



**OFFICER REPORT TO LOCAL COMMITTEE
(Epsom and Ewell)**

UPDATE ON WINTER MAINTENANCE ARRANGEMENTS

(9 December 2013)

KEY ISSUE

To update the Committee on the Winter Plan for 2013/14, which sets out provisions for keeping roads and footways accessible during winter weather.

SUMMARY

The Council has carried out an annual review of the service operation during the 2012/13 winter season and the affect of the operational improvements, together with organisational changes and partnership working arrangements.

This report summarises arrangements for preventative salting, clearing footways, the provision of grit bins and snow clearance. The Council also encourages self-help and supports residents and businesses taking appropriate action in their own neighbourhoods.

OFFICER RECOMMENDATIONS

For information.

1 INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

- 1.1 Throughout their second year as the Council's contractor, Kier has been working with the Task Group on all elements of the winter service to maximise efficiency and reduce costs. This has included:
- I. Optimisation of the gritting routes, resulting in a reduction in the number of routes to 35.
 - II. The final phase of vehicles replacement, all vehicles have now been replaced, increasing the reliability of the fleet.
- 1.2 After a near "average" (52 runs per season) Surrey winter in 2011/12 we saw a return to a more extended winter, with 100 precautionary salting runs completed. Through the full complement of our resources and the continued extension of our localism partnerships we were able to effectively manage

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and respond to the accumulations of snow over the weekend 18th January and the late flurry on the 11th March which effected the south east of the county. In spite of the high demand salt supplies have also remained fluid throughout the period reflecting the approach that the Council and other authorities have taken in maintaining good reserves.

1.3 Whilst no major changes are proposed to the winter service a number of improvements have been made to further enhance the service to residents over the coming winter as follows:

- Salting network remains as last year with some minor changes incorporating results from the new Surrey Priority Network (SPN), member, resident and officer feedback.
- Kier will be operating on 35 routes with 4 reserve gritters.
- Gritting fleet now fully replaced and fitted latest salt spreading technology.
- Maintaining our preseason salt stocks at 16,000 tonnes, approximately double the quantity required for an average Surrey winter.
- Fill all 1,787 grit binds by the end of September. If necessary we will carry out a second fill over the winter, but with resources deployed on clearing roads and footways, we will not be able to refill during a snow event.
- Continuing our partnership with district and boroughs provide up to 40 tonnes of salt to helping them to keep key pavements and town centres clear. Epsom and Ewell Borough Council assist by clearing footways and spreading grit in Epsom Town Centre and Ewell Village Centre, together with a number of shopping parades elsewhere (for example Stoneleigh Broadway).
- Continue to supply new grit bins, allowing residents and local community groups to buy a grit bin for four years at a cost of just £1,040 and the licensing of Parishes and other statutory bodies to provide grit bins on the highway.
- Retain our pool of farmers willing to help out in the toughest of weather conditions (51 farmers)

2 DISCUSSION/ANALYSIS

2.1 Gritting Routes

Through route optimisation the P1 precautionary salting network has been developed over the past two years to improve performance. For example to ensure all priority routes are gritted within 3½ hours – one hour mobilisation following a decision followed by 2½ hours to complete all routes, to ensure that the Council's resources deployed to this activity are applied as efficiently as possible.

Influence can come from local communities who want to swap one road for another. Provided that this does not impact on the strategic network and has been mutually agreed locally (Local Committee) the swapping of roads can be implemented on a "like for like" bases in keeping with the localism agenda.

Area Highway Managers (AHM) and engineers, who have direct contact with members and the public during the winter season have been involved in the review and provided feedback on the new routes. To enable stakeholder

feedback an item on the response to the winter service will be included on the spring round of Local Committees

2.2 Grit Bins

All SCC grit bins were restocked, refurbished as necessary by the end of September. Should circumstances prevail there will be a second fill during the winter, but due to availability of resources bins will not be refilled during a snow event.

A schedule of all grit bins will be available on the SCC website.

Through the grit bin purchase scheme Members (through their local allocation), residents and local community groups will be able to buy a grit bin stocked for a period of four years at a cost of £1,040.

The introduction of the new licensing system enabling Parish and other statutory bodies to place and maintain their own grit bins on the highway has had a good take up with 49 licences being issued in 2012/13.

2.4 Farmers

In order to support the Council's snow clearance and gritting response during times of severe winter weather, under a 5 year contract, 51 local farmers provide additional assistance. With the enhanced network of snowplough routes, the Task Group recognised the contribution that they had provided, particularly in reaching isolated communities.

2.5 Members of the Public

The County Council would also like to stress the importance of the personal responsibility of Surrey's residents, businesses and other organisations. People have been worried about being held liable for claims against them, but this is highly unlikely unless they deliberately do something that makes the situation worse. As requested by residents last winter, the Council is providing a clear legal statement:

"As with all actions taken by members of the public, people should act sensibly and consider the effect their actions might have on other highway users. Provided any salting or snow clearance is carried out responsibly and without creating further hazards which could lead to a passer by injuring themselves, then there would be no liability for such actions."

So residents and organisations need to prepare themselves and their communities for severe weather. This could include, for example:

- Clearing the snow from in front of their own buildings using a wide bladed shovel, but not hot water as this will cause black ice;
- Ensuring elderly relatives and neighbours are safe;
- Travelling with warm blankets, a shovel and even warm drinks;
- Considering buying snow tyres or chains.

The Council will again be running an extensive communications campaign starting in the autumn and continuing through the winter season. This will

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give advice and suggestions as to how people can also prepare for winter themselves.

3 OPTIONS

3.1 The report is provided for information and comment.

4. CONSULTATIONS

4.1 The review was undertaken by the Winter Service Task Group who's recommendations were endorsed by the SCC Cabinet meeting on 24 September 2013.

5 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.2 Members are requested to familiarise themselves with the proposed gritting routes and help their residents prepare for bad weather. County Councillors are encouraged to share the information contained in the report with their residents and with their Borough and Parish Council colleagues.

6 WHAT HAPPENS NEXT

6.1 The Winter Service Plan will be implemented in October.

6.2 Information packs issued, which will include gritting routes for your areas. The pack will explain the different levels of service that will be provided in the P1, P2 and P3 networks. It will also set out local arrangements made with District and Borough Council and farmers.

6.3 The annual review will look at the delivery of continuous improvement during the 2013/14 winter season and update members on performance with recommendations for further improvement and ongoing scrutiny. The proposed engagement timetable is as follows:-

Stakeholder and Local Committee feedback on winter service (Agenda item to be included on spring round of Local Committees)	Oct - March
End of season wash up meetings – Local Highway Service Teams, Service Provider, Operations and Asset Planning	March - April
Task Group Review Meeting (including progress on the 2013/14 recommendations)	March - April
Local Committee Chairmen advised of any changes to salting network	May - July
Environment & Transport Select Committee – Winter Service Report & Plan	September
Cabinet – Winter Service Report & Plan	September
Local Committees – Update on winter service arrangements	Autumn meetings
Winter service information pack and communications campaign	September onwards

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BACKGROUND PAPERS: Report of the Task Group to the Cabinet – 24th September 2013
“Winter Service Development for 2013/14”

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