



Cabinet Member for Environment

25th September 2012

Report of the Assistant Director – Highways, Waste and Fleet

Review of Winter Maintenance Policy

Summary

1. This report informs the Cabinet member of the work undertaken to review the Winter Maintenance policy in preparation for the next winter maintenance period from November 2012. The report outlines the changes recommended to maintain a cost effective, efficient winter maintenance service and seeks approval to this approach for amending the policy. These amendments were piloted and reviewed during the winter season 2011/12, with a view to making them permanent policy for 2012/13.

Background

2. Last winter the City of York experienced a nearer to average winter with February bringing the only serious snowfall of the season. From the period 1st November to 31st March, we undertook:
 - 60 grit runs on the primary network over the full winter period this compares to 60-70 runs in previous average winters
 - Secondary routes were treated on two occasions
 - Designated footways received seven treatments
 - 2800 tonnes of salt was used, 2500-3000 tonnes would be our usage in “normal winters”
3. The main areas of concern were:
 - The condition of footpaths
 - The condition of off road cycle ways
 - Salt bin usage

Resources used in 2011/12 and proposed for 12/13

4. Resources used in the 2011/12 trials (the four mini tractors) proved extremely successful and have now been incorporated in the winter maintenance fleet. The mechanical kit for winter maintenance now consists of:
 - Ten gritting vehicles
 - One trailer gritter
 - Two snow ploughs attachments purchased for Grounds Maintenance tractors
 - One Euromech machine for cycle tracks and footpaths
 - Four footpath snow blowers
 - Three large tow behind salt spreaders
 - Three small tow behind salt spreaders
 - Four mini tractors with mechanical snow brushes and rear salting attachment, for footpaths and cycle tracks.

Carriageway Salting

5. The existing primary routes maximises the use of our resources and have been tested over the years, therefore there are no proposals to amend salting arrangements.
6. Designated secondary routes were identified and included in the operation manual for 11/12. Treatment of these secondary routes will be at the discretion of the Winter Maintenance Group (WVG), and will be serviced in a systematic way giving due consideration to resources both financial and practical. At this stage, it should be considered that all other roads will not be treated during the initial period of heavy snow.
7. Savings were approved through the budget setting process regarding some small-scale alterations to gritting rounds (£10k saving). With regard to these, there are 10 existing gritting routes and these have been subject to route optimisation. It is proposed to reduce these to 9 rounds but extend the length of these rounds to deliver the same coverage as in 2011. It is estimated that this will save £10k in an “average” winter, through a reduction in vehicle and staff costs. A more fundamental review of the winter maintenance

policy will be undertaken including the criteria for gritting roads. This will be subject to public consultation if this proposes any significant changes to gritting policy. Any changes arising from this review will be implemented from Winter 2013.

Routine Footpath Treatments

8. Footpaths will be treated on the first day of a predicated period of three or more consecutive days where the temperature at midday is forecast remain below freezing. The need for repeat treatment will be assessed on a daily basis by officers with knowledge of the weather forecast, resources and salt availability.
9. The treatments will be undertaken using the 4 mini tractor units, supplemented by minimum manual spinners. The usual starting time is 04:30 hrs. Estimated treatment time for completion of all designated priority footpaths is 2 hours.

Heavy Snow Footpath Treatments

10. It is envisaged that during periods of heavy snow the WMG will meet and decisions regarding treatments will be taken by the group.
11. Treatments will be undertaken using the 4 mini tractors and the Euromech with snow brush attachments and rear salt spreaders. An initial clearing pass with the units will leave a usable surface with further passes as resources are available.

Routine Off-Road Cycle Track Treatments

12. We will use the same trigger as the footpaths to determine treatments. The 4 mini tractors and the Euromech machine will be utilised to undertake the work, as the footpaths will be completed by 06:30-07:00 hrs. All off road cycle tracks will be treated by 12:00 hrs.

Heavy Snow Cycle Track Treatments

13. Treatments will be undertaken using the 4 mini tractors and the Euromech with snow brush attachments and rear salt spreaders. An initial clearing pass with the units will leave a usable surface with further passes as resources are available.
14. It is not possible to use metal snow ploughs on some off road cycle routes, due the raised centre cyclist pedestrian demarcation line. It should be noted that during periods of prolonged heavy snow it will

not be possible to maintain a constant “back to tarmac” running surface. During these periods cyclist will need to use the treated carriageway network.

Salt Bins

15. There are currently 199 salt bins maintained and filled through highways budgets, 170 salt bins filled previously with funding provided via ward committees, and a small number of other bins funded through housing services, residents associations and parking services. Last year, in order to implement the approved 2011/12 budget saving of £17k, all the salt bins being left insitu and not collected at the end of March 2012 as in previous years.
16. Following the reduction in ward budgets, there is no longer finance available to maintain 170 salt bins that were previously funded from the ward budgets. Parish Councils have been contacted to see if they would be in a position to take on the funding of any ward bins that they have in their Parish. The general opinion is that there would be an element of double taxation and a drain on already tight parish finances.
17. In order to achieve the approved budget saving, it is proposed to only fill the 199 highways salt bins for the current year. It is proposed that all salt bins however will remain in situ so that a thorough review of salt bin locations (highways and previously ward funded, some 369 in total) can be undertaken with appropriate criteria set to determine the best locations for salt bins to be placed in the future. This will need to be based on still achieving the approved budget saving. Consultation will take place on the most appropriate locations with local elected members and the public. Any changes to locations will be implemented from the winter season 2013/14 onwards.
18. Clearly, expenditure on winter maintenance will depend on the extent of extreme weather conditions and all expenditure will be kept under close review, with the use of contingency if required in exceptional weather conditions.

Snow wardens

19. We currently have in excess of 80 volunteers for Snow Warden (SW). The winter of 11/12 was not as severe as 10/11 and 09/10. The SWs carried out their tasks during the snow of February 2012. Each SW was contacted and materials delivered to agreed locations

prior to the winter period, SWs were resupplied on request. It is proposed to arrange a de-brief with the SWs to look at and discuss practical and operational issues. This will be arranged through the Neighbourhood Management team.

Salt Deliveries

20. It is proposed to continue with the electronic stock control system linked to our suppliers, this ensures continuation of supply based on weekly usage, and ensures adequate stocks over the Christmas break. Work is underway with procurement to look at the most effective ways of procuring salt in order to deliver the approved budget saving for this.

Consultation

21. Snow Wardens and Parish Councils

Options

22. The Cabinet are asked to note the proposals for salt bins as set out above; that there are no proposed changes to coverage of gritting routes although rounds will be reduced from 10 to 9; and that the equipment trialled in winter 11/12 has been added into the winter maintenance fleet.
23. All equipment, supplies and timings must respond to the weather conditions facing the City at any one time. This report builds on the lessons learnt from previous years and looks to deliver some certainty to the residents of York so they fully understand the likely road conditions in extreme weather.
24. A more fundamental review of gritting policy will be undertaken with a view to implementing any changes for the winter season 2013/14 onwards, following consultation.

Implications

25. It is important that the service is capable of achieving the service targets set out in this report.
 - a) **Financial:** Cabinet are asked to note the proposals regarding salt bin provision and filling in order to deliver the approved budget saving. Any alternative arrangement for salt bins would create a budget pressure on the winter maintenance budget which is not approved. Additional

savings were approved through the budget setting process regarding the effective procurement of salt (£30k saving) and small alterations to gritting rounds (£10k saving). With regard to salt procurement, officers are working with the procurement team to ensure the cost effective purchase of salt. The achievement of the savings target will be supplemented through staffing changes by taking away a specific responsibility for a Winter Maintenance Duty Officer, with this duty being undertaken by the existing winter maintenance supervisors, together with additional savings on materials and equipment. Ultimately this will depend on the levels of salt required to be purchased depending on winter weather conditions. With regard to alterations to gritting rounds, these have been subject to route optimisation, and therefore it is not proposed to amend gritting routes.

- b) **Human Resources (HR):** Whilst the previous two winters have tested our resources, it was not declared as an emergency, so all working time directives and terms and conditions were applied.
- c) **Equalities:** A great deal of consultation was carried out on last year programme. These proposals are looking to enhance the service previously experienced. It should be noted that a reduction in salt bin numbers will affect our elderly, less mobile and vulnerable residents and visitors.
- d) **Legal:** No implications
- e) **Crime and Disorder:** No implications.
- f) **Information Technology (IT):** A vehicle tracking system will continue to be used to ensure the correct routes are treated and spread rates are maintained.
- g) **Property:** No implications.
- h) **Other:** No implications.

Recommendations

26. The Cabinet Member is asked to approve the review of winter maintenance arrangements for 2012/13 as set out in the above report.

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Background Papers:

none