

Melton Borough Council - Severe Weather Procedure

Background

Severe weather conditions have become more prevalent during the winter period in recent years. Instances of snow, ice and sub-zero temperatures affect public safety and the economy in terms of the safe movement of vehicles and pedestrians.

Leicestershire County Council, as the Highway Authority, has a statutory duty to provide a winter service on all highways maintainable at public expense within the County except for motorways and trunk roads. The service provided by the County Council covers the precautionary salting and snow clearance of the network. The precautionary salting network is set out in the County Council's leaflet 'Leicestershire Winter Salting Routes'. Broadly, the network consists of A, some B, and some C class roads, commuter and major bus routes and as far as is reasonably practicable one route into all villages.

Leicestershire County Council undertakes precautionary salting of its County roads whenever freezing conditions or snow are forecast. The County Council will only salt additional routes during prolonged periods of sub-zero conditions and only then if resources allow without adversely affecting the treatment of priority routes. Resources are concentrated initially on strategic routes with routes of lesser importance being cleared subsequently.

A Severe Weather Procedure for Melton Borough Council

Responding to severe weather puts considerable strain on public services. The brunt of this strain falls on Leicestershire County Council because of their statutory duties. However, the District Council has, historically, undertaken its own snow clearance and salting on land that it is responsible for when resources permit. More recently the impact of severe weather has increased as has the call for local authorities to do all they can to minimise the impact.

The current budgetary pressures being experienced in the public sector means that a practical and efficient response to severe weather is needed. There is an opportunity to formalise arrangements between the District and County Council and other agencies to improve joint working in future. For example, clarification of responsibilities for snow clearance and salting, including for the payment of certain services is needed.

Resources: The Borough Council is able to re-deploy staff who are prevented from being able to carry out their normal duties due to bad weather and to utilise them as part of the winter maintenance team on such occasions. This would include the Grounds Maintenance Team which is prevented from carrying out their normal programmed duties. There is also an opportunity to redeploy the Street Cleaning Team from Verdant, the Councils Waste Contractors, who clean the market place in Melton Mowbray but similarly are prevented from doing so in severe weather conditions.

The re-deployment of staff can be undertaken within existing budgets. However, they will need materials and equipment to undertake salting and snow clearance. All supplies of grit / salt for use on County highway responsible areas would be provided by Leicestershire County Council. The Borough Council will provide spreading equipment and bins for the storage of grit/salt to be used on Council land.

Locations for snow clearance and salting: The Borough Council will undertake snow clearance and salting on land and property within its ownership as well as supplement the hierarchy of locations that are the responsibility of the County Council. The snow clearance and salting location priorities which are identified as benefiting the most from supplementary treatment are prioritised and detailed in a plan (attached as Appendix A).

The snow clearance and salting routes identified reflect the responsibilities of each party with the Borough Council as a landowner and public service provider. As a consequence, the first priority for Melton Borough Council will be to treat land within the ownership of the Borough Council, with a focus on that to which there is public access. Maintaining the market place and key linkages to public sites in the town centre will be the second priority. Thirdly, the Borough Council will supplement the County Councils hierarchy of salting routes where resources permit and it is practical to do so.

When to activate the Severe Weather Policy: Generally, the salting of public areas at times of severe weather can be in anticipation of the weather event (pre-treatment) or after the event (post-treatment – including snow clearance).

Leicestershire County Council pre-treat the hierarchy of networks they have established. In order to do this they maintain a weather monitoring resource to determine when to take action.

The Borough Council will attempt to re-deploy resources in order to pre-treat when:

- the County Council notify us of an anticipated weather event;
- the Grounds Maintenance and Street Cleaning Teams are unable to undertake their normal duties; and
- Salt and equipment are available for the re-deployed staff to utilise.

The Borough Council will re-deploy resources in order to post-treat when:

- the Grounds Maintenance and Street Cleaning Teams are unable to undertake their normal duties; and
- Salt and equipment are available for the re-deployed staff to utilise.

It should be noted that the Council does not guarantee that at any given time the highway will be free of ice or snow, even following treatment.

Business Continuity

There may be instances of severe weather that affect the Council's ability to deliver its services in a normal manner, especially if conditions extend over a longer period. In these circumstances the Council will trigger its business continuity arrangements and seek to prioritise services. This can lead to the redeployment of staff to areas outside their normal roles. Decisions of this nature are influenced by the availability of staff and resources and the type and nature of the issues that present themselves during an incident.

The Severe Weather Policy intends to divert the environmental maintenance team and street cleaning contractor staff to gritting of the areas defined. However, there is

no intention that the Severe Weather Policy defines a specific corporate wide response across all service areas and in fact business continuity arrangements will maintain their flexible and responsive character. For further information on these arrangements, please refer to the Business Continuity Plan.

Emergency planning

There may be instances when the impact of severe weather is so great or there is another emergency that the Borough Council and its partners who make up the Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland Local Resilience Forum enter into contingency planning to deal with the resulting threats. The Council may suspend some of our normal services at such times and this could include our ability to implement the severe weather policy for Melton.

Signposting to other services

The services provided by Leicestershire County Council are set out in their Highway Maintenance Policy and Strategy. This includes the promotion of snow wardens in the rural areas and the circumstances and mechanisms for the procurement and supply of gritting bins and the supply of salt/grit for use in gritting bins.

Snow wardens can provide additional winter maintenance services and information on local weather conditions, especially in rural areas.

Leicestershire County Council already works with local parish councils to identify snow wardens. The functions of a snow warden during severe weather conditions is :

- (a) To provide information to the County Council on the local situation during the period of severe weather conditions;
- (b) To consult with the County Council on local needs and determine jointly what local action to take, if necessary, to supplement the operations of the County Council;
- (c) To organise that action utilising the local resources agreed with the County Council.

Salt bins are provided by the County Council in village and urban areas provided that:

- (a) the route is not on a precautionary salting route;
- (b) the location of the bin is first agreed with the County Council;
- (c) the cost of the salt bin is met, in parish towns by the local parish council or in non-parished towns by the District or Borough council