

# Transport and Environment Committee

10.00am, Tuesday, 29 October 2013

## Winter Weather Preparations 2013/14

Item number	7.8
Report number	
Wards	All

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Council outcomes	<a href="#">CO19</a> , <a href="#">CO21</a> , <a href="#">CO22</a> , <a href="#">CO23</a> , <a href="#">CO24</a> , <a href="#">CO25</a> , <a href="#">CO26</a> and <a href="#">CO27</a>
Single Outcome Agreement	<a href="#">SO4</a>

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# Executive summary

## Winter Weather Preparations 2013/14

### Summary

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The report sets out details of the Council's winter maintenance plans for 2013/14 and, in particular, the preparations that have been made to deal with any severe winter weather event. Following the severe winters of 2009/10 and 2010/11 the Policy and Strategy Committee commissioned a comprehensive review of winter weather preparedness. That strategic review, *Winter Weather-Working Together*, was undertaken during the spring and summer of 2011. The results were reported to the Policy and Strategy Committee in September 2011, with further reports being considered by that Committee at its meetings in October and November of that year.

This report summarises the key measures that have again been put in place for this winter.

### Recommendations

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It is recommended that the Committee notes and endorses the action that has been taken to prepare for the coming winter.

### Measures of success

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The community's measure of success is for the Council to make a prompt and effective response to any winter weather event, ensuring that essential services are maintained with minimum disruption.

Winter weather and particularly, severe winter weather events, can cause major disruption to domestic, social or business life in Edinburgh. Feedback following the prolonged severe winter weather in 2010/11, indicated that citizens thought that the Council ultimately did a good job. However, most felt that the service response would have benefitted from increased preparation.

The Winter Weather – Working Together recommendations were developed to:

- Significantly increase preparedness through the development and testing of effective plans across all key services;
- Deliver investment in additional equipment for use by staff in schools, care establishments and neighbourhood teams; and
- Improve liaison and co-ordination with key partners in the emergency services, transport providers and health care professionals.

Customer Focus Groups were convened to obtain views and feedback for the Transport Service Review, which is currently underway. They found that many in the City have responded favourably to the improved preparation and response on the last two winters.

## Financial impact

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The winter maintenance budget was increased to £1.89 million in 2012/13. That figure has been maintained this year. The winter weather preparations set out in this report aim to minimise costs. It should be noted, however, that costs for an average winter, based on previous years' activities exceed the budget provision.

## Equalities impact

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The Winter Weather – Working Together review recognised that severe winter weather impacts upon all in the City to a greater or lesser degree. Those with mobility difficulties are likely to experience significant disruption to their working lives. The review therefore focussed on attempting to identify and prioritise groups who may be more adversely affected by severe winter weather including sheltered housing, special schools and care homes. The preparations set out in this report were originally the subject of consultation with a broad range of service users and providers in order to gain an accurate picture of needs across the city, including a survey issued to the Edinburgh Equalities Network.

## Sustainability impact

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Winter Weather – Working Together proposals for the disposal of cleared snow and ice and for the storage of salt stocks were subject to detailed consultation with SEPA.

The Winter Treatment Plans are prioritised to keep essential public transport, pedestrian and cycling routes open and clear of snow and ice.

## Consultation and engagement

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The Winter Weather - Working Together Review and the measures identified were based on an extensive stakeholder engagement exercise including:

- Residents engaged through community groups, focus groups and the use of an online survey.
- Attendance at 23 positive and well attended meetings ranging from Neighbourhood Partnership Meetings, Business Meetings and Sub Groups to specific workshops with Community Council's, YoungEdinburgh and business organisations such as Edinburgh Federation of Small Businesses.
- An online customer survey available on the Council's website.
- Children and Families departmental debriefs with required changes being made to the departmental contingency plan. The Consultative Committee with Parents, which involved all Parent Council Chairs, was encouraged to feedback into the consultation process and complete the public survey as well as notify other parents.
- 20 process-mapping sessions were carried out over three months from May to July 2011, with a cross-section of Children and Families establishments. The staff interviewed were mainly head teachers, business managers and service support officers which provided a detailed overview of the issues faced by staff and pupils during the period. Establishments were selected to ensure representation from all neighbourhoods and services within the department.
- Feedback was gathered regarding services to vulnerable people from partner agencies, via contacts within the Edinburgh Vulnerable People Working Group and Edinburgh Resilience Core Group.
- Knowledge Partnership, a company specialising in consultation, recruited and facilitated twelve focus groups with members of the public, hosting one group in each of the neighbourhood partnership areas during April 2011. Two focus groups were held with customers in the following six categories:
  - Older active people;
  - People living in dense/urban housing areas;

- People resident in rural areas, ie Almond and Pentland neighbourhoods;
- Parents of primary and secondary school children;
- People who cycle and/or use public transport; and
- People who are car users.

Further consultation on a wide range of Transport Services was carried throughout the summer of this year as part of the Transport Review. Winter Maintenance formed a part of that consultation. The results are summarised as follows:

Cost Control – This will be easier to monitor as all of Neighbourhood Taskforce staff will perform their winter weather duties during their normal working hours, avoiding stand-by and overtime payments.

Financial Monitoring – This will be carried out monthly from November–April with projections for year-end to better inform the budget spend forecast process.

## **Background reading/external references**

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Winter Weather - Working Together – Item 9, Policy and Strategy Committee – 6 September 2011

Winter Weather - Working Together Progress Report – Item 7, Policy and Strategy Committee – 4 October 2011

Winter Weather - Working Together Progress Report – Item 7, Policy and Strategy Committee – 8 November 2011

Winter Weather Preparations – Item 7.9, Transport and Environment Committee – 23 November 2012

## Winter Weather Preparations 2013/14

### 1. Background

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- 1.1 This report sets out the preparations that have been made to deal with winter weather, including any periods of severe winter weather. A strategic review of winter weather preparedness was undertaken during the spring and summer of 2011. The results were reported to the Policy and Strategy Committee in September 2011. Further reports on preparations for severe winter weather events were considered by that Committee at its meetings in October and November of that year. A report summarising Winter Weather Preparation was considered by this Committee at its meeting on 23 November 2012.
- 1.2 The review was based on extensive stakeholder engagement. The main priorities identified by the community were:
- Better communication with the public both before and during severe winter weather;
  - Road priority routes – increasing the number of roads designated as category 1 priorities;
  - Pedestrian priority routes – significantly increasing the number of pavements designated as priority 1;
  - Enabling ‘self help’ by increasing the supply of salt locally in Salt Bins or Salt Sacks;
  - Ensuring that access can be maintained to schools, health centres, residential and day care facilities;
  - The use of volunteers;
  - Dealing with inconsiderately parked cars; and
  - Ensuring the resilience of the Waste Collection service

- 1.3 The recommendations agreed were implemented in the winter of 2011/12 and were repeated again last winter. A key recommendation of the Winter Weather-Working Together (WW-WT) Review was that preparations be reviewed annually and reported to Committee before each winter. In 2012/13 two sections of off-road cycleway were included for treatment at the same time as the Priority 1a pavements. This received extremely positive feedback from Spokes and cyclists.

## Main report

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- 2.1 A campaign is due to be launched in October 2013, to raise awareness of the Council's winter weather plans and provide information to citizens to assist them in their preparations for winter. The campaign will follow on from work done during 2011 and 2012 when the launch was deliberately designed to coincide with the Scottish Government's 'Ready for Winter?' campaign. The Council's campaign will encourage citizens to start preparing for winter and advise them what to do during severe winter weather. It will also provide information on the Council's winter weather plans both for normal and severe weather conditions.
- 2.2 The Council's website which was substantially improved over the last two winters, has again been enhanced, allowing easier access to information and providing links to other organisations. It includes:-
- Maps showing gritting routes, salt bins and, when needed, temporary waste sites and salt dumps;
  - A short video encouraging residents to clear snow and ice; and
  - Information about becoming a volunteer snow warden.

Web pages are being regularly updated throughout the winter and will be updated at least daily during any severe winter weather event.

- 2.3 Improvements to roads and pavement gritting were identified as a high priority by stakeholders in 2011. As agreed by Committee last year, roads are now categorised into 2 types:
- Priority 1 – Main and essential roads that are pre-treated when frost or snow is forecast and receive priority treatment during any snow event.
  - Priority 2 – Residential roads that are only treated when there is a severe winter weather event and, then, only after the Priority 1 Route Network is clear.

The number and length of roads, to be treated as Priority 1, was significantly increased as a result of the WW-WT Review to include access roads to all schools, health centres, residential and day care homes, emergency services' facilities and all bus routes. Gritting routes were revised and improved to increase efficiency and improve effectiveness. The larger, high capacity gritters are planned to be used exclusively on the main arterial routes, ensuring these are kept open as an absolute priority. The smaller gritters are deployed on the narrower feeder roads.

- 2.4 Farmers were used for the first time in 2011/12 to undertake the pre-treatment of some rural roads in the west of the City. They proved to be 100% reliable and extremely cost effective. Their contract was extended for the winter of 2012/13. A contract for farmers support has been re-tendered and they will again be used to provide both precautionary salt treatment throughout the winter and snow ploughing in the event of severe winter weather.
- 2.5 Pavement treatment routes were also significantly increased and improved for the 2011/12 winter. By locating the pavement mini-tractors in the areas in which they operate, it was possible to carry out the pre-treatment of many more footways using the same number of tractors. All 9 Priority 1a pavement routes are pre-treated when freezing conditions are forecast. These routes cover the more vulnerable higher ground to the south and south west of the City, that will continue to be treated by Road Services, and two City Centre routes that will be treated, from this year, by the Neighbourhood team. These two routes may require to be treated by the City Centre nightshift team and while this will take 2-3hrs for four of the eight staff in an 11hrs shift, this may at times affect their normal duties. Last year a further two routes were included for Priority 1a treatment. These covered the off-road cycle routes and comprise the North Edinburgh Cycle network and the Innocent Railway cycle route. Positive feedback was received from cyclists last year and these routes will be included for Priority 1a treatment again this winter.
- 2.6 A further 20 other Neighbourhood Priority 1b pavement routes, introduced from winter 2011/12, plus the two City Centre Priority 1a routes, will only be treated from this winter during normal working hours for Taskforce staff in each Neighbourhood. This efficiency measure will reduce budget spend by £205K as no stand-by and overtime will be necessary for Neighbourhood staff. This means that Priority 1a pavements will be treated 24/7 and Priority 1b pavements will be treated from 0615-2100hrs, 7 days per week. Public Holidays will be covered during the same times but 1b pavement treatment, if required, will rely on 20-30 Taskforce volunteers to resource this activity citywide.

- 2.7 This change of treatment will mean the start time in most Neighbourhoods, apart from City Centre and Leith, will be 0615hrs, as apposed to the previous start time of 0500hrs. The control and management of staff completing these routes will be significantly improved, as they will be working under their normal Task Force management, from their normal depots. The ability of Task Force Managers to make local decisions, based on pavement conditions, will ensure that treatment is targeted to the pavements in most need. It is anticipated that this will more than compensate for the later start time.
- 2.8 External contractors will again be available to support Roads and Neighbourhood staff, in the event of a prolonged severe winter weather events as part of the five year Framework Contract let in 2011. They will also provide direct snow and ice clearing support to waste services to enable essential refuse collection services to be maintained.
- 2.9 Edinburgh's salt stocks were increased from 7,500 tonnes to 25,000 tonnes at the start of the 2011/12 winter and these levels were maintained for last winter. The service no longer has access to the Braehead site for use as a strategic salt store, as it is being considered for disposal under the Depots Review. As a result of this reduced storage capacity it has been agreed to reduce the overall salt stock level to 16,000 tonnes for the coming winter. This maintains operational salt storage at 6,000 tonnes, replenished at least monthly by the Council's salt supplier and a strategic salt store of 10,000 tonnes, to be used only when salt supplier cannot deliver. This represents considerably more than an average year's salt usage, and matches the salt used in 2010/11, 16,020 tonnes, although this was supplemented by nearly 4,000 tonnes of grit sand
- 2.10 The City's 2,200 salt bins will be replenished on a programmed basis throughout the winter with 1 Tonne salt bags being deployed to pre-determined locations in the event of any severe weather period.
- 2.11 In 2010/11 inconsiderately parked cars in a small number of key locations prevented access by gritters and emergency vehicles and led to the curtailment of essential bus services. These locations were covered by Temporary Traffic Regulation Orders (TTROs) over the last two winters. The TTROs were designed to be activated during a severe weather event. This enables the Council's parking services contractor to move any vehicles causing an obstruction. These locations have been reviewed in consultation with Lothian Buses and will again be covered by TTROs this year.

- 2.12 During the stakeholder engagement exercise in 2011, many residents offered to support the Council's snow clearing activities. A Snow Wardens Volunteers scheme was introduced prior to the 2011/12 winter and repeated again last winter. These 56 volunteers in 2012/13 were provided with a high visibility jacket and a snow shovel. They also went through a short training session using a video advising on the best methods for clearing snow and ice. Neighbourhood teams are again organising Snow Warden Volunteers, both in terms of contacting those who participated last year and embracing any new volunteers for this winter.
- 2.13 All roads operations and neighbourhood plans have been comprehensively reviewed and updated in liaison with transport providers, emergency services and health care providers where appropriate.
- 2.14 The Council will continue to operate at a high level of preparedness throughout the winter months.

### **3. Recommendations**

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- 3.1 It is recommended that the Committee notes and endorses the action and efficiencies taken.

**Mark Turley**

Director of Services for Communities

## Links

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### Coalition pledges

P24 - Maintain and embrace support for our world-famous festivals and events.

P28 - Further strengthen links with the business community by developing and implementing strategies to promote and protect the economic well being of the City.

P33 - Strengthen Neighbourhood Partnerships and further involve local people in decisions on how Council resources are used.

### Council outcomes

CO19 - Attractive Places and Well-Maintained – Edinburgh remains an attractive city through the development of high quality buildings and places and the delivery of high standards and maintenance of infrastructure and public realm.

CO21 - Safe – Residents, visitors and businesses feel that Edinburgh is a safe city.

CO22 - Moving Efficiently – Edinburgh has a transport system that improves connectivity and is green, healthy and accessible.

CO23 - Well-Engaged and Well-Informed – Communities and individuals are empowered and supported to improve local outcomes and foster a sense of community.

CO24 - The Council communicates effectively and internally and externally and has an excellent reputation for customer care.

CO25 - The Council has efficient and effective services that deliver on objectives.

CO26 - The Council engages with stakeholders and works in partnership to improve services and deliver on agreed objectives.

CO27 - The Council supports, invests in and develops our people.

### Single Outcome Agreement

SO4 – Edinburgh's communities are safer and have improved physical and social fabric.

### Appendices

None