
WINTER SERVICE PLAN FOR YEAR 2020/21

Report by Service Director Assets and Infrastructure

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

6 OCTOBER 2020

1 PURPOSE AND SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report provides a brief review of the performance of Scottish Borders Council's Winter Service during 2019/20, and presents, at Appendix 1, SBC's Winter Service Plan for 2020/21.**
- 1.2 SBC provides a winter service on nearly 3,000km of roads across the Scottish Borders. An annual Winter Service Plan is prepared to outline the steps that will be taken to ensure that the roads network is safe, within available resources.
- 1.3 As part of the Fit for 2024 programme of transformational change, the Council is required to modernise and adapt all of its services to meet present and anticipated future needs in a responsive and agile manner, ensuring that services can continue to be delivered cost effectively and sustainably, while delivering efficiencies and savings where required.
- 1.4 The winter of 2019/20 was not particularly significant; continuing a pattern towards slightly warmer and wetter winters. Snowfall was limited to a few occasions while salt usage and the number of precautionary treatments undertaken was very much along average lines.
- 1.5 The Winter Service Plan for 2020/21 is similar to the previous 2019/20 Plan in terms of policy, priorities, routes, call out arrangements and resource planning it further sets out the potential impacts of CV19 and associated contingency planning.

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 I recommend that the Executive Committee:-**
 - (a) Notes the performance of the SBC Winter Service during 2019/20;**
 - (b) Endorses the Winter Service Plan for 2020/21.**

3 BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The Council undertakes a Winter Service on nearly 3,000km of local road network. The Service is provided by the Assets and Infrastructure Department. Under the Roads (Scotland) Act 1984, Section 34, all roads authorities are required to *'take such steps as they consider reasonable to prevent snow and ice endangering the safe passage of pedestrians and vehicles over public roads'*. The safe passage of people on the road network during winter is very important for the social and the economic needs of the area.
- 3.2 To assist in meeting the legal requirements, the Roads and Infrastructure Service produces an annual Winter Service Plan which describes what steps will be taken to maintain the local road network free from ice and snow, as far as it is considered reasonable within the available budget. A Winter Service Plan has been in place in different forms for over 20 years and is deployed and reviewed annually to ensure, as far as reasonably practicable, that roads are classified in a hierarchy, priority routes have been determined based on various factors such as traffic volumes, bus routes and access to schools, shops and medical centres. Officers have updated the Council's Winter Plan for 2020/21.
- 3.3 How the Council keeps the road network operating safely and effectively is categorised in 2 ways:
- a) Prevention – by pre-salting roads to reduce the effect of frost and frozen conditions, delivered on a routine, planned basis. The road network is classified into Primary, Secondary and Tertiary Networks. Planned “pre-salting” is only undertaken on the Primary network. The remaining road network will then come under the “post-treatment” of Secondary and Tertiary networks. The Secondary network is treated after the Primary network, as time and resources permit and it is believed that the freezing conditions will continue. The Tertiary network will only be treated when extended weather conditions persist, all Primary networks have been treated, resources have been committed to treat Secondary routes, and resources have become available.
 - b) Intervention – through large scale snow clearance following extreme winter conditions, taken forward on more of an ad hoc basis, involving emergency actions and community resilience. This is co-ordinated by the Council's Emergency Planning processes.
- 3.4 Officers present an Annual Report to the Executive Committee, having done so in the current form since 2010/11. Previous reviews and reports defined the Primary and Secondary salting network and presented an update of the overall Winter Service Plan document. These reports have put the Council in a robust position in terms of defining the standards and levels of service delivered through its Winter Service Plan.
- 3.5 Once agreed with the Executive, the Council communicates the Winter Service Plan to the public through placing it on the Council website along with associated winter advice and information including Priority network routes and frequently asked questions.

4 REVIEW OF 2019/20

4.1 The winter of 2019/20 was not significant in terms of snow fall or low freezing temperatures. In overall terms, it was a slightly warmer and wetter winter than average with fairly limited incidences of snowfall; none of which were for a sustained period. Notwithstanding this, low freezing temperatures were more along average lines and both salt usage and planned actions were in line with what might be expected in an average winter.

The following key parameters illustrate this:

Years	14/15	15/16	16/17	17/18	18/19	19/20	Comment
Planned Actions	213	194	196	243	168	198	Call outs to undertake preventative actions (previous 5-year annual average = 203)
Salt Usage (,000T)	33	28	26	47	21	27.5	Used on Local & Trunk roads (previous 5-year annual average = 31)

4.2 Winter can be a very challenging time for the Council with resources often becoming stretched. Should the area experience a more severe winter period of prolonged snow with many roads closed, this is likely to prove to be extremely challenging to manage within existing resources. The workforce have continued to be engaged about the difficulties the Council faces in providing winter maintenance throughout 2020, and suitable arrangements are in place to ensure that the Council continues to meet its winter maintenance obligations.

5 AMENDMENTS TO THE WINTER SERVICE PLAN FOR 2020/21

5.1 At the Executive meeting of 20 August 2019, Members agreed to several amendments to the Winter Service Plan. However, in regard to changes to the arrangements for primary footpaths, Members requested further information including:

- a) What the consequences of the new arrangements may be, and
- b) Details about which routes were to be affected by the change.

5.2 SBC has identified a total of 174km as the Primary footway network that receives winter treatment as outlined in the Winter Service Plan. This creates 20 treatment routes. Details of those routes are included at Appendix B. It should be noted that adjustments require to be made to those routes that incorporate Trunk Road Footways. Following the recent change of Trunk Road operating contractor, the Council has been notified that they will not be called upon to provide support in delivering a winter service on the Trunk Road network.

5.3 The footway network is treated currently on a reactive/post treatment basis as conditions, prevailing temperatures and resources dictate. Unlike the roads network, there is no pre-treatment applied to any of the footway network. The arrangements for 2020-21 do not alter this policy.

5.4 A table setting out the footway treatment arrangements is included below:

		MONDAY to FRIDAY		WEEKENDS	
		CURRENT TREATMENT LEVELS	2020/21 TREATMENT LEVELS	CURRENT TREATMENT LEVELS	2020/21 TREATMENT LEVELS
PRIMARY FOOTWAY NETWORK	PRECAUTIONARY FOOTWAY TREATMENT	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL
	POST TREATMENT (During extreme and severe conditions)	YES between 0600 & 0900	YES between 0730 & 1530 (0600 in extreme, severe and prolonged circumstances)	YES as required	No (other than in extreme, severe and prolonged circumstances)
REMAINING FOOTWAY ROUTES	PRECAUTIONARY FOOTWAY TREATMENT	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL
	POST TREATMENT (During extreme and severe conditions)	As resources allow	As resources allow	As resources allow	As resources allow

5.5 The updated Winter Service Plan, at Appendix 1, will be adopted for winter 2020/21. It is a robust plan and clearly defines the agreed approach to primary; secondary; and tertiary salting of the Council’s adopted road network, following the principles of previous winter service plans.

6 CV19 – CONTINGENCY PLANNING

- 6.1 Officers continue to respond to the changing environment in regards to the impacts of CV19 on Council services. It is recognised that the potential for staff to be effected by CV19 and the impacts this could present in delivering winter maintenance should, for example, a number of staff within a depot/s be required at short notice to leave work and seek a test whilst also self-isolating.
- 6.2 A Resilience Plan to incorporate contractors within the Council’s resources to enable service continuity is almost in place, with staff and Unions being engaged in discussions around how this may work for this winter.
- 6.3 The performance of the service against scheduled treatments will be kept under constant review, with the potential to undertake hybrid treatments to cope with unforeseen issues around CV19 a potential for winter 2020/21.

- 6.4 Officers will continue to monitor and review existing winter service arrangements throughout this winter, noting any deficiencies in service provision, with a view to bringing forward any further amendments for the 2021/22 Winter Service Plan. As a consequence of continuing fiscal constraints, however, reducing budgets and the need to deliver financial plan savings, it is possible that further significant changes to the Winter Service Plan will be required going forward.

7 IMPLICATIONS

7.1 Financial

- (a) In 2020/21 the winter service will continue to be delivered as a funded service. The basic cost of all plant and vehicles required to deliver the winter service are also fully funded from within the Roads & Infrastructure budget.
- (b) Due to the continuing financial pressures affecting the Council, there is a need to continue modernisation of our approach to winter delivery and reducing the overall salt usage on priority road and footpath routes.
- (c) The Roads & Infrastructure Service has significant revenue Financial Plan savings target to deliver permanently, with £150k to deliver from changes to winter operations, in agreeing to this report those targets will be delivered in 2020/21

7.2 Risk and Mitigations

- (a) The Winter Service Plan details how the Council will respond to winter weather events across its network. It does so by clarifying the approach to treatment of carriageways and sets out the principles employed in reaching decisions and deploying resources. There is a risk that the travelling public may come to harm when commuting in and around the Borders during winter weather events. As well as promoting the potential for travel disruption arising from winter weather, the production and public scrutiny of the Winter Service Plan ensures that the Council is being clear about what it can and cannot reasonably address, within its available resources.
- (b) The last two winters have been relatively mild but, as illustrated in the key parameters table above, it is still not uncommon to encounter a much more severe winter as occurred in 2017/18 (and in 2011/12 and 2010/11 before that). This emphasises the need to keep resources to a level that can cope with unexpected, unusually inclement and/or sustained weather conditions in the future. The Roads Service, in conjunction with officers across SBC and partners, will monitor and review arrangements throughout this winter, noting any deficiencies in service provision, with a view to bring forward any further amendments in the autumn for the 2021/22 Winter Plan.
- (c) The potential impact of CV19 on the ability to deliver a winter service is a major concern. As previously intimated, any loss of personnel through contracting of the virus or self-isolation is obviously of considerable concern. This is being mitigated against through the potential use of external contractors that can be called upon to assist

in both planned and emergency situations. Other measures include continuing to promote contractual overtime and encouraging other areas of the workforce to become trained up to assist.

7.3 **Integrated Impact Assessment**

An Integrated Impact Assessment has been undertaken in regards to the content of this report and no adverse findings have been observed requiring a fuller IIA to be undertaken.

7.4 **Acting Sustainably**

There are no economic, social or environmental issues associated with this report.

7.5 **Carbon Management**

There are no significant impacts on the Council's carbon emissions that are additional to current operation.

7.6 **Rural Proofing**

There are no rural proofing impacts resulting from this report. The Winter Service Plan recognises the rural nature of the Scottish Borders and the importance of maintaining transport links during the winter months.

7.7 **Changes to Scheme of Administration or Scheme of Delegation**

There are no changes which are required to either the Scheme of Administration or the Scheme of Delegation as a result of the proposals in this report.

8 CONSULTATION

8.1 The Executive Director (Finance & Regulatory), the Monitoring Officer/Chief Legal Officer, the Chief Officer Audit and Risk, the Service Director HR & Communications, the Clerk to the Council and Corporate Communications have been consulted and comments received incorporated into the final report.

8.2 The Corporate Equalities and Diversity Officer and Procurement Officer have also been consulted and comments received incorporated into the final report.

Approved by

John Curry

Service Director Assets and Infrastructure

Signature

Author(s)

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Background Papers: N/A

Previous Minute Reference: *Executive Committee, 20 August 2019 item 2*

Note – You can get this document on tape, in Braille, large print and various computer formats by contacting the address below. Brian Young can also give information on other language translations as well as providing additional copies.

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