

ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL

COMMITTEE	Operational Delivery Committee
DATE	16 September 2021
EXEMPT	No
CONFIDENTIAL	No
REPORT TITLE	Roads Winter Service Plan 2021-2022
REPORT NUMBER	OPE/21/195
DIRECTOR	Rob Polkinghorne
CHIEF OFFICER	Mark Reilly
REPORT AUTHOR	Paul Davies
TERMS OF REFERENCE	1.1.1

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 This report is intended to present Members with the Roads Winter Service Plan for the coming winter and to highlight any significant changes.

2. RECOMMENDATION(S)

That the Committee: -

- 2.1 Approve the “Roads Winter Service Plan 2021/2022” (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 reviewed and amended annually to reflect both national and local requirements, changes in resource and guidance. This years’ Roads Winter Service Plan is an evolution of the service plan for 2020/21.
- 3.2 Consideration has been given to the possibility of pandemic restrictions returning, however the service believes this risk to be relatively low and one

which can be mitigated using processes and procedures developed for last winter, if required.

3.3 Route changes

3.3.1 The 2021/22 Service Plan reverts to the routes used for winter 2019/20. These have had minor alteration to account for the sites where Spaces for People remain but are otherwise unchanged and proved successful when last used. These routes are optimised to cover as much of the network as is possible with the resources available. Any requests for additions to the routes would require increased budget or the removal of roads from the routes. This would be against officer's advice.

3.3.2 The remaining Spaces for People areas will be treated as per winter 2020/21.

3.3.3 Last winter there were a number of enquiries in relation to Heathryfold Circle and officers agreed to review what might be possible to help residents of the area. Heathryfold Circle will continue to be treated as a top priority road once priority one routes have been completed (as part of the first phase of priority 2 roads).

Officers have identified two locations where it may be possible to place one tonne salt bags. The first location is on the verge area roughly opposite the block housing 216-226 Heathryfold Circle. The other is in the vicinity of the shop at 247 Heathryfold Circle. There are currently four permanent grit boxes in the area. Officers note that the east and northeast extents of Heathryfold Circle are furthest from grit boxes, however a site investigation found there to be nowhere in this area where a salt bag could be placed on any adopted asset without creating safety issues. Officers have identified that a number of properties in this area have substantial driveways and the service would be happy to provide one or two salt bags in the area (waiving the normal requirement for bags to be a reasonable distance apart). Any bags will require customers to apply for them and will not be delivered automatically.

The following items 3.4 – 3.10 are reported to committee annually.

3.4 Salt Usage and Stocks

Salt stock levels have been taken back up to around 11,750 tonnes - this stock is to be topped up with regular programmed deliveries throughout winter.

Year	Starting Tonnage	Usage
18/19	11,531	6,166
19/20	11,911	4,500
20/21	11,750	11,760

3.5 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 continue to promote the 1 tonne salt bag scheme for community use. Twenty large capacity grit bins, introduced in late 2018, from which the public can collect salt remain in place. These “community bins” have been poorly utilised and it is the intention to further promote them in a bid to encourage customers to collect salt for their location. With these bins being easier and more efficient to fill, there is a service benefit to their use.

3.6 Community Salt Bags

- 3.6.1 This scheme has been run for 9 years now and has proven popular and effective. The media team will help promote the scheme and the benefits it provides to the public. Officers were asked to investigate the relaxation of the current scheme guidelines for winter 2021/22. A thorough review of the scheme has been undertaken and some relaxation of the scheme conditions can be made however, legal, logistic, safety and budgetary constraints limit the degree to which the scheme can be expanded.
- 3.6.2 The service has had requests to investigate the possibility of placing salt bags on adopted roads or footways. Unfortunately, there are negative implications associated with placing an obstacle on an adopted carriageway. These can be potential hazards to road and network users, especially vulnerable groups such as the blind and partially sighted. Adequate space must also always be left for vulnerable road users such as those in wheelchairs, as well as those with prams and so on. This severely reduces the number of locations where this would be a viable option.
- 3.6.3 One of the reasons that all bags have been required to be on private land and have a named contact is that this encourages ownership of the resource. Where there is no ownership, such as if the bag were to be placed on public land, there is a fear that bags would not be monitored and may be liable to theft and misuse, as well as potentially being allowed to empty where upon they could be blown around by the wind and create a new hazard on the network.
- 3.6.4 On recently adopted roads where developers have left grit bins – these are not adopted when the road is – we may be able to offer to drop a bag beside the unadopted bin in order for residents to fill it themselves. This would only be possible where there is adequate space around the bin to allow the bag to be placed without causing obstruction and ideally where the bag can be placed on land that has not been adopted.
- 3.6.5 Applications will be considered at the end of a foot/carriageway where there is no through traffic that would be affected by the placement of a bag. Such sites would need to be in very close proximity to the applicants home address to ensure the bags were monitored.
- 3.6.6 Bags will not be placed where there is another grit resource in close proximity, however in steeper areas we will allow bags to be placed closer as we understand there is a greater need in these areas.

3.6.7 While these steps will be taken to open the scheme, care is required not to open the scheme to the extent that a demand is generated which outstrips what the service has the resource to provide.

3.6.8 The revised guidelines are found within the winter service plan and will be published on the Council webpage.

- 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 a large 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.

3.6.9 The cut-off date for applications is the 1st of November 2021, after which applications will not be processed due to the additional demand this places on the service at this time of year. The media team will make the public aware of this well in advance of winter. While the scheme will run until the 1st of November, we would encourage applications as soon as possible as this helps to ensure the scheme runs as efficiently as possible.

3.7 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. This year sees the first use of a fleet of new footway gritters which replace an ageing fleet and should provide greater reliability.

3.8 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 17 Dec	Normal Day	Full Service
Sat 18 Dec	Normal Day	Standby + Response
Sun 19 Dec	Normal Day	Standby + Response
Mon 20 Dec	Normal Day	Full Service
Tues 21 Dec	Normal Day	Full Service
Wed 22 Dec	Normal Day	Full Service
Thur 23 Dec	Normal Day	Full Service
Fri 24 Dec	Normal Day	Full Service
Sat 25 Dec	Public Holiday	Standby+ Response
Sun 26 Dec	Public Holiday	Standby+ Response

Mon 27 Dec	Normal Day	Standby+Early Morning+ Response
Tues 28 Dec	Normal Day	Standby+Early Morning+ Response
Wed 29 Dec	Normal Day	Standby+Early Morning+ Response
Thur 30 Dec	Public Holiday	Standby + Response
Fri 31 Dec	Public Holiday	Standby + Response
Sat 1 Jan	Normal Day	Standby + Response
Sun 2 Jan	Normal Day	Standby + Response

The Response team consists of up to 6 roadworkers providing 24 hours of cover per day, 7 days per week. 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.

3.9 Footways and Cycle Path Operations

Treatment of footways and cycle routes remain as per winter 2020/21.

3.9.1 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. Treatment should begin on footways early mornings so that they may be completed prior to the footways becoming busy with pedestrians. Treatment is not safe or practical once footways become busy.

3.9.2 Footway treatment operations are completed in conjunction with the Grounds Service who support the Roads Service during winter operations and without whom we would be unable to provide the current levels of service.

3.9.3 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 when these footways will be completed.

3.10 Public Information

3.10.1 An information section for Winter Operations is included on the Council's web site and 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.

3.10.2 In recent years the Roads Service has worked closely with the ACC media team to put more winter information into the public domain. This has helped minimise enquiries and complaints from the public and is something that the service will look to grow for the coming winter. The media team will continue to issue a daily winter service update (Mon-Fri) to elected members to keep them abreast of operations.

3.10.3 One issue that became apparent during winter 2020/21 was that salt was being misused with customers often attempting to use it to clear snow. Salt is not an effective snow clearance method and should not be used for this purpose. The amount of salt being used to treat areas for ice was also often excessive. This meant that salt bins and salt bags were emptied prematurely. Prolonged periods of winter weather meant that staff were occupied with gritting and snow clearance and were not able to refill bins as quickly as requests came in. This winter we will continue to work with the media team to educate customers on appropriate salt use and how little salt is needed to treat relatively large areas. We hope that this will help reduce issues encountered last winter where salt bins and bags ran out, often unnecessarily.

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 Resilience

3.11.1 There is a residual risk that the restrictions that have been applied previously to manage the pandemic may be still in place or be reintroduced and may impact the winter service in 2021/22. While we hope this does not transpire, the service is able to move back to an operating model as per last winter if required.

3.11.2 Were such events to take place, 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.

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 cover the total salt used in either of the last two winters (should levels fall to 4485 tonnes – resilience levels - resilience measures may be activated). This means that in the event of a similar winter there should be adequate supply, although a winter similar to winter 2020/21 would see levels run extremely low were no further supplies able to be procured. Should winter 2021/22 be a harsher winter than winter 2020/21, 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, should these be reintroduced. Gritters can be loaded and operated without the need of any staff-staff contact. 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. By the start of winter 2021/22 we anticipate the majority of operatives will have been 'double-vaccinated' against Covid-19.

We will continue to work jointly with our colleagues in ground, as we have done in previous years to facilitate service delivery.

3.11.5 Further 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 2021/22 of £1.57M. The expenditure relating to any potential Covid control measures is currently unclear and is not currently allocated within the Roads Revenue budget. This budget is unchanged from 2020/21.

4.2 It should be noted that the expenditure for the previous three winters has been £2.1M in 2020/21 £1.339M in 2019/20 and £1.729M in 2018/19. The outturn expenditure is heavily dependent on 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 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 delivery of the winter service in many ways.	Medium	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	Staff may contract Covid 19 and depending on how many were affected, there could be potential for service impact.	Medium	By the commencement of winter operations, most operatives will have been ‘double-vaccinated’ however it is acknowledged that this may not cover new variants of the virus and does not provide complete protection.
Financial	Allocated Budget will only cover costs of a mild winter,	High	Make provision within the overall budgets for the possibility of additional

	overspend at times of proloner or worse than average winter weather will require the allocation of additional budget		expenditure being required if the winter is more than averagely severe.
Reputational	The delivery of the service is dependant on the availability of frontline staff. The risk of reduced staff numbers impacting on the service would be likely to negatively impact on the council's reputation.	Low	Liaise with media team to make the public aware of any service changes as a result of Covid 19, should these occur.
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 3. Refresh the Local Transport Strategy, ensuring it includes the results of a city centre parking review, promotes cycle and pedestrian routes, and considers support for public transport.	Continue to work to facilitate safe transport for customers during winter weather events.
Aberdeen City Local Outcome Improvement Plan	
Prosperous Economy Stretch Outcomes	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 Stretch Outcomes	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.

Regional and City Strategies	The proposals within this report support the Strategic Regional Transport Strategy facilitating safe winter transport links for the benefits of communities and businesses.
UK and Scottish Legislative and Policy Programmes	The winter service plan considers the guidance of the National Winter Service Research Group (NWSRG) and Society of Chief Officers of Transport in Scotland (SCOTS) and our statutory obligations under the Roads (Scotland) Act 1984.

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 2021-2022

Appendix 2 – IIA

11. REPORT AUTHOR CONTACT DETAILS

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