

# Individual Executive Member Decision

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## 2017/18 Highway Winter Service Plan

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**Committee considering report:** Individual Executive Member Decision

**Date ID to be signed:** 20 October 2017

**Portfolio Member:** Councillor Jeanette Clifford

**Forward Plan Ref:** ID3382

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### 1. Purpose of the Report

1.1 To seek approval of the 2017/18 Highway Winter Service Plan.

### 2. Recommendation

2.1 That the Portfolio Member for Highways and Transport approves the 2017/18 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 506.1km of carriageway, is included in the 2017/18 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 Transport and Countryside 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:** None arising from this report.
- 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 Graham Jones

**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, Sarah Clark, 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 2016/17 winter service and the 2017-18 Highway Winter Service Plan is provided below.

### **Summary of the 2016/17 Winter Service**

- 6.2 The 2016/17 winter was on the whole a fairly quiet but chilly season. Four of the five months had below average overnight temperatures, with the second half of January being particularly cold. However, from the beginning of March onwards it became quite mild. It was a remarkably dry season too. This was largely due to high pressure dominating for long periods of time and fewer winter storms. There were very few significant snow events this winter.
- 6.3 October was the first of the dry months with only 38% of the average rainfall. Although temperatures over the month were slightly below average, road surface temperatures held above zero across Berkshire throughout the whole month.
- 6.4 November was a much colder and wetter month. Both minimum and maximum temperatures were between 1 and 2 degrees below average and road surface temperatures fell below zero on 8 nights. It turned milder for a time mid-month and again towards the end of the third week of the month when a series of low pressure systems brought very wet and windy conditions. It turned very cold at the end of the month with road surface temperatures down to -5.5°C at the A4 Halfway forecast site on the morning of 30 November.
- 6.5 December was also a very dry month with only 28% of the usual rainfall. The month continued cold with clear skies and fog patches with road surface temperatures falling below zero on 8 occasions. After a cold start, it became much milder. It remained mild but dry until the week leading up to Christmas when it turned rather cold and unsettled. It was windy around Christmas with a couple of named winter storms passing over the UK. High pressure returned from 26<sup>th</sup> onwards and it turned very cold again through to the end of the year.
- 6.6 January was the coldest month of the winter season with road surface temperatures falling below zero on 20 nights. Rainfall was above average across the region. It was less cold between the 6<sup>th</sup> – 11<sup>th</sup>, but cold air returned bringing some sleet and wet snow across parts of Berkshire during the evening of the 12<sup>th</sup>, although accumulations were slight and confined mostly to high ground. It remained very cold with frequent mist and fog overnight, occasionally freezing fog. The coldest night of January and the whole season was the 21<sup>st</sup> when the A4 Halfway forecast site fell to -6.4°C.
- 6.7 February in contrast was a much milder month with average rainfall. Road surface temperatures only fell below zero on 4 occasions, most of which were in the first half of the month. The second half of the month was fairly mild with the exception of some wintry showers following storm “Doris” on 23<sup>rd</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup>.
- 6.8 March was very mild and road surface temperatures only dipped below +1°C once. It was also quite a dry month with only 61% of the average rainfall. After a cool and unsettled first week, it became increasingly settled and remained so for much of the

month. By the end of the month it was very warm with daytime temperatures climbing above +20°C.

- 6.9 April was an exceptionally dry month with only 12% of the average rainfall. Days were often warm especially early in the month, although there were a number of unseasonably chilly nights during the second half of the month. Despite these chilly nights, base temperatures were rising and road surface temperatures remained above zero.
- 6.10 During the season the Primary Network was treated on 44 occasions and the snow clearance network 3 times. As a result approximately 2,279 tonnes of salt was used in total through the season. With this in mind the salt stock held at Chieveley Depot will be 1,500 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 1,000 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 2016/17 winter are provided in Appendices B and C. Of the 360 routes treated during the winter period, 356 were treated within the specified 3 hour period. Through the season only 4 routes were not completed on time.
- 6.12 For the 2016/17 winter period, the Highway 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 2017/18 Treatment Networks**

### **Primary Treatment Network**

- 6.14 For the coming season it is proposed to reinstate Pangbourne Road, Aldworth Road, Bethesda Street and Park Wall Lane, Upper Basildon to the Primary Treatment Network following representation from the local community and concerns from the local bus operator. In addition, Racecourse View Road, Newbury (the access road to the racecourse development off Hambridge Road will also be added. These additions will account for 39.5% of the highway network and will include all A and B classified roads and some strategically important C class and unclassified roads. No routes have been removed. These routes will receive precautionary treatment when hoar frost and/or ice are forecast. Details of these routes are in Appendix A of the Highway Winter Service Plan 2017/18.

### **Secondary Treatment Network**

- 6.15 The Secondary Treatment Network, which represents 21% of the highway network, will be treated when hoar frost and/or ice have been experienced for an unbroken

period of 72 hours or greater (ie, sub-zero temperatures experienced through the period for 3 continuous days and nights). It is proposed to add East Lane, Chieveley to this network which will link to the existing Secondary Treatment Network providing a treated route to the local surgery should severe weather conditions occur. The following routes will be deleted from the Secondary Treatment Network following their reinstatement to the Primary Treatment Network, Pangbourne Road, Aldworth Road, Bethesda Street and Park Wall Lane, Upper Basildon. Details of these routes are in Appendix B of the Highway Winter Service Plan 2017/18.

### **Snow Clearance Treatment Network**

- 6.16 The Snow Clearance Treatment Network (Roads), which accounts for 49% 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. The following routes have been added to this network, Pebble Hill, The Green, the Unnamed Road to West Woodhay, Rooksnest Lane and Trapps Hill. All of these will provide a treated route through West Woodhay when snow conditions are forecast. No routes have been removed. Details of these routes are in Appendix H of the Highway Winter Service Plan 2017/18.
- 6.17 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. The only addition proposed to this network is to connect two previously identified lengths in Church Street, Theale. No routes have been removed. Details of these routes are in Appendix I of the Highway Winter Service Plan 2017/18.

### **Contingency Treatment Network**

- 6.18 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 for 2017/18. Details of these routes are in Appendix C of the Highway Winter Service Plan 2017/18.

### **Salt Bins**

- 6.19 Currently there are 480 salt bins serving Council offices and public buildings with daily access and the road network, of which 31 are owned and maintained by the Council and 449 are owned and maintained by the Town or Parish Councils.

### **Operations**

- 6.20 The Winter Service period for 2017/18 will operate from Monday 30 October 2017 to Sunday 1 April 2018, although this period may be extended if weather conditions dictate.
- 6.21 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 2017/18.

- 6.22 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.
- 6.23 Operationally, the delivery of the Highway Winter Service will be provided by the Council's Highway Maintenance Term Contractor, Volker Highways Ltd.
- 6.24 A copy of the 2017/18 Highway Winter Service Plan will be issued to all Members and all Parish/Town Councils as part of the consultation process. It will also be available on the Council's website.
- 6.25 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 (1,500 tonnes at Chieveley and 1,000 tonnes off site).

### **Communications**

- 6.26 A copy of the Highway Winter Service Plan is provided in Appendix G. A paper copy of the plan along with the associated treatment routes will be made available in the Member's Room during the consultation period.
- 6.27 Following approval of this report, the 'Safer Driving' leaflet will be revised to reflect any 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.
- 6.28 Following approval of this report, an electronic copy of the Highway Winter Service Plan will distributed to all Members and Parish/Town Councils and will be made available on the Council's website.
- 6.29 The Highway Winter Service Plan 2017/18 and associated treatment routes will be published on the Council's website to allow users to decide whether to make a journey.
- 6.30 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:

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-managed Highway Infrastructure – A Code of Practice October 2016.

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

## 8. Recommendations

- 8.1 Officers recommend that the 2017/18 Highway Winter Service Plan is approved and adopted as Council Policy.

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### Background Papers:

Approved 2016/17 Winter Service Policy and Plan

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### Subject to Call-In:

Yes: X      No: ☐

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### Wards affected:

All Wards, Town and Parish Councils

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### Strategic Aims and Priorities Supported:

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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### Officer details:

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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 2017/18 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 2016/17 Winter Service  
Appendix C – Summary of Winter Operations 2016/17  
Appendix D – Changes to the Primary, Secondary, Snow Clearance and Contingency Networks 2017/18  
Appendix E – Salt Bins to be removed from the Network 2017/18  
Appendix F – List of departures from the Code of Practice for Maintenance Management  
Appendix G – Winter Service Plan 2017/18

**Appendix H – Summary of Consultation Responses**