



CABINET – 20TH SEPTEMBER 2023

SUBJECT: WINTER SERVICE PLAN UPDATE

REPORT BY: CORPORATE DIRECTOR FOR ECONOMY AND ENVIRONMENT

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To agree the Winter Service Plan (WSP) as policy and as part of fulfilling our statutory duties under the Highways Act 1980, to provide a safe highway network and provide an update to Cabinet on key winter service activities and priorities in relation to winter maintenance and flooding. The updated Winter Service Plan is included as appendix 1 of this report.

2. SUMMARY

- 2.1 Highways Operations has produced a Winter Service Plan since the inception of Caerphilly County Borough Council (CCBC).
- 2.2 The purpose of the plan is to explain the Council's responsibilities for maintaining the highway infrastructure network during the winter maintenance period (currently October to April).
- 2.3 The plan also provides guidance to elected councillors, council staff and the public on operational procedures and contact points during the winter maintenance period.
- 2.4 The content of the plan has been divided into the following sections:
- Winter Service Policy
 - Roles & Responsibilities
 - Operation Plan – Pre-salting
 - Operational Plan – Snowing
 - Winter Emergency – Flooding
 - Communications Plan
 - Weather Forecast
 - Salt Strategy
 - Resources

2.5 Members are asked to consider the process and overall content.

3. RECOMMENDATIONS

3.1 Cabinet is asked to approve the updated Winter Service Plan.

4. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1 To approve the Winter Service Plan which has been in existence since the inception of CCBC, with reviews undertaken annually. It has proven to be a very valuable document for Officers and Members, when determining actions, dealing with third party claims and answering queries from Members and residents. Annual reviews will be continued and reported to CMT with any significant changes in approach further reported to Cabinet for approval as and when necessary.

5. THE REPORT

5.1 The Winter Service Plan has existed since the inception of CCBC. The content has increased in complexity and quantity over the years, now culminating in an 85 page document outlining the Highway Operations' approach to the Winter Maintenance Service for the coming winter period.

5.2 The purpose of the plan is to explain the Council's responsibilities for maintaining the highway infrastructure network during the winter maintenance period (currently October to April)

5.3 The plan also provides guidance to elected councillors, council staff and the public on operational procedures and contact points during the winter maintenance period, clearly demonstrating the plans and contingencies that will be in place for the coming season.

5.4 To date the Winter Service Plan has been annually reviewed by Elected Councillors and key Council Officers, with a four-week period dedicated to this process during late summer/early autumn. The feedback comments and amendments are then incorporated into the final version, which is made available to all appropriate parties and is also accessible to all stakeholders via the Caerphilly internet site (in October). It is envisaged that this process will continue for each winter season, after Cabinet endorsement of the plan. The future annual reviews will be reported to CMT and should any significant amendments to the plan be identified Cabinet endorsement will be sought.

5.5 The report also takes into account The Highways Act 1980 Section 41, which places a duty on the Local Authority 'to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, that safe passage along a highway is not endangered by snow or ice' and the 'Transport Resilience Review 2014 – A review of the resilience of the transport network to extreme weather events' – Department for Transport.

5.6 The Winter Maintenance Plan and arrangements can be found on the Caerphilly Council Internet site, on the following link:

<http://www.caerphilly.gov.uk/Services/Roads-and-pavements/Gritting-and-snow-clearing>

This gives access to the following information:

- Winter Service Plan
- Gritting procedures and process
- How gritting works
- Salt storage information
- Gritting Vehicles
- Grit Bin requests

- 5.7 The Plan sets out the Winter Maintenance Policy for CCBC, with the prioritisation of routes, and resources deployed with key post roles and responsibilities. The Plan is divided into nine sections as follows:
- 5.7.1 **Winter Service Preamble & Policy** – this gives the background and basis on which the plan is formulated.
- 5.7.2 **Roles and Responsibilities** – this gives the required posts with their responsibilities and duties.
- 5.7.3 **Operational Plan: Pre-salting** – this encompasses the procedures for salting prior to and post a freezing event, based on the Road Hierarchy which sets the order of prioritisation for the Routes throughout the Borough
- 5.7.4 **Operational Plan: Snow Conditions** – this outlines processes and procedures in a ‘white out’ event with the activation of the Snow Plan (which includes Ploughing procedures and route prioritisation).
- 5.7.5 **Winter Emergency: Flooding** – outlines the procedure to follow in a flooding event.
- 5.7.6 **Communications Plan** – includes the processes to be followed in response to freezing, snow and flooding events.
- 5.7.7 **Weather Forecast** – outlines the methods and procedures for forecasting freezing, snow and flooding events.
- 5.7.8 **Salt Stocks** – outlines the strategic storage of salt and restocking procedures.
- 5.7.9 **Resources** – gives an overview of fleet, plant and human resources deployed for the Winter Service Plan.
- 5.8 There are a number of key sections within the document that will be particularly useful for Cabinet members to familiarise themselves with and these are set out below:
- 5.8.1 **Gritting Route and Road Hierarchy** – This gives the prioritisation order to the route gritting and snow clearance throughout CCBC, for example clearing major routes, routes required for medical priority, remote communities, etc. before other parts of the network. A review of this section should assist in confirming that the prioritisation order is appropriate and that key stakeholders have not been overlooked.
- 5.8.2 **Salt Stocks and Location** – This gives the minimum amount of salt that needs to be held by CCBC for each winter season and their respective locations. A review of this section will help clarify the amounts required for each season and whether the

members consider the current deployment of salt stores are adequate for the needs of the highway network over the winter season.

The current locations for salt storage (with tonnage capacities) are:

Penmaen Depot	1,500T
Bedwas Depot	5,000T
Pontlottyn Depot	1,500T
Strategic Regional Salt Stocks (sited in Ebbw Vale)	2,000T

- 5.8.3 Weather Forecasting – This outlines the methods and procedures used to make the appropriate decisions for a freezing or winter event. Reviewing this will assist in both informing the members of systems used and how decisions are made, with any useful contributions as to how this could be improved.
- 5.8.4 Salt Bin Request Process – This is outlined in the Winter Service Plan on Page 131 (Appendix P) and includes a decision flow-chart and an assessment form to show how requested locations are scored, so forming a prioritised order of potential sites. A review of this section should both inform and invite further comment on the effectiveness of the process and possible improvements.
- 5.9 A significant factor to consider in the 2023/24 plan is the impact of the new 20mph speed limit across the County Borough. From September 2023 Welsh Government has decided to reduce the speed limit on all 30mph routes, which has affected the time that the routes take to complete. Several trials have been undertaken of the routes, which have confirmed that on average the routes will take an extra half hour to complete. As the vehicles have automated gritting and satellite navigation, it would be impossible to change the number of routes by the start of this Winter season, so to mitigate this issue, drivers will (if necessary), be sent home half hour earlier to ensure compliance with Domestic Driving Hours requirements. Continual monitoring of the route completion durations will be undertaken during this winter in preparation for any route alterations that may be required for the 2024/25 winter season. This may include the sourcing of an additional gritter if an additional route is needed.

5.10 **Conclusion**

The WSP has been a successful and reliable document that continues to be a valuable source of information and guidance for Officers and Members.

6. **ASSUMPTIONS**

- 6.1 There are no assumptions.

7. **SUMMARY OF INTEGRATED IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

- 7.1 This report is an update to an existing plan with no material alterations from the previous approved plan, so an IIA is not necessary at this stage.

8. **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 8.1 The Plan will be funded through existing revenue budgets, albeit that there is an Earmarked Winter Maintenance Reserve with a current balance of £419,567 that can

be called upon in the event of additional costs being incurred. There are no additional financial implications with this report.

- 8.2 The proposed minor alterations to staff resourcing due to the introduction of the residential 20mph speed limit will be accommodated within existing budgets and are expected to be minor. It is difficult to predict exact figures as the service is governed by the timing of weather events.

9. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 There are no current impacts as the Winter Services are resourced by Winter Standby staff drawn from a voluntary pool of personnel mainly from Highways Operations and NCS (in-house contractor) with the support of drivers from Refuse & Cleansing and Grounds Maintenance when required.
- 9.2 Staffing rotas will remain similar to previous years with additional rest periods provided as and when necessary in light of the 20mph requirements and/or any other circumstances that may arise.

10. CONSULTATIONS

- 10.1 All comments received have been taken into consideration and are included in the report.

11. STATUTORY POWER

- 11.1 Highway Act 1980.
- 11.2 Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2016.

Author: Gareth Richards, Highways Services Group Manager –
richagm@caerphilly.gov.uk

Consultees:

Councillor Nigel George, Cabinet Member for Infrastructure, Property, Corporate Services and Highways
Christina Harray, Chief Executive
Dave Street, Deputy Chief Executive
Mark S. Williams, Corporate Director Economy and Environment
Marcus Lloyd, Head of Infrastructure
Lynne Donovan, Head of People Services
Rob Tranter, Head of Legal and Monitoring Officer
Steve Harris, Head of Financial Services and Section 151 Officer
Robert Hartshorn, Head of Public Protection, Community and Leisure Services
Chris Adams, Highway Engineering Group Manager
Emma Townsend, Health and Safety Manager

Background Papers:

[Highways Maintenance Plan](#)

[Transport Resilience Review 2014 – A review of the resilience of the transport network to extreme weather events’ – Department for Transport.](#)

[Code of Practice ‘Well-Managed Highway Infrastructure](#)

Appendices:

Appendix 1 Winter Service Plan