

EAST RENFREWSHIRE COUNCILCABINET21 June 2018Report by Director of EnvironmentASSESSMENT OF WINTER MAINTENANCE ARRANGEMENTS**PURPOSE OF REPORT**

1. The purpose of this report is to advise the Cabinet on the performance of the Council during the adverse weather conditions experienced in 2018 and to advise on proposals to review the current winter maintenance regime.

RECOMMENDATIONS

2. It is recommended that the Cabinet notes;
- (a) The successful outcomes for East Renfrewshire Council during several periods of unusually extreme weather;
 - (b) That a review of gritting routes is currently underway;
 - (c) The proposal to implement digital technology which will permit the public to identify the location of gritters operating in their area;
 - (d) The proposal to review the location and extent of grit bins and to assess whether this requires to be changed;
 - (e) The intention to review the manner in which the winter maintenance workforce is organised and deployed as part of the Environment Departments change programme; and
 - (f) That a further report will be submitted to the Cabinet with regard to the review of gritting routes and grit bins

BACKGROUND

3. The first quarter of 2018 saw a number of periods of unusually extreme weather in the form of substantial snowfall and sub-zero temperatures. Such situations can pose major problems for the Council and its residents with commonplace activities such as traveling to work, shopping or taking children to school becoming difficult.

4. Whilst it was felt that the Council responded well to these extremely difficult conditions it is felt appropriate to review the current service provision as regards winter maintenance (the regime deployed to minimise such difficulties). In doing this the legal requirements and some of the logistical issues involved need to be considered.

5. The legal obligations are defined by Section 34 of the Roads (Scotland) Act 1984, which requires that *“a road authority shall take such steps as it considers reasonable to prevent snow and ice endangering the safe passage of pedestrians and vehicles over public roads.”*

6. There is a code of practice (COP) issued by the UK Roads Liaison Group that guides local authorities on this issue. The COP is regarded as the benchmark by which authorities will be assessed by both the general public and the courts should disputes occur.

7. The COP states: “Given the scale of financial and other resources involved in delivering the winter service it is not reasonable either to:

- Provide the service on all parts of the network; and
- Ensure running surfaces are kept free of ice or snow at all times, even on the treated parts of the network”.

8. This is an important point for Elected Members and the public to understand.

9. The Winter Service regime runs from 1st October to 30th April and provides 24hr cover for treatment of our priority routes (as noted in Appendix 1). The service is provided by Council employees and two private contractors.

10. In respect of Winter Maintenance the Council aims to provide a winter maintenance service that:

- provides a standard of service on public roads which it considers reasonable to permit the safe movement of vehicular and pedestrian traffic appropriate to the prevailing weather conditions;
- establishes a pattern of working which will keep traffic delays, diversions or road closures to a minimum during adverse weather conditions;
- conducts operations having regard to the requirements of the Health & Safety at Work Act 1974, the Working Time Regulations 1998 and the Drivers Hours Regulations.

Prioritisation

11. The Council has defined the priorities for carriageways. These are noted at appendix 1. Within East Renfrewshire there are currently 11 Priority Carriageway treatment routes and these cover 313km which is approximately 65% of our road network. This benchmarks very favourably with other local authorities. (see Appendix 2).

12. The gritting of footways is subject to the availability of resources. Footways to be gritted are:

- 1) urban shopping areas and precincts
- 2) other areas of high pedestrian concentration e.g. station approaches
- 3) steep hills in housing areas and in the vicinity of old people’s homes and/or sheltered housing
- 4) one footway along the frontage of each school

13. It should however be noted that it cannot be assumed that all or any footways will be treated whatever the weather conditions. This is due to there being insufficient resources to undertake this activity **at the same time** as gritting roads.

14. The treatment of car parks is awarded a lower priority and is undertaken as and when resources allow, normally during the working day and only when a prolonged period of sub-zero temperatures or snow fall occurs. However, the treatment of car parks at Council and Leisure Trust buildings is managed through separate arrangements. The current arrangement is to grit a driving route through each 'operational property' utilising a private contractor. The current contract does not include snow clearance nor does it include gritting individual parking bays. During the recent winter, due to high volumes of snow fall, additional measures were put in place to clear snow. This contract is due for renewal in 2018. However, pending a full assessment of the Council's needs it is the intention to issue a Quick Quote for 18/19 to the value of £50,000.

Workforce Issues.

15. It should be noted that when not carrying out Winter Maintenance duties the staff carry out their normal duties e.g. pothole repairs, gully cleansing, drainage etc. Often staff will work their normal daily hours and then carry out a winter treatment action or vice versa. To comply with Drivers Hours Regulations and the Working Time Directive staff are sometimes required to be sent home on rest during their normal working day to ensure they are available for Winter Maintenance duties. It should therefore be noted that, whilst staff are undertaking winter maintenance duties they may not be able to undertake their normal duties. Therefore if additional gritting is required this would need to be undertaken either through the use of private contractors or by extending the workforce. Both of these options would have a cost implication in addition to further logistical complexities such as a possible need for additional vehicles and vehicle storage.

16. As part of the Environment Department's change programme the manner in which the winter maintenance workforce is organised and deployed is under review. This review is not expected to be completed until 2019.

Precautionary Treatments

17. The Council is a member of the West of Scotland Local Authority Weather Forecast Partnership which procures weather forecasting services from Meteogroup. This permits the Council to respond to changing weather patterns. However, on occasion large snowfalls may be unanticipated by meteorological services. Such an occurrence was experienced on 6th March 2018 when large snowfalls took place in a few hours which were not forecast by meteorological services.

18. Precautionary treatments (gritting in advance of temperatures dropping) are generally timed to coincide with the end of any precipitation and prior to road surface temperatures dropping below zero – the purpose of a precautionary treatment is to prevent the formation of ice or to weaken the bond of freezing rain or snow to the road surface.

19. It can take approximately 3 hours to treat our priority routes using 5 of our own vehicles and 2 contractor's vehicles. It is important to note that this means that, on occasions where there is excessive snowfall in a very short period of time, snow will accumulate faster than it can be removed. The Council have just completed an exercise of digitising the routes (i.e. loading them into a Geographic Information System) and is now in a position to be able to begin to review the efficiency of the current routes. It is hoped that this will result in shorter journey times with a resultant financial saving. It is intended that this exercise will be completed before the next winter maintenance start date of October 2018.

Digital Information

20. Members of the public are often keen to know when their street was last gritted or when it will be next gritted. The Council is currently in the process of updating its vehicle tracker systems which will enable the public to identify the location of the gritting vehicles on line and provide them with real time information as to when the street is likely to be gritted.

Grit Bins

21. In addition to the Council undertaking gritting itself it also provides grit bins to permit residents to treat their own areas. The location of these grit bins is recorded on the Council's website.

22. There are 337 grit bins. During times of adverse weather these bins are well utilised and require to be refilled frequently and this is the maximum number of bins considered to be manageable with existing resources. However the location of the grit bins was last considered in 2011. Since that date a number of housing developments have been created. Therefore it is the intention to review the location of these bins. It is anticipated that the number of bins will increase. This will require either an increase in the workforce required to maintain and fill them or use of an external contractor. As such there will be a cost implication with this proposal. If this task is undertaken using ERC staff there are also logistical implications to be considered.

23. Currently when considering the positioning of the bins the following criteria has to be met:

- The location is under the direct control of the Roads Service (i.e. the location is adopted by the Council for maintenance purposes);
- The location is not on a current priority gritting route;
- Bins where possible should not be within 200m walked distance of each other;
- Streets less than 100m in length will not be considered unless there are exceptional circumstances (e.g. in relation to the steepness of the road).

Gritting Around Schools

24. The arrangements for the gritting of schools are that Janitors will clear a one metre path from main gate to school entrance and fire escapes. These paths agreed by the Head Teacher for each school. It should be noted that Janitors only commence work at 7.30 a.m.

Snow Ploughs

25. The service is often asked about snow ploughs. Ploughing is not effective until there is around 50mm of lying snow. This is because the plough runs approx. 25mm above the road surface. If it ran on the surface of the road then the rubbers of the plough would get damaged too quickly and there would also be the risk of damaging the road surface. Also if the road is ploughed with less than that depth of snow the snow can be compacted, turns to water and if temperatures are low this quickly turns to hard compacted ice and it then becomes more difficult to deal with. Also ploughing can deposit deep snow at the side of roads blocking driveways and/or pavements in residential areas which means that we have in the past had to send out a digger to open up driveways – diverting resources away from gritting.

FINANCE AND EFFICIENCY

26. The cost of providing the winter maintenance service varies each year according to weather conditions. In previous years the costs were

YEAR	TOTAL
2015/2016	£958,512
2016/2017	£1,028,830
2017/2018	£1,322,727

27. As noted in previous paragraphs it is hoped that the review of gritting routes can be made more efficient which will hopefully generate savings. However it should also be noted that any increase in the provision of grit bins (largely to service new estates built since 2011) will have a resultant cost increase.

CONSULTATION

28. Significant informal consultation took place during the recent severe weather as members of the public expressed views upon the winter maintenance service provision, either directly (through social media or direct contact) or via elected members. The information obtained through these process will be fed into the various reviews referred to in the paper.

PARTNERSHIP WORKING

29. Both the drafting of the paper and also the various reviews referred to in the paper are a part of a process involving staff from Roads, Property and Technical Services, Education and Corporate Services.

IMPLICATIONS OF THE PROPOSALS

30. This report does not have any implications in terms of property, legal, equalities, IT or sustainability. Any financial implications would occur as a result of the outcomes of the various reviews referred to in the paper and will be presented to Cabinet at a later date.

CONCLUSIONS

31. The weather experienced in East Renfrewshire in 2017/18 was the worst, from a perspective of freezing conditions and snowfall, for a number of years. Despite this the Council in the main coped well. A number of areas for potential improvement have been identified and these will be further explored in the coming months.

32. It should be noted that public expectations can sometimes exceed the practical and financial capacity of local authorities to deliver high volume services for a short period of time when these services are only infrequently required. All of the areas for review that have been identified will be reported back to Cabinet at a later date.

RECOMMENDATIONS

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Director of Environment

Further information can be obtained from – Andrew Cahill, Director of Environment, 0141 577 3036, andrew.cahill@eastrenfrewshire.gov.uk

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June 2018

Carriageway Priorities**Priority 1 - Strategic & Main Traffic Routes**

A77 Fenwick Road, A77 Ayr Road, A727 Busby to Speirsbridge,
A736 Glasgow Rd/Lochlibo Rd, B769 Stewarton Road, B767 Busby to Eaglesham

Priority 2

One access route to Fire Stations.

Bus access routes where considered appropriate, including one access route to each school served by a dedicated bus service, as notified by the SPT.

Bus routes treated under Priority 2 would normally include major bus routes. The diversity of bus routes since deregulation and the frequent alterations, deletions and additions precludes the inclusion of all bus routes in Priority 2.

The full length of school bus routes may not be treated.

Priority 3

Other "B" class roads not included above.

Priority 4

Local concentrations of employment i.e. industrial estates

Priority 5

Other "C" class and Unclassified public roads

Priority 6

Access to isolated settlements not covered above

Priority 7

Prospective public roads

Priority 8

Private roads

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Winter Maintenance Benchmarking Information: East Renfrewshire Council

Through SCOTS (Society of Chief Officers of Transportation in Scotland) we benchmark our services and the following figures are based on the 2016/17 SCOTS Road Asset Management Performance Data Report – for the purposes of this report Local Authorities are grouped with other similar authorities, East Renfrewshire has been placed in the Urban Group along with Renfrewshire, North Lanarkshire, East Dunbarton, Falkirk, Inverclyde, Clackmannanshire and West Dunbarton. Our other neighbouring authorities North Ayrshire and South Lanarkshire are placed in the semi urban group and Glasgow City is in the City grouping.

Carriageway Priority Route Treatment – Our Priority treatment routes cover 313km of the 481km total public road network - over 65% of the carriageway network.

This compares to other authorities in our SCOTS family grouping as follows

- Renfrewshire 56.8%
- West Dunbarton 58.48%
- North Lanarkshire 36.06%
- Inverclyde 48.44%
- Clackmannanshire 58.29%
- Falkirk 37.25%
- only East Dunbartonshire treats a higher percentage of its network with a figure of 82.98% (based on the SCOTS Road Asset Management Report 2016/17 figures)
- the Scottish Average is 48.31%
 - Glasgow City Councils figure is 40.08%
 - North Ayrshire 48.34%
 - South Lanarkshire 51.98%

Footways Treatment - Our fixed footway treatment routes cover 62km of our footway network– 8.9% of our footway network.

This compares to other authorities in our SCOTS family grouping as follows

- Renfrewshire 0.41%
- North Lanarkshire 6.38%
- Inverclyde 0%, Falkirk 6.65%
- Clackmannanshire 18.37% and
- East Dunbartonshire 15.35% (based on the SCOTS Road Asset Management Report 2016/17 figures)
- the Scottish Average is 11.16%
 - Glasgow City Councils figure is 11.47%
 - North Ayrshire 6.25%
 - South Lanarkshire 3.44%

Grit Bin Provision - Our total of 337 salt bins equates to 0.48 bins per km of footway network which compares to other authorities in our SCOTS family grouping as follows

- Renfrewshire 0.37
- North Lanarkshire 0.78
- Inverclyde 0.83
- Falkirk 0.59
- Clackmannanshire 0.77
- East Dunbartonshire 0.55 (based on the SCOTS Road Asset Management Report 2016/17 figures)

- the Scottish Average is 0.54
 - Glasgow City Councils figure is 0.45
 - North Ayrshire 0.44
 - South Lanarkshire 0.87