in addition to access roads to emergency service facilities. The de-trunked section of the A92 and A96 are included in this category. These routes should not become impassable to traffic except in abnormal conditions for the 24 hours.

Priority 1 silver routes to contain the roads that were treated as Priority 1 routes in 2018,2019 less the proposed Priority 1 Gold routes and the Link Roads and Local Access Roads that do not have any special circumstances such as steep slopes, etc. These routes should not become impassable to traffic except in abnormal conditions between the hours of 04.45 and 21.00.

The Priority 1 Gold and Silver routes are shown in map form in Appendices 3 and 4. The list and location plan of the Link Roads and Local access roads proposed for consideration for removal from the Priority 1 routes are shown in Appendices 5 and 5a.

b) Route changes

Work on revised routes has been ongoing for some months and the routes have been revised to incorporate the proposed new treatment priorities and to include changes to the network including the de-trunked sections of the A96 and A92.

The revised routes priority routes are included in appendix C of the Roads Winter Service Plan.

These revised routes allow for 51 km of Link and Local access roads to be moved from the Priority 1 treatments and included in the priority 2 or 3 treatment routes. This is the equivalent of approximately one Priority 1 route.

Route optimisation software has been used to improve the efficiency of the routes to the equivalent of approximately one Priority 1 route.

The following items e-n are reviewed and reported each year –

c) Salt Usage and Stocks

Salt stock levels have been taken back up to 9,411 tonnes, this stock is to be topped up with regular programmed deliveries throughout the winter. The salt usage is a good measure of the severity of the weather.

Year	Starting Tonnage	Usage
16/17	10,087	4,602
17/18	10,624	15,321
18/19	11,531	6,166

d) De-icing Agent

Brine and de-icing chemicals have been trialed as a precautionary treatment several times at locations in the city centre and on cycleways. These trials were generally successful with the benefits including the elimination of the spread of salt into shops and private properties and the treatment remaining effective for longer than standard salt.

e) Salt Bins

There are currently more than 900 salt bins throughout the City. Every year there are demands for further bins at new locations. Maintaining the salt bins is a labour-intensive operation and to continually increase the numbers will only add to the current restocking problems. It is proposed to continue the policy of not issuing any additional

salt bins this winter but to further promote the issue of 1tonne bags of salt for community use. The location of grit bins is based on historic requests.

20 large capacity grit bins that can be quickly filled from a small truck were deployed on the network last year, their locations are included in Appendix D; these should allow the public easier access to salt during storm conditions.

If individuals require salt and they do not have access to a vehicle, a limited number of 10kg salt buckets can be deployed on pallets to residential areas. This is a labour-intensive process and may have to be restricted during storm conditions.

f) Community Salt Bags

A scheme was introduced, in 2012-13, to issue 1 tonne bags of salt to Community groups willing to carry out self-help winter treatment. This scheme allows community groups to request a 1 tonne bag of salt. A total of 273 bags were delivered to residents and community groups last year. Additional small bags will be provided to help distribute the salt in the community. The media team will help promote the scheme and the benefits it provides to the public.

The scheme is still subject to the following conditions.

- the salt is issued to community groups.
- the bags are to be located in a secure place such as a resident's driveway as they are susceptible to theft and vandalism.
- the location needs to be accessible to the delivery lorry.

This year the following conditions will also be applied

- salt will not be left on or near private grassed or garden areas until the owner/tenant accepts responsibility for the possible long term damage that would occur.

These bags hold a far greater quantity of salt than a salt bin and will therefore last longer and are relatively quick to replenish.

There is a cut off date for applications of the 1 November after which applications will not be processed until the following year. The media team are to make the public aware of this well in advance of winter.

g) Vehicles and Plant

Considerable investment over the years has reduced the average age of the winter fleet. This programme will continue this winter in order to have a fleet of vehicles at an age which is serviceable and reduces downtime for repair. Future investment will continue with the purchase of multi-use vehicles, that can be quickly converted to other specialist equipment. This has proven to be the most cost-effective method of updating the fleet.

h) Service Provision Over Festive Period

Service provision over the festive period will remain at the same level as in previous years. The specific details are shown below.

Day	Status	Service Available
Thur 19 Dec	Normal Day	Full Service
Fri 20 Dec	Normal Day	Full Service
Sat 21 Dec	Normal Day	Standby + Response
Sun 22 Dec	Normal Day	Standby + Response
Mon 23 Dec	Normal Day	Full Service
Tue 24 Dec	Normal Day	Full Service
Wed 25 Dec	Public Holiday	Standby + Response
Thur 26 Dec	Public Holiday	Standby + Response
Fri 27 Dec	Normal Day	Standby+Early Morning+ Response
Sat 28 Dec	Normal Day	Standby + Response
Sun 29 Dec	Normal Day	Standby + Response
Mon 30 Jan	Normal Day	Standby+Early Morning+ Response
Tue 31 Jan	Public Holiday	Standby + Response
Wed 1 Jan	Public Holiday	Standby + Response
Thur 2 Jan	Public Holiday	Standby + Response
Fri 3 Jan	Normal Day	Full Service

The Response team consists of up to 5 roadworkers providing 23 hours of cover per day, 7 days per week with a break between shifts from 03:00 to 04:00. This break will be monitored by the night attendant but can be covered in emergencies. This team is available to respond to the required treatment on the 4 Priority 1 Gold Routes.

Standby + Response consists of sufficient staff to operate the 6 Priority 1 Silver carriageway routes and 2 Priority footpath gritter routes.

Early Morning operations, if necessary, provides a treatment of the 6 Priority 1 Silver carriageway routes and 2 Priority footpath gritter routes. These will commence at 04:45 and this shift will continue working until 15:45 at the end of the normal working day.

i) Footways and Cycle Path Operations

The city centre priority 1 footways as set out in the Roads Winter Services Plan are the only routes to be covered as part of the early morning operations. This change in operations was approved by the Policy and Strategy Committee in 2008. The priority 1 routes are concentrated on the city centre, shopping areas and footways with a steep gradient. The current policy is that treatment should begin on these footways during the day Monday – Friday between 7.45 and 15.45. At weekends the provision is targeted at the city centre routes.

Completing the Priority 1 footways already stretches the resources available to Roads and assistance from other services is required to complete all the Priority1 footways in a reasonable timescale.

Currently, once the P1 footways are treated further treatment is extended into the lower priority footways, including those that contain some of these essential facilities, the treatment that lower priority footways receive is dependent on the resources available so there is no timescale placed on the completed the lower priority footways.

The criteria for including a footway for priority 1 treatment is the number of pedestrians and the steepness of the footway being so severe that they would be dangerous when covered in ice or hard packed snow. To increase the number of priority 1 footway routes on the basis of other criteria such as treating frontage of schools, hospitals, etc, would require a change in the policy and cost an estimated £35,000 per route for a typical winter. Current budgets and staffing levels will not meet increased costs if progressed.

Footpath works are given additional support, as and when necessary, from other Council services. These operatives carry out hand spreading to some footpaths especially around sheltered accommodation. The 2019/20 Roads Winter Service Plan includes a green, amber and red readiness approach, with treatment for sheltered housing facilities to be considered at the amber phase. If the treatment is required, the Service undertaking the work is to be notified at an early stage to allow them to dedicate resources to the treatment.

With over 1200km of footways to maintain it is not feasible to have the widespread instant coverage. With a further 480 km of remote paths and areas within our Council housing estates requiring treatment it is not feasible to have instant coverage therefore priority is given to main routes.

Similar to roads, the use of grit will be included in the treatment of footways at lower temperatures, particularly where water is lying on ice at low temperatures.

There is no provision in the current policy for the widespread use of precautionary salting treatment of footways. It is however proposed to continue the use of brine as a precautionary treatment in selected areas.

j) Public Information

An information section for Winter Operations is included on the Council's web site this provides information on gritter routes and live information on operations on the main routes. There is a further section advising of weather and road conditions. The webpage will continue to be developed further as necessary.

Vehicle location history was introduced last winter, and it is intended to have this information available to the public via the website.

The council does produce a Winter Travel Advice leaflet which includes information on aspects of the winter treatment regime and on how particular groups should approach the wintery conditions.

k) Future Developments

Several Road Authorities are working with residents to encourage self-help during time of heavy snow, this can include the provision of equipment, training, providing personal

protective equipment and technical backup. The cost of this equipment is relatively inexpensive, less than £2000 per group, it may therefore be appropriate to progress this in Aberdeen if there is a public demand.

l) Consultation

The following organisations are being consulted on the content of the Roads Winter Service Plan:

Aberdeen Roads Limited, Bear Scotland, Bon Accord Care, NHS Scotland, Aberdeen City Council – Education, and Housing Services, Police Scotland, The Scottish Fire and Rescue Service.

4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

4.1 Expenditure is anticipated to be around the Council’s approved Revenue budgets for Winter Maintenance and Emergencies 2019-2020 of £1.523M.

4.2 It should be noted that the expenditure for the previous three winters has been £1.729M in 2018-2019, £2.333M in 2017-18 and £1.610M in 2016-17. The outturn expenditure is therefore heavily dependent on actual conditions experienced during the winter. It would therefore be prudent to note that authorisation may be required for continued expenditure beyond the budget should the weather be worse than anticipated and this would likely form the subject of a report to the City Growth and Resources Committee.

5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 Failure to provide a robust and justifiable “Roads Winter Service Plan” would leave the Council more vulnerable to legal challenges and 3rd party insurance claims.

5.2 The Council is obligated under Section 34 of the Roads (Scotland) Act 1984 to take such steps as they consider reasonable to prevent snow and ice endangering the safe passage of pedestrians and vehicles over a public road.

6. MANAGEMENT OF RISK

To ensure that the service meets its obligation in the coming years the risks identified in the Future Developments section of the report need to be addressed:

Risk Reputational/Technological/ Customer /citizen	Risk Level	Mitigation/Controls
The increased use of grit/sand is likely to affect drainage systems and leave footways and open areas looking untidy.	Medium	Provision made for removal of grit after each cold period by the appropriate service.

The development of new codes of practice superseding the current winter policies.	Medium	Monitor and consult on industry developments and adapt the Roads Winter Service Plan to meet developing standards and practices.
Variable numbers of Community Salt Bags depending on the prevailing weather.	Medium	Use Corporate Communications to continue to highlight the importance of the community salt but to set a cutoff date after which provision cannot be guaranteed.

Risk	Risk Level	Mitigation/Controls
Reputational and Financial		
The increased use of salt in marginal conditions is likely to cause pressure on the budget.	Medium	Make financial provision for changes or invest in equipment that would allow the salt spread rates to be reduced.
The additional burden placed on the winter service from the de-trunking of sections of the A90/A96.	Medium	Revise routes to accommodate the de-trunked sections and authorization gained to treat these roads to ACC rather than trunk road standards.
Allocated Budget will only cover costs of a mild winter, overspend at times of high snowfall will require the allocation of additional budget	High	Seek authorisation in respect of additional finance.

7. OUTCOMES

Local Outcome Improvement Plan Themes	
	Impact of Report
Prosperous Economy	The provision of an effective winter maintenance service that keeps the transport network working effectively is important to support the economy of Aberdeen during adverse winter conditions.
Prosperous People	With a growing population and expanding roads network it is important that the winter service plan is reviewed and adjusted to meet the ongoing demands of the population. The winter service plan seeks to have a positive impact on the public in general including those with protected characteristics by reducing the adverse effects of winter weather.
Prosperous Place	The Council is committed to providing a winter maintenance service that will help to enhance Aberdeen as a place to invest, live and visit. An effective winter maintenance service will also make the city safer for all road and transport users.

Enabling Technology	The Council is committed to examining technological and innovative methods to solve winter maintenance problems and to communicate with the public regarding ongoing treatments.
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Design Principles of Target Operating Model	
	Impact of Report
Customer Service Design	The proposed enhancements to the winter service outlined in section 3.0 are beneficial to the customer engagement and needs.
Organisational Design	The use of self-help principal is a move away from being a provider to the customer to facilitating engagement with the customer.
Governance	This report seeks to comply with the Governance Principles set out in the Target Operating Model.
Workforce	This report seeks to comply with the Workforce Principles set out in the Target Operating Model.
Process Design	This report seeks to adopt appropriate national standards to help comply with the Processes Principles set out in the Target Operating Model.
Technology	The proposed future developments seek to use technology to embrace new ways of undertaking the works and drive savings and additionally keeping the customer informed.
Partnerships and Alliances	The winter service seeks to use joint working across and outwith the organisation to deliver the service.

8. IMPACT ASSESSMENTS

Assessment	Outcome
Equality & Human Rights Impact Assessment	Full EHRIA included.
Data Protection Impact Assessment	Not Required.
Duty of Due Regard / Fairer Scotland Duty	Not applicable.

9. BACKGROUND PAPERS

<http://councilcommittees.acc.gov.uk/documents/s94669/Detrunking%20Committee%20Report%20final.pdf>

10. APPENDICES (if applicable)

Roads Winter Service Plan 2019-20

Road Maintenance Hierarchy

Priority 1 Gold Routes

Priority 1 Silver Routes.

Plan of Link and Local Roads to be assessed for Priority 2 and 3 treatment

List of Link and Local Roads to be assessed for Priority 2 and 3 treatment

EHRIA

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