

Subject: Brighton & Hove City Council Winter Service Plan, its operation and review 2009-2010

Date of Meeting: 8 February 2010

Report of: Director of Environment

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FOR GENERAL RELEASE

1. SUMMARY AND POLICY CONTEXT:

- 1.1 This report summarises the events and key issues arising from the snowfall and extreme weather events relating to the Council's response and provision of services from 16 December 2009 to 21 December 2009, and subsequently the period from 6 January 2010.
- 1.2 The report also includes information regarding the Council's Winter Service Plan, budget provision, operational details and a summary of actions during this period.
- 1.3 Initial findings, changes and innovation and practical experiences from our 'enhanced' service since Christmas will also be highlighted throughout this report.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

Members of the Overview & Scrutiny Commission are requested to:

- 2.1 consider the Council's response and service in relation to the Winter Service Plan.
- 2.2 consider the impact and implications of the enhanced level of service provided.
- 2.3 discuss and make recommendations on suggestions at Section 7: Further Improvements.
- 2.4 to scope and establish a one day Scrutiny Panel on the Council's response to the extreme weather events.

3. RELEVANT BACKGROUND INFORMATION/CHRONOLOGY OF KEY EVENTS:

Introduction

- 3.1 Accumulations of up to 15cm of snow fell across the City throughout the evening of Thursday 17th December and early morning of Friday 18th December 2009. This was followed by an unusually longer period of day time temperatures consistently below freezing associated with a high pressure weather system over the UK. The resulting impacted frozen snow and ice led to very difficult driving and walking conditions throughout the City on treated and untreated roads alike, including footways. This in turn led to criticism that the Council didn't meet its service obligations in spite of 'gritting' and pavement clearance operations undertaken in accordance with normal 'Winter Service' procedures. This report sets out the chronology of events and also compares the response to the snow and ice for the period of the 16th to 21st December as well as from the period from the 6th January and implications of the changed practices.

Winter Service Plan

- 3.2 The Council's agreed Winter Service Plan details what the council will undertake in ice and snow conditions. It was prepared in accordance with LAAs Code of Good Practice for Highway Maintenance and Winter Maintenance Supplement and further Best Value Code of Practice. The requirement to prepare a Plan stems from legal obligations on the Highway Authority from the 1980 Highways Act, the Railways & Transport Act 2003 and Traffic Management Act 2004 that requires removal of snow and ice on the public highway as far as is reasonably practicable. This is to permit the safe movement of traffic on designated roads and to minimise accidents and delays brought about by adverse weather conditions. The Council treats 40% of its highway network exceeding the Audit Commission Target of 24 – 38%.
- 3.3 The current Winter Service Plan was reviewed after the snow event in February 2009, and more formally during the summer and autumn of 2009. The Plan was further tested during this event and then undertook additional consultation with Category 1 Responders (fire, police, NHS) and the bus service during its finalisation. Following the February snow event and difficulty in obtaining additional salt supplies the Plan was adapted to provide a more robust and responsive Salt Supply Contract to provide faster delivery times and contractual obligations for the provider.
- 3.4 Following briefings offered to all Parties and Lead Councillors, the Winter Service Plan was formally presented and approved at Environment Cabinet Member meeting on 5 November 2009. There were no objections raised.
- 3.5 The Winter Service is undertaken from November to March encompassing the predicted coldest temperatures and, through its Operational Plan, treats a priority network of approximately 250km of the Council's 630km of Public Highway with rock salt and grit using vehicle mounted spreaders or 'Gritters'.

- 3.6 The priority network of roads encompasses all 'A' and 'B', some 'C' roads, all bus routes as well as key strategic destinations such as Hospitals and premises related to Emergency Services.
- 3.7 Pavements are cleared and treated in exceptional circumstances such as severe and prolonged snowfall, and arrangements exist with highway subcontractors to undertake this in specified areas in the Winter Service Plan. There are also 350 grit bins located across the City.
- 3.8 The Council's fleet of 7 gritter vehicles and snow ploughs, are operated 24/7 throughout the Winter Service Period by 12 NVQ trained City Clean drivers. There is also a 24/7 rota of Winter Duty Officers interpreting a managed weather forecasting service and weather stations around the city to make decisions on deployment of gritting operations. All operatives were trained or retrained before the 2009/10 Winter Service Period.
- 3.9 Although we refer to "gritting" and "gritter" vehicles, in fact, the operation usually involves salt rather than any grit. Winter service treatments across the UK involve pre-salting the road network in advance of snow, ice, frost or freezing rain. How much salt is put down depends on the predicted severity of the weather event, and other factors such as moisture content and amount of salt already laid from previous treatments.
- 3.10 The salt is spread on the road and works by reducing the freezing point of water. The salt works best when it is in a solution and the process is aided by vehicles passing over the salt to help crush it into a good solution. However, salt starts to become less effective at minus 5°C and almost ineffective at lower temperatures. As a result, at these temperatures its use becomes practically, economically and environmentally difficult. A salt/grit mix is often more effective in snow conditions as this gives better traction for vehicles. Ploughing can be used if the depth of the snow allows this - by clearing the roads of the worst accumulations, this allows the salt/grit to treat the roads more efficiently.
- 3.11 Weather forecasts come from one of the major weather companies under contract to BHCC to deliver city-specific forecasts as well as monitoring data from the council's weather stations. There are 3 weather outstations in the city. The UK generally, and particularly the southern part of England with its milder climate, often gets what are called "marginal nights" where it can be very hard to predict accurately in advance whether the temperature will fall below zero. The amount of snowfall is also notoriously hard to predict – forecasters can tell that precipitation is on its way but often not how much will fall at any one time over a specific area.
- 3.12 The council's ability to hold highway stocks is limited by the storage space available at the only depot, based at Hollingdean and by the turn-around time for supplies to come in to Shoreham Harbour. This is one practical reason why the gritters need to keep to a pre-defined route and why the highways section cannot provide large quantities of stock or gritting to private organisations, private roads or even to other council sections. It is a civil contingency requirement that all council sections should have plans in place to deal with severe weather incidents.

Response for snowfall period 16th – 21st December

- 3.13 On Thursday 17th December the council's weather forecasters predicted intermittent snow showers persisting through the night into the Friday morning rush-hour with accumulations possibly reaching a maximum of up to 10cm locally. The forecasters could not state with certainty the timings or the exact amount across the network. It had rained heavily during the night of Wednesday 16 December which washed away most of the previous salt applications. The Winter Duty Officer therefore gave instructions for heavy applications of salt to be spread after the rain, on all priority routes by 6 gritters starting at 2 a.m. on Thursday morning before the expected snowfall. The gritter vehicles then started running their full routes at 4pm on Thursday afternoon and ran continuously throughout the night (4 times) the following day in accordance with the Winter Service Plan. Snow Ploughs were also used throughout this period. 230 tonnes of salt or salt/grit mix were laid in this initial 24 hour period.
- 3.14 Gritting/ploughing runs were undertaken on 17 December at:
- 2 a.m. (after the rain on Wednesday night)
 - 4 p.m. (just before the major snowfall)
 - 8.00 p.m. (during snowfall)
 - 11.30 p.m. (during snowfall) - included extra run to Woodvale Crematorium, Saddlescombe Road and Mill Road
- 3.15 Throughout the next day (Friday), over the weekend and next 5 days, gritter drivers were able to get to work and gritting operations on the roads continued 24/7 where possible.
- 3.16 Gritting/ploughing runs were undertaken on 18 December at the following times:
- 2.00 a.m. (during snowfall)
 - 4.30 p.m. (during snowfall)
 - 8.00 a.m. (responding to bus company and police requests)
 - 3.00 p.m. (afternoon shift)
- Gritter runs then continued throughout the cold period running full routes or concentrating on problematic outlying areas.
- 3.17 Some roads were even impassable by the non 4 x 4 gritters because the City's road network has a high proportion of hilly roads with steep gradients. As a result the existing three 4x4 gritter vehicles had to be constantly re-directed to treat these roads.
- 3.18 Salt treatment requires heavy vehicular traffic to help it become effective, and with several days of consistently cold temperatures as well as rain that froze on top of the snow, it was a struggle to keep open outlying bus routes. Nonetheless, Winter Duty Officers were in regular contact with the bus company and gritters were sent out during the day or night to any specific problem areas on our gritting routes identified by the bus company or by local residents.

- 3.19 Pavement clearance was begun on Friday in Western Road by highway sub contractors. Cityclean Street Cleansing service also began gritting on Friday. However, both the sub contractors and Cityclean experienced significant staff shortages because of the weather conditions. Pavement clearance took place after the snowfall in accordance with the Winter Service Plan and continued throughout the weekend. However, what had not been initially foreseen or predicted were the continuing freezing temperatures in the daytime for several days which meant that the snowfall did not melt.
- 3.20 There was also rain during Friday/Saturday night which fell onto freezing surfaces and added an icy layer to the snow. The forecast for Friday through to Saturday stated that there would be partly cloudy conditions in the daytime, which usually brings temperatures up above freezing, and that temperatures would drop below zero from early evening. However, the daytime temperatures did not rise above zero and the weather stations showed that road surface temperatures were often below minus 5 degrees. This meant that both roads and pavements were not clearing naturally during the daytime, and with intermittent snow and freezing rain, drivers and operatives had to constantly keep going over areas that had already been treated. It also meant that there were icy surfaces on top of existing snowfall with the salt treatment lying inert underneath this. Street Cleansing staff carried out clearance by chipping ice off pavements with shovels as well as using grit/salt treatment during this extremely cold spell.
- 3.21 The council does not have in place a stand by arrangement as part of its agreed Winter Service Plan and budget arrangements, to call in staff from refuse and recycling, street cleansing and the gardeners. Over the weekend, refuse and recycling staff do not work and the numbers of street sweepers are reduced to the city centre. With weekend staff numbers and weather conditions preventing those due to come to work getting in, there was a limited number of street sweepers able to grit pavements in the city centre. The focus was the city centre where the highest number of pedestrians would be particularly bearing in mind this was the last shopping weekend before Christmas.
- 3.22 By Monday morning, all non HGV vehicles, including tractors and trailers, across Cityclean and Cityparks were loaded with grit and all available staff took part in pavement clearance.
- 3.23 Throughout this period (18 Dec – 23 Dec) over 400 tonnes of salt or salt/grit mix were used, as well as continuing ploughing operations. Winter Duty Officers and Head of Network Management maintained a presence at the Hollingdean Depot including weekends to direct operations throughout the cold spell. Senior Officers from Sustainable Transport and City Clean sent out regular briefings to members to keep them up to date with operations.

Communications

- 3.24 The communications around this weather event began on Thursday 17 December. The strategy was to communicate up-to-date information on travel conditions, network availability and availability of services using a variety of media, including press, television, radio and the internet. Information for the public was to be clear, accurate, consistent and co-ordinated.
- 3.25 The media team provided broadcasters and the press information before the event, on Thursday (17 December), so that winter service arrangements, especially salting routes, were well understood by users and the community ahead of the first snowfall. The web operation began the same day with the web team contacting all schools to remind them to inform the corporate communications team first in the event of any school closures.
- 3.26 Schools began sending in emails to the web team at 7am on Friday (18 December) and the website was updated immediately and continually. That morning, the media team began issuing hourly bulletins for all media on council action in all service areas to mitigate against the weather. Mark Prior, AD Sustainable Transport, gave broadcast interviews giving key messages about the council's response, including how services would be affected. The Argus on Saturday ran an uncritical and factual article saying refuse and recycling services had been suspended.
- 3.27 The council's severe weather webpage was updated hourly throughout Friday and updated again on Saturday. However, due to a technical problem with the content management system it was not possible to update the website for a period of time on Sunday. On Sunday morning (20 December), the out-of-hours press officer began receiving calls from print, radio and television news rooms asking the council to respond to complaints about the gritting and that people were sustaining injuries from falls. Cllr Maria Caulfield gave an interview to the Argus reassuring social housing tenants that everything was being done to ensure their safety. The council issued a statement to all media explaining what gritting had been undertaken and explaining that it was diverting parks and refuse staff to gritting because the freeze was becoming severe. This ran on the local BBC news on Sunday evening and all day on the radio, as well as in national newspapers the following day.
- 3.28 The Argus on Monday (21 December) carried a front page story under the headline "COLD SNAP", alleging that the council had 'abandoned residents' in residential side-roads. Cllr Geoffrey Theobald gave an interview to BBC Sussex radio on Monday morning and for lunchtime and evening local news bulletins on BBC and ITV re-iterating that the council had cleared 40% of the network and thanking residents for their help.
- 3.29 Regular website and 'social media' updates about services resumed on Monday, including the publication of the exact location of the council's 350 grit bins and a revised refuse and recycling collections timetable. The council also

joined online chat forums to post a message acknowledging the frustrations of residents and to direct them to the hourly website updates.

- 3.30 On Tuesday (22 December), the Argus carried a front-page story under the headline “TOO LITTLE, TOO LATE”, focusing on residents’ comments that their roads were icy. Cllr Geoffrey Theobald was quoted saying the council had done all it could. The media team later issued a statement saying Cllr Mary Mears had visited the Hollingdean depot to discuss challenges with staff and, as a result of that, and residents’ concerns, she would review the gritting service and announce changes before the New Year. The story was carried in the Argus Wednesday (23 December) under the headline “Lessons learned after cold snap”. The Argus leader column said the development was ‘welcome’. The media team continued to issue hourly media bulletins and the media turned their attention specifically to the hilly Moulsecoomb and Patcham areas, where there had been a raft of minor traffic collisions.
- 3.31 By the five days leading up to Wednesday (23 December), the council’s severe weather webpage had received 32,206 views.
- 3.32 The communications team used four platforms to keep a steady flow of information and advice to council staff and Members: news updates on the Wave (intranet), the Chief Executive’s update (also accessed on the Wave), direct emails to all Members and direct emails to all directors and assistant directors to cascade to their teams. Throughout the period staff were able to see how the crisis was being covered in the traditional news media and social media by looking at daily news monitoring posts on the Wave. All media briefings were also made available to emergency services and health partners who, in turn, gave the council communications team advance notice of their own communications so that both were co-ordinated.

Summary

- 3.33 In summary, the Winter Service Plan was activated effectively in terms of its stated aims and priorities – to grit the main roads and bus routes, and to carry out pavement clearance starting with areas of highest footfall. However, it is also clear that what was very different was the duration of the poor weather. This highlighted several clear issues which the council has to address in order to give a higher level of service in such conditions. Public and partner expectations also need to be clearly understood so that we are all more prepared and better co-ordinated. The unprecedented number of public slips and falls on footways was extremely serious and senior officers were swift to review how this might be mitigated given future cold weather forecasts.

4. Response to prediction of snowfall for the 31st January

Operations

- 4.1 During this Christmas week, a risk of further snow fall and ice conditions were predicted for New Year’s Eve/New Year’s Day, although accumulations were

predicted to be only 1 – 2 cm. Officers acted swiftly to mobilize staff ahead of the predicted snowfall despite this being a major holiday period. All grit bins were replenished. The gritter drivers were deployed on Full Routes and all street sweepers on Thursday 31st across the city were deployed on pavement gritting. 80 tonnes of salt was used on that night in addition to the previous treatments of salt laid during preceding cold nights.

- 4.2 A dedicated person in charge of communications was appointed across the council and prepared timely press releases, constant website updates and email updates.
- 4.3 To mobilise such resources was a difficult decision, given that forecasters could not confidently predict timings or amount of snowfall even up to 12 hours before and that this enhanced service response had financial and practical implications (e.g. salt stock monitoring and supply). The predicted snowfall did not occur.

Communications

- 4.4 The communications strategy during the second bout of predicted snow was largely as before, centering on regular and relevant information directly to the residents, media, Members and council staff. Having fixed the technical problem with the website, it was updated regularly throughout the New Year holiday period when the council was closed. Two way communications were increased with residents through more regular engagement in social media. The result was – for the first time since the cold weather began – complimentary messages on social networking sites and the Argus website about the council’s gritting and its efforts to warn and inform residents. The tone of traditional media coverage was also far more sympathetic to the council by this stage.

5. Response to snowfall of the 6th - 13th January

Operations

- 5.1 Because of the cold nights and risk of ice during the early January period, the gritters had been laying applications of salt from 1 – 5 January, and as there was no rain, this also formed good preparation for the predicted snowfall. On Tuesday 5 January the weather forecast at midday stated that there was a risk of up to 2 – 5 cm of snow accumulation overnight into Wednesday morning with a further risk of 5 – 10 cm during Wednesday. Snow fell and 6 gritters with snow ploughs started full routes at 6.00 p.m., continuing at 9.30 p.m. on full routes with ploughs and then driving through the night .running full routes again at midnight and 3.00 a.m. Gritting operations continued into the next day with routes ploughed and gritted on a constant turn-around system.
- 5.2 Throughout the week the service worked 24/7. All non HGV vehicles from Cityclean and Cityparks were deployed where possible dumping piles of grit across the city in preparation for the week ahead.

- 5.3 On Wednesday all available staff across refuse and recycling, street cleansing and gardeners were transported to the grit piles to spread the grit. As the conditions were severe only four 4 x 4's could be used to transport staff across the city.
- 5.4 The use of all 12 gritter drivers on a day/night shift system continued constantly throughout the week and Cityclean and Cityparks staff carried on with hand clearance throughout the week.
- 5.5 For weekend of the 9th and 10th January staff were drafted in on overtime to help grit across the city. Approximately, 100 staff were deployed from Cityparks and Cityclean supplemented by staff from NSL, the council's parking contractors. This included:
- On call additional staff for weekend work
 - Increased numbers of 4 x 4 vehicles (including tractors) to access hard-to-reach areas
 - Agreement regarding grit "drop-off" points
 - Up to date information on the website and through other communication channels
- 5.6 In addition to continuous communication with the bus company, their Operations Manager was deployed at the Council's Bartholomew House Traffic Control Centre to monitor and direct city centre bus operations using CCTV.
- 5.7 Throughout the whole period Winter Duty Officers and Head of Network Management maintained a presence at the Hollingdean Depot seven days a week to direct operations throughout the cold spell, co-ordinating work with the Operations Managers from Cityclean to manage staff and vehicles for road and pavement gritting as required.

Communications

- 5.8 The communications strategy continued as before but this time with two key improvements. The first was the production of three YouTube videos viewable on the council's website, all about different aspects of the gritting operation. This was designed to give residents more detail in an easily-digestible format about the hard work being undertaken by staff, as well as to improve the morale of those staff. The second was the transformation of the previously-published grit bin list into a map showing the exact locations of each bin. This was published and widely publicised. A new objective was also fulfilled by the council's communications in the gathering of 12 volunteer 4x4 drivers to carry out adult social care transport duties. This was done via an appeal on the website, radio, Sky News, BBC News 24 and social networking websites. A list of volunteers was compiled by the media team and passed on to Adult Social Care. The appeal was later praised by the Communities Secretary John Denham in a press statement and was featured in the industry magazine PR Week as an example of best practice in using social media during a crisis.

5.9 By this stage visits to the council's website were more than double the figure for the two previous bouts of snow. In the five days covering 31 December to 4 Jan, there were 28,534 visits. By contrast, the five days covering 6 January to 10 January saw a rise to 67,631 visits. The growth in daily visitors on the previous week was testament to the website's growing reputation as a source for relevant information.

6. Innovation

6.1 Following the public criticism of the Council during the December snow and ice, the Winter Service Team, Director of Environment, and Assistant Directors for City Services and Sustainable Transport worked closely with the Leader of the Council to review the response and improve key areas.

6.2 Brighton & Hove is a small authority with resources and supplies sufficient for our usual winter climate. The unprecedented weather situation meant that we had to think innovatively about how best to use our available staff and resources. Examples of leading practice and innovation include:

- Using grit instead of salt on outlying routes. This was because during the snow event of last February, we learnt that grit was a much more useful treatment for layers of compacted snow, persistently cold temperatures and hilly routes where the salt becomes ineffective. The grit gives vehicles traction and starts to break down the compacted layers to reach the salt treatment beneath. National government advice on this came out much later.
- Using Parks 4 x 4 vehicles and tractors to take salt/grit out to outlying hard-to-reach communities.
- Using all available in-house 4 x 4 vehicles and calling on the public to help with 4 x 4 transport in order to reach vulnerable people.
- Giving out legal advice to householders about clearing pavements themselves – this was followed up by national government advice a week after we had posted information on our website.
- Carrying out a sustained system of pavement gritting, including working with CYPT to identify school routes on a priority basis.
- Using a JCB and tractor-trailer to remove large snow drifts around Falmer Road/Bexhill Road.
- Setting up a rota system with Street Cleansing staff acting as drivers' mates during ploughing operations, thus avoiding using trained drivers. This allowed us to utilize our complete drivers' rota to double-shift on day and night time duties.
- Using Parking Attendants to clear pavements.
- Dropping off piles of grit for residents to help clear their local areas.
- Continuing to refill grit bins as a priority throughout the cold period.
- Sharing intelligence and use of the Council's Traffic Control Centre with the bus company.
- Dedicated communication support coordinating all communications activity – website updates, using the press, radio and TV to get actively messages across and briefing members.
- Use of film to get across messages to place on website and Youtube

- Establishment of a “Transport Cell” to support snow and ice clearance in the wider community as well as deployment of 4x4 vehicles to vulnerable residents.
- Delivering salt/grit supplies to the hospital, bus company, crematorium, and schools to enable them to continue treating their own premises.
- Creating links between Highway contractors and the council’s Housing section to ensure they got supplies of grit to continue treating housing estates.

6.3 This advanced level of work delivered real improvements in January and Improved communications and in closer working with the public on what we could and couldn’t do led to some positive press coverage.

6.4 By 8th January, there were 0 recorded falls on ice compared to 49 in December. An appendix is attached with more information.

7 Further Improvements

7.1 There is a high expectation of the Winter ‘Gritting’ Service because much of the economy and well-being of the city relies on a good degree of movement and mobility. The Winter Service Plan delivered according to its aims but following the snow event in December, senior managers introduced an enhanced service in order to respond to public concerns and requirements. However, if the plans operated from the 6th January are to be adopted or further enhanced, the Winter Service will require significantly more resources in terms of revenue and capital for the use of additional staff and vehicles.

7.2 Decisions on whether to agree a greater level of service need to be made during the budget process for this financial year.

Proposal	Recommendation	Timescale
The public have a low awareness of the Winter Service including its limitations in extreme weather conditions. It is important to provide clear information to residents and business on Winter Service Plan, location of grit bins, and advice on public transport, driving in bad weather and gritting pavements.	An annual leaflet sent to all households and businesses, website and social media sites Newspaper advert in the winter months. Special edition of City News in October.	Spring/summer 2010/11

<p>The Council currently has three 4x4 Gritter vehicles out of its fleet of 7. During the prolonged snow and icy conditions many roads on the existing network of priority roads were inaccessible by normal two wheel drive vehicles. This hasn't been an issue before but highlights the need to replace this aged fleet with 4x4 vehicles to allow full coverage. The gritters are 10 years old and due for replacement</p>	<p>Replace gritter vehicles with 4x4 fleet, narrower chassis vehicles and more modern equipment that will be better able to access Brighton & Hove's urban steep roads</p>	<p>Winter 2010/11</p>
<p>The current salt storage capacity at Hollingdean Depot is limited to approximately 1,000 tonnes and is sufficient for the average Winter conditions without contingency. The council was fortunate it did not run out of supplies during the bad weather periods but it did have to seek mutual aid for supplies from other councils although due to careful use of stocks did not ultimately need to take this up</p>	<p>A covered salt barn, silo, pre-wetted salt / saline or other suitable alternative arrangements providing additional capacity would give further assurance to supplies and contingency.</p>	<p>Long term. The depot is in a poor condition and needs refurbishment works and development to make better use of the site and put in place substantial and proper storage capacity for grit and salt. It is essential work commences on this immediately and forms part of the refurbishment plans for the depot</p>
<p>Grit bins – the Winter Service team have received numerous requests for grit bins all over the city including in the warmest central and low lying areas. Many bins have been removed in the past at the request of various groups such as Local Action Team's to reduce street clutter and</p>	<p>Investigate possibility of using builders' bags to deposit grit where required rather than place additional grit bins all over the city.</p> <p>Additional budget will be required to be able to provide and fill all the additional bins/bags before, during and after</p>	<p>Winter 2010/11</p>

vandalism. Yellow plastic bins in prime conservation areas would also ruin the aesthetics of the street scene	each cold weather event	
Provision of additional hand gritting equipment to allow it to take place more speedily and easily	There are excellent examples of pavement clearance machines but require additional capital and revenue budget to purchase and operate	Winter 2010/11
Provision of more trained gritter drivers from Cityclean increasing the pool of staff available	There are additional costs associated with training extra drivers (approx £1,000 per driver)	Winter 2010/11
Provision of additional 4x4 vehicles for highway operations transporting grit and transportation of staff.	Older vehicles in Cityparks could be replaced with 4 x 4's and then called on in bad weather	As vehicles come to the end of their economic life

7.3 Officers can investigate the capital costs of replacing gritters and purchasing pavement gritting machines. It is likely that these costs will be in excess of £950k and there is no budget identified for this additional expenditure. This unsupported borrowing could be explored.

8 DAMAGE TO THE HIGHWAY

8.1 Severe cold weather followed by a thaw usually results in increased damage to the highway and to apparatus under the highway. This is because of the expansion and contraction caused by cold and ice penetration, often resulting in "frost heave" which is movement of the road surface and sub-surface.

8.2 For the Highway Authority, this means that large potholes can appear in the road, or some pavements may crack or move. For utilities, this results in burst mains requiring emergency repairs.

8.3 As the snow has thawed and potholes have appeared, the council's highways team have been responding to problems, calling in extra staff to make temporary and permanent repairs to road surfaces.

8.4 Last month a programme of repairs to potholes was carried out after the first batch of snow.

- 8.5 Following the severe weather, council Highway Inspectors are once again focusing on identifying and repairing new potholes as they are gradually exposed by the thawing snow and ice. This will continue to be a priority for the coming weeks, with more 'pothole gangs' being made available by the council's contractor to deal with problems.
- 8.6 Inspectors are already reporting a noticeable increase in potholes and other damage to the highways but the full extent will only be revealed over the next month or so – depending on whether more cold weather follows.
- 8.7 Roads where potholes have already been repaired include:
- London Road
 - Lewes Road
 - North Street
 - Western Road
 - Falmer Road
 - North Road
 - Trafalgar Street
 - Upper North Street
 - Lansdowne Road
 - Marine Parade
- 8.8 When potholes appear, the council carries out two different types of repair – for the lesser used side roads we use a temporary cold material and a permanent repair follows at a later date. For the busier main roads we use a more expensive semi-permanent material that sets with water and can be installed quickly using minimal traffic management, and reducing traffic congestion.
- 8.9 Last financial year, 08-09, the council spent just over £360k on repairs to carriageways. This year we have already spent £217k. The snow last February resulted in around £100,000 worth of damage.

9 CONSULTATION

- 9.1 Transport Cell –consultation with representatives from schools, Adult Social Care, PCT, public transport and Civil Contingencies.
- 9.2 The Winter Service Plan for 2009-10 was discussed with all emergency services, the Brighton & Hove Bus Company, Lead Members and relevant council sections before being presented to Environment Cabinet Member meeting for approval in November 2009.

10 FINANCIAL & OTHER IMPLICATIONS

Financial Implications:

- 10.1 The Council's annual budget for the Winter Service is £227,000. The budget has not changed in real terms over the past five years. This level of resources is based on the expected usual weather patterns and is estimated to provide 30 Standard treatments per year plus a snow event of 2 days duration.
- 10.2 Any underspend in the revenue budget is carried over into the Winter Maintenance Reserve, as contingency for periods of extreme weather. This fund has been used during financial years 2006-7 and 2008-9 for severe weather. A minimum of £250,000 is held in this reserve.
- 10.3 The budget is based on fixed costs for weather infrastructure and vehicles and variable costs including drivers, fuel, vehicle maintenance, salt supply and grit bin filling. The greatest proportion of the budget is for the lease hire of the gritter vehicles, standing at £106,000. The gritter vehicles were purchased from the lease company 3 years ago, thus enabling a saving of £80,000 per year which has been utilised to cover the other ongoing operational costs of the winter service.
- 10.4 As the timing of this report and the January snow event has overlapped, the costs of the enhanced Winter Service are yet to be determined. The additional costs will cover the treating of pavements, increased weekend working, additional materials (salt and grit supplies) and the increased cost associated with round the clock pre-treatment of roads during a prolonged period of cold weather with significant individual snow events. If we experienced continuous snowfall with significant accumulations then expenditure could easily amount to £200,000 per week to cover additional labour, salt, grit, loading, maintenance. and transportation costs.
- 10.5 There is a need to work up capital costs of replacing the gritters and purchasing more hand gritting machines. It is likely that these costs will be in excess of £925,000.

Finance Officer Consulted: Patrick Rice

Date: 13/01/10

Legal Implications:

- 10.6 The Council has a statutory responsibility to ensure as far as practicable safe passage on the highway and safe movement of all users pursuant to the Highways Act 1980, the Railway and Transport Act 2003 and the Traffic Management Act 2004. The implementation of the Winter Service Plan together with the other steps taken by the Council as outlined in this report has ensured that the above

obligations have been met in relation to the recent snow events. If proposals for improvement are agreed this will assist further to demonstrate that the Council continues to meet its statutory responsibilities by reviewing its Winter Service Plan and implementing changes where these can lead to improvements in the service.

Lawyer Consulted: Elizabeth Culbert

Date: 15/01/10

Equalities Implications:

- 10.7 The Winter Maintenance service covers main routes and all bus routes. It is not logistically or economically feasible to cover all roads in the city, so by treating bus routes we aim to provide all areas of the city with accessible options for vehicular travel. In order to assist pedestrian and other mobility, the Plan includes pavement and cycle route gritting during prolonged snow events, starting with areas of highest footfall in the city centre and around emergency services' premises, then moving on to local shopping areas and local concentrations of footfall and finally to additional local pavements.

Sustainability Implications:

- 10.8 Salt has an environmental impact to a greater or lesser degree. For example, it can harm vegetation such as grass verges and can leach through soil and soakaways into the water table. It may also contribute to the road surface damage following frost heave under cold temperatures. Therefore resources are carefully deployed in order to provide a balance between network usability and detriment to the local environment.

Crime & Disorder Implications:

- 10.9 The police have been consulted on the preparation of the plans and officers work closely with all emergency services both in preparation for and responding to severe weather. The Head of Network Management communicated regularly with the Sussex Police Road Policing Unit during both snow events.

Risk and Opportunity Management Implications:

- 10.10 The objective is to provide a winter service, which will permit, as far as is reasonably possible, the safe movement of traffic on designated roads throughout Brighton and Hove and to keep to a minimum delays and accidents brought about by adverse weather conditions. The roads around the two major hospitals, bus depots and all police, fire and ambulance premises are covered by the Winter Plan's gritting routes.

Corporate / Citywide Implications:

10.11 The winter service is an essential support service for the city's economy by helping to provide an accessible road network.

11 EVALUATION OF ANY ALTERNATIVE OPTION(S):

11.1 This report is for Scrutiny to consider the implications, actions and recommendations arising from the two recent severe weather events in the UK – there are no alternative options relevant at this time.

12 REASONS FOR REPORT RECOMMENDATIONS

12.1 The report ensures that the implications and recommendations arising from an enhanced winter service can be formally considered.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

Appendices:

1. Number and location of falls related to bad weather

Documents In Members' Rooms

None

Background Documents

Brighton & Hove City Council's Winter Service Plan 2009-10

