

Transport and Environment Committee

10.00am, Thursday, 4 October 2018

Winter Maintenance Readiness

Item number	7.8
Report number	
Executive/routine	Executive
Wards	All
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Executive Summary

This report provides an update on arrangements for winter 2018/19 to address freezing and snow conditions across Edinburgh's pavements, cycle ways and roads.

Winter Maintenance Readiness

1. Recommendations

- 1.1 It is recommended that Committee:
 - 1.1.1 Notes the measures in place to address freezing and snow conditions across Edinburgh's pavements, cycle ways and roads;
 - 1.1.2 Notes that there is no reduction in service from previous years; and
 - 1.1.3 Note that only the priority network is routinely treated and that it is impossible to maintain even the priority network 100% ice and snow free at all times.

2. Background

- 2.1 At the Transport and Environment Committee on [17 May 2018](#) information was provided on the current service arrangements together with the improvement plan developed.
- 2.2 At the Transport and Environment Committee on [9 August 2018](#) progress with the Winter Maintenance Review was provided.

3. Main report

Winter Operations Update

- 3.1 It was noted on [9 August 2018](#) that improvement plans had been purposely very ambitious and progress with improvements is still underway and will continue into the winter season.
- 3.2 A contract is in place with the Met Office to provide forecasts and via this contract, Vaisala provide a bureau service, presenting the route forecasts, data and other information on a web platform.
- 3.3 The findings of the Thermal Mapping exercise proposed that the city is split in to three gritting domains. This has been implemented for winter 2018/19.
- 3.4 Using these domains, gritting routes have been optimised for road priority 1 gritting routes using Route Smart software, allowing winter weather forecasts to identify individual routes that could receive freezing conditions.
- 3.5 Using this information, Duty Managers can make decisions on which routes to treat when temperatures drop, instead of a 'one out all out' approach to treating the city.

- 3.6 In line with previous years, a winter standby/call out shift roster for the treatment of road routes and park and ride sites (Roster A) will commence in mid-October. This roster is mainly staffed from Edinburgh Road Services (ERS).
- 3.7 An advertisement to staff from across the Council to join the winter standby/call out shift roster (Roster B) to treat Priority 1 pavements and cycle ways was placed on the Orb in early September. This roster will commence in mid-October at the same time as Roster A.
- 3.8 Local priority areas, which have been absorbed into P2 and P3 routes, were and will continue to be staffed by other Council staff. These staff carry out winter weather duties during their normal working hours.
- 3.9 Grit Bins will be filled in reverse priority in respect of pavement, cycleway and road priorities treatment. Grit bins on non-priority pavements, cycleways and roads will be afforded first priority for refilling to ensure residents have a supply of salt to allow for self-help.
- 3.10 The Council's website is being updated to provide revised information on the new treatment domains and changes to grit bins.

Depot Operations

- 3.11 A stock of 13,000 tonnes of salt is in place and will be replenished as required. An operational supply of 5,000 tonnes is held between Bankhead and Blackford roads depots.
- 3.12 A further strategic supply of 8,000 tonnes is in place at the Council's Braehead depot.

Fleet

- 3.13 The provision of new fleet to support winter weather operations is being led by the Council's Fleet Services team. Due to the condition of the current aging fleet, a hire arrangement has been utilised to provide a core of 12 modern reliable vehicles.
- 3.14 Fleet have confirmed their cover arrangements to provide the required Mechanical and Fitter support 24/7 during winter operations. The provision of newer vehicles will reduce the pressure on maintenance services.

Contract Management

- 3.15 The Council has a contract in place for additional support to cover staff absence, vehicle breakdown or extreme conditions. Provision is in place to hire a gritter with driver when required.
- 3.16 The Council also has a contract in place with a farmer located in the rural Balerno area. This contract is working well and will continue for the forthcoming winter.

Technological Improvements

- 3.17 A GPS vehicle tracking system is installed in the council gritting fleet and mini tractors. Mobile units are available for contracted in gritters and some hire vehicles.

- 3.18 Route Smart optimised gritting routes have been loaded into a few robust tablets, on loan from Waste Services, to trial this approach to 'sat nav' type gritter route direction.
- 3.19 The 12 modern, hired in gritters are fitted with their own version of 'sat nav'. Optimised routes have been uploaded to these units and they not only direct the driver and indicate when to put salt down, they can also 'communicate' with the gritter unit and switch it on and off, or change the spread rate or pattern as required. The driver is free to concentrate on driving and can confidently cover an unfamiliar route.

Communication

- 3.20 A Media Launch of the Council's winter weather plans, inviting print and broadcast media to conduct interviews and obtain photographs and footage, is proposed for the last week of October.
- 3.21 In response to forecast weather events, the Council web pages will be updated, and communications delivered to Council services and staff. There will also be opportunities for proactive press engagement to highlight the Council's preparations to respond to these events.
- 3.22 The Council's website has information on gritting routes, grit bin locations and guidance on clearing paths here - Gritting and Grit Bins.
- 3.23 Officers have held preliminary discussions with Transport Scotland, exploring the feasibility of providing transport information for Edinburgh on the Traffic Scotland Mobile site. This would enable seamless journey planning information, such as gritting operations, across Scotland's major roads network and Edinburgh.
- 3.24 A briefing note will be circulated to members on the Council's winter maintenance readiness in mid-October.

4. Measures of success

- 4.1 The Thermal Mapping exercise has produced 3 domains, allowing targeted gritting to be undertaken in the coldest parts of the city when the weather forecast permits this approach.
- 4.2 Optimising gritting routes using Routesmart software is estimated to achieve a 17% to 20% route efficiency.
- 4.3 The Edinburgh community will have clarity on which pavements, cycleways and roads will be treated, and when.
- 4.4 There will be clear timescales for refilling grit bins.
- 4.5 The downtime of the gritting fleet will reduce with the provision of newer vehicles.

5. Financial impact

- 5.1 The budget to provide a winter weather service is based on a seven year average spend and was £2.88m for 2017/18. This budget was not exceeded.
- 5.2 Underspends had been set aside to create a reserve but these have been utilised for other financial pressures. If a severe winter is experienced, requiring spend greater than the £2.88m budget allocated, additional funds will be required.
- 5.3 The improvements and changes already made and those being implemented during the winter season, enable the Council to deliver winter weather services effectively and efficiently.
- 5.4 In delivering the service for P2 and P3 pavements and cycleways, there will be an impact on services that supply staff to carry out winter weather duties during their normal working hours. This does not have a direct financial impact but there will be a performance implication and additional costs may be incurred as services return to normal.

6. Risk, policy, compliance and governance impact

- 6.1 The City of Edinburgh Council has a statutory duty (under Section 34 of the Roads (Scotland) Act 1984) to take such steps as it considers reasonable ‘to prevent snow and ice endangering the safe passage of pedestrians and vehicles over public roads’. The intention of this duty is not that the Council will take immediate and simultaneous steps to clear and/or treat every road whenever ice or snow exists. It is recognised by the Courts that this would be impossible and beyond the limits of available resources. Failure to fulfil these duties could result in action being taken against the Council.
- 6.2 ERS provides the Winter Maintenance Service with support from other Council services; some provide drivers for the gritting fleet. Failure to secure this support could have significant reputational risks if the pavement, cycleway and road network is not treated during wintry weather. It would also increase the requirements to use sub-contractors, and could expose the Council to legal challenge.
- 6.3 Failure to replace the existing fleet could result in an insufficient number of available vehicles to manage the gritting requirements in accordance with Section 34 of the Roads (Scotland) Act 1984.

7. Equalities impact

- 7.1 It is recognised that the Winter Maintenance service impacts upon everyone in the city to a greater or lesser degree. It is acknowledged that people with mobility difficulties are likely to experience significant disruption to their working and/or personal lives.

- 7.2 The major Winter Weather Working Together review conducted in 2011 focussed on the identification of groups who may be more adversely affected by severe winter weather including sheltered housing, special schools and care homes. The changes made to gritting routes were developed from these findings.
- 7.3 Reviews of gritting routes undertaken since that date take in to account the location and needs of these groups and the services they need to access.
- 7.4 During periods of severe winter weather, the Council's Emergency Plan has provisions in place to cater for those from within the protected characteristics.
- 7.5 Edinburgh's winter weather approach uses three main groups of staff to treat all Priority 1 pavements, cycleways and roads at the same time. The Priority 1 roads are selected to provide emergency service access and a public transport network.

8. Sustainability impact

- 8.1 Reduction in mileage, gained through the thermal mapping exercise when gritting only the coldest domain, will result in a reduction of vehicle emissions.
- 8.2 Reduction in mileage, gained through Routesmart route optimisation will result in a reduction of vehicle emissions.
- 8.3 Any reduction in salt usage, obtained through the thermal mapping exercise, will reduce the amount of salt entering rivers and water courses.
- 8.4 Renewal of the gritting fleet will provide more efficient engines and reduce emissions.

9. Consultation and engagement

- 9.1 ERS staff have, and continue to be, consulted on the depot rationalisation project, the replacement of fleet and the use of 'in cab' technology.
- 9.2 Consultation and engagement with staff continues to take place in relation to the wider Roads Improvement Plan which includes some aspects of Winter Maintenance.

10. Background reading/external references

- 10.1 Winter Maintenance Review at Transport and Environment Committee on [17 May 2018](#)

Paul Lawrence

Executive Director of Place

Contact: Gareth Barwell, Head of Place Management

E-mail: gareth.barwell@edinburgh.gov.uk | Tel: 0131 529 5844

11. Appendices

None.