

From: John Burr – Director of Highways & Transportation

To: David Brazier, Cabinet Member – Transport & Environment

Decision No: 13/00061

Subject: Highways and Transportation Winter Service Policy for 2013/14

Classification: Unrestricted

Past Pathway of Paper: N/A

Future Pathway of Paper: For Cabinet Member Decision and future Joint Transportation Board reports

Electoral Division: All Kent divisions

Summary:

Each year Highways and Transportation reviews the Council's Highways and Transportation 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 proposed amendments following the review.

Recommendation(s):

That the Cabinet Member for Transport and Environment agree the changes to the Highways and Transportation Winter Service Policy for 2013/14.

1. Introduction

1 (1) The winter of 2012/13 was one of the most prolonged periods of cold weather experienced in Kent for many years. As a result of this the winter service period had to be extended for two weeks and the last salting run of the season was 27th April.

National guidance for winter service delivery by highway authorities is 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. Earlier this year a series of seminars were held across the country to publicise the new guidance and officers from H&T and Enterprise staff attended.

Much of the guidance provided has long been incorporated in the Highways and Transportation (H&T) winter service policy and plan. However some of the technical recommendations (including issues such as vehicle calibration and salt storage) will be looked at and incorporated over the next few years into the planning for the Kent winter service. Guidance on decision making for salting runs has also been provided and a matrix has been developed for use this winter season by Winter Duty Officers.

2. Financial Implications

2. (1) The allocated budget for winter service for 2013/14 is £3,299,900, £20,000 of this was allocated for the purchase of additional salt bins.

3. Bold Steps for Kent and Policy Framework

3. (1) The revisions to the winter service policy meet the objectives of the Council's medium term plan for 2014/15, Bold Steps for Kent. One of the priorities of Bold Steps is to ensure that the Council gets ever greater value for money from our services and seeks more efficient provision of those services. The proposals for the winter service policy support this approach. Working in partnership with other authorities contributes towards achieving a better service and value for money for Kent residents.

3. (2) Putting the citizen in control will be achieved by continuing to provide salt bags to parishes who request them. Salt bins will continue to be provided across the county. Advice on how people in the Kent community can self help during winter conditions will also be included on the website, including road safety tips.

3. (3) The service aims to ensure a safe operational highway network thus providing access to KCC services for all.

4. Winter resilience

4. (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 H&T 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 but recognise that there may be times as experienced in previous years where it will be prudent to reduce the network as stated above to maintain our salt levels and keep the main roads in Kent moving as much as possible

4. (2) Additionally H&T 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. H&T has 23,000 tonnes in stock 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.

5. Collaboration with neighbouring authorities

5. (1) 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.

6. Farmers

6. (1) 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. This year as a trial we are providing a few farmers with a trailer and salt so that they can treat areas that they have in the past just ploughed. The results of this trial will be reviewed at the end of the season and decisions taken about how it can be taken forward in future years.

7. Media and communication

7. (1) Last year a successful winter service campaign 'We're prepared are/have you?' was run across the county. The campaign was designed to increase awareness of the service and also to encourage people to be prepared and use self-help when possible. The winter page on the website was well used with a peak of over 28,000 hits on Sunday 20th January and 64,516 hits in total for that month. This compares with 35,831 in February last year when we had a snow emergency. Additionally visits to the dedicated winter pages increased by 58%. A similar campaign has been designed for the coming year and we will continue to work closely with the media and use Twitter which proved to be a very successful communication tool this year.

8. Forecast and ice prediction service

8. (1) Last year a three year contract was awarded to Meteogroup for the supply of the winter weather forecast. At the time of writing this report the ice prediction service currently provided by Vaisala was out to tender and details of the new provider will be presented verbally at the committee meeting.

9. Winter Service Policy and Plan 2013/14

9. (1) 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 Enterprise plc to ensure that plans are aligned. The Plan is available for Members to view on request from Highways and Transportation. 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.

10. Conclusion

10. (1) The Winter Service Policy sets out Highways and Transportation's arrangements to deliver a winter service across Kent. The following revisions have been made this year:

(a) Salt bins will be identified on a map on Kent.gov – Find my Nearest..

(b) A new one year contract to provide an ice prediction service will be in place for the start of the winter service season

(c) A trial with some farmers salting key routes through villages in addition to ploughing

11. Recommendation(s)

Recommendation(s):

11. The Cabinet Member for Transport and Environment is asked to note the proposed changes to the Highways and Transportation Winter Service Policy for 2013/14.

12. Background documents

12. (1) The UK Road Liaison Group's Well Maintained Highways - Section 13 Winter Service

<http://www.ukroadsliasongroup.org/en/utilities/document-summary.cfm?docid=C7214A5B-66E1-4994-AA7FBAC360DC5CC7>

8. Contact details

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