

From: David Brazier, Cabinet Member Environment and Transport
John Burr, Director of Highways, Transportation and Waste

To: Environment & Transport Cabinet Committee – 17 September 2014

Subject: 14/00104 Winter Service Policy for 2014/15

Classification: Unrestricted

Past Pathway of Paper: N/A

Future Pathway of Paper: For Cabinet Member Decision

Electoral Division: All electoral divisions

Summary: Each year Highway Operations reviews the Council's Winter Service Policy and the operational plan that supports it in light of changes in national guidance and lessons learnt from the previous winter. This report sets out revisions to this year's policy and details of arrangements for delivering the winter service including procurement of the ice prediction service.

Recommendation: The Cabinet Committee is asked to consider, endorse or make recommendations for the proposed changes to the Winter Service Policy for 2014/15 for the Cabinet Member to agree.

1. Introduction

The winter of 2013/14 was characterised by extreme flooding across the country and in many parts of Kent. For the first time since 2009 there were no snow days during the winter period. However there were still a good number of days and nights where there were marginal temperatures hovering around zero degrees. This led to 70 primary salting runs being undertaken – 39 full runs covering all of Kent and 31 part runs. There were no secondary runs.

2. Financial implications

The allocated budget for winter service for 2014/15 is £3,219,000, £20,000 of this was allocated for the purchase of additional salt bins.

3. National guidance and winter planning

(1) Last year the Highway Operations winter service team started working to implement the National guidance for winter service issued by the Department for Transport and detailed in the Code of Practice for highway authorities – Well Maintained Highways - section 13 Winter Service. The appendix to this section of the guidance – Appendix H – has been updated and amended as a result of lessons being learnt in the industry over four successive cold and snowy winters.

(2) During the summer work was done to further refine and improve the winter service; this work focused on three key areas

- a route optimisation programme,
- assessing areas of Appendix H to implement this coming winter and
- the procurement of the weather station contract

4. Route Optimisation

(1) The aim of the activity was to optimise the existing gritting routes for the county and develop an in-house capability so that routes can be updated and amended without the necessity of asking consultants for help. Specifically we wanted to:

- achieve new optimised gritting routes that are as efficient as possible with minimum dead running time.
- have the ability to group routes according to their thermal properties, and topographical features of the area in order to carry out what if and planning scenarios. This will support the decision making process to treat only routes that will be required on marginal nights.
- Potentially achieve an overall reduction in the current number of primary salting routes, vehicle mileage and salt usage

(2) To date the primary routes have been optimised so that we are sure that they are carried out efficiently and effectively. All drivers will be issued with a route card that will detail the order in which the route should be done. This exercise as well as improving our efficiency will eliminate as far as possible, driver error in omitting parts of the route.

(3) Further work will be done in the coming months to group routes according to thermal properties with the expectation that this will be implemented for the 2015/16 winter season.

5. Winter resilience

(1) Well Maintained Highways recommends that local authorities identify a minimum network that would be treated continuously for a period of six days in the event of a severe winter event. Last year we identified the minimum network for Kent as being the main strategic network, i.e. all A and B roads and some other locally important roads as identified in the highway network hierarchy and amended the policy accordingly. Essentially, these equate to the current primary routes minus the local roads and roads that go through estates etc. H&T will always endeavour to treat the entire primary network as identified in the policy. However we recognise that there may be times as experienced in previous years where it will be necessary to reduce the network as stated above to maintain our salt stock levels and keep the main roads in Kent moving during protracted winter weather events.

(2) Additionally we have identified an Operational Winter Period which is October to April and a Core Winter Period which is December to February and the stocks of salt needed during those periods to effectively treat the network in line with recommended resilience levels. The resilience levels are shown at Appendix A. We maintain a salt stock of 23,000 tonnes so we are well within the recommended resilience level. Arrangements are in place for winter deliveries to keep us topped up

during winter and 2000 tonnes are held in a strategic stockpile at Faversham Highway depot.

6. Collaboration with neighbouring authorities

In previous years good relationships have been established with the Highways Agency MAC Area 4 who manage the trunk roads and motorways in Kent. KCC shares two depots with the HA and there has been a reciprocal salt sharing arrangement for some time which has worked very well. Additionally there is an arrangement with Medway Council in respect of the weather forecast and treating areas on the borders of Kent and Medway. We also have good working relationships with adjacent local authorities who we can work with in the event that mutual aid is required during a snow emergency.

7. Farmers

The farmers we currently have contracted to clear our rural areas when we have snow conditions provide an extremely valuable service. All farmers have agreed routes to clear, usually in rural areas, village centres etc. They are provided with KCC ploughs. Last year we intended to carry out a trial by providing a few farmers with a trailer and salt so that they could treat areas that they have in the past just ploughed. The trial did not go ahead as there was no snow event; dependent on the weather it will be trialled this season. The results of the trial will be reviewed at the end of the season and decisions taken about how it can be taken forward in future years.

8. Media and communication

Following the successful winter service campaign 'We're prepared are/have you?' which was run across the county in 2012/13, a similar campaign was planned for last year. Work is ongoing to continue this for the coming season and again the website and radio advertising will be key in getting the winter message across the county as well as Twitter which proved to be very popular in the past. The campaign will increase awareness of the service and also to encourage people to be prepared and undertake self-help when possible. This year the media – radio, television and press – will be provided with media briefs in advance of the winter season detailing the essentials of the winter service. Key staff in H&T are working with the press office to prepare statements and press releases for rapid issue at the onset of winter conditions. These will be pre-approved for use during periods of severe conditions when the winter service delivery team will be busy

9. Forecast and ice prediction service

At the time of writing this report the ice prediction service currently provided by Vaisala was out to tender and a new three year contract will be placed once the process has been completed.

10. Winter Service Policy and Plan 2013/14

The Winter Service Policy is presented at Appendix B. The Winter Service Policy is supported by an operational Plan which has been updated in line with the Policy and discussions have been had with our contractor Amey to ensure that plans are aligned. The Plan is available for Members to view on request. In addition district

plans have been developed in conjunction with district councils across the county and these will be used together with the Policy and Plan to deliver the winter service. Local district plans will be reported to the next round of Joint Transportation Boards.

11. Conclusion

The Winter Service Policy sets out the councils arrangements to deliver a winter service across Kent. The following revisions have been made this year:

- (a) Primary routes have been optimised leading to greater efficiency and effectiveness of the service
- (b) The ice prediction service has been put out to tender for a three year contract
- (c) A trial with some farmers salting key routes through villages in addition to ploughing

12. Recommendation:

The Cabinet Committee is asked to consider, endorse or make recommendations for the proposed changes to the Winter Service Policy for 2014/15 for the Cabinet Member to agree.

13. Background documents

The UK Road Liaison Group's Well Maintained Highways - Section 13 Winter Service
<http://www.ukroadsliaisongroup.org/en/UKRLG-and-boards/uk-roads-board/wellmaintained-highways.cfm>

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Appendix A

Minimum Salt Stock

Minimum Stock					
Routes	Normal salting network	Minimum Winter Network (tonnes/run)	Full season stock (12 days/48 runs)	Pre winter Core period 6 days/36 runs	Overall winter period Minimum Network(3 days/18 runs)
Primary	350	350	16,800	12,600	6,300
Secondary	300	0	0	1800	5400
Total			16,800	14,400	11,700

Overall winter period - 18th October to 25th April

Core winter period - 1st November to 1st March

Days resilience (overall winter period) 3 days

Days resilience (core winter period) 6 days

The minimum in season stocks are the minimum to which stocks should be allowed to fall, i.e. restocking should take place well before the minimum is likely to be reached