

# Individual Executive Member Decision

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## 2016/17 Highway Winter Service Plan

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<b>Committee considering report:</b>	Individual Executive Member Decision
<b>Date ID to be signed:</b>	21 October 2016
<b>Portfolio Member:</b>	Councillor Jeanette Clifford
<b>Forward Plan Ref:</b>	ID3182

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### 1. Purpose of the Report

#### 1.1 To seek approval of the 2016/17 Highway Winter Service Plan

### 2. Recommendation

#### 2.1 That the Executive Portfolio Member for Highways and Transport approves the 2016/17 Highway Winter Service Plan.

### 3. Implications

- 3.1 **Financial:** The cost of providing the Winter Service, including the maintenance of West Berkshire Council owned salt bins and undertaking up to 50 primary precautionary salting runs on 497km of carriageway, is included in the 2016/17 revenue budget. (There is no budget provision for salting of the secondary network, snow clearance operations or footways treatment).
- 3.2 **Policy:** 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.  
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.
- 3.3 **Personnel:** None arising from this report.
- 3.4 **Legal:** Following a House of Lords ruling, the Council has had a statutory duty from 10 October 2003 to ensure, so far as reasonably practicable that the safe passage along a highway is not endangered by snow or ice.  
The winter service is to be procured through the new Highways, Bridges and Street Lighting Term Maintenance

Contract 2016.

**3.5 Risk Management:** In reducing the length of the Primary Treatment Network, there will be roads that will not be treated which historically have been treated. In order to inform the public of these changes and reduce the Council's exposure to risk, the new routes will be detailed in the 2016-17 Winter Service Plan. This will be supported by new online maps and a list of roads no longer receiving treatment when a hoar frost is forecast, on the Council's website and a Safer Driving Leaflet.

The new routes have been based on the previously approved routes contained within the 2010-11 Winter Service Plan. In reducing the number of routes, every effort has been made to maintain a connected network by linking transport hubs, bus links, hospitals, NHS Surgeries and larger schools to the larger network. Whilst bus routes have also been considered, in reducing the treated length, some bus services may be affected by this change in the event of a hoar frost.

**3.6 Property:** None arising from this report.

**3.7 Other:** A Stage 1 Equality Impact Assessment has been prepared.

## 4. Consultation Responses

### Members:

**Leader of Council:** Councillor Roger Croft

**Overview & Scrutiny Management Commission Chairman:** Councillor Emma Webster

**Ward Members:** All Ward Members

**Opposition Spokesperson:** Councillor Billy Drummond

**Local Stakeholders:** All Town and Parish Councils

**Officers Consulted:** Mark Edwards, Wendy Howells, David Holling, Carolyn Richardson

**Trade Union:** Not applicable.

## 5. Other options considered

5.1 None.

## 6. Introduction/Background

- 6.1 Government guidance for highway management recommends the provision of an annually reviewed operational plan for winter service. A summary of the 2015-16 winter service and the 2016-17 Winter Service Plan is provided below.

### **Summary of the 2015-16 Winter Service**

- 6.2 The 2015/16 winter season was defined in large part by milder and often wetter than average weather, particularly from November through to February, before it finally turned colder in March and April. Road surface temperatures only fell below zero on 37 nights in the entire season and snow was very rarely seen.
- 6.3 October was a fairly average month in terms of temperatures, although just over half of the expected rainfall fell in the district. However, there were a number of notable wet spells. Road surface temperatures held above zero throughout.
- 6.4 A much milder than average November followed, with rainfall totals slightly above normal but sunshine amounts well below expected. After a largely dry first couple of days, the rest of the month saw rainfall recorded most days as showers moved through the district. The rain was occasionally accompanied by strong winds as three named storms rolled across the UK. Despite the overall mild conditions, which largely kept road surface temperatures above zero, they did in fact fall below zero in a brief cold snap on the nights of 21st and 22nd.
- 6.5 Wintry conditions held well at bay in December, a month which brought exceptionally mild and wet weather across the district, making it the warmest December on record. A result of this record-breaking warmth was that road surface temperatures held above zero throughout most of the month, only dipping below as the New Year approached. A further three named storms occurred this month.
- 6.6 January 2016 was another milder than normal month (although less markedly so compared with December), with rainfall totalling well above average. The first and last thirds of the month were dominated by low pressure systems, which kept road surface temperatures broadly above freezing. The middle part of the month was dominated by below zero road surface temperatures as winds temporarily turned north-westerly bringing cold air down. There was also a rare, brief spell of sleet and snow during this time. The coldest night of the month, and indeed the season, occurred at the "A4 Halfway" when the road surface temperature fell to -5.9C.
- 6.7 February saw mean temperatures remain above average, whilst rainfall amounts were close to average for the month. Road surface temperatures dropped below zero on 12 nights, particularly between the 10th and 18th and again between the 23rd and 28th. The coldest night of the month occurred on the 15th, when the road surface temperature at the "A4 Halfway" fell to -3.8C.
- 6.8 Mean temperatures finally took a tumble below the long-term average in March, although both rainfall and sunshine amounts recorded were above average. An extended spell of high pressure dominated from around the 10th to the 23rd, restricting the unsettled wet weather to the opening and closing weeks. Alongside the wet weather, there were some very strong wind events, such as on the 27th/28th when Storm Katie brought destructive gales to southern England. Road surface temperatures fell below zero on 10 nights, mostly within the first fortnight.

- 6.9 April saw a last surge of wintry weather across the district, as easterly and then northerly winds dominated, bringing cold air and keeping mean temperatures well below average. Both rainfall and sunshine amounts were slightly above average, with some wintry precipitation falling at times. Road surface temperatures fell slightly below zero on two nights in the month, but otherwise held above despite the colder than average conditions, due in part to shorter nights and increased daytime temperatures.
- 6.10 During the season the Primary Network was treated on 38 occasions and the snow clearance network once. As a result approximately 1,500 tonnes of salt was used in total through the season. With this in mind the salt stock held at Chieveley Depot will be 1,000 tonnes for the coming season. This stockpile will be replenished throughout the winter season to maintain sufficient supply in accordance with the Winter Service Plan. However, should the need arise the Council have access to 1,500 tonnes of additional salt which is stored off site by the Council's Term Contractor (Volker Highways Ltd).
- 6.11 Details of Volker Highways Ltd performance and the number of salting runs undertaken during the 2015/16 winter are provided in Appendices B and C. Of the 370 routes treated during the winter period, 360 were treated within the specified 3 hour period. Of the 10 routes that were not completed on time, 6 were due to breakdowns, 3 were due to late starts and 1 was due to congestion on the network.
- 6.12 For the 2015/16 winter period, the Winter Service Plan and associated treatment routes were published on the Council's website and incorporated into the Council's online mapping facilities. In addition, live reporting of the Council's Winter Service actions was also published on the home page and in combination, these initiatives helped reduce the number of winter service related calls to the Council.
- 6.13 The 'Safer Driving' leaflet was revised and copies were distributed to all Members and Parish/Town Councils. It was also made available at all Council buildings with public access and published on the Council's website.

## **Winter Service Plan 2016-17 Treatment Networks**

### **Primary Treatment Network**

- 6.14 The Primary Treatment Network, which accounts for 39% of the highway network includes all A and B classified roads and some strategically important C class and unclassified roads.
- 6.15 Following a public consultation on the Council's Budget Proposals for 2016/17 in February 2016, on 1 March 2016, the Council approved a reduction in the number of routes that will be treated when a hoar frost is forecast (the Primary Treatment Network) from 10 routes to 9 routes. Moving to 9 routes represents a percentage reduction in treated length of 2% from 41% to 39%, equivalent to 33.4km of treated network.
- 6.16 The new routes have been based on the previously approved routes contained within the 2010-11 Winter Service Plan. In reducing the number of routes, every effort has been made to maintain a connected network by linking transport hubs,

bus links, hospitals, NHS Surgeries and larger schools to the larger network. Whilst bus routes have also been considered, in reducing the treated length, some bus services may be affected by this change in the event of a hoar frost.

- 6.17 One road has been added and 21 roads have been removed from the Primary Treatment Network and these are detailed in Appendix D of this report. The roads treated are detailed in Appendix A of the Winter Service Policy and Plan (see Appendix G of this report).
- 6.18 In reducing the length of the Primary Treatment Network, there will be roads that will not be treated which historically have been treated. In order to inform the public of these changes and reduce the Council's exposure to risk, the new routes will be detailed in the 2016-17 Winter Service Plan. This will be supported by new online maps and a list of roads no longer receiving treatment when a hoar frost is forecast on the Council's website and a Safer Driving Leaflet.

### **Secondary Treatment Network**

- 6.19 The Secondary Treatment Network, which represents 22% 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.
- 6.20 21 roads have been added (those removed from the Primary Treatment Network) and 3 roads removed from the Secondary Treatment Network and this is summarised in Appendix D of this report. The roads treated are detailed in Appendix B of the Winter Service Policy and Plan (see Appendix G of this report).

### **Snow Clearance Treatment Network**

- 6.21 The Snow Clearance Treatment Network (Roads), which accounts for 48.5% 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.
- 6.22 The Snow Clearance Treatment Network (Roads and Footways) are not affected by the outcomes of the consultation and the Council's decision to reduce the length of the treated Primary Treatment Network. No routes have been added or removed from these networks and the roads and footways that will be treated are detailed within Appendix H and I respectively of the Winter Service Policy and Plan (see Appendix G of this report).
- 6.23 Footways will be cleared of snow using cross-service resources as they become available. The footway snow clearance network includes major town and village centres as well as footways to NHS hospitals and surgeries, schools and other key public buildings owned by the Council.

### **Contingency Treatment Network**

- 6.24 The Contingency Treatment Network which covers 46.8% of the highway network, 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. No routes have been added or removed from

the Contingency Treatment Network and the roads treated are detailed in Appendix C of the Winter Service Policy and Plan (see Appendix G of this report).

### **Salt Bins**

- 6.25 Currently there are 473 salt bins serving Council offices and public buildings with daily access and the road network, of which 260 are owned and maintained by the Council and 213 are owned by the Town and Parish Councils.
- 6.26 Following a public consultation on the Council's Budget Proposals for 2016/17 in February 2016, the Council made the decision to no longer provide or maintain salt bins on the highway network. The decision does not affect salt bins serving public buildings owned by the Council.
- 6.27 Following further consultation with Town and Parish Council's, from the 31 October 2016, 236 salt bins will transfer into Town and Parish Council ownership and 24 salt bins will be removed from the network.. The total number removed from the network may change depending on the outcome of a decision by Newbury Town Council in September.
- 6.28 In taking ownership, the Town and Parish Council's will become fully responsible for their maintenance and refilling. The Council will provide a replacement and refilling service, however, there will be a charge for both services from 31 October 2016.
- 6.29 The decision does not affect the approval procedure for placing new salt bins on the highway network.
- 6.30 Details of the salt bins that will be removed from the network are summarised in Appendix E of this report. The locations of salt bins which are to remain on the network under the ownership of Town and Parish Councils are detailed in Appendix G of the Winter Service Policy and Plan (see Appendix G of this report).

### **Operations**

- 6.31 The Winter Service period for 2016/17 will operate from Monday 31 October 2016 to Sunday 2 April 2017, although this period may be extended if weather conditions dictate.
- 6.32 Precautionary salting, snow clearance, salt bin provision and the response to adverse weather will be carried out in accordance with the policy and guidance as detailed within the Council's Highway Winter Service Plan 2016/17.
- 6.33 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.
- 6.34 Operationally, the delivery of the Winter Service will be provided by the Council's Highway Maintenance Term Contractor, Volker Highways Ltd.
- 6.35 A copy of the 2016/17 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

- 6.36 Salt stocks remained above the minimum requirement of 500 tonnes throughout the winter season. To meet the environmental requirements, the salt stock at Chieveley Depot was covered. At the start of the winter season a total of 2,500 tonnes will be available for the Council's use.

### **Communications**

- 6.37 A copy of the Winter Service Plan is provided in Appendix G. A paper copy of the Winter Service Plan along with the associated treatment routes will be made available in the Member's Room during the consultation period.
- 6.38 Following approval of this report, the 'Safer Driving' leaflet will be revised to reflect the changes in the Primary Treatment Network and the recommendations of 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. It will also be available on the Council's website.
- 6.39 Following approval of this report, an electronic copy of the Winter Service Policy and Plan will be distributed to all Members and Parish/Town Councils and will be made available on the Council's website.

The Winter Service Plan 2016/17 and associated treatment routes will be published on the Council's website to allow users to decide whether to make a journey.

- 6.40 A map and list showing the routes that will no longer be treated will be published on the Council's website.
- 6.41 A map and list showing salt bin ownership will be published on the Council's website.

## **7. Supporting Information**

- 7.1 In preparing this report, reference was made to the following supporting information/documentation:

Budget Proposals for 2016/17 – Phase One Consultation and the published results following the full Council meeting on the 1 March 2016.

The Overview and Scrutiny Management Commission's review of the 2010/11 winter season.

UK Roads Group publication 'Lessons Learned from Severe Weather February 2009'.

Well maintained Highways – Code of Practice for Highway Maintenance Management, as amended November 2011.

The resilience of England's Transport Systems in Winter – Interim report July 2010.

## **8. Recommendations**

- 8.1 Officers recommend that the 2016/17 Highway Winter Service Plan is approved and adopted as Council Policy.

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**Background Papers:**

Council meeting on the 1 March 2016 - Published results of the Budget Proposals for 2016/17 – Phase One Consultation.

Approved 2015/16 Winter Service Policy and Plan

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**Subject to Call-In:**

Yes: X      No:

The item is due to be referred to Council for final approval

Delays in implementation could have serious financial implications for the Council

Delays in implementation could compromise the Council's position

Considered or reviewed by Overview and Scrutiny Management Commission or associated Task Groups within preceding six months

Item is Urgent Key Decision

Report is to note only

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**Wards affected:**

All Wards, Town and Parish Councils

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The proposals contained in this report will help to achieve the following Council Strategy priority:

**X HQL1 – Support communities to do more to help themselves**

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## 9. Executive Summary

- 9.1 Following a House of Lords ruling, the Council has had a statutory duty from 10 October 2003 to ensure, so far as reasonably practicable that the safe passage along a highway is not endangered by snow or ice.
- 9.2 Officers recommend that the 2016/17 Highway Winter Service Plan is approved and adopted as Council Policy.

## 10. Appendices

- Appendix A – Stage 1 Equality Impact Assessment  
Appendix B – Contractors Performance in delivering the 2015/16 Winter Service  
Appendix C – Summary of Winter Operations 2015/16  
Appendix D – Changes to the Primary, Snow Clearance and Contingency Networks  
Appendix E – Salt Bins to be removed from the Network prior to the start of 2016/17 season (following consultation process)  
Appendix F – List of departures from the Code of Practice for Maintenance Management  
Appendix G – Winter Service Plan 2016/17  
Appendix H – Summary of Consultation Responses