

Place & Resources Overview Committee

17th December 2020

Winter Maintenance Policy

For Decision

Portfolio Holder: Cllr R Bryan, Highways, Travel and Environment

Local Councillor(s): All

Executive Director: J Sellgren, Executive Director of Place

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Report Status: Public

Recommendation:

That the Place and Resources Overview Committee support the following action, in line with the decision of the Portfolio holder on the 12th August 2020: adoption of the revised Winter maintenance policy and operational plan.

Reason for Recommendation:

Only minor amendments have been made to the policy to reflect changes in date and team structures. The operational plan updates have been agreed by the portfolio holder and head of service in an appropriate manner.

1. Executive Summary

The Winter maintenance policy is currently under review through the Highways and Transportation Board. Once this process is finished it will return to this committee.

With that in mind I have taken the opportunity in this report to expand on the changes made to the operational plan.

This report will inform members of the research that has been carried out into potential financial and environmental savings that the transition to route-based forecasting (RBF) could bring.

We historically made decisions regarding salting on a forecast for each of the 4 weather domains in the Dorset Council area. RBF gives a forecast for each of our 22 salting routes. This allows for a more targeted approach, only treating the parts of the network that are likely to see frost or ice forming on them.

The main justifications for Dorset Councils move to RBF are:

- Facilitate more targeted, surgical treatments on marginal nights:
- Better use of resources:
- Conserve salt
- Reduction in drivers' hours and the risks to the Fleet Operators Licence in managing them
- Reduce fuel consumption
- Reduced operational costs
- Reduce environmental impact:
- Prevent unnecessary salt application
- Reduction in CO2 emissions from operational activity
- Prepares the organisation for future moves to dynamic spreading (variable spread rates on the same route) and fully autonomous gritters
- Scientific, data-led decision making which support a more robust defence against litigation
- Negates the (costly) need for thermal mapping (re)surveys

2. Financial Implications

During the 2019-20 winter season RBF was monitored offline to compare the number of routes that would have been treated compared to the domain-based system. Decisions were still made on the domain-based forecast (DBF) in line with the operational plan at that time. Using DBF a total of 676 routes were treated, in comparison to the 566 routes that would have been treated under an RBF system. A saving of 110 routes.

The routes cost on average £371 when we are spreading at a rate of 8g per square meter. At that spread rate it would be a saving of £40810 (110 x £371). The extra cost of having RBF is £18,825 annually. This would have brought a net saving of £21985.

The cost for RBF is fixed (other than inflation changes) for the next two years.

The move to RBF was achievable with the existing approved budgetary allocation to this service.

Details of how these figures were obtained can be found in appendix 2 Winter maintenance report 20/21 season.

3. Well-being and Health Implications

No well-being or health implications have been identified.

4. Climate implications

There are also savings to be made on environmental grounds including a reduction in emissions from fewer lorry movements and reduced salt usage. These savings will continue to be explored but initial findings are in appendix 2.

5. Other Implications

There are no other implications to different areas of the council.

6. Risk Assessment

Having considered the risks associated with this decision, the level of risk has been identified as:

Current Risk: Low

Residual Risk: Low

The overall risk in changing to RBF is low. We would still be relying on an accurate forecast to help make the decision around salting in any part of Dorset. The accuracy of the forecast has been very good in previous years.

The financial risk I would judge to be medium. At the average cost per route we would have to reduce the number of routes treated by 51 to cover the increase in costs due to RBF. Last winter we would have seen a reduction of about 110 routes, but it was a very mild winter leading to a lot of moderate nights. I would not expect to see this kind of number in a normal winter.

7. Equalities Impact Assessment There are no equalities implications arising from this report.

Appendices Appendix 1-Dorset Highways Winter Service Policy and Operational Plan, Appendix 2- Winter maintenance report 20/21 season.

8. Background Papers None

Footnote:

Issues relating to financial, legal, environmental, economic and equalities implications have been considered and any information relevant to the decision is included within the report.