

**RICHMOND &
WANDSWORTH
BETTER
SERVICE
PARTNERSHIP**



RICHMOND AND WANDSWORTH BETTER SERVICE PARTNERSHIP

WINTER SERVICE PLAN 2025-2026

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1. INTRODUCTION

Richmond and Wandsworth Council have statutory duties to ensure that snow and ice does not prevent safe travel within the boroughs.

Section 41 of the Highways Act (1980) outlines the council's duty to maintain the highways, including ensuring that safe passage along a highway is not endangered by snow or ice. Section 150 of the Highways Act (1980) imposes a duty upon councils to remove any obstruction of the highway resulting from accumulation of snow. The Traffic Management Act 2004 places a duty on local authorities to do all that is reasonably practicable to manage the network effectively and reduce traffic congestion, including maintaining the public highway so as to provide an appropriate level of service.

The Winter Service Plan for Richmond and Wandsworth is based on the guidelines detailed in the Code of Practice 'Delivering Best Value in Highway Maintenance' and is broadly aligned with the 'Well Maintained Highway: Code of Practice for Highway Maintenance Management'.

The objectives of this Winter Service Plan are as follows:

- To ensure vehicles and pedestrians using priority routes in the borough can travel as freely and safely as is reasonably practicable
- To minimise delays, accidents or damage from snow or ice, where reasonably practicable.
- To ensure Winter Service Operations are undertaken as efficiently as possible, ensuring a responsive and well co-ordinated service.
- To satisfy the statutory requirements of relevant legislation.

The legislation uses the phrase "as far as is reasonably practicable"; recognising that it is not realistic to treat every carriageway, footway and cycle path within the boroughs. This Winter Service Plan outlines a prioritised approach which is used to decide which routes are to be treated, to what degree, in different conditions. In the case of snow and/or ice there will inevitably be routes which remain untreated.

It should be noted that in the event of persistent snowfall over a sustained period, repeat treatments of the priority routes may be necessary. This could result in a delay in the treatment of some lower priority routes.

The winter service period will run for four months from 1st November 2025 to 31st March 2026.

2. ROUTE PLANNING AND PRIORITISATION

The boroughs' road network has been assessed and sub-divided into Priority Carriageway Routes and Secondary Carriageway Routes. Priority Carriageway Routes are roads which, in the main, are bus routes, main feeder roads, known traffic rat-runs, hills/ inclines and known cold spots.

Due to the narrow nature of some residential roads, coupled with heavy on-street parking, it is not possible to use mechanised gritting on all roads. Those roads that have been assessed as unsuitable for mechanised gritting machines have been included on hand-grit routes.

Gritting is carried out at two stages. 'Precautionary Salting' aims to prevent ice from forming. 'Post salting' aims to melt / remove formed snow.

In times of heavy snow fall, the 'Precautionary Salting' will take priority over other forms of salting.

Precautionary Salting of Carriageways

Upon receipt of adverse weather forecast that the road network in the Borough is at risk from frost, ice, or snow, the priority carriageway routes will be pre-salted. This will take place later that day, generally taking place after rush hour so roads are clear and more salt remains in place overnight.

Upon receipt of a severe weather warning, pre-salting of secondary routes will be undertaken. Additional operational resources to those provided on weekly gritting standby duty, who will predominately attend to priority routes, will be provided to work on pre-salting of secondary routes in priority route order.

Due to practical difficulties, footways are not pre salted. Footways adjacent to carriageways will receive a degree of salting from the treatment of the carriageway.

Post salting of Carriageways

In the event of widespread ice and significant snow accumulations, post-salting of primary routes will take place. secondary routes will be undertaken only when priority routes have already been salted and are passable for traffic.

Should significant and prolonged snow accumulations be experienced, then 24-hour working can be undertaken on a shift basis to ensure priority road network is kept open by repeated salting applications.

Some minor roads, such as cul-de-sacs and particularly narrow streets subject to heavy on-street parking cannot be treated by mechanised spreader vehicles.

Post salting of Footways

Primary Walking Routes will be treated first, these include town centres, high streets and high use pedestrian areas. Once primary walking routes have been cleared and are passable, secondary Walking Routes will be treated. Icy / slippery footways outside of the above criteria will not be treated.

Pan London Resilience

The London Resilience Forum have developed a plan for the gritting of Priority roads and Bus routes in the event that London's rock salt reserves are severely depleted and further supplies cannot be sourced during the Winter Service period.

The London Boroughs of Richmond and Wandsworth have drawn up a consistent road resilience network across the borough, which includes the minimum key roads that authorities need to keep open in severe winter weather. This resilience plan will ensure that a minimum network would be maintained even in exceptional severe weather conditions and/or when resources are scarce.

3. ORGANISATION AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The Operational Services division of the Department of Environment and Community Services (ECS) is the Department's Maintenance Contractor and is contracted to provide the Council's Winter Service.

They will be supported by Senior Management Staff who will consider if and when gritting is required. That decision will be based on the latest Met Desk forecasts, local knowledge of known cold spots, local road conditions, and the existence of residual salt from any recent gritting operations.

The on call supervisors are responsible for the out of hours gritting. During day time working hours the responsibility is passed over to Highways to manage. There will always be a rota of Winter Standby Supervisors and Operational Staff available on a weekly basis over the Standby period.

The duty Winter Standby Supervisor is responsible for evaluating weather forecasts on a daily basis during their operational standby period. In the event of doubt over a predicted weather forecast, they will be responsible for seeking clarification from the Met Desk forecaster, and/or Senior Management as required.

The duty Winter Standby Supervisor is responsible for taking decisions and initiating appropriate responses to prevailing or forecast weather situations during their period of standby duty. Their duties include analysing forecast data, liaising with the forecast provider and producing the daily winter maintenance action plan and gaining approval from the Executive Director; Environment & Community Services or the Head of Inspection & Enforcement, for initiating a gritting procedure.

The duty Winter Standby Supervisor will ensure that the appointed staff in their areas are aware of and understand the strategies and priorities as stipulated. On receiving the approved daily winter action plan, they will ensure that the plan is correctly implemented. They will ensure, wherever practicable, that adequate resources are available to fully undertake the Council's Winter Service Policy.

Regular meetings will take place between Environment & Community Services and Senior Managers to monitor the Winter Service performance. Any decisions made during these meetings will be relayed to the duty Winter Standby Supervisor for implementation. Action points from these meetings will be recorded.

In the event of prolonged snowfall leading to significant accumulations of snow, coupled with freezing conditions, street cleansing operations will be suspended to enable resources and equipment to be deployed to assist Operational Services personnel engaged on footway salting and snow clearance. The street cleansing contractor will also be instructed to pay particular regard to footway gritting and snow clearing in preparation for the following days refuse collection.

The duty Winter Standby Supervisor is responsible for contacting those staff on the weekly standby roster, to report for gritting duties once an adverse forecast has been received.

Staff will be issued with designated gritting routes and instructed on the specified rate of salt spread to deal with prevailing weather conditions. All crews will have work mobile telephones to enable them to be in constant communication with base control while undertaking gritting duties.

All gritting duties undertaken will be recorded and a detailed log of events will be maintained by the duty Winter Standby Supervisor of actions taken.

Additional experienced Staff, drawn from Operational Services, will be available in the event of unavailability of standby staff or protracted operations. They will be used during severe weather conditions, which necessitate continuous 24-hour gritting operations.

Prior to the commencement of each gritting season, it will be the responsibility of the term Engineering Contractor to advise on any issues affecting gritting routes, so that they may be updated with the changes. This will take account of Traffic Management Scheme changes, legislation changes and industry best practice techniques.

4. WEATHER FORECASTS

Because of the varied meteorological conditions experienced in the London region, the Met Office has identified areas on a domain basis. There are a range of domains across the two boroughs which will be taken into account. Climatic Conditions in the Borough are also influenced by 'The Urban Heat Island Effect', which will also be taken into account.

Met Desk' is the forecast provider used by the councils. This includes a web-based weather forecast system providing the facility to obtain detailed, up to the minute, weather conditions for the borough.

The duty Winter Standby Supervisor will be responsible for maintaining detailed Met Desk weather forecast reports of prevailing road conditions taken before and during gritting operations.

It will be the duty Winter Standby Supervisor's responsibility to interpret Weather Forecast information along with local knowledge of cold spots in the Borough, prevailing salt applications to Borough roads, and taking into account "The Urban Heat Effect" in deciding the appropriate action to be undertaken. Senior Management will always be available to assist the duty Officers in agreeing the action to be undertaken.

Each day when snow is forecast, the Director of Highway Operations and Street Scene will meet with Senior Managers, to discuss and plan the gritting and snow clearing strategy for the following 24 hours. Delegation will occur should the director be on annual leave.

When unexpected weather changes occur out of hours - such as sleet/snow starting to fall, the Joint Control Centre (JCC) will contact the Duty Winter Standby Supervisor to appraise them on the current situation.

When the duty Winter Standby Supervisor has made a decision to commence gritting, the time, route and rate of spread of salt will be communicated to TfL, and the three adjoining Boroughs (Lambeth, Merton, and Richmond-upon-Thames). Notification should also be received by the council from the afore-mentioned Agencies of their gritting operations in order that traffic moving between Boroughs are not travelling on untreated strategic roads and experiencing significant differences in road conditions due to ice-snow accumulations.

5. PLANT, EQUIPMENT AND DEPOTS

Annual Servicing

Prior to the commencement of the Winter Service period in October, all plant and equipment will be fully serviced to ensure full operational capability. To ensure effective operation of salt spreading by gritting machines, the Transport and Stores Manager shall arrange for spreading equipment to be tested and calibrated in accord with appropriate British Standard.

Because of the extremely corrosive nature of rock salt, gritting machines are not to be left loaded following cessation of gritting operations. All plant and equipment used on gritting operations will be washed down at the earliest opportunity following cessation of gritting operations.

Breakdowns – Wandsworth

The Transport and Stores Manager shall provide a suitable Workshop Technician, available on a 24-hour standby roster, to attend to breakdowns promptly. All plant and equipment designated for gritting operations to be accorded priority repair status during the 21-week Winter Gritting Season.

Breakdowns – Richmond

In the event of a breakdown during normal working hours contact Econ Engineering Ltd Service Engineers or DAF AID.

In the event of a tyre fault contact the Council's nominated contractor should be contacted. If the problem is associated with the spreader equipment then Econ Engineering Ltd Service Engineers should be called out.

Salt

The salt to be used on highways during winter is a naturally occurring rock salt, and shall be to the requirements of BS3247 'Salt for Spreading – Coarse Rock Salt'.

Salt will be stored in the Council's purpose-built Salt Barn location. It will be the responsibility of the Operational Services Stores Manager to maintain adequate stock levels at all times to meet gritting requirements.

Winter conditions present a variety of variables, which makes it difficult to define exact treatments and salt applications. Spread rates will be decided upon by duty supervisor based upon the latest information available at the time along with local knowledge.

Rock salt will not instantaneously remove snow or ice. Where hard packed snow and ice is encountered, repeated applications of salt up to 40 gms/m² by successive salt spreads may be required. The action of traffic movement is essential for salting to be effective by breaking down the salt granules to form a saline solution which melts the ice. It should be noted that

at temperatures below - 5o centigrade, rock salt becomes less effective a de-icing agent, the greater the temperature falls below that point.

Rock Salt is highly corrosive and can be ecologically damaging to the environment, especially roadside trees. The control of gritting and usage of rock salt needs to be monitored and balanced against its undoubted de-icing qualities against over- usage resulting in harmful damage to street trees.

Salt Bins

Salt/Grit bins are a self-help facility and will be placed in strategic locations where difficulties are likely to be experienced. They will be positioned prior to the start of the Winter Service Period and are to be removed at the end of that time. This will enable local residents or passing motorists to treat the carriageway and footway within the locality.

Gritting Of Depots

Highways Operations and Street Scene will grit the yards of operational depots during low temperatures as part of winter gritting. This will include all sections of the depot and pedestrian walkways as required. As gritting teams will be on site they can assess the state of the depot carriageways and walkways and grit appropriately

Snow Removal

In cases of snow settling within the depots, gritting teams will clear the snow as required, and on a prioritised basis. Additional support will be coordinated if required

6. HEALTH AND SAFETY

All staff involved in Winter Service duties, regardless of experience, will receive training and instruction prior to commencement of the Winter Service Period, to ensure effective operation. This will cover effective decision making, operational procedures, guidance and tuition in the safe operation of equipment as appropriate.

All operational gritting staff must undergo training prior to operating all vehicles to ensure they are fully aware of the vehicles operations and systems. Appropriate safety equipment and PPE including high visibility and weather resistant clothing will be made readily available to all those undertaking gritting operations.

Every person engaged in the Winter Service must comply with Operational Services Safety Provisions & Safe Working Codes of Practice whilst undertaking winter maintenance operation and all winter service operations will be covered by appropriate risk assessments.