

ENVIRONMENT OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY

Date of Meeting	Tuesday 19 September 2017
Report Subject	Review of the Winter Maintenance Policy
Cabinet Member	Cabinet Member for Streetscene and Countryside
Report Author	Chief Officer – Streetscene & Transportation
Type of Report	Strategic

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Winter Maintenance Service is recognised as one of the most important functions that the Highway Authority provides and it is fundamental in providing safe and reliable access on the highway network during the period October to April each year. The purpose of this report is to seek a recommendation to Cabinet to approve the revised Winter Maintenance Policy for use by the Authority.

This report updates the current Winter Maintenance Policy, confirms the legislative requirements of providing such a service, the budget allocation and actual expenditure incurred by the Council in complying with the existing policy and delivering the service over the past 4 financial years. It is good practice to regularly review the Winter Maintenance Policy, and this report outlines the changes contained in the most recent version of the Winter Maintenance Policy (2017-19) which is being put forward for approval.

In addition the report outlines the County's response to other adverse weather events such as flooding and high winds and seeks approval of the regional Sand Bag Distribution Policy which will be activated during periods of heavy rainfall or other flooding events.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1	That Scrutiny recommends approval of the revised Winter Maintenance Policy (2017-19) - Appendix 1 and the procedures contained therein for delivering the winter maintenance service.
2	That Scrutiny notes the details of the County's response to other adverse weather events and recommends approval of the new Sand Bag Distribution Policy - Appendix 2 .

REPORT DETAILS

1.00	BACKGROUND OF WINTER MAINTENANCE POLICY
1.01	The Council, as the Highway Authority, has a general duty, under Section 41 of the Highways Act 1980, to maintain the highway network in a good state of repair so as to render it safe for ordinary traffic at all times of the year.
1.02	Section 111 of the Railways and Transport Act 2003 states that <i>"In particular, 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 and ice"</i> .
1.03	Under Section 150(1) of the Highways Act 1980, there is a requirement for the Highway Authority to remove an accumulation of snow which forms an obstruction, subject to a number of factors stated in Section 150(3) of the 1980 Act.
1.04	In addition, the Traffic Management Act 2004 placed a network management duty on all Local Traffic Authorities. It requires Authorities to do all that is reasonably practicable to manage the network effectively to keep traffic moving. In meeting the duty, Authorities should establish contingency plans for dealing promptly and effectively with unplanned events, such as unforeseen weather conditions, as far as is reasonably practicable.
1.05	The legislation does not impose an absolute duty but rather involves a balance between the degree of risk and the reasonableness of the steps necessary to eliminate the risk.
1.06	In order to provide a statutory defence, a Council policy on its winter maintenance services is required which should be reviewed on a regular basis. Flintshire currently review their own policy every two years.
1.07	<p>The review of service was undertaken by officers from the Streetscene and Transportation portfolio and considered these key areas:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Does the current service meet the statutory requirements? 2. Are there any changes to standards which should be incorporated into the new policy? 3. Are there any local concerns or complaints with the service which might require a change to working practices? 4. Are there any changes in local circumstances which would require changes to policy? 5. Is the current supply chain effective and sufficient to support the service? 6. Are current salt stocks sufficient to deliver the service effectively? 7. Are arrangements to treat car parks and footways sufficient?
1.08	The review concluded that the current operating model is adequate in

	responding to the risk presented during periods of adverse weather and is effective in deploying the necessary resources, whilst limiting the impact of the disruption to other service areas and wider service users.
1.09	<p>Operating arrangements for the winter service are outlined below:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The newly implemented Fleet Contract has provided a brand new gritting fleet for the 2017/18 season. These vehicles will come fitted with the Schmidt Autologic software. This systems aides drivers in operations whilst ensuring exactly the right amount of salt is spread on the network. This ensures drivers can concentrate solely on the road and not have to focus on the vehicles spreading settings. It also has the following benefits: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The systems has been pre-loaded with the Authority's exact road widths and ensures the optimal amount of salt has been spread to maximise the treatments, meaning salt has not been wasted. • The system provides optimisation and higher levels of road safety, through providing route-based directional guidance to drivers, leaving them free to concentrate on driving, whilst also providing flexibility in staff deployment as route knowledge is not required by the driver. 2. 26 operational drivers will be rostered to be on-call throughout the season to respond to winter conditions. There are also on-call highways response teams that are available to supplement these teams if necessary. 3. 6 Duty Officers will be rostered throughout the winter period to monitor weather forecasts and decide on the appropriate preventative action.
1.10	Plans to deal with other adverse weather events are also planned in advance and documented within the Winter Maintenance handbook which is distributed to all responsible staff and contractors and updated as a controlled document throughout the season.
1.11	On receipt of a severe weather warning (high winds, flooding, snow event, etc.) an operational control room is established in Alltami and operated by staff from Streetscene Services who will act as a dedicated point of contact. The staff within the operational control room will have direct contact with Streetscene Coordinators/Supervisors who will be on-site to investigate complaints and mobilise resources which will then act under their direct control.
1.12	The operational control room will be responsible for directing all operations and act as a liaison contact to the press office through which all press releases are made. In the event that the emergency escalates the Council's Emergency Response Process will be triggered and the Emergency Response (Operations team) then operate from the control room in Alltami depot.
1.13	In the event that high winds are forecast, the details of the forecast are examined by the Duty Officer and consideration will be given as to whether

	or not close the Flintshire Bridge (A548). This process to be followed (in the event that the bridge needs closing) are set out within the updated Winter Maintenance Policy 2017-19.
1.14	The region has developed a Sandbag Distribution Policy to provide a consistent regional response to the provision of sandbags following period of heavy rain. A copy of this policy is included in Appendix 2 .

2.00	RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS				
2.01	Finance - Previous Years Budgets against Spend are as follows:				
	FY	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17
	Budget	£998,595	£998,595	£844,497	£830,006
	Actual	£919,250	£951,215	£796,000	£865,008
2.02	The available budget for the 2017/18 winter period is £832,408				
	The Winter Maintenance reserve which can be utilised to supplement the budget - in the event of a particularly poor winter, currently stands at £215,000				
2.03	Winter maintenance operations on the highway infrastructure are carried out by the Streetscene Staff and resources supplemented by local agricultural contractors as necessary.				

3.00	CONSULTATIONS REQUIRED / CARRIED OUT
3.01	<p>Consultation took place with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Operational departments and stakeholders With Cabinet Member Neighbouring Local Authorities in relation to their Winter Maintenance Operations

4.00	RISK MANAGEMENT
4.01	The service has undertaken risk assessments on the provision of preventative treatment to various categories of the network which are outlined within the policy.
5.00	APPENDICES
5.01	Appendix 1 - Revised Winter Maintenance Policy
5.02	Appendix 2 – Sandbag Distribution Policy

6.00	LIST OF ACCESSIBLE BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS
6.01	Highways Act 1980.
6.02	Railways and Transport Act 2003
6.03	Code of Practice for Well-managed Highway Infrastructure (2016)
6.04	Traffic Management Act 2004
6.05	Quarmby Report on winter maintenance activities – July 2010
6.06	Trunk Road Maintenance Manual
6.07	Welsh Government Advice Documents
6.08	WLGA Advice Documents
6.09	Contact Officer: Stephen O Jones – Chief Officer – Streetscene & Transportation Telephone: 01352 704700 E-mail: Stephen.o.jones@flintshire.gov.uk

7.00	GLOSSARY OF TERMS
7.01	Financial Year (FY): the period of 12 months commencing on 1 April
7.02	Autologic System: A software package used to support drivers in the application of salt spreading rates based on network location.