

Bath & North East Somerset Council

MEETING:	Cabinet	
MEETING DATE:	14 September 2011	EXECUTIVE FORWARD PLAN REFERENCE:
		E 2276
TITLE:	Winter Service Policy	
WARD:	All	
AN OPEN PUBLIC ITEM		
List of attachments to this report: Appendix 1 – Winter Service Policy		

1 THE ISSUE

1.1 The Council's severe winter weather arrangements have evolved over many years. The severe weather in the last two winters has resulted in a significant increase in demand for services and an increased public expectation on the Council. Cabinet is asked to formally approve the Highways Team's Winter Service policy

2 RECOMMENDATION

The Cabinet agrees that:

2.1 The Winter Service Policy (Appendix1) is approved as the Highway Authority's policy for winter maintenance in Bath and North East Somerset.

2.2 The Cabinet receives a separate report on the on the outcome of the Community Snow Warden Pilot scheme following Winter 2011.

3 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1 The current operational winter maintenance budget provides for an average British winter. In the event of a heavy snowfall or prolonged icy conditions the service budget will overspend, and may require additional financial support from the Council's Revenue Budget Contingency.
- 3.2 The operational service has reached its capacity and any increase in standards above those in the Policy will require a significant investment in additional salt storage facilities, the purchase of additional gritters and an increased number of operatives to deliver the service. Funding would need to be identified by re-appraising existing Council priorities.
- 3.3 Any reduction to the level of service could result in the Council receiving an increase in claims for damage and personal injury, resulting in an increase in compensation payments. Funding would need to be identified by re-appraising existing Council priorities.
- 3.4 The Community Snow Warden pilot scheme is still in development and costs are yet to be finalised, but are likely to be in the region of circa £20k. Funding for this has not yet been identified and a separate report will be presented to Cabinet, in due course, to finalise the scheme and the funding.

4 CORPORATE PRIORITIES

- *Addressing the causes and effects of Climate Change*
Recent winters have resulted in heavy snowfall incidents. This policy ensures that the Council has arrangements in place to respond to snowfalls and icy weather
- *Improving transport and the public realm*
The Council's gritting routes are based around key transport routes and roads used by public transport. The strategic gritting route network helps keep public transport moving

5 THE REPORT

- 5.1 Full details of the Council's winter maintenance arrangements are set out in Appendix 1. Details of gritting routes and grit bin positions are also published on the Council's web site.
- 5.2 The winter maintenance period runs from 1 October to 30 April. During this period the Council's contractor maintains an available pool of gritter drivers on a rota and the Council's Duty Engineer is available around the clock to make any decisions in relation to winter weather operations.
- 5.3 The Council pays for a specialist weather forecasting system that operates a 24 hours a day service and Officers also use live data from two weather stations to inform decision making on gritting operations.
- 5.4 Officers recognise that the topography across the district can be difficult during severe weather and therefore the Highway's team already pre-salts 38% of the road network when snow and ice is likely. This is well above the national average of 30%

- 5.5 Various improvements have already been undertaken as a result of the Winter Maintenance review completed in 2010. Changes included additional lengths of gritting added to the routes, a review of all grit bin requests and a number of additional bins being placed on the highway.
- 5.6 National salt supplies did run low and reached critical levels during the worst of the snowfall. The Council has increased its salt storage capacity from approximately 1300 tonnes (in Clutton Depot) by an additional 1000 tonnes by creating a salt storage area within Brayesdown Depot.
- 5.7 Officers have developed contingency plans and gritting route reductions that will be introduced in the event of a national salt shortage. These measures ensure the most critical routes remain open and protect essential services.
- 5.8 The Council plans to continue with the arrangement of employing a network of local farmers to assist with snow clearing operations.
- 5.9 The Council has developed arrangements that enable additional resources to be redeployed from other teams in Environmental Services to support Highways during snowfall conditions. This additional resource is used to clear snow and ice at busy transport interchanges, areas of high pedestrian use and other essential local facilities that communities rely upon.
- 5.10 It is proposed to trial a pilot scheme in winter 2011 using volunteer snow wardens to provide a community resource to help clear snow and ice in local communities. The Council will provide training, salt (depending on availability) and an appropriate spreader to enable locally prioritised areas of adopted public highway be cleared of snow and ice. The pilot scheme should enable local communities to ensure more footways are cleared of snow and ice.
- 5.11 Schools will be offered the opportunity, on a rechargeable basis, a small supply of salt before the onset of winter. This will be delivered by Highways to the school in small bags to enable 'self –help' during snowfall conditions

6 RISK MANAGEMENT

- 6.1 The report author and Lead Cabinet member have fully reviewed the risk assessment related to the issue and recommendations, in compliance with the Council's decision making risk management guidance.

7 EQUALITIES

- 7.1 A proportionate equalities impact assessment has been completed. It is not considered that the policy will impact negatively on equalities. The proposed pilot is likely to impact positively on age and socio economically disadvantaged groups.

8 RATIONALE

- 8.1 The Winter Service Policy is based upon nationally recognised standards set out in *Well Maintained Highways – A code of Practice*.
- 8.2 Officers consider that the Winter Service Policy (Appendix 1) is a good standard of service to provide for the residents and the travelling public. An increase in

standards would require significant extra investment for relatively rare snowfall events. It is considered that any reduction in standards of service would be very unpopular with the residents and users of the highway network, as well as increasing the potential for claims against the Council.

9 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

9.1 None

10 CONSULTATION

10.1 The Council's Section 151 Officer and Divisional Director Legal and Democratic Services have been consulted on the report and any comments received are included in the report.

10.2 The views of all Ward Councillors and Cabinet members were sought as part of the Winter Maintenance Review in 2010. Where appropriate, and feasible, these have been reflected in the Winter Service Policy.

10.3 Parish Councils, Town Councils and Residents associations also participated in the Winter Maintenance Review and their views have been considered when drafting the Policy. The Service Manager for Highways has discussed winter weather arrangements extensively at Parish Cluster meetings and the findings of the Winter Maintenance Review were reported to Parish Liaison Meeting on 20 October 2010.

10.4 The Safer and Stronger Communities Overview & Scrutiny Panel meeting on 18 November 2010 received a Winter Maintenance Arrangements update. The Panel meeting on 24 March 2011 considered the Winter Service Policy. The views of the Panel are reflected in the Policy (Appendix 1)

11 ISSUES TO CONSIDER IN REACHING THE DECISION

11.1 Financial- Cabinet should consider that in addition to funding the Snow Warden pilot, any increase in standards or improvements to the service would require an increase in the operational winter maintenance budget.

11.2 Legal – The Council has a statutory obligations under the Railways and Transport Act 2003 (Section 111) and the Highways Act 1980 Section 41 (1A) which places a duty on the Highway Authority to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, that safe passage along a highway is not endangered by snow and ice.

12. ADVICE SOUGHT

The Council's Monitoring Officer (Divisional Director – Legal and Democratic Services) and Section 151 Officer (Divisional Director - Finance) have had the opportunity to input to this report and have cleared it for publication.

Contact person	Kelvin Packer, Service Manager – Highways 01225 394339
Sponsoring Cabinet Member	Councillor Roger Symonds
Background papers	<p>Safer and Stronger Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel -24 March 2011. Winter Maintenance Policy</p> <p>Safer and Stronger Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel -18 November 2010 .Winter Maintenance Arrangements update</p> <p>Report to Parish Liaison 20 October 2010 – The outcome of the Winter Maintenance Review.</p>
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