

10 November 2014

Winter Maintenance Plan : Update

**Joint report of Lorraine O'Donnell, Assistant Chief Executive and
Terry Collins, Corporate Director, Neighbourhoods**

Purpose of the Report

- 1 To provide Members of the Environment and Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee with supporting information in advance of an update presentation on the Winter Service Policy.

Background

- 2 The Environment and Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee in 2009 carried out a scrutiny review looking at the winter maintenance strategy/service. The review resulted from the severe weather experienced across the UK in 2008/09 following a pro-longed spell of cold weather, exposed weaknesses with existing policies on supply and stocks of salt to enable Highways Authorities to carry out their winter maintenance duties.
- 3 During this period, demand for salt outstripped the amount that could be supplied by UK Salt Suppliers, which left many areas at high risk of running out of salt. The Government was required to intervene in arrangements between Local Authorities and Salt Suppliers to prioritise distribution in order to keep local road networks functioning. This highlighted the need for Local Authorities to have appropriate plans in place to ensure that such intervention was not necessary should similar circumstances occur in the future. During this period Durham County Council acted as a supplier of salt to a number of Local Authorities who paid the Council for this service as the County Council had adequate supplies.
- 4 The severe weather over the winter of 2008/09 necessitated spending considerably more than in previous years on snow clearing and winter gritting of paths and highways to ensure safe movement, to keep traffic delays to a minimum and access to emergency facilities was maintained. The Council was not only concerned with the increased costs but the complaints and concerns expressed by organisations and the general public and interested parties in relation to the level of service provided. The report made a number of recommendations which were considered by Cabinet in September 2009 and then incorporated into the winter service plan.

- 5 The winter of 2009/2010 was the worst winter the country had experienced for 3 decades. During the period December 2009 to March 2010, County Durham was subject to severe weather conditions of sub-zero temperatures and heavy snowfall with temperatures of in excess of -10 degrees C with nine inches of snow falling over the new year weekend which necessitated continuous winter maintenance.
- 6 It was therefore thought appropriate to establish a further scrutiny review group to look at the progress made against the recommendations contained in the winter maintenance strategy/service scrutiny review report. The findings of the review group were considered by Cabinet in May 2010 and resulted in significant amendments to the Code of Practice 'Well Maintained Highways' with these amendments also incorporated into the winter service plan.
- 7 Due to the previous involvement of Overview and Scrutiny in shaping the winter service plan an overview presentation was provided at the Environment and Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee on the 24 January 2014 which was of particular use to new members of the Committee. At that meeting it was commented by members that it would be useful to receive an update as part of the refresh of the work programme so that members are aware of the processes in place before the start of the winter period.
- 8 Arrangements have been made for Brian Kitching, Policy and Assets Manager to attend the meeting on the 10 November to provide an update for members on the resources available and the processes in place prior to the winter period. The presentation will focus on the following:
 - Highways Act 1980/Code of Practice
 - Winter Policy
 - External Systems
 - Operational Matters
 - Presalting Routes/Gritters
 - Facts and Figures
 - Salt & Salt Bins
 - Partnership Working
 - Future Challenges

Recommendation

- 9 The Environment and Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee is asked to note and comment upon the information provided in the report and presentation.

Background Papers

Review of the Winter Maintenance Service/Strategy – Scrutiny Review Report-
September, 2009.

Review of the Winter Maintenance Service /Strategy – Scrutiny Review Report -
May, 2010.

Winter Service Policy 2014/15.

Environment and Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Report –
Winter Service Plan – 24 January 2014

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Appendix 1: Implications

Finance – NA

Staffing – NA

Risk – NA

Equality and Diversity / Public Sector Equality Duty – NA

Accommodation – NA

Crime and Disorder – NA

Human Rights – NA

Consultation – NA

Procurement – NA

Disability Issues – NA

Legal Implications – NA