
Winter Maintenance Policy (Reviewed)
Stockport Metropolitan Borough Council
October 2010

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1. Vision

- 1.1. The Council is committed to providing a safer highway system in winter conditions by gritting the highway as necessary, where required, and as practicable within the resources available.

2. Links to other policies

- 2.1. This policy is designed to work in co-ordination with the: Winter Services Operational Plan, Footway Policy, Code of Practice for Highways Maintenance Management and Transport Asset Management Plan (being developed).

3. Legal Position

- 3.1. Under Section 41A(1) of the Highways Act 1980, as amended by the Railways and Transport Safety Act 2003 the authority, who are for the time being the Highway Authority, for a highway maintainable at the public expense are under a duty to maintain the highway. In particular, the Highway Authorities are under a duty to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, that safe passage along a highway is not endangered by snow or ice (the highway in the terms of the Act includes footways maintainable at public expense). The Traffic Management Act 2004 also requires that authorities' do all that is reasonably practical to manage the network effectively to keep traffic moving including the establishment of contingency plans.
- 3.2. To meet the statutory obligation, the Council has produced a plan to enable the cold weather maintenance of the key routes and areas of the borough. This plan prioritises the order in which the cold weather maintenance will be done. Not all routes and areas in the borough can be treated during cold weather due to financial and operational constraints. Therefore the prioritisation is carried out in such a way as to maintain an optimal level of traffic flow along major routes first. The prioritisation has been carried out with reference to the needs of the area based on specialist knowledge and the needs of the local community. Even on those routes that are treated, it is not always possible to ensure that running surfaces are kept free of ice at all times due to the nature of the routes and the practicalities of the operational work.

4. Issues

- 4.1. The issues this policy seeks to address are the need to ensure:
 - The main carriageways and specific footways are treated, taking in to consideration, pedestrians, cyclists, public transport, road users, promoted facilities, vulnerable users and emergency services.

- As many eventualities as possible are catered for in terms of winter maintenance e.g. severe weather, day time snow etc.
- The public is aware of the system we have in place and what they can do in order to help themselves and neighbours in severe weather.
- There is a clear and well recorded process of decisions and actions taken in terms of winter maintenance.
- There is a clear criteria for routes and areas treated and provision of grit bins.

5. Objectives

5.1. The objectives of the policy are:

- The safe passage for vehicles and pedestrians using the highway network.
- That in severe weather conditions the Council has all the necessary resources to grit the core network during severe freezing/snow conditions.
- A service that can cope with an average winter but having the capacity to be extended and adapted to deal with extended or more severe conditions.
- Development of a support mechanism for partner organisations including the way in which assistance will be prioritised in a major weather event.
- A service that can cope with the varying conditions which may occur throughout the day.
- To ensure that the public is kept informed about our actions before, during and after the winter period.
- To ensure an adequate record of our actions is kept.
- That the public are advised of the actions they can take for themselves and their neighbours in the event of severe weather.

6. Key themes and principals

6.1. The objectives will be met by:

- Categorising different streets in to different gritting routes and the placement of grit bins using set criteria.
- The creation of plans for alternate weather situations.
- The continuation and updating, where necessary, of agreements between bordering authorities.
- The creation of an information pack, showing gritting routes and giving other cold weather information, to be issued via the internet and advertised through other media.
- Global Positioning Systems (GPS) information and decision records being used to create a comprehensive record of winter maintenance.
- Adjustment of the footway winter maintenance to reflect the day of the week.

7. Stakeholder Involvement

- 7.1. The original Winter Maintenance Policy was developed in consultation with the public. The 2005 Stockport Metropolitan Borough Council StreetScene Panel Survey taken just before the adoption of the policy reported that:
- 62 % of those questioned were very/fairly satisfied with the gritting of major roads, defined as main bus routes such as the A6 or Marple Road.
 - 25% of those questioned were very/fairly satisfied with gritting of minor roads, and,
 - 34% of those questioned were very / fairly satisfied with clearance of snow.
- 7.2. In 2009 the Streetcene Panel Survey showed that:
- 75% of those questioned were very or fairly satisfied with the gritting of main roads;
 - 31% of those questioned were very or fairly satisfied with the gritting of other roads ;
 - 33% were very or fairly satisfied with snow clearance from roads, and,
 - 15% were very or fairly satisfied with the number of grit boxes.
- This meant that, other than grit boxes, satisfaction levels increased in all areas.
- 7.3. Following the severe weather in the winter of 2009/10 a review of the winter services provided by the council was instigated with Councillors and Key Stakeholders being asked to send comments on the performance of the strategy. These comments have been compiled in to a report with appropriate changes being made to this

Strategy and the related plan. Officers understanding of the public's concerns and enquiries raised during the severe weather have also been used to review the policy.

7.4. This policy has also been adapted to follow the most up to date version of Well Maintained Highways Code of Practice.

8. Targets

8.1. The targets for this policy are for:

- Priority routes 1 – 5 to be treated within 2 hours of the commencement of gritting.
- Priority routes 6 – 10 to be then done within 5 hours of the commencement of gritting.
- Footways designated as priority 1 to be treated before 9.00 am

9. Monitoring

9.1. A report on the winter gritting activities that have been undertaken will be produced yearly to clearly illustrate the meeting of targets and will explain any issues that have arisen.

10. Review

10.1. The Operational Plan will be reviewed annually and the policy will be reviewed in detail in five years time.

Appendix 1

1. Management Arrangements

1.1. The StreetScene Team will be responsible for the operational planning and execution of the Winter Maintenance Plan, which will be developed in line with the Winter Maintenance Policy.

1.2. StreetScene will:

- Provide, organise and train a labour force.
- Provide the equipment.
- Carry out the winter maintenance.
- Liaise with Marketing and Communication Unit to keep the public up to date on actions regarding Winter Service.

2. Treatment Priorities

- 2.1. The treatment priorities should be reviewed yearly to ensure that the routes reflect the current priorities of the Borough. The current priorities have been developed over several years, with reference to local knowledge, Met office data and weather station information, to identify the more vulnerable roads.

3. Carriageway Priorities

- 3.1. See the Winter Operational Plan for detailed routes and criteria for priorities.

- 3.2. Priority Order:

- Priority Routes 1 to 5
- Priority Routes 6 to 10
- Tertiary Routes East Areas 1, 2 and 3, West Areas 1 and 2, North Areas 1 and 2

Priority routes 1-5 will receive precautionary gritting. Priority routes 6-10 will receive precautionary gritting when priority routes 1-5 have been completed. Tertiary routes will be treated as required, where resources permit, after other routes have been effectively treated.

4. Forecast related route adjustments

- 4.1. In reaction to certain predicted weather patterns only part of the boroughs road system may be gritted.
- 4.2. Wet spot routes – when the forecast predicts dry-freezing conditions these identified areas will be gritted.
- 4.3. High Domain Roads - the forecast may show that only the higher and more exposed roads are in danger of freezing on certain occasions. In these cases a limited route will be treated. These 'High Domain' route priorities cover a defined area of the borough and are treated in response to specific forecasts of frost or ice. The domain routes are treated with two vehicles within 4 hours of commencement of gritting activities, with completion before the ice forms on the road.

5. Road Works

- 5.1. Where gritting routes are affected by road works or other official closures diversionary routes will be upgraded to the priority of the route being replaced and included in the appropriate winter maintenance schedule.

6. Footway/cycle way priorities (See Winter Maintenance Operational Plan)

- 6.1. These areas may not be treated on weekends where it is deemed inappropriate e.g. school routes with limited use when the school is closed. The areas that are gritted are restricted to those on steep gradients that are main routes to:
 - Schools
 - Train and bus stations
 - Health Centres and Hospitals
 - Retail centres (Town Centre, District Centres and Local Centres)
- 6.2. The above areas should be prioritised in to the following way:
- 6.3. Priority 1 - Footways which are identified as a priority, based on an assessment of associated risk. To be treated before 09.00 hours
- 6.4. Priority 2 – Footways other than those above.
- 6.5. Priorities 2 would be treated if the adverse (Snow and Ice) conditions were persistent and the resources permitted.
- 6.6. Due to resource issues these routes will normally only be gritted during working hours. The number of areas that can be gritted is restricted by the number of personnel and resources available to do the work.
- 6.7. During snow conditions additional resources will be allocated with operational activities associated with snow clearance being undertaken on a priority basis across the borough.

7. Grit Boxes (See Winter Maintenance Operational Plan)

- 7.1. Currently there are in excess of 260 grit boxes, which are maintained by the Council. The boxes are returned to the depot for repair in the summer and deployed, in specified locations, in the winter months.
- 7.2. Grit boxes are to be placed, as required, at the start of the winter period and maintained. These boxes will be issued to areas that meet the Council's criteria and may be removed in areas where there has been a change in circumstance. See the operational plan for criteria and current locations. Placement/ location issues will be reviewed annually.

8. Additional Grit Locations (See Winter Maintenance Operational Plan)

- 8.1. In rural locations, as opposed to grit boxes, rock salt heaps may be put out to be used in periods of poor weather.

9. Treatment Priorities in Snow and Extreme Weather Conditions

- 9.1. Where roads require re-treatment, or other unforeseen circumstances occur, then high priority routes would again be treated before the lower priority ones. In snow conditions resources will be focused on the radial routes first and when conditions ease revert to the other priority routes.
- 9.2. During prolonged extreme conditions, it may be necessary to reduce the network coverage in order to preserve existing rock salt stocks and only treat the minimum critical network (made up of priority routes and routes necessary to ensure that vital services are maintained). Should these conditions prevail, all key stakeholders will be informed – e.g. Hospitals, schools, public transport, before the plan is implemented. Ongoing communication between all parties will be maintained, with operational briefing notes issued as required throughout the winter operational period. The public will be informed via press releases and the Council website about winter maintenance issues.
- 9.3. Non-highway private land is the responsibility of the landowner. The Streetscene team will advise as necessary on any prepared plans and their suitability.

10. Decision Making

- 10.1. Decisions will be made considering the following factors:

- Weather that is forecast.
- Existing or potential moisture on the roads.
- Residual rock salt on the road network.

11. Weather Forecast Information

- 11.1. Stockport Council has a contract with the Met Office which provides two daily reports on the expected weather conditions; these reports influence the treatment decision. StreetScene can also contact them directly at any time and can access online website information.

12. Road Closures

12.1. Where it is considered that snow has rendered a route unsafe for use the decision to close the route will be taken. All relevant groups will be notified accordingly including the Police and Network Management.

13. Treatment Guidelines

13.1. *Precautionary Gritting*

13.2. Criteria for precautionary gritting:

- Weather is expected to drop below freezing.
- There is moisture on the roads but it is not raining.
- There is not enough residual grit to deal with the conditions.

13.3. Spread rates to reflect expected weather and existing conditions. See operational plan for detailed current guidelines in use.

13.4. *Snow*

13.5. Guidelines for snow:

- Precautionary gritting will be carried out as indicated in 13.1 above.
- During periods of snowfall gritting or ploughing activities will continue throughout the period of snow as resources and priorities allow.

13.6. See operational plan for detailed current guidelines in use.

14. Labour Resources

14.1. StreetScene will provide sufficient personnel with an acceptable level of training to be able to comply with the requirements of the operational plan. During prolonged severe conditions, additional operational resources will be allocated as necessary to assist across all areas with snow clearance activities.

15. Vehicle and Plant Resources

15.1. StreetScene has a fleet of frontline gritters with GPS tracking systems for precise information on routes that have been gritted. These are supported by a fleet of smaller vehicles, tippers, JCB's and manual spreading equipment.

16. Health and Safety

16.1. Appropriate Health and Safety measures will be taken that accord with current Health and Safety Legislation and good practice.

17. Grit Materials

17.1. 6mm Rock Salt is used on the carriageway and on footways. Where the corrosive effect needs to be lessened it is treated with molasses. This is stored at the Adswold depot. The salt dome can accommodate approx 3200 tonnes of rock salt. This is supported by a stock management contract held with Salt Union for stocks to be replenished as required throughout the operational period.

18. External Communication

18.1. The details of the winter gritting routes will be available on the Council website and in libraries, schools and public transport centres. The Streetscene telephone number will be advertised as a contact for the public to notify the Council of any issues. Key press contacts will also be issued so that press enquires can be dealt with in an efficient manner. Advice on self help will be issued in advance of the winter period and then reissued in the event of severe weather. Further updates will be issued as and when required throughout the winter period.

19. Arrangements at Boundaries

19.1. There is a long-standing agreement with the surrounding boroughs where gritted routes pass out of the Stockport area to ensure continuity of treatment along a route.

20. Records

20.1. GPS software is used to make records of the gritting work that has been done on the carriageway. Similar information will be collected manually for the areas that are gritted not using frontline gritters, e.g. car parks and footways, to ensure that the records of the works undertaken is complete.

21. Cost

21.1. The cost of winter gritting included in the budget is based on the expenditure for a mild winter. Additional resources will be allocated from other areas of the Service as needs arise.

22. Notification

22.1. Major incidents arising as a result of winter conditions and closures of roads, or parts of roads, in extreme conditions shall be reported by the Winter Maintenance Manager to all key stakeholders, these will

include: Council Members, Press Office, Contact Centre, Network Management, Strategic Partners and other key personnel.

23. Post Snow Maintenance Inspections

- 23.1. Inspections of treated routes should be carried out rapidly after severe weather conditions to identify any emergency repairs necessary on the highway network.