

ENVIRONMENT OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Date of Meeting	Tuesday 17th September 2019
Report Subject	Winter Maintenance Policy Review 2019-21
Cabinet Member	Cabinet Member for Streetscene & Transportation
Report Author	Chief Officer – Streetscene & Transportation
Type of Report	Operational

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Winter Maintenance Service is recognised as one of the most important functions that the Council as ‘Highway Authority’ provides. It is fundamental to providing safe and reliable access to the highway network during the period October to April each year.

This report updates the current Winter Maintenance Policy, explains the legislative requirements of providing such a service and the actions taken by the Streetscene and Transportation portfolio to deliver the winter maintenance service. In addition the report outlines the Council’s response to other adverse weather events such as flooding and high winds.

It is good practise to regularly review the winter maintenance policy and this report outlines the changes to the most recent version of the ‘Winter Maintenance Policy (2019-21)’ which is being put forward for Cabinet approval.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1	That Scrutiny recommends Cabinet approve the reviewed Winter Maintenance Policy (2019-21) which also contains the procedures for delivering the Council’s winter maintenance and adverse weather service.
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REPORT DETAILS

1.00	BACKGROUND OF WINTER MAINTENANCE POLICY
1.01	The Council, as the Highway Authority for County Roads, has a general duty, under Section 41 of the Highways Act 1980, to maintain the highway network in a good state of repair so as to render it safe for ordinary traffic at all times of the year.
1.02	Section 111 of the Railways and Transport Act 2003 states that <i>"In particular, a Highway Authority is under a duty to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, that safe passage along a highway is not endangered by snow and ice"</i> .
1.03	Under Section 150(1) of the Highways Act 1980, there is a requirement for the Highway Authority to remove an accumulation of snow which forms an obstruction, subject to a number of factors stated in Section 150(3) of the 1980 Act.
1.04	In addition, the Traffic Management Act 2004 placed a network management duty on all local traffic authorities. It requires authorities to do all that is reasonably practicable to manage the network effectively to keep traffic moving. In meeting the duty, authorities should establish contingency plans for dealing promptly and effectively with unplanned events, such as unforeseen weather conditions, as far as is reasonably practicable.
1.05	The legislation does not impose an absolute duty but rather involves a balance between the degree of risk and the steps necessary to eliminate the risk.
1.06	In order to provide a statutory defence, a Council policy on Winter Maintenance services is required which should be reviewed on a regular basis. Flintshire currently review the policy every two years.
1.07	<p>The review of service was undertaken by officers from the Streetscene and Transportation portfolio and considered these key areas:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Does the current service meet the statutory requirements?2. Are there any changes to standards which should be incorporated into the new policy?3. Are there any local concerns or complaints with the service which might require a change to working practices?4. Are there any changes in local circumstances which would require changes to policy?5. Is the current supply chain effective and sufficient to support the service?6. Are current salt stocks sufficient to deliver the service effectively?7. Are arrangements to treat car parks and footways sufficient?
1.08	The review concluded that the current operating model is adequate in responding to the risk presented during periods of adverse weather and effective in the deployment of resource, whilst limiting the impact of the disruption to the service and wider service users.

1.09	There are no significant changes following the review of the policy on this occasion, however in recent years the service has looked to improve the communication during periods of severe or prolonged adverse weather, and the approach has been captured within the policy.
1.10	The policy has also been amended to reflect the change in weather forecast provider, from MeteoGroup to MetDesk, following procurement of the forecast service by Welsh Government.
1.11	The adverse weather response is planned in advance of the winter season, and documented within the Winter Maintenance handbook that is distributed to all involved personnel, and updated as a controlled document throughout the season.
1.12	6 Duty Officers will be rostered throughout the winter period to monitor weather forecasts and decide on appropriate preventative action.
1.13	A minimum of 26 frontline, operational staff will be rostered to be on-call throughout the season to respond to adverse weather. There are also on-call highways response teams that are available to supplement these teams if necessary.
1.14	On receipt of a severe weather warning (high winds, flooding, snow event, etc.) an operational control room is established in Alltami and manned by staff from the Streetscene service who will act as a dedicated point of contact for the Contact Centre staff. The staff within the operational control room will have direct contact with Streetscene Coordinators/Supervisors who will be on-site to investigate complaints and mobilise dedicated gritting vehicles under their direct control.
1.15	The Streetscene Contact Centre is now combined with the Housing Contact Centre and based in Ty Dewi Sant in Ewloe. Staff from the Streetscene service meet regularly with the manager of the new combined Contact Centre to ensure that systems are in place to ensure a smooth transition from the current arrangement to the new, particularly in the event of a period of bad weather. It is expected that the additional staffing numbers within the new Contact Centre will provide additional resilience and improve answering times during periods of high call volumes.
1.16	The operational control room will be responsible for directing all operations and act as a liaison contact to the Corporate Communication office through which all press releases will be made.
1.17	In the event that high winds are forecast, the details of the forecast are examined by the Duty Officer, and consideration will be given as to whether or not to close the Flintshire Bridge (A548). The process to follow in the event the bridge needs closing is set out within the updated Winter Maintenance Policy 2019-21.

2.00	RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS
2.01	The Winter Maintenance budget is ring-fenced and reserves are reviewed annually to ensure adequate funding is available to deliver the service throughout the winter season.
2.02	Winter maintenance operations on the highway infrastructure are carried out by the Streetscene Staff and resources supplemented by local agricultural contractors as necessary.

3.00	CONSULTATIONS REQUIRED / CARRIED OUT
3.01	<p>Consultation took place with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Operational departments and stakeholders • With Cabinet Member • Neighbouring Local Authorities in relation to their Winter Maintenance Operations

4.00	RISK MANAGEMENT
4.01	The winter maintenance service has undertaken various risk assessments on the provision of road surface treatments which are outlined within the policy.

5.00	APPENDICES
5.01	Appendix 1 - Revised Winter Maintenance Policy

6.00	LIST OF ACCESSIBLE BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS
6.01	Highways Act 1980.
6.02	Railways and Transport Act 2003
6.03	Code of Practice for Well-managed Highway Infrastructure (2016)
6.04	Traffic Management Act 2004
6.05	Quarmby Report – July 2010
6.06	Trunk Road Maintenance Manual
6.07	Welsh Government Advice Documents

6.08	WLGA Advice Documents
6.09	<p>Contact Officer: Stephen O Jones – Chief Officer – Streetscene & Transportation</p> <p>Telephone: 01352 704700</p> <p>E-mail: Stephen.o.jones@flintshire.gov.uk</p>

7.00	GLOSSARY OF TERMS
7.01	Financial Year (FY): the period of 12 months commencing on 1 April
7.02	Budget: a statement expressing the Council's policies and service levels in financial terms for a particular financial year. In its broadest sense it includes both the revenue budget and capital programme and any authorised amendments to them.