

From: Mike Whiting, Cabinet Member for Planning, Highways, Transport and Waste

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To: Environment and Transport Cabinet Committee – 10 October 2019

Subject: Winter Service Policy for 2019/20

Classification: Unrestricted

Past Pathway of Paper: N/A

Future Pathway of Paper: N/A

Electoral Division: All

Summary: Each year we review 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.

Recommendation: The Cabinet Committee is asked to discuss and comment on the report and the proposed workplan to implement lessons learned from recent winter service delivery, specifically to implement the changes to the Winter Service Policy at:

(s.5.2) For the 2019/20 season, 23 primary salting routes will be utilising in-cab technology with digitised salting routes pre-programmed into a navigation unit. These will run on identified primary routes.

(8.1.3) From October 2019 all salt bins will have a unique number that will be utilised by the contractor for filling and will assist members of the public to accurately report empty bins.

1. Introduction

1.1.1 The 2018/19 winter was milder than average with 56 primary routes completed compared with the budgeted 66 runs. There was one day of snow which did not necessitate a snow emergency being declared. However, farmers in affected areas were deployed and cleared snow from affected roads.

2. Financial implications

2.1 The allocated budget for winter service for 2019/20 is £3,268,100. The budget is broken down as follows:

Pre-Salting Gritting Operation	1,182,200
Plant & Equipment	1,745,500
Snowex Machines	139,300
Maintenance Of Farmers Ploughs	50,000
Weather Forecasting	20,000
Ice Prediction	40,000
Supply & Maintain Salt Bins	71,100
Supply Of Salt To Districts	10,000
Publicity Campaign	10,000
TOTAL	£3,268,100

3. Winter planning

3.1 Over the 2019 summer period work has been done to further refine and improve the winter service. This work focused on:

- Smart Winter project
- Route optimisation
- Salt bin identification labels
- Replacement of brine saturators and commissioning

3.2 Phase 2 of the Smart Winter project is for “Navtrak” in cab technology which automates the gritting process to ensure that only the critical areas of the primary network are salted and only with the correct spread rates of salt. This technology will be in place for the start of the 2019/20 winter season. During the summer, 23 primary routes were digitised using the “Map a Route” system which incorporates OS mapping and street gazetteer information to develop the routes. Once completed they were checked by local highway engineers for accuracy. These routes have been uploaded into Navtrak units in 23 gritters which provides the following benefits:

- in-cab audio and visual route navigation
- stores all the routes on board
- provide immediate support to drivers
- reduces wrong turns and mileage
- guarantee route adherence

3.3 Phase 2a of the project will continue the route optimisation process using the data from the 120 sensors out on the network. The continuation of the project will lead to more data on which to base any future optimisation. All primary routes will also be digitised so that when funding becomes available, Navtrak can be installed in the whole gritting fleet.

3.4 Salt bin identification labels. There are nearly 3000 salt bins across the county and these provide an essential means of self-help for communities during snow and ice events. This year in addition to the

existing labels each salt bin will be given a unique reference number. This will enable customers to report empty bins and also ensure that inspections and refills can be accurately recorded in the highways asset management system.

- 3.5 Replacement brine saturator procurement. The brine saturator units produce brine which is a simple mixture of water and salt (NaCl). The brine is used with dry salt to form the treatment that is used across the network. Following a successful procurement 6 new saturator units were installed in the highway depots. These were commissioned during September 2019 and will be fully operational for commencement of the winter season on 25th October 2019.

4. Winter resilience

- 4.1 As with previous years, 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 minimum levels of salt needed to maintain the resilient network (as defined in the Quarmby review 2012) are shown at Appendix A. We maintain a salt stock of 23,000 tonnes (including 2,000 tonnes of a salt/grit mix which is held in a strategic stockpile at Faversham Highway depot) ensuring the recommended minimum levels are achieved. Arrangements are in place for salt deliveries during the winter to ensure we have the recommended resilience stock levels.
- 4.2 Agreements are in place whereby snowploughs are provided and maintained by KCC Highway and assigned to 114 local farmers and plant operators for snow clearance operations, generally on the more rural parts of the highway.

5. Collaboration with neighbouring authorities

- 5.1 Mutual aid arrangements are in place with Highways England Area 4 and Medway Council. The annual winter meeting with all south east highway authorities to finalise arrangements took place on 24th September at Surrey County Council. Key topics included winter route planning and mutual aid. There was also an agreement to consider joint winter training in future.
- 5.2 We offer free of charge 1 tonne salt bags to Parish Councils for them to self-help and we have in place arrangements with District and Borough Councils to clear town centres and footways during snow emergencies when normal operations are suspended.

6. Media and communication

- 6.1 As in previous years a media campaign will be used during the winter season. A series of infographics have been prepared which gives engaging information about the winter service. These will feature in a range of media, including social media.
- 6.2 The campaign will increase awareness of the service and also encourage everyone to be prepared and undertake self-help when possible. This year radio, television and press will be provided with media briefs in advance of the winter season detailing the essentials of the winter service.
- 6.3 Key staff in Highways 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.

7. Brexit

- 7.1 Preparations continue within KCC for the anticipated 31st October Brexit and winter service is included in those preparations. Whilst the exact impact on the road network is unknown at this time any additional congestion on the pre-salted routes will impact on the effectiveness of the service.

8. Winter Service Policy and Plan 2019/20

- 8.1 The Winter Service Policy is presented at Appendix B. The following additions have been made to this year's policy:
 - (s.5.2) For the 2019/20 season, 23 primary salting routes will be utilising in cab technology with digitised salting routes pre-programmed into a navigation unit. These will run on identified primary routes.
 - (8.1.3) From October 2019 all salt bins will have a unique number that will be utilised by the contractor for filling and will assist members of the public to accurately report empty bins.
- 8.2 The Winter Service Policy is supported by an Operational Plan which has been updated in line with the Policy and discussions have taken place with our Highway Maintenance Service Provider to ensure that plans are aligned.
- 8.3 The Plan is available for Members to view on request. In addition, officers have worked with districts on their respective operational local district plans and these will be reported to the next round of Joint Transport Boards.

9.. Strategic Statement

- 9.1 Winter service is essential to “Keep Kent Moving” for social and economic development reasons. It also contributes towards Kent residents having a good quality of life in all weathers through local district winter plans, the provision of salt bins and the communication strategy that complements the winter service policy.

10. Equality Impact Assessment

- 10.1 An equality impact assessment (EQIA) is being carried out on the Policy and if any negative impacts are identified, action will be taken to mitigate or remove them. The EQIA undertaken last year did not identify any factors that required mitigation or changes to the Policy.

11. Conclusion

- 11.1 The Winter Service Policy sets out the Councils arrangements to deliver a winter service across Kent. A few revisions have been made as set out above and detailed in the recommendations below.

12. Recommendations

- 12.1 The Cabinet Committee is asked to discuss and comment on the report and the proposed workplan to implement lessons learned from recent winter service delivery, specifically to implement the changes to the Winter Service Policy at:

(s.5.2) For the 2019/20 season, 23 primary salting routes will be utilising in-cab technology with digitised salting routes pre-programmed into a navigation unit. These will run on identified primary routes.

(8.1.3) From October 2019 all salt bins will have a unique number that will be utilised by the contractor for filling and will assist members of the public to accurately report empty bins.

13. Background documents

- Well Managed Highways 2016; Appendix H winter service guidance NWSRG: <http://www.ukroadsliaisongroup.org/en/codes/index.cfm>
- Appendix A: Minimum Salt Stock
- Appendix B: Winter Service Policy
- Appendix C: EqIA

14. Contact details

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