

Individual Executive Member Decision

Highway Winter Service Plan 2023-2024

Committee considering report:	Individual Executive Member Decision
Date ID to be signed:	20 October 2023
Portfolio Member:	Councillor Denise Gaines
Forward Plan Ref:	ID4436

1. Purpose of the Report

1.1 To seek approval of the 2023/24 Highway Winter Service Plan.

2. Recommendation

2.1 That the Executive Portfolio Member for Highways, Housing and Sustainable Travel approves the 2023/24 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 (30 no.) and undertaking up to 50 primary precautionary treatments on 529.5km of carriageway, is included in the 2023/24 revenue budget. (There is no budget provision for treatment of the secondary network, snow clearance network or footway networks).
- 3.2 **Policy:** To comply with best practice and the statutory duty to maintain the public highway in a safe condition, the Environment Department reviews and produces a Highway Winter Service Plan annually to set out its operational proposals for Members to consider.
- 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 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 Lee Dillon
- Overview & Scrutiny Management Commission Chairman:** Councillor Caroline Culver
- Ward Members:** All Ward Members.
- Opposition Spokesperson:** Councillor Richard Somner

Local Stakeholders: All Town and Parish Councils

Officers Consulted: Jon Winstanley, Jonathan Martin, 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 2022/23 winter season and the 2023/24 Highway Winter Service Plan is provided below.

Summary of the 2022/23 Winter Season

- 6.2 October 2022 was a warm month, with temperatures trending around 1.5-2.0C above the monthly average. Rainfall was around the average for the time of year near the coast and slightly above the average elsewhere. Maximum temperatures were close to 3C above the usual October average as well. As it usually is, RSTs remained above zero throughout the month. October started off on a variable note, with spells of rain on the first two days, but it was then rather dry for the following week. It turned a little cooler from the 8th-12th of the month as a cold front moved through the UK, with a ridge of high pressure moving in. This brought the air temperature close to 0C overnight, but RSTs remained above zero. The rest of the month was rather mild with low pressure residing to the west of the UK, allowing for a warm, but moist south-westerly flow to set up. This meant that temperatures rose above 20C towards the end of the month, but there were thunderstorms and strong winds at times, particularly on the 23rd and 31st, when a gust of 110mph was recorded at Needles in the Isle of Wight.
- 6.3 November 2022 was another warm month. Temperatures were around 2C above the average for the time of year. However, it was a significantly wet month, with

rainfall totals over 200% of the average November totals in the Isle of Wight and the south-east of Hampshire. This was welcome relief to many as the previous 11 months had been very dry, with drought conditions for many areas of the UK. The rain fell across the month but was particularly intense during the first part of this. As a result, flooding occurred on the 3rd and 6th in parts of the region. The 15th to 18th was also particularly wet, with further flooding occurring on major parts of the road network. Due to the mild and wet conditions, RSTs remained well above zero for much of the month. There were a few chilly nights towards the end of the month in the wake of cold fronts, but there weren't any prolonged cold spells.

- 6.4 December 2022 was a cold month, with temperatures trending around 1C below the December average. Rainfall amounts were around average, but like with the temperature, there were significant swings within the month. This was the coldest December since 2010 and the first 17 days of the month saw exceptionally cold and frosty conditions. A strong upper-level ridge developed over Greenland, which pushed a deep trough from the Arctic towards the UK and north-west Europe, allowing very cold air from the north to rush in. RSTs regularly fell below zero and often struggled to rise above zero at times, mainly inland. Whilst it was a dry period, the 11th brought some snowfall in West Berkshire, but nothing compared to other parts of the south-east of England which saw significant accumulations. The 18th saw a return to a tropical maritime airmass, and RSTs recovered as a result. The final part of the month was rather variable in nature with spells of rain and a few chilly nights, notably on Boxing Day. However, the New Year's period saw a mild south-westerly flow, allowing for RSTs to remain above zero.
- 6.5 January 2023 saw temperatures trend around the average for the time of the year. Rainfall totals were above the average – 125-150% for most areas but West Berkshire had precipitation amounts around the average. It was again a month of two halves. The first half was mild and wet, with 14 of the first 15 days of the month seeing rainfall. As a result of the mild and cloudy conditions, RSTs generally remained above zero, with just a few marginal nights. However, the heavy rainfall resulted in further flooding in some parts of Central Southern England. The second half was much colder with a few sleet and snow showers at times. The nights were also much colder with frequent sub-zero nights as a deep trough pushed in from the Arctic again. RSTs again fell well below zero from the 16th to the 22nd. RSTs recovered somewhat for the rest of the month, with just 1 or 2 marginal to below zero nights.
- 6.6 February 2023 saw a mild month, with temperatures trending around 1C above the average for the time of year. It was also a very dry month with less than 20% of the average rainfall occurring. This temperature/rainfall pattern is unusual for winter-time as dry months are usually associated with cold months and wet months are associated with frequent areas of low pressure and therefore mild conditions. However, in this case, upper-level ridges and surface areas of high pressure were the dominant features of the UK. This pushed areas of low pressure and spells of rain to the north, keeping the UK dry, especially the south. Mist and fog were often a feature of the weather in February due to the calm and settled conditions. Within these conditions, there were times when skies were clear which allowed the RSTs to drop below zero particularly in the first and last week of the month.
- 6.7 March 2023 was an exceptionally wet month with over 175-200% of the average rainfall seen. Temperatures were around the average for the time of year. March started off with the continuation of the settled conditions that were seen in February.

However, from the 6th, a major change occurred with another strong upper-level trough from the Arctic bringing about another cold spell across the UK. Snow showers were seen on the 7th and 8th, with RSTs falling well below zero. One of the ingredients for this cold spell was the Sudden Stratospheric Warming which occurred towards the end of February. The trickle-down effects of the polar vortex weakening helped to push the trough over north-west Europe and bring the cold and icy conditions. Whilst the 9th-10th brought significant snowfall to northern and central parts of the UK, the south didn't see any significant accumulations and the rainfall and cloud cover associated with this event helped to keep RSTs above zero. The following week saw frequent areas of low pressure and transitory ridges, meaning that RSTs fell below zero at times. However, the end of the month saw a milder theme, with temperatures trending a little above the average. RSTs fell marginal on few occasions but generally remained above zero.

- 6.8 April 2023 saw a slightly wet month, with rainfall totals around 125% the monthly average. Temperatures were around the average for the time of year as well. The first week of April saw some clear and chilly nights, allowing for RSTs to drop marginal to below zero on a few occasions. However, for much of the rest of the month, RSTs remained comfortably above zero in the milder spring conditions. A northerly flow developed in the last full week of April, resulting in a few marginal nights locally, before turning milder in the last couple of days of the month, with air temperatures reaching the mid-to-high-teens.
- 6.9 During the season the Primary Treatment network was treated on 40 occasions and the Snow Clearance Network on 6 occasions. As a result approximately 2,748 tonnes of salt was used in total through the season. With this in mind the salt stock held at Chieveley Depot will be 1,200 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).
- 6.10 Details of Volker Highways Ltd performance and the number of treatments undertaken during the 2022/23 winter season are provided in Appendix C and D. Of the 414 routes treated during the winter period, 412 were completed within the specified 3 hour period.
- 6.11 For the 2022/23 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.
- 6.12 The "Safer Driving" leaflet was revised and copies were distributed to relevant stakeholders. It was also made available on the Council's website.

Highway Winter Service Plan 2023/24 – Treatment Networks

Primary Treatment Network

- 6.13 The Primary treatment Network, which represents 40.6% of the highway network, and will be treated when hoar frost and/or ice is forecast, includes all "A" and "B" classified roads and some strategically important "C" class and unclassified roads. No routes have been added or removed from this network for the coming season.

Details of these routes are given in Appendix A of the Highway Winter Service Plan 2023/24.

Secondary Treatment Network

- 6.14 The Secondary Treatment Network, which represents 19.9% of the highway network and will be treated when hoar frost and/or ice have been experienced for an unbroken period of 72 hours or greater (ie, sub-zero road surface temperatures are continuously experienced through the period for 3 days and nights). No routes have been added or removed from this network for the coming season. Details of these routes are given in Appendix B of the Highway Winter Service Plan 2023/24.

Snow Clearance Treatment Network

- 6.15 The Snow Clearance Treatment Network, accounts for 51.2% 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. No routes have been added or removed from this network for the coming season. Details of these routes are given in Appendix H of the Highway Winter Service Plan 2023/24.
- 6.16 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. Details of these routes are given in Appendix I of the Highway Winter Service Plan 2023/24.

Contingency Treatment Network

- 6.17 The Contingency Treatment Network which covers 45.5% 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 suppliers and/or there has been a Government directive to limit salt use. No routes have been added or removed from this network for the coming season. Details of these routes are given in Appendix C of the Highway Winter Service Plan 2023/24.

Salt Bins

- 6.18 Currently there are 476 salt bins on the network serving Council Offices and public buildings with daily access and the road network. Of these 30 are owned and maintained by the Council (WBC) and 446 are owned and maintained by the Town or Parish Council.

Operations

- 6.19 The Winter Service period for 2023/24 will operate from Monday 30 October 2023 to Sunday 31 March 2024, although this period may be extended if weather conditions dictate.
- 6.20 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 2023/24.

- 6.21 All decisions and actions will be made/instructed by the Council's Winter Service Duty Officer using forecast information as supplied by the Council's contracted forecaster and local roadside weather stations.
- 6.22 Operationally, the delivery of the Highway Winter Service will be provided by the Council's Highway Maintenance Term Contractor, Volker Highways Ltd.
- 6.23 A copy of the 2023/24 Highway Winter Service Plan will be issued to all Members and all Town/Parish Councils as part of the consultation process. It will also be available on the Council's website.
- 6.24 Salt stocks to be maintained above the minimum requirement of 500 tonnes throughout the winter season. At the start of the winter season a total of 2,200 tonnes of salt will be available for the Council's use (1,200 tonnes at Chieveley Depot and 1,000 tonnes off site).

Communications

- 6.25 A copy of the Highway Winter Service Plan 2023/24 is provided in Appendix G.
- 6.26 Following approval of this report, the "Safer Driving" leaflet will be revised to reflect any changes in the Primary Treatment Network and any other recommendations within the report. The leaflet will also be made available on the Council's website.
- 6.27 Following approval of this report, an electronic copy of the Highway Winter Service Plan 2023/24 will be distributed to all Members and Parish/Town Councils.
- 6.28 The Highway Winter Service Plan 2023/24 and associated treatment routes will be published on the Council's website to allow users to make an informed decision whether to make a journey.
- 6.29 A map and list showing salt bin locations and ownership will also 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. Options for Consideration

- 8.1 None.

9. Proposals

9.1 It is proposed that the Highway Winter Service Plan 2023/24 is approved.

10. Conclusion

10.1 That the Executive Portfolio Member for Highways, Housing and Sustainable Travel approves the 2023/24 Highway Winter Service Plan.

Subject to Call-In:

Yes: 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

Wards affected:

All Wards, Town and Parish Councils

Strategic Priorities Supported:

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

- PC1: Ensure our vulnerable children and adults achieve better outcomes**
- PC2: Support everyone to reach their full potential**
- OFB1: Support businesses to start, develop and thrive in West Berkshire**
- GP1: Develop local infrastructure to support and grow the local economy**
- GP2: Maintain a green district**
- SIT1: Ensure sustainable services through innovation and partnerships**

The proposals contained in this report will help to achieve the above Council Strategy priorities by *(add text)

Officer details:

Name: Andrew Reynolds
Job Title: Asset Manager
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E-mail Address: andrew.reynolds@westberks.gov.uk

11. Executive Summary

11.1 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.

12. Conclusion

- 12.1 That the Executive Portfolio Member for Transport and Countryside approves the 2023/24 Highway Winter Service Plan.

13. Appendices

- 13.1 Appendix A – Data Protection Impact Assessment
- 13.2 Appendix B – Equalities Impact Assessment
- 13.3 Appendix C – Contractors Performance in delivering the 2022/23 Winter Service
- 13.4 Appendix D – Summary of Winter Operations 2022/23
- 13.5 Appendix E – Changes to the Primary, Secondary, Snow Clearance and Contingency Network 2023/24
- 13.6 Appendix F – Salt Bins to be removed from the Network 2023/24
- 13.7 Appendix G – List of departures from the Code of Practice for Maintenance Management
- 13.8 Appendix H – Highway Winter Service Plan 2023/24
- 13.9 Appendix I – Summary of Consultation Responses

Appendix A

Data Protection Impact Assessment – Stage One

The General Data Protection Regulations require a Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA) for certain projects that have a significant impact on the rights of data subjects.

Should you require additional guidance in completing this assessment, please refer to the Information Management Officer via dp@westberks.gov.uk

Directorate:	Place
Service:	Environment Department
Team:	Asset Management Team
Lead Officer:	Nick Dale
Title of Project/System:	Highway Winter Service Plan 2023/24
Date of Assessment:	6 September 2023

Do you need to do a Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA)?

	Yes	No
<p>Will you be processing SENSITIVE or “special category” personal data?</p> <p>Note – sensitive personal data is described as “data revealing racial or ethnic origin, political opinions, religious or philosophical beliefs, or trade union membership, and the processing of genetic data, biometric data for the purpose of uniquely identifying a natural person, data concerning health or data concerning a natural person’s sex life or sexual orientation”</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<p>Will you be processing data on a large scale?</p> <p>Note – Large scale might apply to the number of individuals affected OR the volume of data you are processing OR both</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<p>Will your project or system have a “social media” dimension?</p> <p>Note – will it have an interactive element which allows users to communicate directly with one another?</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<p>Will any decisions be automated?</p> <p>Note – does your system or process involve circumstances where an individual’s input is “scored” or assessed without intervention/review/checking by a human being? Will there be any “profiling” of data subjects?</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<p>Will your project/system involve CCTV or monitoring of an area accessible to the public?</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<p>Will you be using the data you collect to match or cross-reference against another existing set of data?</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<p>Will you be using any novel, or technologically advanced systems or processes?</p> <p>Note – this could include biometrics, “internet of things” connectivity or anything that is currently not widely utilised</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

If you answer “Yes” to any of the above, you will probably need to complete [Data Protection Impact Assessment - Stage Two](#). If you are unsure, please consult with the Information Management Officer before proceeding.

Equality Impact Assessment - Stage One

We need to ensure that our strategies, policies, functions and services, current and proposed have given due regard to equality and diversity as set out in the Public Sector Equality Duty (Section 149 of the Equality Act), which states:

- “(1) A public authority must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to:**
- (a) eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act;**
 - (b) advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it; This includes the need to:**
 - (i) remove or minimise disadvantages suffered by persons who share a relevant protected characteristic that are connected to that characteristic;**
 - (ii) take steps to meet the needs of persons who share a relevant protected characteristic that are different from the needs of persons who do not share it;**
 - (c) foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it, with due regard, in particular, to the need to be aware that compliance with the duties in this section may involve treating some persons more favourably than others.**
- (2) The steps involved in meeting the needs of disabled persons that are different from the needs of persons who are not disabled include, in particular, steps to take account of disabled persons' disabilities.**
- (3) Compliance with the duties in this section may involve treating some persons more favourably than others.”**

The following list of questions may help to establish whether the decision is relevant to equality:

- Does the decision affect service users, employees or the wider community?
- (The relevance of a decision to equality depends not just on the number of those affected but on the significance of the impact on them)
- Is it likely to affect people with particular protected characteristics differently?
- Is it a major policy, or a major change to an existing policy, significantly affecting how functions are delivered?
- Will the decision have a significant impact on how other organisations operate in terms of equality?
- Does the decision relate to functions that engagement has identified as being important to people with particular protected characteristics?
- Does the decision relate to an area with known inequalities?
- Does the decision relate to any equality objectives that have been set by the council?

Please complete the following questions to determine whether a full Stage Two, Equality Impact Assessment is required.

What is the proposed decision that you are asking the Executive to make:	Approve Highway Winter Service Plan 2023/24
Summary of relevant legislation:	Section 41 (1A) of the Highways Act 1980, which was modified on 31st October 2003, by Section 111 of the Railways and Transport Act 2003.
Does the proposed decision conflict with any of the Council's key strategy priorities?	No
Name of assessor:	Nick Dale
Date of assessment:	6 September 2023

Is this a:		Is this:	
Policy	Yes	New or proposed	n/a
Strategy	No	Already exists and is being reviewed	Yes
Function	Yes	Is changing	Yes
Service	Yes		

1 What are the main aims, objectives and intended outcomes of the proposed decision and who is likely to benefit from it?	
Aims:	To comply with best practice and the statutory duty to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, that safe passage along a highway is not endangered by snow or ice (Section 41 (1A) of the Highways Act 1980, which was modified on 31st October 2003, by Section 111 of the Railways and Transport Act 2003.
Objectives:	The Council aims to provide as far as reasonably practicable safe travelling conditions on the treated network during the winter season.
Outcomes:	Safe travelling conditions on treated roads.
Benefits:	Reduce the number of road traffic collisions during the winter season.

2 Note which groups may be affected by the proposed decision. Consider how they may be affected, whether it is positively or negatively and what sources of information have been used to determine this.

(Please demonstrate consideration of all strands – Age, Disability, Gender Reassignment, Marriage and Civil Partnership, Pregnancy and Maternity, Race, Religion or Belief, Sex and Sexual Orientation.)

Group Affected	What might be the effect?	Information to support this
Age	Older residents may have difficulty using footways during the winter season due to frost, ice or snow.	Customer Services calls. Claim submissions.
Disability	As above.	Customer Services calls. Claim submissions.
Gender Reassignment	n/a	n/a
Marriage and Civil Partnership	n/a	n/a
Pregnancy and Maternity	n/a	n/a
Race	n/a	n/a
Religion or Belief	n/a	n/a
Sex	n/a	n/a
Sexual Orientation	n/a	n/a

Further Comments relating to the item:

The Winter Service Plan is sent out to consultation to all Members and Town/Parish Councils each year and the Plan and associated treatment routes are published on the Council's website to allow users to make an informed decision whether to make a journey. As a result of the above, no Stage 2 Audit is required.

3 Result

Are there any aspects of the proposed decision, including how it is delivered or accessed, that could contribute to inequality?

No

Please provide an explanation for your answer: See above comment.

Will the proposed decision have an adverse impact upon the lives of people, including employees and service users?

No

Please provide an explanation for your answer: See above comment.

If your answers to question 2 have identified potential adverse impacts and you have answered 'yes' to either of the sections at question 3, or you are unsure about the impact, then you should carry out a Stage Two Equality Impact Assessment.

If a Stage Two Equality Impact Assessment is required, before proceeding you should discuss the scope of the Assessment with service managers in your area. You will also need to refer to the [Equality Impact Assessment guidance and Stage Two template](#).

4 Identify next steps as appropriate:	
Stage Two required	No
Owner of Stage Two assessment:	n/a
Timescale for Stage Two assessment:	n/a

Name: *W. Dale*

Date: 6 September 2023

Please now forward this completed form to Rachel Craggs, Principal Policy Officer (Equality and Diversity) (rachel.craggs@westberks.gov.uk), for publication on the WBC website.