

Individual Executive Member Decision

Title of Report:	2010/11 Highway Winter Service Plan
Report to be considered by:	Individual Executive Member Decision
Date on which Decision is to be taken:	11 November 2010
Forward Plan Ref:	ID2176

Purpose of Report: To seek approval of the 2010/2011 Highway Winter Service Plan

Recommended Action: That the Executive Member for Highways, Transport (operational) & ICT approves the 2010/11 Highway Winter Service Plan.

Reason for decision to be taken: Government guidance for highway management recommends the provision of an annually reviewed operational plan for winter service.

Statutory: **Non-Statutory:**
Other:

Other options considered: None

Key background documentation:

- The Overview and Scrutiny Management Commission's review of the 2009/10 Winter.
- UK Roads Group publication 'Lessons Learned from Severe Weather February 2009'.
- Well maintained Highways – Code of Practice for Highway Maintenance Management.
- The resilience of England's Transport Systems in Winter – Interim report July 2010. The Overview and Scrutiny Management Commission's

Portfolio Member Details	
Name & Telephone No.:	Councillor David Betts - Tel (0118) 942 2485
E-mail Address:	dbetts@westberks.gov.uk

Contact Officer Details	
Name:	Melvyn May
Job Title:	Highways Manager
Tel. No.:	01635 519873
E-mail Address:	mmay@westberks.gov.uk

Implications

Policy:	<p>To comply with best practice and the statutory duty to maintain the public highway in a safe condition, the Highways and Transport Service reviews and produces a Highway Winter Service Plan annually to set out its operational proposals for Members to consider.</p> <p>West Berkshire Council aims to provide as far as is reasonably practicable safe travelling conditions on the primary precautionary salting network during the winter service period when hoar frost and snow conditions are forecast.</p>
Financial:	<p>The cost of providing the call out service, providing salt bins and undertaking up to 50 primary precautionary salting runs on 500km of carriageway, is included in the 2010/2011 revenue budget. (There is no budget provision for salting of the secondary network, snow clearance operations or footways treatment).</p>
Personnel:	<p>None arising from this report.</p>
Legal/Procurement:	<p>Following a House of Lords ruling, the Council has had a statutory duty from 10 October 2003 to ensure, so far as reasonably practicable the safe passage along a highway is not endangered by snow or ice.</p> <p>The winter service is procured through the current Term Maintenance Contract for Highways and Bridges 2006 to 2014.</p>
Environmental:	<p>There are issues surrounding the impact of rock salt on the environment and these are addressed in the current term Highway Maintenance Contract for Highways and Bridges 2006 to 2014.</p>
Partnering:	<p>None arising from this report.</p>
Property:	<p>None arising from this report.</p>
Risk Management:	<p>None arising from this report.</p>
Community Safety:	<p>None arising from this report.</p>
Equalities:	<p>A Stage 1 Equality Impact Assessment has been prepared.</p>

Consultation Responses

Members:

- Leader of Council:** Councillor Graham Jones
- Overview & Scrutiny Management Commission Chairman:** Councillor Brian Bedwell led the OSMC review of the impact of, and response to, the severe weather experienced last winter. The commissions recommendations are addressed in this report.
- Select Committee Chairman:** Not applicable.
- Ward Members:** All Members were consulted on the draft Winter Service Plan and their comments incorporated within Appendix C of this report.
- Opposition Spokesperson:** Councillor Keith Woodhams has proposed some amendments which have been included.
- Local Stakeholders:** Various stakeholders including adjoining authorities, emergency services, Parish and Town Councils have been consulted on the plan. They were also previously consulted by the OSMC as part of its review. The draft gritting routes were displayed at the October 2010 District Parish Conference.
- Officers Consulted:** Mark Edwards, Gabrielle Esplin, David Holling, Jenny Graham, Carolyn Richardson
- Trade Union:** Not applicable.

NOTE: The section below does not need to be completed if your report will not progress beyond Corporate or Management Board.

Is this item subject to call-in.	Yes: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No: <input type="checkbox"/>
If not subject to call-in please put a cross in the appropriate box:		
The item is due to be referred to Council for final approval	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Delays in implementation could have serious financial implications for the Council	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Delays in implementation could compromise the Council's position	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Considered or reviewed by OSC or associated Task Groups within preceding 6 months	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Item is Urgent Key Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>	

Supporting Information

1. Background

- 1.1 The winter of 2009-2010 in Europe was unusually cold. In January 2010, the northern half of Europe experienced one of its coldest winters with the most widespread period of snowfall and cold weather since the winter of 1981/82.
- 1.2 The Met Office recorded the severe weather of winter 2009/10 as commencing on 17 December 2009. In West Berkshire there was a period of around 3 weeks of sustained severe winter weather, most noticeable in the heavy snowfalls of 21 December 2009 and 5 January 2010 which caused traffic chaos and left many motorists stranded.
- 1.3 Temperatures across West Berkshire were often below -10°C and daytime temperatures were rarely above freezing. The combination of the heavy snow, freezing temperatures and slow thaw prolonged the difficulties that were felt across the District.
- 1.4 Due to the severity of the 2009/10 winter weather, the Council's Overview and Scrutiny Management Commission (OSMC) undertook a detailed and comprehensive review of the effects of the weather and the response to it made by the Council and other organisations. Details of the review can be found in other reports, this report focuses on the recommendations that affect the highway network.
- 1.5 For a typical winter period, around 1000 tonnes of salt is used across the district, however, in 2008/09 around 2500 tonnes was used and in 2009/10 around 4,000 tonnes was used. Details of the contractors performance and the number of salting runs undertaken during the winter are provided in Appendices A and B. Despite the severe weather conditions Volker Highways delivered a good performance returning an average score of 99.1% for the winter period. i.e. 99.1% of routes were completed within the contract time of 3 hours under normal winter conditions.
- 1.6 Following national media reporting of widespread disruption to the transport network throughout the country as a result of a national shortage of salt during the 2008/09 winter, the Government requested the UK Roads Liaison Group to investigate what actually happened and a report titled 'Lessons Learned from the Severe Weather February 2009' was published in early August 2009.

This report produced 19 recommendations that between the Government, local authorities, contractors and salt suppliers should be adopted. Where appropriate and practicable the recommendations of the report were adopted by the Council last winter and will be again for 2010/11.

2. OSMC Review

- 2.1 The OSMC held several meetings following the 2009/10 winter, interviewing a number of council officers and representatives of other organisations such as Thames Valley Police, South Central Ambulance Service, Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service, Public transport companies and several Parish/Town Council's. At the end of the review, 19 recommendations were made. 6 of these were the

responsibility of the Head of Highways and Transport to implement and can be summarised as follows:

- Review the Winter Service Plan specifically examining gritting routes and contingency plans
- Increase the Council's salt storage to 4,000 - 5,000 tonnes
- Review the Council's salt bin policy
- Develop and implement an appropriate communication strategy
- Explore the engagement of local farmers to provide assistance with snow clearance
- Establish procedures to allow other contractors staff to be redirected to snow clearance

2.2 A brief update on each of the 6 recommendations is provided as follows:

Review the Winter Service Plan

The gritting routes have been reviewed and amended to ensure that wherever practicable the roads leading to schools and doctors surgeries are treated when snow is forecast. Whilst many of these establishments are served by roads that also form part of the Primary network it isn't possible to include them all. Details of roads added to the Primary and Secondary gritting routes as a result of this exercise are detailed in Appendix C.

The winter policy has been clarified in respect of treatment of footways during periods of heavy snow. The intention of this policy amendment is that in the event of snow being forecast, town centre footways will be treated earlier by Environment Directorate contractors which will assist with the subsequent removal of any snow accumulations. Footways leading to subways have also now been specifically included.

Salt Stock

During July 2010 the Council's salt stock was increased to 5,000 tonnes. To put this into perspective around 4,000 tonnes was used last winter. The Head of Service took action early in the year with the assistance of Volker Highways Ltd to ensure that an adequate stockpile was in place for the 2010/11 winter. In the 7 October 2010 edition of the New Civil Engineer magazine it was reported that 'nearly one in five Councils in England and Wales were still without salt they had ordered for the gritting season.' This was based on a survey by the Local Government Association.

Salt Bin Policy

In July 2010 officers wrote to every Town and Parish Council in West Berkshire to seek views on the provision and maintenance of salt bins. After a period of 2 months, approximately 40% had responded. The review has prompted a revised policy where the Council will place out the usual number of bins this winter but if the local council would like any additional bins, they can be provided at their expense. All refilling will be managed and paid for by West Berkshire Council. A letter to this effect was sent to all Parish and Town Councils on 5 October 2010.

Communication Strategy

To ensure adequate communications regarding the use of salt in bins, a label will be provided on every bin with appropriate advice. Information on the Council's website is also being improved this year. The Governments Winter Resilience

Review, chaired by David Quarmby, published its final report in October 2010. The report, which makes 17 recommendations covering winter gritting, the road salt supply chain, public expectations and weather forecasting, also mentions self-help by the public. On this latter point David Quarmby has confirmed that a simple code of practice will be produced by the Government (and distributed by local authorities) setting out clear advice for self help and, if observed, guard the public against negligence claims. A copy of the guidance is included in the Winter Service Plan and has been distributed to all Members and Parish/Town Councils.

Engagement of local farmers

Earlier in the year officers met with the representative of an organisation called the Thames and Kennet Machinery Ring (TKMR). TKMR is a co-operative of agricultural and allied businesses for this region and who expressed an interest in forming an arrangement whereby local farmers could be employed, in effect as sub-contractors, to the Council's main highway contractor. Discussions are still ongoing and the Winter Plan will be updated as soon as a formal outcome is achieved.

Redirection of contractors staff

The arrangement whereby staff from Veolia and Waterers can be utilised to assist with snow clearing has been formalised and will be operational for this winter.

3. Operational Arrangements for Winter 2010/2011

- 3.1 The Winter Service period for 2010/2011 will operate from Monday 1 November 2010 to Sunday 2 April 2011, although this period may be extended if weather conditions dictate.
- 3.2 Precautionary salting, snow clearance, salt bin provision and the response to adverse weather shall be carried out in accordance with the policy and guidance as detailed within the Council's Highway Winter Service Plan. All decisions and actions will be made by the Council's Winter Service Duty Officer using forecast information as supplied by the Council's contracted forecaster and local roadside weather stations.
- 3.3 Operationally, the delivery of the Winter Service will be provided by the Council's current Highway Maintenance Term Contractor, Volker Highways Ltd.

4. Communications

- 4.1 A copy of the 2010/11 Highway Winter Service Plan will be issued to all Members and all Parish/Town Councils. It will also be available on the Council's website.
- 4.2 The 'Safer Driving' leaflet will also be revised to reflect the recommendations made in this report. Copies will be distributed to all Members and Parish/Town Councils and will be made available at all Council buildings with public access. The leaflet can also be downloaded from the website.
- 4.3 All salt bins will be labelled with advice on where salt/grit can be used by members of the public.
- 4.4 The Council has made available information from the Government on self help regarding clearance of snow from footways.

5. Conclusions

- 5.1 The policy statements set out in the Winter Service Plan have been amended to reflect the experience of last winter and to incorporate the recommendations of the OSMC review.
- 5.2 The amended Primary gritting routes, which account for 38.8% of the highway network includes all A and B classified roads and some strategically important C and unclassified roads. 14 additional roads have been included on the Primary gritting routes for 2010/11 and none have been deleted. Details are shown in Appendix C. These routes will receive precautionary treatment when hoar frost and/or ice is forecast.
- 5.3 The amended Secondary gritting routes, which represent 19.2% of the highway network, will be treated when hoar frost and/or ice have been experienced for an unbroken period of greater than 72 hours. 15 additional roads have been included on the Secondary gritting routes for 2010/11.
- 5.4 A new contingency treatment network which covers 45% of the highway network, has been introduced which will be treated when hoar frost and/or ice or snow are forecast but only when there is a national shortage of salt or limited salt supplies and/or there has been a Government directive to limit salt use.
- 5.5 The amended policy for footways will ensure that town centre footways are treated sooner in times of snowfall.
- 5.6 The amended salt bin policy provides an opportunity for Parish and Town Council's to play a role in determining what self-help facilities are provided locally for communities.
- 5.7 The amended Road Snow Clearance Network, which accounts for 44% of the highway network ensures that as far as is reasonably practicable all bus routes and access routes to schools and doctors surgeries will be cleared of snow as a priority.

6. Recommendations

- 6.1 Officers recommend that the 2010/11 Highway Winter Service Plan is approved. The Plan introduces a number of amendments to previous years and should be read in conjunction with this report.
- 6.2 Officers recommend that a new salt bin policy is implemented whereby Parish and Town Council's can request new bins at their expense although the cost of refilling bins will be met by West Berkshire Council. These will be in addition to those normally supplied by the Council.

Appendices

Appendix A – Contractors Performance in delivering the 2009/10 Winter Service.

Appendix B – Summary of Winter Operations 2009/10.

Appendix C – Proposed Variations to the Salting Networks.

Appendix D – List of departures from the Code of Practice for Maintenance Management (Winter Service)

Contractors Performance in Delivering 2009/10 Winter Service.

Contract Performance Indicator – the percentage of gritting routes completed within the specified time.

Month	Percentage of routes completed within time	Contract requirement
November 2009	100.0 %	100.0 %
December 2009	100.0 %	100.0 %
January 2010	98.4 %	100.0 %
February 2010	98.5 %	100.0 %
March 2010	98.5 %	100.0 %
Annual average	99.1 %	100.0 %

Summary of Winter Operations 2009/2010

Month	Precautionary Salting Runs on Primary Network*	Precautionary Salting Runs on Secondary Network*	Precautionary Salting Runs on the Contingency Network*	Ploughing	Wet Patches/ Spot Salting
Nov 2009	1	0	0	0	0
Dec 2009	21	9	0	3	4
Jan 2010	19	9	9	6	21
Feb 2010	22	0	0	0	3
March 2010	6	0	0	0	7
Totals (For 1 April 09 to 31 March 10)	69	18	9	9	35

Operational days from 1 April 2009 to March 2010	54	13	6	7	24
--	----	----	---	---	----

Number of Days with Multiple Salting Runs on Primary/Secondary/Contingency Network	15
--	----

* The figures shown relate to normal winter service conditions. For the periods 17 December and 5 January, the service was operating under emergency procedures and vehicles were constantly on the network treating roads or clearing snow. Performance during this period is therefore excluded from the above summary.

Primary Salting Route Additions in 2010/11

Name	Start	End	Parish
Greenways, Lambourn	Edwards Hill	End of Road	Lambourn
Drain Hill, Upper Lambourn	Uplands Lane	250m North	Lambourn
Unnamed Road from Malt Shovel Lane, Upper Lambourn	Malt Shovel Lane	End of Road	Lambourn
Unnamed Road from High Street, Upper Lambourn	High Street	End of Road	Lambourn
Weavers Lane/Folly Road, Inkpen	Craven Road	Post Office Road	Inkpen
Kintbury Road, Inkpen	Post Office Road	Blandys Hill	Kintbury
Post Office Road, Inkpen	Kintbury Road	Unnamed Road	Inkpen
Bishops Green, Greenham	A339	District Boundary	Greenham
Brimpton Road, Nr Tadley	B3051	District Boundary	Brimpton
Stephens Road, Mortimer	Victoria Road	West End Road	Mortimer
High Street, Thatcham	The Broadway	A4	Thatcham
Pincent's Kiln, Calcot	A4	A4	Tilehurst
Dorking Way, Calcot	A4	Charrington Road	Holybrook
Water Street, Hampstead Norreys	Newbury Hill	Unnamed Road	Hampstead Norreys

Primary Salting Route Removals in 2010/11

Name	Start	End	Parish
Nil			

Secondary Salting Route Additions in 2010/11

Name	Start	End	Parish
Cross Lane, Beech Hill	Beech Hill Road	Bloomfield Hatch Road	Beech Hill
Trowes Lane, Beech Hill	Beech Hill Road	District Boundary	Beech Hill
Shortheath Lane, Sulhamstead	Hollybush Lane	Island Farm Road	Sulhamstead
Bannister Road, Burghfield	Hollybush Lane	Abbots Road	Sulhamstead
Cods Hill, Woolhampton	Woolhampton Hill	A4	Woolhampton
Urquart Road, Thatcham	Ilkley Way	Station Road	Thatcham
Bowling Green Road	Gordon Road	Tull Way	Thatcham
Mayrick Drive/Normay Rise, Newbury	Villiers Way	Glendale Ave	Newbury
Bartlemy Road, Newbury	Valley Road	A343 Andover Road	Newbury
Rowan Drive, Newbury	Almond Ave	Almond Ave	Newbury

Dolman Road, Newbury	Maple Crescent	Rowan Drive	Newbury
Unnamed Road, Winterbourne	Winterbourne Road	Wantage Road	Winterbourne
Hoe Benham Lane, Hoe Benham	A4 Bath Road	Baydon Road	Wickham
Oxford Street, Eddington	A4 Charnham Street	A338 Wantage Road	Hungerford
Atherton Road, Hungerford	Church Way	Atherton Crescent	Hungerford

Secondary Salting Route Removals in 2010/11

Name	Start	End	Parish
Weavers Lane/Folly Road, Inkpen	Craven Road	Post Office Road	Inkpen
Kintbury Road, Inkpen	Post Office Road	Blandys Hill	Kintbury
Atherton Crescent	Atherton Road	A338 Salisbury Road	Hungerford
Straight Lane, Easton	Newbury Road	Ermin Street	Lambourn
New Road Hill, Midgham	Carbinswood Lane	A4 Bath Road	Midgham
Dorking Way, Calcot	A4 Bath Road	Charrington Road	Holybrook
Goldcrest Way, Tilehurst	City Road	End of Road	Tilehurst

Departures from the Code of Practice for Maintenance Management Recommendations for Winter Service - 2009/2010

Recommendation	Description	Adopted by WBC	Comments	Reason for not adopting recommendation
1	Authorities should formally approve and adopt policies and priorities for Winter Service, which are coherent with wider objectives for transport, integration, accessibility and network management, including strategies for public transport, walking and cycling. They should also take into account the wider strategic objectives of the authority.	Yes	Winter Service Plan reviewed in accordance with recommendations of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Commission (OSMC) and COP as amended December 2009. Plan to be approved by Individual Decision 4 November 2010.	
2	Authorities should consider, consult on and formally adopt local service standards for resilience of their winter service in terms of number of days continuous severe conditions salting on a defined Minimum Winter Network for the Overall Winter Period and for the Core Winter Period.	Yes	Revised Contingency Treatment Network.	
3	Authorities should review their approach to climate change and in particular their resilience to prolonged cold weather.	Yes	Emerging Severe Weather Plan covering flooding, severe winter conditions, heatwaves and droughts; the purchase of 5000t salt.	
4	Authorities should consider whether collaborative arrangements such as shared services, lead authority arrangements, collaborative service procurement and sharing depots and salt stock, would prove effective and provide value for money approach to increasing winter service resilience.	Yes	Joint procurement with Berkshire Unitaries for sensor maintenance and forecasting services.	

Departures from the Code of Practice for Maintenance Management Recommendations for Winter Service - 2009/2010

Recommendation	Description	Adopted by WBC	Comments	Reason for not adopting recommendation
5	Authorities should determine critical areas and infrastructure in conjunction with key public services and other stakeholders and seek to ensure that appropriate winter treatment has been considered by the appropriate party.	Yes	Scrutiny by WBC's OSMC involving all interested internal and external parties.	
6	Authorities should ensure effective communication of information for the public before and during normal and severe winter conditions.	Yes	Publication of 'Safer Driving this Winter on West Berkshire Roads' leaflet and Winter Service Plan and associated route plans via the website.	
7	Authorities should ensure that there is appropriate consultation and communication with other highway authorities, key public services and other stakeholders and seek to ensure improved service for the public.	Yes	Comprehensive consultation was carried out by OSMC during their review and during the development of the 2011/12 Winter Service Plan. Consultees included internal stakeholders, Council and Parish/Town Council Members, transport providers, adjoining councils and emergency services.	
8	Authorities should formally approve, adopt and publish, in consultation with users and key stakeholders, a Winter Service Plan based on the principles of this Code	Yes	Winter Service Plan reviewed in accordance with recommendations of the OSMC and COP as amended December 2009. All interested internal and external parties consulted as part of scrutiny and development and approval of Plan.	

Departures from the Code of Practice for Maintenance Management Recommendations for Winter Service - 2009/2010

Recommendation	Description	Adopted by WBC	Comments	Reason for not adopting recommendation
9	Authorities should define treatment route plans for carriageways, cycle routes and footways for pre-treatment and snow conditions, based upon the general maintenance hierarchy, but adapted to take into account the factors identified by this Code.	Yes	Route plans in place.	The Council only salts specified sections of footway network during prolonged hazardous conditions and when snow is forecast.
10	Authorities should prepare contingency Winter Service Plans for severe weather conditions, which include possibilities such as salting a Minimum Winter Network. Authorities should seek agreement on plans in advance with other highway authorities and key public services such as hospitals and public transport providers. There should be a co-ordinated approach to implementing Minimum Winter Networks across adjacent Authorities.	Yes	Comprehensive consultation was carried out by OSMC during their review and during the development of the 2011/12 Winter Service Plan. Consultees included internal stakeholders, Council and Parish/Town Council Members, transport providers, adjoining councils and emergency services. Thames Valley Police 'Salt Cell' working group to develop GIS plans for Thames Valley to assist authorities with cross boundary treatment.	
Recommendation	Description	Adopted by WBC	Comments	Reason for not adopting recommendation
11	Authorities should explore the potential for mutual aid in salt supply and other aspects of winter service and should make contingency arrangements in advance.	Yes	Alternative salt supply arrangements in place with WBC's Term Maintenance Contractor.	

Departures from the Code of Practice for Maintenance Management Recommendations for Winter Service - 2009/2010

Recommendation	Description	Adopted by WBC	Comments	Reason for not adopting recommendation
12	Authorities should take full advantage of decision support systems and services to enable timely, efficient and accurate decision making.	Yes	West Berkshire Council makes use of information from roadside sensors and detailed site specific forecasts issued by MeteoGroup UK in its decision making process.	
13	Authority should continually monitor performance during service delivery and respond effectively to changing conditions or network incidents.	Yes	PI's in Term Maintenance Contract and Winter Service Plan.	
14	To ensure appropriate level of competence, training and development needs of all personnel should be established and reviewed annually, including health and safety and appropriate vocational qualifications. Training should then be provided where appropriate before the Winter Service season.	Yes	Formal training of WBC Staff undertaken with Vaisala 2009. All Duty Officers trained to City and Guilds Supervisor Standard. All Term Contractor WS operatives have City & Guilds 6157 accreditation (superseded by 6159). 2 staff are now accredited City & Guilds Winter Service Supervisors.	
15	Authorities and relevant organisations should provide training and conduct periodic exercising to test plans for responding to severe weather events.	Yes	Ad hoc audits are undertaken to test Winter Service Plan during winter season.	
16	Authorities and salt suppliers should treat the supply of salt as a service rather than a simple commodity purchase.	Yes	Term Contractor/salt Union re-stocking arrangements in place.	

Departures from the Code of Practice for Maintenance Management Recommendations for Winter Service - 2009/2010

Recommendation	Description	Adopted by WBC	Comments	Reason for not adopting recommendation
17	As a means of enhancing local salt storage capacity, Authority and salt suppliers should jointly consider supplier owned salt stocks held on a short or long term basis in a number of widely distributed locations around the country. A joint approach may include agreements such as purchase of some or all stock by the end of season or provision of land.	Yes	Recommendation of OSMC to increase WBC's salt stock to 5000t. Being a predominantly rural district, WBC's winter service requirements do not favourably align with those of the more urban UA's in Berkshire.	
18	Authority should seek a broad approach to salt supply, for example establishing framework contracts with more than one supplier.	Yes	Arrangements in place with Highway Term Contract for alternative salt supplies.	
19	Authorities should consider whether efficiency benefits can be obtained from collaborative salt procurement and should also consider ways to improve the balance of risk between salt suppliers and themselves, e.g. Longer contracts, performance contracts with minimum guaranteed purchase and supply, and contracts that include supply of salt and investment facilities.	Yes	Arrangements in place with salt union to maintain 5000t salt reserve.	
20	All aspects of the Winter Service Plan, including service delivery arrangements, should be reviewed annually in consultation with key stakeholders to take account of changing circumstances.	Yes	The Winter Plan has been comprehensively consulted on and reviewed 2010/11. The next annual review will take place next summer in advance of the 2012/13 winter season.	