

**WINTER SERVICE PLAN 2019/20**

*To:* **Highways & Infrastructure Committee**

*Meeting Date:* **10 September 2019**

*From:* **Steve Cox, Executive Director: Place and Economy**

*Electoral division(s):* **All**

*Forward Plan ref:* **2019/027**      *Key decision:* **Yes**

*Purpose:* **To inform Committee of the Winter Service Plan for 2019/2020 winter season.**

*Recommendation:* **The Committee is asked to:**

- **Approve the Winter Service Plan for the 2019/2020 winter gritting season.**

<b><i>Officer contact:</i></b>	<b><i>Member contacts:</i></b>
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## **1. BACKGROUND**

- 1.1 Cambridgeshire County Council, in its role as Highway Authority has a statutory duty under the Highways Act “to ensure safe passage along the highway is not endangered by snow and ice”.
- 1.2 The winter service operations of Cambridgeshire County Council are jointly provided by Skanska and Cambridgeshire County Council, under the Cambridgeshire Highways umbrella. The operation deals with regular, frequent and reasonably predictable occurrences like low temperatures, ice and snow, as well as exceptional weather events.
- 1.3 Although a specialised area, the Winter Service is a significant aspect of network management both financially and in terms of its importance to road users. It can also have significant environmental effects.
- 1.4 The production and adoption of this Winter Maintenance Policy and Operational Plan establishes how the County Council is able to demonstrate that the current legal obligations are being met, and being done so in a way which ensures that resources are deployed in the most economic, efficient, effective and environmentally friendly manner.
- 1.5 The winter plan is reviewed on an annual basis to ensure changes in network length, new developments, budgetary changes, resource pressures and revised legislation are taken account of. The plan also provides the county council's defence in the event of claims.
- 1.6 The 2019/20 budget for delivering the winter service is £2.125m.

## **2. MAIN ISSUES**

- 2.1 Cambridgeshire Highways currently grit approximately 44% of the highway network. This comprises primary and secondary routes (an interactive map is available on the [county council website](#)) and the Guided Busway. Primary routes are sections of the network which serve as major connecting routes for communities and allow the majority of users to commute and access essential services across the County. Secondary routes are those gritted in addition to primary routes when there is a forecast of a prolonged cold spell, where road surface temperatures fall below zero or when snowfall is forecast as and when resources allow.
- 2.2 The county is split into three weather domains and forecasts are received for each domain. The use of domains means that we do not automatically grit across the county if only one area reaches the weather trigger point. This allows for a much more efficient and cost effective approach. The decision to grit is currently made by a team of County and Skanska staff, who have been trained and are fully certified.
- 2.3 The council has a fleet of 37 gritters, which are leased from ECON as part of a seven year agreement. The agreement with ECON is currently in its 5th year. Skanska are responsible for providing the drivers and generally there are two drivers per gritter. Each gritter is assigned one route and each route requires to be completed within 2.5 hours.

- 2.4 Many of Cambridgeshire's parishes have signed up to our winter gritting volunteer programme. This is where the parish has identified footpaths and dedicated cycleways that they would like gritted in freezing weather, for example, outside a school or a shop. Currently there are approximately 80 winter volunteers around the county.
- 2.5 Future challenges include the ability to accommodate the increasing length of highway network arising from new infrastructure and developments as part of the growth agenda. Discussions are currently underway with Highways England to understand when new roads will be handed over to the county council as part of the A14 project and therefore at which point these roads will need to be included in our winter plan.

### **3. ALIGNMENT WITH CORPORATE PRIORITIES**

#### **3.1 A good quality of life for everyone**

Maintaining a safe Highway network during the winter season enables local communities and local businesses to continue their daily activities providing benefits to all local residents.

#### **3.2 Thriving places for people to live**

Maintaining a safe Highway network during the winter season enables safe movement between and within communities provides a positive contribution to this priority.

#### **3.3 The best start for Cambridgeshire's children**

There are no significant implications for this priority.

### **4. SIGNIFICANT IMPLICATIONS**

#### **4.1 Resource Implications**

Despite 2018/19 being a mild winter, with relatively few gritting runs, the winter service budget overspent by approximately £76k. This was primarily due to the replacement of equipment that had reached the end of its life and increased training costs for staff involved in the delivery of the winter service, ensuring continued compliance with legislation. Officers are therefore taking the opportunity to review the costs associated with delivering the winter service as part of standard county council budgetary review processes.

The 2019/20 budget for the winter service is £2.125 million and is based on a rolling five-year average.

Nationally there is an increasing challenge around the recruitment and retention of qualified drivers and winter decision makers.

#### **4.2 Statutory, Risk and Legal Implications**

The Statutory requirements are set out in the Highways Act 1980, specifically:

- Section 41(1A) - duty to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, that safe passage along the highway is not endangered by snow and ice.

- Section 150 - duty to remove snow, soil, etc. from the highway. If an obstruction arises in a highway from accumulation of snow or from the falling down of banks in the side of the highway, or any other cause, the highway authority shall remove the obstruction.
- National guidance *Well Maintained Highways*, recognises that local circumstances, including financial and other resource constraints, can vary across the country and whilst the aspirations of the guidance should be taken into account in assessment of winter service, it is unrealistic for local authorities to meet high standards right across their networks. It is not possible to define an absolute minimum level of service required to meet statutory duties.

#### **4.3 Equality and Diversity Implications**

Equalities impact has been considered. Increasing the robustness of the winter maintenance service can ensure that the priority highway network is available for all to use during periods of adverse weather (paragraph 3.7 of the Operational Plan).

#### **4.4 Engagement and Consultation Implications**

Cambridgeshire Highways works closely with the Corporate Communications Team. A well-established communications plan is followed that includes press releases and opportunities throughout the season. Preseason engagement with the parishes is carried out to identify new and existing volunteers.

#### **4.5 Localism and Local Member Involvement**

Over 26 parishes consisting of 84 volunteers attended training in 2018/19 and are insured to grit agreed footways in their parish. These volunteers were given the opportunity to confirm contact information, request personal protective and gritting equipment that they did not have available and provide feedback on the volunteer programme.

Further work is planned to build on the community involvement achieved during the last season and officers will continue to engage with district council partners to supplement county gritting operations. However, there will be a need to manage expectations over the ability of the county council to grit additional lengths of footway unless additional budget is allocated and the focus should be on facilitating local communities to help themselves with the county providing salt supplies and equipment.

Huntingdonshire and East Cambridgeshire District Councils and Cambridge City Council continued to treat areas using equipment and salt provided by the county council.

The District Council partners referred to above treated various priority footways on several occasions with Cambridge City Council being the most proactive.

#### **4.6 Public Health Implications**

By maintaining the Highway network in a safe condition during the winter period which may subsequently contribute to reducing the risk of accident injuries on the network.

<b>Source Documents</b>	<b>Location</b>
Cambridgeshire County Council Highway Service Winter Service Plan 2019/20  <a href="https://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/residents/travel-roads-and-parking/roads-and-pathways/gritting-roads-cycleways-and-paths/">https://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/residents/travel-roads-and-parking/roads-and-pathways/gritting-roads-cycleways-and-paths/</a>	Appendix A   Online

<b>Implications</b>	<b>Officer Clearance</b>
<b>Have the resource implications been cleared by Finance?</b>	Yes Name of Financial Officer: Sarah Heywood
<b>Have the procurement/contractual/ Council Contract Procedure Rules implications been cleared by the LGSS Head of Procurement?</b>	Yes Name of Officer: Gus de Silva
<b>Has the impact on Statutory, Legal and Risk implications been cleared by LGSS Law?</b>	Yes Name of Legal Officer: Amy Brown
<b>Have the equality and diversity implications been cleared by your Service Contact?</b>	Yes Name of Officer: Elsa Evans
<b>Have any engagement and communication implications been cleared by Communications?</b>	Yes Name of Officer: Sarah Silk
<b>Have any localism and Local Member involvement issues been cleared by your Service Contact?</b>	Yes Name of Officer: Richard Lumley
<b>Have any Public Health implications been cleared by Public Health</b>	Yes Name of Officer: Iain Green