

ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL

COMMITTEE	Operational Delivery Committee
DATE	10 th September 2020
EXEMPT	No
CONFIDENTIAL	No
REPORT TITLE	Roads Winter Service Plan 2020-2021
REPORT NUMBER	OPE/20/114
DIRECTOR	Rob Polkinghorne – Chief Operating Officer
CHIEF OFFICER	Mark Reilly
REPORT AUTHOR	Angus Maciver
TERMS OF REFERENCE	1.1.1,1.1.3,1.1.5

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

1.1 This report is intended to present Members with the proposed Roads Winter Service Plan and to explain changes from previous years.

2. RECOMMENDATION(S)

That the Committee: -

2.1 Approve the “Roads Winter Service Plan 2020/2021” (Appendix 1)

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 years' Roads Winter Service Plan is drawn up to maintain the significant update to the plan introduced in 2019/20. This update brought the local practices in line with national guidance and allowed for some significant budget savings.

While following the principles introduced in the 2019/20 Service Plan, and treating the same roads, some adaptations, as set out in section 3.5, are required to accommodate proposed changes to depots over the coming months.

- 3.2 Consideration has been given to the possibility of pandemic restrictions, such as in the event of a second wave of Covid 19. These are to some extent outlined in section 3.11 of this report.

3.3 Winter 2019/20 Review

- 3.3.1 Last winter saw a significant change to how winter service was delivered with 10 revised priority one routes created incorporating the newly adopted detrunked sections of the A92 and A96 and the higher priority network within the city.

- 3.3.2 Feedback from the public on the revised routes was generally positive however with a relatively mild winter the extent of the changes may not have been fully apparent to road users. The issues raised by residents around the Anguston Road area were the main source of concern.

- 3.3.3 In 2019/20 Anguston Road was initially classified as a priority 2 gritting route as determined by its place on the Aberdeen City roads hierarchy (based on the national Code of Practice for roads – *Well Managed Highway Infrastructure*). This hierarchy considers such factors as strategic importance, usage, traffic flow volumes, etc.

Following the concerns raised the priority 2 prioritisation was reviewed and after much consideration it was concluded that almost all of the Anguston Road was correctly classified as a priority 2 route, however the sections of Anguston and Linn Moor Roads that service the special needs school were added to a priority one route.

It was also concluded that the gritting vehicle treating the priority 1 route servicing the strategic roads close to the Anguston area was operating at full capacity. Extending the priority 1 treatment to the Anguston Road would require either roads to be removed from the current route or the creation of a new route.

It is the opinion of officers that removing roads which are of greater hierarchical importance and which serve a greater number of residents would not be best practice and may increase the risk of litigation as this move could be considered as contrary to national guidance. The alternative of creating an additional route would add significant costs, in the order of £120,000 to the winter maintenance budget.

3.3.4 Winter 2019/20 saw the introduction of a split in priority 1 routes – 4 routes designated “Gold” and 6 routes designated “Silver. In total precautionary treatment was carried out on 65 days with a total of 714 completed routes (mix of gold and silver). There were 10 days on which gold routes were run but silvers were not. On 3 days gold and silver routes were completed and conditions warranted squads continuing to then work on priority two treatment areas. Footway treatments were carried out on 34 days.

3.4 Policy

Subject to any changes required as a result of the Covid 19 pandemic it is proposed to continue operating the policy as revised and applied in 2019/20. The 2019/20 revisions delivered a significant budget saving albeit during a relatively mild winter.

3.5 Route changes

3.5.1 The 2020/21 Service Plan proposes only minor changes to the accepted 2019/20 routes. The ongoing installation of temporary measures that are being placed in throughout the city to accommodate social distancing measures will necessitate frequent reviews and updates to routes. The exact extent and nature of the treatment required is difficult to gauge at this stage and is dependent on how the Covid pandemic develops. It is proposed to delegate the decisions on the treatments of these temporary measures to the Roads Operations Manager and the Roads Infrastructure Manager who will arrange for measures to be in place for the start of winter, these measures may be subject to further review if the pandemic affects the resources, in particular staff resources available. Section 7 Resilience of the Winter Service Plan offers guidance in these decisions with trigger points at which consideration for activating the reduced network treatment would be appropriate.

3.5.2 Following the decision to close the Peterculter Roads depot as approved at the Urgent Business Committee (June 30, 2020) route 10 will originate from the Bucksburn Depot. The gritter will travel the AWPR (A90 south) until its junction with the A944 where it will start the route, unaltered from last winter, before returning to the depot on the AWPR. There are no proposals to change the roads being treated on this route.

The following items 3.6 – 3.10 are reported to committee annually.

3.6 Salt Usage and Stocks

3.6.1 Salt stock levels have been taken back up to around 10,127 tonnes - this stock is to be topped up with regular programmed deliveries throughout winter.

Year	Starting Tonnage	Usage
17/18	10,624	15,321

18/19	11,531	6,166
19/20	11,911	7,208

3.6.2 Salt Bins

There are 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 would 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 1 tonne bags of salt for community use. The location of grit bins is based on historic requests. Twenty large capacity grit bins, introduced in late 2018, from which the public can collect salt remain in place.

3.6.3 Community Salt Bags

This scheme was introduced in 2012/13 to issue 1 tonne bags of salt to Community groups willing to carry out self-help winter treatment. A total of 180 bags were delivered to residents and community groups last year, down from 227 the year before. 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:

- 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 locations need to be accessible to the delivery lorry.
- 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 could occur from salt contamination of the ground.

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

3.6.4 Vehicles and Plant

Continued 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. The procurement of multiuse vehicles has proven to be the most cost-effective method of updating the fleet.

3.7 Service Provision Over Festive Period (subject to any pandemic restrictions)

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
Fri 18 Dec	Normal Day	Full Service
Sat 19 Dec	Normal Day	Standby + Response
Sun 20 Dec	Normal Day	Standby + Response
Mon 21 Dec	Normal Day	Full Service
Tues 22 Dec	Normal Day	Full Service
Wed 23 Dec	Normal Day	Full Service
Thur 24 Dec	Normal Day	Full Service
Fri 25 Dec	Public Holiday	Standby + Response
Sat 26 Dec	Public Holiday	Standby+ Response
Sun 27 Dec	Normal Day	Standby+ Response
Mon 28 Dec	Normal Day	Standby+Early Morning+ Response
Tues 29 Dec	Normal Day	Standby+Early Morning+ Response
Wed 30 Dec	Normal Day	Standby+Early Morning+ Response
Thur 31 Dec	Public Holiday	Standby + Response
Fri 1 Jan	Public Holiday	Standby + Response
Sat 2 Jan	Public Holiday	Standby + Response
Sun 3 Jan	Normal Day	Standby + Response

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 city centre priority footpath gritter routes.

Early Morning operations, if necessary, provides a treatment of the 6 Priority 1 Silver carriageway routes and 2 city centre 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.

3.8 Footways and Cycle Path Operations

Treatment of footways and cycle routes remain as per winter 2019/20.

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. 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 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 Priority 1 footways in a reasonable timescale.

Currently, once the Priority1 footways are treated further treatment is extended into the lower priority footways, 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.

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.

3.9 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 including gritter tracking showing where operations have been completed. The webpage will continue to be developed further as necessary.

3.10 Consultation

The following organisations are being consulted on the content of the Roads Winter Service Plan: Aberdeenshire Council, 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.

3.11 Pandemic resilience

3.11.1 There is a significant risk that the restrictions being applied to manage the current pandemic may impact the winter service in 2020/21. There is uncertainty regarding the measures that may be required to control the situation during the coming months in particular if further waves of the pandemic develop and if further restrictions are imposed on staff movements and the operation of the external parties that assist in the delivery of the service.

As an absolute minimum the service would wish to be able to cover all strategic gold routes with the aim to also cover silver routes and provide full priority one route coverage. It is possible that lockdown restrictions may limit the number of staff available to complete winter operations.

3.11.2 Route alterations due to pandemic measures

Route changes to accommodate the temporary network alterations required for pandemic control measures (e.g. temporary pedestrianisation of roads or one-

way systems) are being reviewed and short-term changes to the treatment routes being identified. Where a priority one road cannot be treated, or a road used to transit between priority one roads is not passable, routes will be altered to stick as closely as possible to the standard routes. Where a temporary restriction will lead to traffic being moved from a priority one road to a lower priority road, treatment of the lower priority road will be considered if the restrictions will mean that the lower priority road acts as if it were higher class of road – e.g. where bus routes are moved to alternate roads, these will be treated as per how the original road would have been treated. It is not currently known what the full extent of these temporary measures will be, however they are being monitored by officers so that suitably modified routes will be in place in time for winter operations.

3.11.3 Salt and other supply issues

There is a potential risk that the pandemic could result in supply issues for salt and other winter supplies. Current salt stocks are greater than the total salt used in any one of the last two winters. This means that in the event of a similar winter there should be adequate supply. Should winter 2020/21 be a harsh winter the current salt stocks may not be adequate. To mitigate this risk salt levels will be kept “topped-up” throughout the winter period, if however salt supplies are restricted treatment of non-strategic routes may have to be restricted to keep traffic flows along main roads and access to important establishment such as the main hospitals operating.

3.11.4 Staffing

Gritting operations can be completed whilst adhering to social distancing measures. Gritters can be loaded and operated without the need to any staff-staff contact. Where there may be a need for multiple operatives to drive the same vehicle within a 72-hour period the vehicle will be wiped down with disinfectant spray to mitigate the chances of any contamination. Starting times for staff may be staggered in order to minimise the number of people in the yard at any given time. Should Covid 19 affect a significant number of the frontline staff resilience measures may have to be applied.

Frontline staff involved in the delivery of the winter service are to be offered the seasonal flu vaccine and support staff are to be offered the vaccine or directed to the proposed NHS vaccination campaign. These measures should reduce the number of staff developing seasonal flu and consequently being unavailable for works while unnecessarily implementing Coronavirus protective measures.

3.11.5 Resilience measures.

Resilience measures have been included in Section 7 Resilience of the Roads Service Plan for several years. This section of the plan is in place to allow managers to respond to extreme circumstances that may have a major adverse impact on the provision of the winter service. The measures delegate to Roads Operations Manager and the Roads Infrastructure Manager the authority to alter the level of service to be provided in response to circumstances that cannot be currently forecast or to seek additional resources to deliver the

required level of service. Pandemics are a typical example of such circumstances. If staff numbers are significantly reduced such measures may include.

- Restricting treatment to Priority 1 Gold or Gold/Silver routes
- Restricting the level of service to the capacity of the available resources.
- Dedicate further available resources to the service delivery.

The service plan includes trigger points at which it would be reasonable to consider the introduction of resilience measures.

4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

4.1 Non Covid related expenditure is anticipated to be around the Council's approved Revenue budgets for Winter Maintenance and Emergencies 2020/21 of £1.574M. The expenditure relating to Covid control measures is currently unclear and is not currently allocated within the Roads Revenue budget.

4.2 It should be noted that the expenditure for the previous three winters has been £1.339M in 2019/2020, £1.729M in 2018/2019, £2.333M and in 2017/2018. The outturn expenditure is 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.

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

Category	Risk	Low (L) Medium (M) High (H)	Mitigation
Strategic Risk	The current pandemic has the potential to affect the deliver of the winter service in many ways.	High	The Service Plan incorporates measures that will allow increased flexibility by delegates in extreme circumstances to the Roads Operations Manager and the Roads Infrastructure Manager the authority to adjust the level of service to respond to circumstances including responding to pandemic control measures.

Compliance	The legal requirement and basis for a Roads Winter Service Plan has been in place for many years. What is considered an adequate Winter Service Plan changes in line with national guidance. There is a risk that not following national guidance may open the council up to litigation.	Low	The winter service plan has been produced following the national guidance such as advice in the “Well managed Highway Infrastructure” Code of Practice. Staff also attend national seminars and discuss requirements with neighbouring authorities to rationalise treatments across the region.
Operational	The difficulty of distinguishing between seasonal flu and Covid 19 may become an issue during the seasonal flu season. This could result in an increase in the number of staff unnecessarily self-isolating, thereby reducing the staff available to deliver the service.	High	Staff directly involved in winter operations have for many years been offered seasonal flu vaccinations. Staff who work closely with frontline staff are to be offered flu vaccinations or directed to the increased vaccination programme proposed by the NHS.
Financial	Allocated Budget will only cover costs of a mild winter, overspend at times of high snowfall will require the allocation of additional budget	High	Make provision within the overall budgets for the possibility of additional expenditure being required if the winter is very cold.
Reputational	The delivery of the service is dependant on the availability of frontline staff. The risk of reduced staff numbers impacting on the service is likely to negatively impact on the council’s reputation.	Medium	Liaise with media team to make the public aware of service changes caused by Covid 19.
Environment / Climate	The risk to plants, trees, watercourses, bridges and other structures from overtreating the networks.	Low	There is a potential risk of overtreating the network with salt this can be mitigated by training the duty officers on the required level of treatment.

7. OUTCOMES

COUNCIL DELIVERY PLAN	
	Impact of Report
Aberdeen City Council Policy Statement	The proposals within this report support the delivery of Policy Statement 4 and 9 – Increase city centre footfall and maximising community benefits for major developments by making the use of the city centre and developments safer and easier to access during cold and wintery weather condition.
Aberdeen City Local Outcome Improvement Plan	
Prosperous Economy Stretch Outcomes	The proposals within this report support the delivery of LOIP Prosperous Economy Stretch Outcome 1 – 10% increase in employment across priority and volume growth sectors by 2026. By improving access and safety across the city during cold and wintery conditions.
Prosperous People Stretch Outcomes	The proposals within this report support the delivery of Prosperous People (adult) Stretch Outcomes 11 in the LOIP. Healthy life expectancy (time lived in good health) is five years longer by 2026 by allowing extended access to footway and cycle path network during the winter.
Prosperous Place Stretch Outcomes	The proposals within this report support the delivery of Prosperous Place Stretch Outcomes 14. Addressing climate change by reducing Aberdeen’s carbon emissions by 42.5% by 2026 and adapting to the impacts of our changing climate and 15. 38% of people walking and 5% of people cycling as main mode of travel by 2026 by improving traffic flows and therefore reducing vehicle exhaust emissions and encouraging people to use the footways and cycle path networks during cold and wintery weather.
Regional and City Strategies	<p>The proposals within this report support the Regional Transport Strategy by:</p> <p>Making the movement of goods and people within the north east and to/from the area more efficient and reliable.</p> <p>To improve connectivity within the north east, particularly between residential and employment areas.</p>

	To reduce the number and severity of traffic related accidents and improve personal safety and security for all users of transport.
UK and Scottish Legislative and Policy Programmes	The report sets out the requirements to fulfil the obligations set out in 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.

8. IMPACT ASSESSMENTS

Assessment	Outcome
Impact Assessment	Full EHRIA assessment included.
Data Protection Impact Assessment	Not required

9. BACKGROUND PAPERS

Code of Practice for Roads – *Well Managed Highway Infrastructure*

10. APPENDICES

Appendix 1 - Roads Winter Service Plan 2020-2021

Appendix 2 – EHRIA

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