

NORTH LINCOLNSHIRE COUNCIL

**HIGHWAYS AND NEIGHBOURHOODS
CABINET MEMBER**

UPDATE ON WINTER SERVICE REVIEW

1. OBJECT AND KEY POINTS IN THIS REPORT

- 1.1 To advise the Cabinet Member of progress made to date on the winter service review and seek approval of interim recommendations for improving the service.
- 1.2 A further report, taking account of the ongoing consultation, and including any recommendations for adjustments to salting routes, will be presented to Cabinet Member shortly.

2. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 2.1 The previous two winter seasons have contained spells of significant adverse weather. These tested the resilience of the highways winter service arrangements both locally and nationally. In order to improve the council's response to similar events in the future, we have undertaken a review of the service prior to the winter season 2011/12.
- 2.2 In order to inform the review, an extensive consultation exercise was carried out. The main outcomes are set out in the appendix to this paper.
- 2.3 In addition, a number of lessons were learnt as a result of last winter:-
 - A greater pool of gritting vehicle drivers is required, in order to meet demand in severe conditions and also to comply with drivers' hours regulations
 - There are limitations on how much salt is available to local highway authorities. In severe conditions this can lead to salt shortages
 - The winter service plan needs to be reviewed and made widely available to the general public. It should state what the service will do during the winter period. It should also state clearly what the service will not provide
 - The management of the operational service during severe snow conditions needs to be reviewed and managed in line with the council's emergency procedures
 - There continues to be periodic problems with the effective treatment of the A15 (North).

- 2.4 Taking the consultation outcomes and lessons learned into account, the following improvements to the winter service are proposed: -
- Increase the number of gritter drivers
 - Provide an additional storage area to hold a reserve of salt
 - Place more emphasis on keeping strategic routes open (including key bus routes along those routes) as well as strategic car parks
 - Improved information for road users, for example through the council's website
 - Continue discussions with town & parish councils and voluntary groups with regard to local self help initiatives and the introduction of the snow warden scheme
 - Introduce ice-warning signs on the A15 (North) and enhance the treatment regime.
- 2.5 In addition to the above, the council has made £130,000 available for improving how it responds to adverse weather events. It is proposed to invest around £90,000 of this directly in winter initiatives.
- 2.6 These initiatives will include the following:-
- Purchase of pedestrian snow blowers. Principally to enable more effective clearance of snow from footways in key pedestrianised areas
 - New in-vehicle technology for gritters to improve performance and provide real-time information
 - We will trial quad bikes and spray attachments for liquid de-icing agents to treat pedestrian areas more effectively
 - We will consider provision of additional salt bins and salt to local communities.
- 2.7 An on-line consultation exercise, ended in late August. The outcomes are currently being analysed, together with requests for changes to salting routes. It is proposed that a further report is presented shortly seeking the approval of the Cabinet Member to any further recommendations emerging from this process.

3. OPTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION

- 3.1 There are three options for consideration:

Option 1 - Do nothing.

Option 2 - Adopt the proposed changes in full.

Option 3 - Adopt the proposed changes in part.

4. ANALYSIS OF OPTIONS

- 4.1 **Option 1** - This is not recommended as it will not enable implementation of necessary improvements to the winter service including fulfilling the council's statutory obligations in respect of drivers' hours regulations.
- 4.2 **Option 2** - This is the recommended option as it reflects the outcomes of consultation, includes some essential changes and is fully funded. It also includes improvements that are consistent with national guidance on winter service provision.
- 4.3 **Option 3** - This would only be recommended if funding restrictions did not permit Option 2 to be implemented.

5. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS (FINANCIAL, STAFFING, PROPERTY, IT)

5.1 Financial

- 5.1.1 Council recently approved funding of £130,000 to support the council's response to adverse weather. It is proposed to use around £90,000 toward implementing the improvements to the winter service.
- 5.1.2 The additional improvements detailed in paragraph 2.4 will be funded from within existing budgets.
- 5.1.3 The council's existing winter maintenance budget will fund a 'standard' winter response. This comprises approximately 45 precautionary salting turnouts and one week of average snow clearance activity.
- 5.1.4 Extreme winter weather, as was experienced in 2010/11, requires significant additional funding, which, by way of example, amounted to approximately £450,000 last winter. This was to pay for additional salt from the strategic salt stock, hired in plant for snow clearance and additional hours worked by council staff and plant to clear snow.

5.2 Staffing

- 5.2.1 We will engage additional drivers from across existing council service areas.
- 5.2.2 There will be a need to draw on additional council staff during extreme winter weather conditions. This will improve the response to such conditions in line with the council's emergency response procedures.

5.3 Property

5.3.1 We are exploring establishing an indoor storage area for additional salt at the Station Road Depot, Scunthorpe.

6. SECTION 17 – CRIME AND DISORDER, RISK AND OTHER

6.1 Statutory

6.1.1 The Highways Act of 1980; Section 41 states that, 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.

6.1.2 The highway authority must also comply with the GB domestic drivers' hours rules as set out in the Transport Act 1968 and the current Working Time Directive in relation to all employees deployed on winter service operations.

6.2 Risk

6.2.1 The winter service is designed to reduce, so far as is reasonably practicable, the risks associated with the formation of ice and snow on the highway. The proposals in this report seek to improve the service in North Lincolnshire and further reduce risk to all road users.

6.3 There are no other implications to this report.

7. OUTCOMES OF CONSULTATION

7.1 The council's Safer and Stronger Communities Panel was consulted about the local response to the adverse winter weather in 2010/11 and advised of the intention to consult widely on our future approach to winter service provision.

7.2 The trades unions were consulted about changes to the number of winter maintenance drivers and fully support the process adopted to achieve that increase.

7.3 To support the review, a consultation process took place in early July 2011. Town and parish council representatives and Ward Members attended the following four winter service consultation exercises:

- 11 July 2011 - Barton and District at the Barton Assembly Rooms
- 12 July 2011 - Brigg and District at The Angel Suite, Brigg
- 14 July 2011 - Isle of Axholme at the Epworth Imperial Hall
- 18 July 2011 - Scunthorpe (N & S) at Pittwood House

- 7.4 Representatives from other council services and partner organisations attended a fifth event, which took place at The Angel Suite, Brigg on 13 July 2011.
- 7.5 This was supported by local businesses that were invited to contribute via an online questionnaire. The online questionnaire was also open to the general public and available up to the end of August 2011.
- 7.6 The key consultation outcomes are contained in the appendix to this report.
- 7.7 The online consultation concluded at the end of August. All responses are currently being evaluated.

8. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 8.1 That the Cabinet Member approves the implementation of the proposed measures detailed in paragraphs 2.4 and 2.6 of this report.
- 8.2 That, following the analysis of on-line consultation feedback, a further report be presented to the Cabinet Member to consider any additional recommendations, including any proposed changes to salting routes for the 2011/12 winter period.

DIRECTOR OF INFRASTRUCTURE SERVICES

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Background Papers used in the preparation of this report:

Highways Act 1980
Transport Act 1968
Feedback from consultation carried out during July 2011.
Report to Safer and Stronger Communities Panel, "Council Response to Adverse Weather – Winter 2010/11", 15 March 2011
UK Roads Liaison Group document, "Lessons from the Severe Weather February 2009", published July 2009
"Well Maintained Highways – Code of Practice for Highway Maintenance"
"Winter Service Guidance for Local Authority Practitioners", UK Roads Liaison Group, October 2010

APPENDIX

OUTCOMES OF CONSULTATION

In order to inform the review, extensive consultation was carried out. The key outcomes of the consultation are that:-

- There was little or no support for any reduction in precautionary or secondary salting routes
- The majority felt the current precautionary network was acceptable but that the trigger timescale for treating the secondary network should be shortened to 24 hours from the current 48 hours
- There was agreement that the current risk based criteria for establishing salting routes was in the main correct however the issue of treatment on hills should be reconsidered
- The majority agreed with the reduced salting routes, which will be treated in times of salt shortages
- The A.15 (North) be considered for additional treatment, due to it being a route with a history of developing particular problems in winter
- There was strong support for the council to consider holding an increased quantity of salt
- During snow conditions, there was strong support that the service concentrate on clearing the main roads and providing at least one clear point of access to all areas of population before diverting on to other objectives
- More emphasis should be made on clearing snow from footways when resources allow especially in areas of heavy footfall, around health centres and schools. In addition, the more heavily used car parks should also be a priority including those serving public buildings
- The council continues dialogue with town & parish councils and voluntary groups to promote more local self help in times of severe weather and to establish a network of snow wardens
- There was a lot of support for improved communication from the council in times of severe weather.