



**OFFICER REPORT TO LOCAL COMMITTEE
(Tandridge)**

UPDATE ON WINTER MAINTENANCE ARRANGEMENTS

14 DECEMBER 2012

KEY ISSUE

To update the Committee on the Winter Plan for 2012/13, which sets out provisions for keeping roads and footways accessible during winter weather.

SUMMARY

The Council has again reviewed service operation during the 2011/12 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

The Local Committee (Tandridge) is asked to agree to:

- (i) Note the revised winter maintenance arrangements for Tandridge.
- (ii) Ensure that the information contained in the report is shared widely within the District.

1 INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

- 1.1 Throughout their first year, as the council's contractor May Gurney has been working with the Task Group on all elements of winter services. This has included the optimisation of the gritting routes, to maximise efficiency and reduce costs, by reducing the number of routes (a reduction of routes from 39 to 35 is anticipated but not confirmed at the time of report publication). This has been managed in conjunction with the contract planned replacement of vehicles and across 2011/12 and 2012/13, 16 vehicles have now been replaced.
- 1.2 After three consecutive years of extreme winters 2011/12 saw a return to a near "average" (52 runs per season) Surrey winter, where 55 precautionary salting runs completed. The accumulations of snow over the weekend 4th February were nevertheless sufficient to test our response to a severe weather event, through the new contract arrangements now in place with May Gurney.
- 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:-
- Consolidation of the P1 precautionary salting routes providing a more efficient response, helping to reach some of our more isolated communities.
 - Salting network remains as last year with some minor changes to take account of bus routes and extensions to schools on P3 network.
 - May Gurney operating 35 routes with 4 reserve gritters.
 - 16 new front line gritters with latest salt spreading technology to replace older fleet plus 3 additional ploughs to support farmers
 - Maintaining our preseason salt stocks at 16,000 tonnes, approximately double the quantity required for an average Surrey winter.
 - Fill all 1,766 existing 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.
 - Continue to supply new grit bins, allowing residence and local community groups to buy a grit bin for four years at a cost of just £1,000
 - Introduction of grit bin licensing scheme enabling Parish Councils to maintain their own 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 additional P1 precautionary salting network, approved last year to provide a 'people solution', has now been consolidated into the main routes, leading to a further improvement in performance.

Area Highway Managers (AHM) and engineers, who have direct contact with the public and members during the winter season have been involved in the review and provided feedback on the new routes. On review, with the exception to some minor changes on main bus routes the P1 network will remain unchanged from last year. Members felt that a clearer communication link through Area Managers to members on any changes on the network needs to be in place.

The inclusion of primary schools on a new P3 network in 2011/12 has been further enhanced, to ensure that issues of access, raised during the season, have been addressed.

2.2 Grit Bins

All Surrey County Council 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 is available on the Surrey County Council 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 £1,000.

It is noted that various interested parties have proposed, or made prior arrangements to supply and install grit bins in their area. As a result of consultation a licensing scheme has been approved that gives permission to Parish or Town Councils to place grit bins on footpaths (without obstruction) and/or verge of the highway.

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 provided additional assistance in 2011/2012. 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 from the autumn and continuing through the winter season. This will 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 Surrey County Council Cabinet meeting on 25 September 2012.

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 District and Parish Council colleagues.

6 WHAT HAPPENS NEXT

6.1 The Winter Service Plan was implemented in October 2012.

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BACKGROUND PAPERS: Report of the Task Group to the Cabinet – 25th September 2012
"Winter Service Development for 2012/13"