

AGENDA ITEM 13. MEMBER QUESTIONS - RESPONSE TO QUESTION 2

Cllr Julian Dean; Winter Maintenance.

Shropshire Council have a duty under the Highways Act 1980 to prevent the formation of ice on the defined road network, to melt ice and snow already formed and to remove snow that has fallen. The Winter Service aims to; prevent ice forming on the Defined Network, known as 'pre-salting', melt ice and snow already formed, known as 'post salting', and remove snow. The Defined Network consists of all 'A' and 'B' roads, and localised high-risk sections of other roads. It comprises approximately 28% of the total road network in Shropshire. The Secondary Network consists of all distributor roads not on the Defined Network, town centres and other high-risk local roads. Other rural roads are maintained by our workforce or retained farmers/contractors.

We operate a fleet of 25 Gritter Lorries from various depots around the county. These are all assigned appropriate primary and secondary routes. A core fleet of snow blowing equipment, together with footway ploughs are also placed in the divisions. There are over 100 farmer contractors, on retainers for winter snow clearance, who between them have over 200 snow ploughs, 27 tractor mounted Gritter units and various snow blowers.

Between 7th and 14th December we undertook 681 gritting operations and used 4,555 tonnes of salt with our front line gritter fleet. Main routes were each treated between 82 and 103 times, secondary routes between 5 and 11 times and car parks 5 times.

In response to the specific points raised by Cllr Dean:

The Saturday after the snow event saw a street market in the square, but the area did not seem to be have been treated or cleared to make it safe for shoppers and traders.

The Square is not all public highway, the majority is designated open space under the Shrewsbury Acts. We treat it when resources allow, but that is after our defined network.

What plans were in place to treat pavements, and thereby provide a necessary service to pedestrians that was provided to other road users?

Town centre footways are treated as secondary routes. They were treated in Shrewsbury 7 times during the period in question.

Is the Council satisfied with its performance and execution of its Winter Service Plan with respect to the treatment of, and subsequent condition of, primary roads?

There were problems during the period of heavy snow fall in early December. On Friday the 7th this was concentrated in Shrewsbury town centre and in the Much Wenlock/Farley area. The problem in Shrewsbury was a bus that got stuck on Wyle Cop and at Farley it was due to a large number of conifer trees falling, under the weight of snow, thus hindering access by our gritters/ploughs. Highways England had similar problems on the M54 and A49 as did Telford and Wrekin in their area. Things were not helped on the Friday as many businesses and schools decided to allow employees/pupils home at about 11:00 am, which blocked the

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roads and a number of cars were abandoned on slopes, which prevented our grittier fleet from having open access to the roads.

What feedback have you had concerning Emergency Service vehicle access to the Town Centre during this period? Was access compromised and if so for how long?

No reports were received regarding emergency vehicle access during the snow. We work closely with all emergency services and when there are likely to be extended periods of snow and ice we do have Bronze, Silver and Gold tasking meetings with all partners as appropriate. No such meeting was called for this event.

What, if any, failings in the plan were experienced?

The main problem was access to our network, due to abandoned or stuck vehicles, that meant our gritter fleet could not be as effective in some locations.

Was this winter event considered within the Council's Winter Service Plan? If not, why not?

The winter maintenance plan tries to consider all eventualities. At the end of each winter campaign officers review what went well and what could be done better. Officers will be undertaking a full review and any changes proposed will be presented to Members for their consideration during the summer.

What advice from the Met Office was taken when developing the plan? / Winter weather is unpredictable and weather patterns are changing. Is this fact being considered with the Council's Winter Service Plan? If so, how?

We have a contract for the provision of weather forecasts, have access to 19 roadside weather stations on our or the HE network and radar mapping of weather events as they approach Shropshire. These are used, along with local knowledge, to inform our policy and plans. We take previous events, covering all types of severe weather event; snow, wind, floods into account when planning and resourcing our winter and other services.

What can I tell my constituents, some of whom were injured by slipping on untreated surfaces, about how we dealt with this event and what lessons have been drawn for the future?

Shropshire Council have an appropriate and adequately resourced service which operates, often out of sight, to keep the travelling public safe and on the move.

Many people want to help treat and clear paths but the advice from Central Government is considered by many as being too vague. Will the Council consider publishing clear advice on how the public can engage and help to treat and clear footpaths?

We are happy to provide advice and will develop this over the spring which will then go onto the website. We have agreed to keep Cllr Dean updated on this following a meeting that was held in January on this topic