

ANGUS COUNCIL

COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE – 18 AUGUST 2015

WINTER SERVICE POLICY AND PROVISION FOR 2015/16

REPORT BY HEAD OF TECHNICAL AND PROPERTY SERVICES

ABSTRACT

This report sets out the proposed Winter Service Policy and details the proposed service provision for preventative treatment and snow clearing during the winter period 2015/16 together with contingency arrangements to cater for extreme conditions prevailing, in conjunction with the operational issues detailed in the supplement placed in the Information Hub.

1. RECOMMENDATIONS

Committee is asked to agree:

- (i) the policy for the Winter Service during the forthcoming winter as stated in **Appendix 1**;
- (ii) the Operational Details/Supplement;
- (iii) the arrangements proposed to meet the costs of the winter service during 2015/16;
- (iv) to delegate authority to the Head of Technical and Property Services to temporarily increase the level of service in extreme conditions;
- (v) to delegate authority to the Head of Technical and Property Services to deviate from the treatment decision matrix and introduce salt conservation techniques as proposed in the report if difficulties are experienced or anticipated in obtaining sufficient salt supplies.

2. ALIGNMENT TO THE ANGUS COMMUNITY PLAN/SINGLE OUTCOME AGREEMENT /CORPORATE PLAN/ LOCAL OUTCOMES

This report contributes to the following local outcome contained within the Angus Community Plan and Single Outcome Agreement 2013 – 2016:

- Communities that are safe and strong

3. BACKGROUND

3.1 Winter 2014/15

3.1.1 The weather conditions experienced together with the costs of providing the winter roads service in 2014/15 were set out in the Winter Maintenance 2014-15 Activity Review included as Schedule 3 in the Information Report - Report No 207/15 placed before the Communities Committee on 26 May 2015.

3.2 Statutory Duty

3.2.1 The Roads (Scotland) Act 1984 Section 34 places a duty on the Roads Authority to take such steps as it considers reasonable to prevent snow and ice endangering the safe passage of pedestrians and vehicles over public roads. It is therefore incumbent on Angus Council to

determine the measures which it deems appropriate for the winter service on its public roads taking into account its overall priorities and available resources.

- 3.2.2 In order to ensure that the council can demonstrate that it is meeting its legal obligations and is doing so in a way which ensures that its resources are being deployed in the most economic, effective and efficient way an essential pre-requisite is a clear statement of policy endorsed by elected members. This policy statement then provides a framework for planning the preparatory arrangements and operational procedures to be implemented and allows clear guidelines to be given to those involved in the delivery of the service.

3.3 **Established Policy and Practice**

- 3.3.1 The Communities Committee of 19 August 2014 reconfirmed the policy by approving Report No 332/14 – Winter Services Policy and Provision for 2014/2015. The policy has proved to be robust and effective, and is unchanged from previous years.

- 3.3.2 In order to make best use of available resources it is necessary to operate a priority system for the treatment of carriageways and footways. Strategic routes including important bus routes, important commuter routes, roads serving hospitals, ambulance stations, fire stations, shopping centres, most schools, and major industrial centres are classed as "priority routes" (Category 1) and, accordingly, are given a higher level of service and priority over other "non-priority" (Category 3) roads. In the same way footways are classed as priority (Category 1) or non-priority (Category 3) taking into account the level of pedestrian usage.

- 3.3.3 Priority (Category 1) routes are:

- given extended winter maintenance coverage
- treated before non-priority routes (Category 2/3 routes)
- during prolonged snow conditions are kept open or are opened up in preference to non-priority routes.

Auxiliary (Category 2) Routes:

- Auxiliary (Category 2) Routes are non-priority routes which are treated, when necessary, Monday to Friday in advance of the morning school bus on routes which are particularly prone to icing;
- Of these routes the Glen routes/routes north of the A90/A926/B957 along with the C52 Westhills to Cockhill from the B9128 at Draffin to Redford on the B961, and the U338 Auchterhouse, "The Brae" are also treated on weekend mornings and public holiday mornings only, when necessary
- start later than priority routes but before the other non priority routes.

Non-priority (Category 3) routes are:

- given a lesser winter maintenance coverage than priority routes
- only treated after priority routes
- during prolonged snow conditions, dealt with after priority routes have been satisfactorily cleared.

- 3.3.4 The background detail and operational detail have previously been established over many years. The council's winter service policy has been established for many years, as required under the statutory duties imposed by the Roads (Scotland) Act 1984.

- 3.3.5 There are real benefits in dealing with snow as quickly as possible by making maximum use of available resources while conditions persist and it is recommended that authority is delegated to the Head of Technical and Property Services, or in his absence the Service Manager (Roads), to authorise the expenditure involved in providing a temporarily increased level of service (e.g. permitting weekend; public holiday and evening work on non-priority routes and mobilising additional physical resources).

- 3.3.6 The priorities remain:

- Priority (Category 1) road network, as per previous policy and as set out in the Operational Plan.

- Auxiliary (Category 2) road network, as per previous policy and as set out in the Operational Plan.
- 3.3.7 As in previous years roads constructed following Road Construction Consents and which have not been adopted by the council will not be treated and will remain the responsibility of the landowner or developer.
- 3.3.8 Once the main transport routes are in an acceptable condition, noting that with further low temperatures or additional snow they may require re-treatment, then in heavy snow conditions (as experienced in the winter of 2010/11) resources will be used to address the other issues, in the following general order. The hierarchy below will be followed in principle and will be delivered in a practical and economic way subject to the prevailing circumstances. The process will be in accordance with the council's incident management procedures and will seek to maximise the productivity of the resources whilst focussing on the hierarchy and it is proposed that such operational management is delegated to officers. The committee are asked to confirm this operational approach.
- Snow clearance of town centre areas;
 - Treatment of areas of public transport difficulties (i.e. at or around bus stations, widening of specific routes to enable safe passage of buses);
 - Routes to schools– see below;
 - Areas requiring clearance for specific road safety issues (such as narrowing routes due to continued ploughing), particularly for school transport routes;
 - Town centre car parks, once other services are being restored to enable off street parking;
 - Health care areas such as doctors' surgeries, improved access to hospitals;
 - Nursing homes and elderly resident areas (through customer contact and specific requests);
 - Residents/business requests – whilst these are the majority of our ACCESSLine calls, we will have to limit our response to (potentially) serious issues. Life and limb situations will be assessed and addressed as appropriate.
- 3.3.9 This process was the basis of the hierarchy followed in snow events and consequently snow clearance is initially focussed on town centres and then radiated out of town centres to areas of public transport, schools and health centres.
- 3.3.10 As part of the actions to clear non-priority routes, and in order to maximise the effect as quickly as possible, footways on one side of the road only are cleared. This doubles the length of footways which can be cleared with the available resources, allowing increased access to services for the public.
- 3.3.11 As a consequence of the 2010 event, certain pedestrian areas for snow clearance around schools have been agreed with the People Directorate and school head teachers. These areas are those considered to be a priority by the head teacher where they are part of the adopted road. Depending on the school they may include walking routes, bus drop off points and areas used by parents to drop off children. They do not, however, imply the clearance of all routes to the school or in some cases continuous routes. The priorities for the People Directorate are that services are restored to secondary schools ahead of primary schools such that the disruption to pupils preparing course work or undertaking preliminary examinations is minimised.
- 3.3.12 The People Directorate have in place processes for making decisions regarding school closures and notifying the media and parents. These are not detailed in this report. The People Directorate arranges for the snow clearance of schools grounds as deemed appropriate.
- 3.3.13 Subsequent to the agreed areas at schools being cleared, restoration of school transport services is the People Directorate's next priority. While some of these routes are auxiliary routes, additional clearance works may be required to provide safe passage of school transport including widening at corners and clearance of passing places on narrow roads often made narrower by accumulations of snow including from ploughing operations. Again priority is given to transport routes for secondary school pupils.
- 3.3.14 As in previous years, staff and plant resources from Parks staff may be available to assist in snow clearance. Where operatives are unable to carry out their normal activities due to the weather they may be available to assist in snow clearance activities. Parks already undertake third party contracts for winter treatment and these remain their priority due to established

contractual commitments. These contracts include access and car parks for the health service, courts, and major retailers. When available these resources are utilised in snow clearance operations for the council on a wider basis than duties under the Roads (Scotland) Act. This includes clearance of council staff office car parks and council business/industrial estates. This increases the council's winter resilience and assists in restoring council services affected by the weather related issues. These resources are managed through the council's incident management team during extreme weather conditions as appropriate. Operational issues are coordinated but there are resource implications, particularly the ability for operatives to be transported which limits their actual availability for use.

- 3.3.15 Assistance has been provided in the past by Community Service Criminal Justice Services operatives and in future events any resources made available will be utilised on a self managed basis.

3.4 Budgetary Provision and Expenditure Control

- 3.4.1 The provision of a winter service must take into account the vagaries of local winter weather which can vary widely from year to year in both the severity and the occurrence of wintry conditions (snow and ice). The unpredictable nature of the climate requires a pragmatic and reactive approach to the provision of resources. In practice resources have to be available to allow a measured response to an "average winter" and contingency plans made to take account of particularly abnormal (mild or severe) winters.

- 3.4.2 The recommended approach is:

(i) to differentiate between "fixed costs" and "variable costs";

(ii) to adjust the level of service to contain fixed costs and variable costs for an average winter to keep within budget; and

(iii) to have contingency arrangements in place to deal with a projected overspend or underspend as a result of "abnormal" weather. These contingency plans must take account of the possibility of prolonged severe weather very late in the financial year while still working within an overall cash limited budget.

- 3.4.3 Fixed costs include plant and equipment, storage and handling charges for salt, grit bins, fixed costs of standby payments, training and costs of office, depot and garaging facilities. The majority of these items form part of the standing charges submitted by Tayside Contracts.

- 3.4.4 Variable costs include running costs of plant, salt used, driver costs and payments to outside contractors for assistance with snow clearing.

- 3.4.5 Whilst the fixed costs are broadly independent of the number of treatment activities occasioned by the weather conditions and can be estimated with some confidence, the variable costs are dependent on the prevailing weather conditions.

- 3.4.6 In the event of a sustained period of severe winter weather and the likelihood of the budgetary provision being exceeded this would be reported to the Head of Corporate Improvement and Finance and the appropriate committee in accordance with the council's financial regulations.

- 3.4.7 If the severity of the winter weather is such that other road works cannot be carried out then it is sometimes possible to transfer the "under spend" from these works to Winter Service operations, thus assisting in containing the total expenditure within the overall revenue budget. Conversely, if all the indications are that expenditure on Winter Service operations will be less than the budget allocation any "under spend" can be transferred to fund other roads revenue works.

4 PROPOSALS (Operational Aspects)

- 4.1 The main proposals of the winter service are detailed in the Operational Details/ Supplement placed in the Information Hub. This Supplement includes details of the hours of service; prioritised routes; type of plant and equipment; type and quantity of salt. The committee are asked to approve these operational issues.

- 4.2 There are some continuing changes arising from the Winter Maintenance Efficiency Savings as detailed in Report No 142/13.

Use of Pre-Wet techniques for the application of salt. Brine solution is added to salt in the vehicle prior to being broadcast onto the road surface. This improves the effectiveness of the application.	Being implemented for 2015
Externalise 3 no. auxiliary routes currently undertaken by Tayside Contracts to agricultural contractors reducing standing charges and hourly rates	Routes being taken over by farmers as soon as contractual obligations regarding vehicle leasing disposal permits. One route has been externalised to date.

In addition, the Council have been looking to see if the priority routes can be split between coastal and in land which may allow savings to be made in terms of some routes not being run on marginal nights with the coast being above freezing. This work is continuing.

The Council is also looking to adjust the timing of priority routes to keep within the target timescales. This will not change the routes treated. Again, this work is continuing.

- 4.3 Given the problems associated with salt shortages in previous years it is recommended that the Head of Technical and Property Services be delegated the authority, as previously, to apply salt conservation measures in future entailing varying the decision matrix in the policy to allow the use of 50/50 grit sand/salt mixes as may be appropriate or in some cases to broadcast grit sand only. Grit sand can help with traction. It also can be of benefit where salt is less effective where temperatures are below minus 5 degrees C.
- 4.4 As noted in Report No's 329/12 and 320/13 Angus has undertaken collaborative procurement, through Tayside Procurement Consortium, with Fife, Perth and Kinross, Dundee City, Aberdeen City, Aberdeenshire and Moray Councils for winter weather forecasting and similarly with some of these authorities for weather bureau services and ice station maintenance for a three year + one + one year contracts. The council has agreed to extend these contracts into years four and five.
- 4.5 The SCOTS Winter Service Subgroup has been in consultation with the National Winter Service Research Group (NWSRG) concerning the implementation of Appendix H of Well Maintained Highways. The Subgroup have made a number of suggestions to implement Appendix H that have been commented on by the NWSRG. These comments indicate where the NWSRG agree with the SCOTS Winter Service Subgroup interpretation of Appendix H, where they do not agree and where they indicate that they will review the text of Appendix H in relation to these matters. The primary residual issues that the SCOTS Winter Service Subgroup have identified with Appendix H are indicated in the Operational Details placed in the Information Hub.
- 4.6 Having considered the feedback from the NWSRG on the review of Appendix H the SCOTS Winter Service Subgroup provides advice that Scottish Local Roads Authorities adopt the variations to Appendix H of Well Maintained Highways detailed in the Operational Details placed in the Information Hub. The SCOTS Winter Service Subgroup justification for advising these variations and Angus Council's position approval of which is sought through approval of this report is also included.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 The approved budget for Winter Service third party payments only has been established for 2015/16 at a sum of £2,663,000.
- 5.2 As in previous years the intention is to provide the best level of service possible within the available budget. In practice winter service operations are dictated by the prevailing weather and the response required in accordance with the council's policy and agreed level of service.
- 5.3 Some costs (related primarily to ensuring a state of "being prepared") are fixed and will be predictable once the relevant charges and rates have been agreed with Tayside Contracts.
- 5.4 Other costs are variable and are proportional to the treatment activity required in consequence of the severity of the winter and, as detailed above, a severe winter can greatly increase the expenditure required to provide the approved level of service.

- 5.5 The Head of Technical and Property Services will monitor costs closely as the winter progresses, and if there are indications that the projected expenditure is likely to be at variance with the budget a report will be prepared in conjunction with the Head of Corporate Improvement and Finance, with proposals for any necessary budget adjustments for the consideration of the appropriate committee.

6 CONSULTATION

The Chief Executive, the Strategic Directors - Resources, Strategic Director – People, the Head of Corporate Improvement & Finance, the Head of Legal & Democratic Services, the Local Police Commander for Tayside Division and the Managing Director of Tayside Contracts have been consulted in the preparation of this report.

NOTE: The background papers, as defined by Section 50D of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 (other than any containing confidential or exempt information) which were relied on to any material extent in preparing the above report are:

- Report No. 332/14 – Winter Service Policy and Provision for 2014/2015 – Communities Committee - 19 August 2014.
- Report No 207/15 Information Report - Winter Maintenance 2014/15 Activity Review – Communities Committee - 26 May 2015.

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List of Appendices:

Appendix 1 – Winter Service 2015/16 Policy

APPENDIX 1

ANGUS COUNCIL WINTER SERVICE 2015/2016 POLICY

Angus Council will endeavour to use the resources available for winter maintenance in the most efficient, effective and economic way to prevent, as far as is considered reasonably possible, snow and ice endangering the safe passage of pedestrians and vehicles over public roads and to minimise the inaccessibility of public roads and temporary disruption of traffic directly attributable to adverse weather conditions.

The Council will therefore operate a system of winter maintenance which gives priority to the more important and heavily trafficked sections of the public road network (both carriageways and footways).

The Council will encourage the use of self-help measures.

The Council will not provide winter maintenance on private roads or prospective public roads. The Council will however carry out winter maintenance on effectively adopted public roads (i.e. roads which have been constructed to the Council's standards and have been accepted for adoption at the end of the one year maintenance period but which have not yet been added to the List of Public Roads).