

ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL

COMMITTEE	Enterprise, Planning & Infrastructure
DATE	11 September 2012
DIRECTOR	Gordon McIntosh
TITLE OF REPORT	Roads Winter Services Plan 2012-2013
REPORT NUMBER:	EPI/12/183

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

This report is intended to present Members with the proposed Winter Service Plan and to explain significant changes.

2. RECOMMENDATION(S)

- a) to note the content of this report
- b) to agree the "Roads Winter Service Plan" (Appendix A) for 2012-2013 (Appendix A "The Winter Service Plan" will be sent to Councillors as an electronic attachment)

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Expenditure will be in accordance with the Council's approved Revenue budgets for Winter Maintenance and Emergencies 2012-2013 of £1.512M. It should be noted that the expenditure for the previous three winters has been £2.12M in 2011-12, £2.08M in 2010-2011 and £2.4M in 2009-2010.

Salt, which is purchased, through Scotland Excel procurement, has increased this year from £29.25 per tonne to £30.27 per tonne. In an average winter 20,000 tonnes of salt will be used, this will increase our costs by an expected £20,000 during this financial year.

4. SERVICE & COMMUNITY IMPACT

This report has no direct implications in relation to Equalities & Human Rights Impact Assessment.

SOA & The Smarter City

1.v,xviii

Aberdeen is an attractive place to do business

2.vii

Aberdeen will have high quality employment opportunities for citizens

3.viii

Ensure education is appropriate to pupil needs and ensure pupils leave school with skills essential to living

5. OTHER IMPLICATIONS

Failure to have a robust “Roads Winter Service Plan” will leave the Council more vulnerable to 3rd party insurance claims.

6. REPORT

Aberdeen City Council, Winter Maintenance Specification and Winter Maintenance Plan have evolved over many years and are amended to reflect both national and local requirements.

This year’s amendments have been made to reflect: the following-

a) Salt Usage and Stocks

During both the winters of 09/10 and 10/11 salt demand outstripped supply on a National basis. During both these winters, Aberdeen City managed to control salt usage by starting the winter season with a healthy salt stock and by introducing salt resilience operations at an early stage in order to manage supplies.

Year	Starting Tonnage	Usage
09/10	13,493	25,476
10/11	14,076	19,799
11/12	15,986	8,088

This practice will be continued and the current stock level is **16,726T**

b) Winter Trials

The proposed trial of the chemical de-icing agent, Ecothaw was not possible during the winter 2011/12 as the trial conditions, hard packed snow and ice, did not occur. This de-icing agent is more effective at very low temperatures than salt and should be a useful addition to assist with winter treatment. There are still 24,000 litres in stock and the equipment is in place to carry out a trial this coming winter provided the appropriate conditions prevail.

Similarly the introduction of 1 Tonne bags of salt to communities was not progressed last year; this will be taken forward in 2012/13

c) Grit (Salt/ Sand Mix)

The use of grit causes problems and expense for both street sweeping and gully emptying. While stocks of grit will continue to be held, they will, given the consequences, only be used in extreme conditions.

De-icing agents, once suitably trialed, may provide a more acceptable alternative to the use of grit in very severe conditions.

d) Salt Bins

There are currently approximately 900 salt bins throughout the City. Every year there are demands for further boxes at new locations. Maintaining these boxes is a very labour intensive operation and to continually increase their numbers will only add to the current restocking problems. It is proposed to limit the number of extra grit bins this winter. 15 will be allocated from requests received during last winter and it is proposed that the number of additional bins being allocated this winter is limited to a further 15.

A review of existing bins will continue to be undertaken to ensure that they are still in an appropriate location, if not they will be removed and reallocated.

A scheme was introduced last winter to issue 1Tonne bags of salt to Community groups willing to carry out self help winter treatment. There was no uptake of this scheme, possibly because of the less severe winter. This scheme will be continued this winter but there are conditions that the bags need to be located in a secure place such as a resident's driveway as they are susceptible to theft and vandalism. The location also needs to be accessible to the Council delivery lorry. These bags hold a far greater quantity of salt than a salt bin, will therefore last longer and are relatively quick to replenish. While it is appropriate to encourage self help during severe winter weather, current staffing levels mean that it would not be possible to implement a more formal scheme of equipment issue so it is proposed that this scheme remains limited to the issue of salt only.

e) Vehicles and Plant

It has been practice for several years now for the City Council to purchase second hand lorry chassis (approx 6 years old) and to use re-furbished gritter bodies. This has proved to be the most cost effective option. Prior to last winter 2 second hand gritters were purchased and one gritter was hired for the winter period, with an additional gritter being hired for the Trunk Road route which ACC operate for BEAR. For the coming winter it is proposed to hire 2 gritters for the winter period and to hire 1 gritter for BEAR. There will not be any purchase of

replacement gritters this year. Consequently the winter fleet continues to age and this does have an effect on the condition and reliability of the vehicles.

f) Service Provision Over Festive Period

<u>DAY</u>	<u>STATUS</u>	<u>SERVICE AVAILABLE</u>
Mon 24 Dec	Normal Day	Full Service
Tues 25 Dec	Public Holiday	Standby + Nightshift
Wed 26 Dec	Public Holiday	Standby + Nightshift
Thurs 27 Dec	Normal Day	Standby + Early Morning + Nightshift
Fri 28 Dec	Normal Day	Standby + Early Morning + Nightshift
Sat 29 Dec	Week End	Standby + Nightshift
Sun 30 Dec	Week End	Standby + Nightshift
Mon 31 Dec	Public Holiday	Standby + Nightshift
Tues 1 Jan	Public Holiday	Standby + Nightshift
Wed 2 Jan	Public Holiday	Standby + Nightshift
Thurs 3 Jan	Normal Day	Full Service

Standby for Holidays consists of sufficient staff to operate the 10 Priority 1 carriageway routes and 2 Priority 1 footpath gritter routes. Standby provides up to a 10 hour service during the period 05:45 hrs to 19:00 hrs and can be utilized in different ways depending on the prevailing weather conditions.

Nightshift provides cover from 19.00 hrs until 06.00 hrs to the main arterial routes through the City. This operation does not include any operations within the housing estates. The exception to this is in an emergency situation

Early Morning shift provides a treatment of the 10 Priority 1 carriageway routes and 2 Priority 1 footpath gritter routes if necessary at 04:45 hrs and this shift will continue working until the end of the normal working day at 15:45 hrs

g) Public Information

An information section for Winter Operations was introduced to the Council Web Site 2 years ago. This provided information on gritter routes and live information on operations on the main routes. Prior to last winter a further section was added advising of weather and road conditions.

A total of 1527 contacts were made to this service. This is a lower rate than the previous winter and is a reflection on the public perception that the winter was not so severe. Analysis of the use of the website indicates a higher level of contact during severe weather.

h) City Voice 25th Questionnaire

A survey of the general public's satisfaction with the winter maintenance service was carried out.

A brief synopsis of the results of this survey is given here.

The first question asked whether or not the public were satisfied with certain aspect of the Council's winter maintenance performance. The results showed that approximately 75% of respondents showed a level of satisfaction with the gritting and snow clearing of main routes with approximately 9% showing a level of dissatisfaction. This result was reversed for side roads with approximately 25% showing a level of satisfaction and approximately 50% showing a level of dissatisfaction. This trend is not unexpected given that the focus of the winter service plan is on the treatment of main roads. It may be that this opinion is still influenced by the events of the previous two severe winters where residents experienced difficulties in side roads.

Panelists were then asked if they had seen the Roads Winter Service Plan 2011-12 and if they had how satisfied they were with the plan. Disappointingly only 6% of respondents had seen the plan and this is something the Roads Service will try to address by highlighting the link to the plan on the Council Website during the winter. The low number of respondents who had seen the plan (41) means that this result may not be particularly accurate. Of the 41 who responded 63% showed a level of satisfaction with 15% showing a level of dissatisfaction.

The next question asked panelists if they had used the Council Website in order to gain information on local weather conditions. A clear majority of 79% had not done so. Of the 137 respondents who had used the website, 79% had shown a level of satisfaction with only 4% showing a level of dissatisfaction.

The final question posed was to ask panelists to rate the Council's winter performance out of 10 with 1 being very poor and 10 being excellent. The results were grouped as poor (1-4), neutral (5-6) and good (7-10). This resulted in 50% rating the performance as good, 36% neutral and 14% poor.

Summary, there is reasonable satisfaction with the performance on main routes and dissatisfaction with the performance on side roads. This is to expected given current budget constraints which is also reflected in the present winter policy and it would be difficult to provide a greater level of service to the side roads. It may be that the introduction of issuing 1 Tonne bags of salt to communities could help to improve the perception of the service in minor roads. Given that a majority of the respondents who had read the Roads Winter Service Plan showed a level of satisfaction with it, then it may be that if more of the panelists were aware of the constraints of the plan then the level of dissatisfaction may be reduced. The easiest route to allow ready access to the plan is via the Council Website and a media brief will be prepared to highlight its availability. This will hopefully improve the low



figures for panelists accessing the website and give a truer picture of the satisfaction levels with both the website and the winter service plan. The questions will be asked on an annual basis as part of the Roads Asset Management Plan so that Roads Service can build up a picture of public opinion compared to the severity of the winter and address public concerns where possible.

7. BACKGROUND PAPERS

Bulletin "Winter Maintenance Operations 2011 -2012" 31st May 2012

<http://councilcommittees/mgConvert2PDF.aspx?ID=13900>

8. REPORT AUTHOR DETAILS

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