

LONDON BOROUGH OF MERTON



WINTER SERVICE

OPERATIONAL POLICY AND PLAN  
2017 – 2018

**ENVIRONMENTAL & REGENERATION DEPARTMENT**  
**WINTER SERVICE OPERATIONAL PLAN 2017 TO 2018**

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# **1. INTRODUCTION**

## **1.1 Objectives of the plan and legislative context**

This London Borough of Merton Winter Service Operational Plan sets out how the Council provides its service to ensure safe and functional operability of its highway network during periods when it is or may be affected by ice and/or snow. The Highways Act 1980 as amended in 2003 places a duty on highway authorities to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, that safe passage along a highway is not endangered by snow or ice.

The Winter Service in Merton is consistent with the requirements of “Well-Managed Highway Infrastructure- A Code of Practice” published in September 2016, specifically Part B.7. The Operational Plan also draws upon the National Winter Service Research Group (NWSRG). Practical Guide for Winter Service.

The Winter Service is provided by the Future Merton Infrastructure Division of the Environment and Regeneration Department on behalf of Merton Council. This plan aims to ensure adequate resources are available to respond to adverse conditions affecting public highways as a result of the winter climate.

The Winter Service exists specifically and exclusively to ensure safe operability of the highway network, and therefore other Council services which may be affected by snow and/or ice (other than on the highway) should have in place their own arrangements for business continuity which do not rely on resources that are part of the Winter Service.

## **1.2 The Designated Winter Period**

The Designated Winter Period commences on the last Monday of October and ends on the first Sunday of April. During this Period designated personnel are on standby to carry out salting and other Winter Service operations, and all dedicated vehicles and equipment are available for use.

This Plan also specifies contingency arrangements for Winter Service operations should adverse weather conditions occur outside the Designated Winter Period.

## **1.3 Geography and Climatic Conditions Affecting Merton**

Merton’s area is 3796 Ha. Its highway network is 363 km in length (34 km principal roads, 38 km other classified roads and 291 km minor roads). There are also 7.5 km of roads maintained by Transport for London.

Merton’s climate reflects its Outer London location and as such is subject to periods of below freezing temperatures and occasional falls of snow during winter. Adverse and extreme weather conditions rarely last for long periods. This Plan provides resources that reflect these climatic conditions, taking into account the longer and more adverse weather conditions that occurred in past years.

## **2. LEGISLATION**

### **2.1 Legislation**

The first part of Section 41 of the Highways Act 1980 (as amended on 31 October 2003) reads:

“a) The authority who are for the time being the highway authority for a highway maintainable at the public expense are under a duty, subject to subsections (2) and (3) below, to maintain the highway.

b) (1) In particular, a highway authority is under a duty to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, that safe passage along a highway is not endangered by snow or ice.”

This is not an absolute duty, given the qualification of “reasonable practicability”. Section 150 of the Highways Act 1980 still imposes a duty upon authorities to remove any obstruction of the highway resulting from “accumulation of snow or from the falling down of banks on the side of the highway, or from any other cause”.

In addition, the Traffic Management Act 2004 places 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. In meeting the duty, authorities should establish contingency plans for dealing promptly and effectively with unplanned events, such as unforeseen weather conditions, as far as is reasonably practicable.

The legislative background lays down clear duties on highway authorities in terms of safety and traffic movement, and recognizes, through the phrase “as far as is reasonably practicable” that authorities face resource constraints including financial. In addition, a service based on spreading salt / physically clearing snow, takes time to provide. Therefore it is inevitable that under adverse winter conditions some roads will remain affected by ice / snow and budgets need to reflect a service prioritized by likelihood of occurrence / impact of occurrence.

## **3. WINTER SERVICE POLICY STATEMENT**

### **3.1 Statement of Service.**

The Council aims to provide a Winter Service which will, as far as is reasonably practicable, ensure the safe movement of all highway users in the borough and keep delays and accidents caused by adverse weather to a minimum.

### **3.2 Winter Service Plan.**

The means by which the policy standards set out herein will be achieved are specified in detail in the Winter Service Plan.

### **3.3 Approach & Strategy.**

The general approach and strategy recommended by the Code of Practice for Highways (“Well-Managed Highways”), is accepted as an appropriate basis for the delivery of Winter Service in the borough and

all standards and procedures are generally in accord with the principles set out in that Code.

### **3.4 Personnel.**

Identified Winter Emergency Duty Officers (WEO) will be on duty 24 hours a day during the Designated Winter Period to monitor weather forecast information and local conditions and to instruct Service Providers on the level of response, if any, required to deal with the impending conditions. All Winter Service operations will be coordinated and instructed by the WEO in consultation, when necessary, with the Head of Future Merton, the Head of Sustainable Communities and the Waste and Infrastructure Manager.

### **3.5 Weather Information.**

The London Boroughs Winter Weather Forecast Service provided by the Met Office will be monitored daily by the Winter Emergency Officer, who will also, if necessary, consult directly with the Met Office forecasters to clarify specific local conditions at any time.

### **3.6 Carriageway Primary & Secondary Road Network.**

The priority road network (known as the Primary Road Network) for salting will comprise all classified roads, bus routes and other important local traffic routes which, because of the volume of use and/or physical characteristics justify priority treatment. The secondary road network for salting will comprise local roads which provide access to specific local facilities such as schools and Day Centres. The Primary Road Network will be pre-salted first to prevent, as far as practicable, the formation of ice or the settlement of snow and post-salted as necessary to remove any ice or snow which has formed on the surface. The target treatment time for precautionary salting of this network will be 1 hour to mobilise and 2 hours to treat. The secondary network will be pre-salted where widespread ice or snow is forecast and post-salted as necessary to remove any ice or snow which has formed on the surface. The target treatment time for precautionary salting of this network will be 3 hours after completion of the Primary Road Network.

Requests for ad hoc treatments to roads that do not appear on the Primary or Secondary road networks will be declined unless an emergency situation applies.

### **3.7 Footway & Cycleway Network.**

Merton has three footway treatment networks:- the precautionary footway network, day 1 snow clearance network and day 2 snow clearance network (as two days are required to cover all such footways). Generally, the precautionary network will be treated when snow or severe ice lasting more than 24 hours is forecast. The aim will be to treat all day 1 footway routes within 24 hours of snow settling. Day 2 footway route, will be treated as soon as practicable after completion of day 1 footway routes and the aim will be to complete within 48 hours of snow settling, resources permitting.

Requests for ad hoc treatments to footways that do not appear on the precautionary, day 1 or day 2 networks will be declined unless an emergency situation applies.

As a policy cycleways will not be treated separately from the road or footway prioritisation, due to it being operationally very difficult to send a gritter down such routes. It could also mislead people into thinking that when part of a cycle route had been treated as part of the carriageway gritting that the whole cycle way has been treated. The question on whether it is sensible to encourage the riding of a bicycle in such weather also is of concern. This policy will be reviewed if new methods of treating such routes become available.

### **3.8 Resilience Arrangements.**

Merton has a Resilience Network of carriageways and footways which has been identified in our Winter Plan.

### **3.9 Co-Ordination with Other Local Authorities**

During the winter months details of the proposed action for Merton will be sent by email to all neighbouring highway authorities. Whilst Winter Service information regarding treatments is openly shared between neighbouring authorities, LBMerton will not allow its resources to be used on neighbouring highways without prior agreement.

### **3.10 Budgets.**

The annual budget for Winter Service will be set at a level which meets the fixed contractual costs of setting up and maintaining the Winter Service operation together with provision for a winter of average severity. Should, during the course of the winter season additional funds be required due to weather conditions leading to these budgetary provisions being exceeded, these additional funds will be sought from the Council's central contingencies.

### **3.11 Public Highway.**

The Winter Service exists specifically and exclusively to ensure safe operability of the highway network, and therefore other Council services which may be affected by snow and/or ice (other than on the highway) should have in place their own arrangements for business continuity which do not rely on resources that are part of the Winter Service.

### **3.12 Winter Service Operational Plan**

A winter service operation plan setting out how these policy objectives are to be achieved will be reviewed annually in consultation with various stakeholders to ensure that consideration can be given to changing circumstances which might affect the performance of the winter service.

### **3.13 Review Procedures.**

The Council's Winter Service Plan (including this Policy Statement) will be reviewed at the end of the Designated Winter Period to enable the effectiveness of the Service to be assessed and necessary changes in

the Policy Statement and operational specification to be identified and incorporated within the Winter Service Plan for ongoing winter seasons.