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| **Report to:** | Executive Cabinet Member - Environmental Delivery | | | |
| **Date of meeting:** | 14th September 2021 | | | |
| **Report of:** | Director of Place Services | | **Report**  **Number:** | 41176 |
| **Reporting Officer:** | John Kelly – Assistant Director | | **Telephone**  **Number:** | 336419 |
| **Contact Officer:** | Steve Walsh – Senior Engineering Manager | | **Telephone**  **Number:** | 336436 |
| **Report title:** | Winter Gritting Highway Network – Risk Based Matrix | | | |
| **Not confidential**  This report does not contain information which warrants its consideration in the absence of the press or members of the public. | | | | |
| **Purpose:** | To seek approval to implement a new risk-based highway network winter gritting matrix for future delivery. | | | |
| **Recommendations:** | The Executive Cabinet Member is recommended to:   * Approve the risk-based highway network winter gritting matrix for future delivery. | | | |
| **Decision:** |  | | | |
| **Appendices:** |  | | | |
| **Background documents:** | PGD minutes | | | |
| **Date:** |  |  | | |

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Consultation with other officers** | | | | |
| Finance | Yes | ??? | ??? | |
| Legal | No | N/A | N/A | |
| HR | No | N/A | N/A | |
| Climate Change | No | N/A | N/A | |
| Equality Impact Assessment | Yes | ??? | Tammy Tatman | |
| 1. **Pre-consultation reports**   Is there a need to consult on the proposals? | | | No | |
| **Vision outcomes**  Please identify the appropriate Vision outcome(s) that this report relates or contributes to by putting a cross in the relevant box. | | | 1. Start Well |  |
| 2. Live Well |  |
| 3. Age Well |  |
| 4. Prosperous |  |
| 5. Clean and Green | X |
| 6. Strong and Distinctive |  |

**1.0 INTRODUCTION & BACKGROUND**

1.1 The winter service provision within Bolton Council is provided by the Highways & Engineering Division, Directorate of Place Services. It is planned to ensure that adequate resources are available during the winter period to respond to adverse weather conditions in accordance with national best practise.

1.2 As Highway Authority, the Council has the responsibility for providing a degree of winter service provision. The Highways Act 1980 Section 41(1A) imposes a duty on a highway authority ‘to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, that safe passage along a highway is not endangered by ice and snow’. Section 150 of the highways Act 1980 imposes a duty upon authorities to remove any obstruction of the highway resulting from “accumulation of snow or from falling down of banks on the side of the highway, or from any other cause”.

1.3 In addition, the Traffic Management Act 2004 placed a network management duty on all local traffic authorities in England. It requires authorities to do all that is reasonably practicable to manage the network effectively to keep traffic moving.

1.4 The Council aims to provide a winter service which, insofar as is reasonably practicable, will permit safe movement of traffic and minimise delays and accidents directly attributable to adverse weather conditions, having regard to financial constraints and legal requirements. However, it is important to note that this does not create an absolute duty on the Council to remove ice and snow from all council-owned roads and footways.

1.5 The council’s current treatment rationale within the Winter Service Policy states the precautionary salting network includes, classified roads; the majority of bus routes; major through routes between wards, and routes to emergency service premises. In addition, certain footways within Town Centres will be treated. When normal departmental services are suspended due to severe weather conditions, operational teams from across the department will be deployed to increase capacity to respond to treating footways.

**2.0 ISSUES**

2.1 The document: “Well-maintained Highways - Code of Practice for Maintenance Management”, and the Institute of Civil Engineers’ publication “Design and Practice Guides - Highway Winter Maintenance”, provide detailed professional guidance in the delivery and management of winter services. The guidance states that a risk-based approach should be utilised to define treatment routes for carriageways, cycle routes and footways for pre-treatment and snow conditions, based on the general maintenance hierarchy but adapted to take account factors identified within this code.

2.2 Subsequently, following national guidance and best practice, in 2020, the council initiated a full risk assessment of the entire highway network within the borough. The findings of this assessment were presented at two Policy Development Group (PDG) meetings on 8th October 2020 and 7th July 2021, to discuss and comment on the risk-based approach for developing future treatment routes.

**3.0 PROPOSAL FOR CHANGE**

3.1 Following discussions with the PDG, it is proposed to adopt a delivery framework which defines the highway network into different risk categories, based on the general maintenance hierarchy and other factors which may be pertinent within the winter season. The highway risk categories provide the council with the framework to agree a treatment network based on its risk appetite, financial and resource constraints. These routes will influence the council’s Winter Service Policy in the near future.

3.2 It is also important to consider a range of other important factors with regards to the treatment of the network. These are:

* Response and treatment times for all carriageways
* Allocation of plant, vehicles, equipment, and materials to routes
* Location and maintenance of salt bins
* Special sites or features
* Consistency with neighbouring authorities

Prioritising our Highways – A risk-based approach

3.3 It is beyond the resources of the council to treat the entire highway network in winter conditions and therefore the prioritisation of routes must take place. A risk-based approach has been investigated, where every road owned by the council, has been assessed and placed within a specific category.

3.4 It is important to note that classifying highways into risk categories is complex and not an exact science, therefore in some cases a balanced approach will be needed.

3.5 Given the council’s current financial and resource challenges and the desire to be consistent with neighbouring authorities, five risk categories of highway which should be treated is proposed. Table 1 below outlines these categories.

Table 1 – Risk Categories

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Risk Level** | **Category Title** | **Category Description** |
| **1** | Resilient Network | Largest traffic volumes, major routes, and critical infrastructure. |
| **2** | Resilient Network and Classified Network | Largest traffic volumes, importance to the people, economy, and public transport. |
| **3** | Above plus bus routes and critical infrastructure on steep roads (>10%) | Likelihood of accidents increases on steep roads and importance of public transport |
| **4** | Above plus bus routes and critical infrastructure on steep roads (>10%) | Minor steep roads serving numerous properties. |
| **5** | Above plus remaining bus routes and access to critical infrastructure | Moderate traffic volumes, impacts on the economy, importance of public transport. Critical infrastructure includes hospital, transport hubs, industrial estates, links near schools |

3.6 If the need arises to implement the framework, Table 2 below highlights a hierarchy of treatment options

Table 2 – Treatment Options

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Hierarchy of Treatment Options** | **1** | **2** | **3** | **4** | **5** | **Approx. driven length of highway (km)** |
| Current Risk appetite | X | X | X | X | X | 700 |
| Medium Risk | X | X | X | X |  | 600 |
| High Risk | X | X | X |  |  | 500 |
| Very High Risk | X |  |  |  |  | 400 |

3.7 None of the options above include treatment of facilities for walking and cycling other than salting within the Town Centres. Should walking and cycling routes need to be considered in the future, additional resources would be required.

Salt Bins / Self Help

3.8 There are currently 533 salt bins located in the borough. To ensure a more risk based approach is adopted, it is proposed to develop a risk-based scoring matrix to ensure a consistent installation of salt bins. Risk categories for salt bin installation will be developed to facilitate any changes to future network treatment regimes. The risk-based scoring matrix and categories will be included within the Winter Service Policy when new treatment routes have been defined.

**4.0 IMPACTS AND IMPLICATIONS**

**Financial**

4.1 At this stage, there are no financial implications regarding the introduction of a risk based framework. Financial implications will arise out of subsequent decisions on treatment options decided using the new risk matrix based approach.  Those subsequent decisions will need to be taken with due regard to financial constraints at that time.

**Legal**

4.2 At this stage, there are no legal implications regarding the introduction of a risk based framework.

**HR**

4.3 At this stage, there are no staffing implications regarding the introduction of a risk based framework.

**Climate Change**

4.4 At this stage, there are no climate change implications regarding the introduction of a risk based framework.

**5.0 EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT (EIA)**

5.1 Under the Equality Act 2010, the council has a general duty to have due regard to the need to:

* **eliminate unlawful discrimination**, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct prohibited by the Act;
* **advance equality of opportunity** between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it; and
* **foster good relations** between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it.

5.2 At this stage it is not anticipated that the proposals will have a disproportionate impact on any of Bolton’s diversity groups. The proposals focus on the adoption of a risk based highway gritting framework, which will influence the Winter Service Plan, when refreshed. This Plan will address any equality impact at that point in time.

**6.0 CONSULTATION**

6.1 There is no internal or external consultation required at this stage.

**7.0 VISION 2030**

7.1 Within the Vision 2030 Strategy, it states that the council will strive to deliver services more efficiently, through service improvement, redesign, recommissioning and decommissioning, based on evidence of impact. In addition, delivering frontline services in an environmentally sustainable manner is at the forefront of service plans. The proposals within this report contribute to these strategic council aims.

**8.0 RECOMMENDATIONS**

8.1 The Executive Cabinet Member is recommended to:

* Approve the risk-based highway network winter gritting matrix for future delivery