Parks & Leisure

Parks and Cemeteries Winter Maintenance 2019/20 Updated September 2019

Severe Weather Conditions Guidance

1.0 Scope & Purpose

This document is intended to provide guidance around operational service delivery within parks, open spaces and cemeteries during periods of severe weather. The predominant service impacts include conditions such as: snow, ice, low temperatures, high winds and storm events plus, to a lesser extent, heavy and persistent rain leading to localised flooding.

2.0 Introduction

The London Borough of Southwark (Southwark) has a hierarchical approach to snow clearance and/or salting hard surfaces across multiple asset groups with priority being given to main roads. The overall policy approach and supporting document can be viewed at www.southwark.gov.uk/street-care/gritting.

The corporate approach to flood risk is available at www.southwark.gov.uk/environment/flood-risk-management.

3.0 Parks & Open Spaces

It is recognised that access to parks and open spaces is important to local residents for leisure and recreational purposes. Previous experience has identified that schools may close during heavy or prolonged snow and ice conditions. In such circumstances, parks often become a destination of

choice for leisure purposes. All efforts will be made to ensure that parks remain open and accessible for public use during periods of inclement weather. As such, there is an increased emphasis on customers (users of parks and open spaces) to assess the risks of travelling through parks and/or using the park facilities prior to entry.

Southwark implements a salting programme on the public highway. Customers should consider the option to travel around the park, as opposed to passing through, should always be considered in the first instance.

This season there will be **no salting or gritting carried out in parks and open spaces** across Southwark. This is in line with the services provided by many other Local Authorities and is more environmentally friendly. Accordingly, individual members of the public who choose to use parks and open spaces during periods of inclement weather do so at their own risk.

3.1 Duty of Care

As an organisation, Southwark has a Duty of Care to park users, directly- employed staff and maintenance contractors. In order to mitigate risks, we have taken the following actions.

4.0 Risk Mitigation

The following actions are undertaken to mitigate risk.

4.1 Annual Review

The winter service plan for parks and open spaces is reviewed each year (Sept – Nov) in advance of the winter period and takes account of Southwark's broader corporate approach, industry best practice, lessons learnt from previous years, environmental considerations and operational changes that may have occurred during the intervening period. This document is made available through the Southwark web site, circulated to friends groups and key stakeholders, together with targeted communications messages for public information.

4.2 Advice to the public (Risk awareness)

Members of the public wishing to use parks and open spaces when snow and/or icy conditions or high winds prevail are advised to exercise their own judgement regarding the associated risks before entering a park or open space. This is particularly important if they are accompanied by or responsible for children or vulnerable persons during their visit to the park. Visitors should be mindful that they have a responsibility for their own health and safety and also to ensure that their actions don't put others at risk.

4.3 Signage

Risk awareness information is also available to view in park notice boards and main park entrances. This **does not** extend to all park entrances or sites without boundary fences or places to attach notices.

4.4 Corporate Communications

The advice in this document is available via the Southwark website, and periodically communicated through corporate communications.

4.5 Stakeholder Engagement

Operational issues, including winter service arrangements, form part of ongoing discussions with and updates to friends groups and operators of facilities and services in parks and open spaces.

4.6 Weather Forecasts & Met Office Warnings

Data received for the London Area will be used to inform operational managerial decisions. The Parks and Leisure service will work and communicate as proactively as reasonably practicable to minimise the impacts of adverse weather conditions on the public's enjoyment of our parks.

Members of the public are advised to check the weather forecast when initially planning their journey and again prior to leaving home.

5.0 Park Opening & Closing

During periods of inclement weather normal open and closing times may vary. The major parks and main entrances will receive priority for unlocking (where parks are locked at night). Accordingly, some sites may be opened later than usual due to the weather conditions. In severe conditions the locking and unlocking of sites may be suspended for limited periods where access to sites is inhibited or the availability of staff restricts service provision.

5.1 Extreme Weather Conditions

Where conditions are considered severe, parks and open spaces where traffic is normally permitted may be closed to vehicular traffic. This may be extended to the closure of entire parks and/or limited to particular areas within parks. The Parks and Leisure management team will make this decision and communicate accordingly.

6.0 High winds & Storm Events

During high winds and storm events there is an increased risk of damage to persons or property from falling and flying debris. The risk of tree failure is a specific concern. There is also an increased risk of slips and trips with regard to debris on the ground, risk of being blown off balance and falling over. Customers who wish to access or use the parks and open spaces are advised to assess the risks prior to entry, in accordance with the risk awareness considerations highlighted in section 4 above.

In severe circumstances, the Parks and Leisure management team may choose to close parks and open spaces, or areas within sites at short notice to aid clear-up operations.

7.0 Cycling

Cyclists who wish to access or use the parks and open spaces for leisure or commuting purposes are advised to assess the risks prior to entry, in accordance with the risk awareness considerations in section 4 above. **Designated Cycle routes through parks will remain untreated.** Please consider an alternative route or mode of transport.

8.0 Cemeteries

Cemeteries & crematoria provide a critical public service. It is essential they remain open for ongoing access and use despite the whether conditions. Accordingly, a salting programme will be in place in periods of snow and ice. Operatives will apply salt as required to limit the impacts of snow and ice on main drives, entrances, steep gradients and frost- susceptible footpaths.

In addition, Cemetery staff will review conditions within their sites and assist in salt application where required to minimise disruption to planned services.

9.0 Exemptions

Salting will be considered for a temporary period to facilitate access to significant events in parks or in other unforeseen circumstances.

10. Document Distribution

This document will be available on the Southwark website and has been distributed internally to all officers relevant to the delivery of the parks winter service.