



REGENERATION AND ENVIRONMENT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 28TH JUNE 2016

SUBJECT: WINTER SERVICE PLAN ENDORSEMENT

REPORT BY: CORPORATE DIRECTOR COMMUNITIES

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 This report will outline the background and content of the Council's Winter Service Plan (WSP) (in Appendix A) and explain the process by which it is reviewed on an annual basis.
- 1.2 For Scrutiny members to review the Winter Service Plan's process and key areas and provide comment for consideration prior to seeking Cabinet endorsement.

2. SUMMARY

- 2.1 Highways Operations has produced a Winter Service Plan since the inception of Caerphilly County Borough Council (CCBC).
- 2.2 The purpose of the plan is to explain the Council's responsibilities of maintaining the highway infrastructure network during the winter maintenance period (currently October to April).
- 2.3 The plan also provides guidance to elected councillors, council staff and the public on operational procedures and contact points during the winter maintenance period.
- 2.4 The content of the plan has been divided into the following sections:
 - Winter Service Policy
 - Roles & Responsibilities
 - Operation Plan – Pre-salting
 - Operational Plan – Snowing
 - Winter Emergency – Flooding
 - Communications Plan
 - Weather Forecast
 - Salt Strategy
 - Resources
- 2.5 Members are asked to scrutinise the process and overall content, then to provide comment prior to seeking endorsement by Cabinet.

3. LINKS TO STRATEGY

- 3.1 This report links directly to the regeneration of the county borough making Caerphilly County Borough a better place to live and work.

- 3.2 The report links directly to the Council's priority to improve accessibility throughout the county borough by improving the transport network, enabling individuals to move freely around Caerphilly.
- 3.3 There is also a link to ensuring communities are safer by maintaining a safety standards for the development of integrated, efficient local and regional transport system, on which public transport, private users, cycling and walking networks can operate.
- 3.4 The link to greener and cleaner objectives are centred around reducing our carbon footprint and improving sustainability, taking steps to adapt to the local effects of climate change (warmer and wetter weather patterns).
- 3.5 The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 came into force this April, it sets out seven Well-Being Goals; the focus of this report supports a Sustainable Wales, A Prosperous wales, A Wales of Cohesive Communities and a Globally Responsible Wales

4. THE REPORT

- 4.1 The Winter Service Plan has existed since the instigation of CCBC and in a more simplified format prior to this. The content has increased in complexity and quantity over the years, now culminating in an 85 page document outlining the Highway Operations' approach to Winter Maintenance Service for the coming season.
- 4.2 The purpose of the plan is to explain the Council's responsibilities of maintaining the highway infrastructure network during the winter maintenance period (currently October to April).
- 4.3 The plan also provides guidance to elected councillors, council staff and the public on operational procedures and contact points during the winter maintenance period; so clearly demonstrating the plans and contingencies that will be in place for the coming season.
- 4.4 To date the Winter Service Plan has been annually reviewed by Elected Councillors and key Council Officers, with a four week period dedicated to this process. The feedback comments and amendments are then incorporated into the final version, which is then posted to all appropriate parties and on to the Caerphilly internet site (in October). It is envisaged that this process will continue for 2016-17 winter season, after this Cabinet endorsement process has been completed.
- 4.5 The report also takes into account The Highways Act 1980 Section 41, which places a duty on the Local Authority 'to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, that safe passage along a highway is not endangered by snow or ice' and the 'Transport Resilience Review 2014 – A review of the resilience of the transport network to extreme weather events' – Department for Transport.
- 4.6 The Winter Maintenance Plan and arrangements can be found on the Caerphilly Council Internet site, on the following link:

<http://www.caerphilly.gov.uk/Services/Roads-and-pavements/Gritting-and-snow-clearing>

This gives access to the following information:

- Winter Service Plan
- Gritting procedures and process
- How gritting works
- Salt storage information
- Gritting Vehicles
- Grit Bin requests.

- 4.7 The Plan sets out the Winter Maintenance Policy for CCBC, with the prioritisation of routes, resources deployed with key post roles and responsibilities. The Plan is divided into nine sections:
 - 4.7.1 Winter Service Preamble & Policy – this gives the background and basis on which the plan is formulated.
 - 4.7.2 Roles and Responsibilities – this gives the required posts with their responsibilities and duties.
 - 4.7.3 Operational Plan: Pre-salting – this encompasses the procedures for salting prior to and post a freezing event, based on the Road Hierarchy which sets the order of prioritisation for the Routes throughout the Borough
 - 4.7.4 Operational Plan: Snow Conditions – this outlines processes and procedures in a ‘white out’ event with the activation of the Snow Plan (which includes Ploughing procedures and route prioritisation).
 - 4.7.5 Winter Emergency: Flooding – outlines the procedure to follow in a flooding event.
 - 4.7.6 Communications Plan – includes the processes to be followed in response to freezing, snow and flooding events.
 - 4.7.7 Weather Forecast – outlines the methods and procedures for forecasting freezing, snow and flooding events
 - 4.7.8 Salt Stocks – outlines the strategic storage of salt and restocking procedures
 - 4.7.9 Resources – gives an overview of fleet, plant and human resources deployed for the Winter Service Plan.
- 4.8 Of these sections there are a number that require review by Scrutiny members as they cover key issues within the Winter Service Plan, these being:
 - 4.8.1 Gritting Route and Road Hierarchy – This gives the prioritisation order to the route gritting and snow clearance throughout CCBC, for example clearing major routes, routes required for medical, remote communities before other parts of the network. A review of this section should assist in confirming the prioritisation order is appropriate and that key stakeholders have not been overlooked.
 - 4.8.2 Salt Stocks and Location – This gives the minimum amount of salt that needs to be held by CCBC for each winter season and their respective locations. A review will help clarify the amounts required for each season and whether the members consider the current deployment of salt stores are adequate for the needs of the highway network over the winter season.

The current locations for salt storage (with tonnage capacities) are:

Penmaen Depot	1,500T
Bedwas Depot	5,000T
Pontlloftyn Depot	1,500T
Strategic Salt Stocks (sited in Ebbw Vale)	2,000T

There is an initiative to enlarge the salt storage capacity in the Penmaen location, as it is more centrally located and is the centre of operations for the majority of Gritting routes. This will probably take the form of a larger salt storage barn and require an injection of capital funding to cover its purchase, design, construction and any associated enabling works.

- 4.8.3 Weather Forecasting – This outlines the methods and procedures used to make the appropriate decisions for a freezing or winter event. Reviewing this will assist in both informing the members of systems used and how decisions are made, with any useful contributions as to how this could be improved.

- 4.8.4 Salt Bin Request Process – This is outlined in Appendix B and includes a decision flow-chart and an assessment form to show how requested locations are scored, so forming a prioritised order of potential sites. This is a recent revision, so does not form part of the Winter Service Plan for last year (2015-16). It has been incorporated into the Winter Maintenance Procedures (2016-17) to help clarify the process followed when carrying out these assessments. A review of this section should both inform and invite further comment on the effectiveness of the process and possible improvements. This will then form part of the Winter Service Plan review process as outlined in 4.4.

5. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 A functional and correct Winter Service Plan will benefit the vulnerable, young and elderly, ensuring their services (including emergencies), remain robust throughout the winter period (October to April).
- 5.2 Taking steps to adapt to the local effects of climate change (warmer and wetter weather patterns), centred around reducing our carbon footprint, will also benefit the less mobile/ vulnerable members of the community.

6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 The Winter Maintenance / Severe Weather budget has been held at £1.14M since agreed in 2014-15, protecting this fundamental service area from savings. In parallel an additional amount is being accrued in a separate safeguarded fund to be used for extreme weather events that are outside the Winter Maintenance / Severe Weather budget, this has been capped at £500k.

7. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 These proposals will not have any direct impact on CCBC personnel, though it should be noted that the Winter Services are resourced by Winter Standby staff draw from a voluntary pool of personnel mainly from Highways Operations and NSC (in-house contractor) with the support of drivers from Refuse & Cleansing.

8. CONSULTATIONS

- 8.1 All comments received have been taken into consideration and are included in the report.

9. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 9.1 For Scrutiny Members to comment on the process of compiling of an annual WSP, considering the key issues as outlined in 4.8
- 9.2 To consider and offer comments in relation to the draft Winter Service Plan, prior to consideration by Cabinet.

10. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 10.1 To provide comments and views with regards to the draft Winter Service Plan, prior to approval by Cabinet.

11. STATUTORY POWER

- 11.1 Highway Act 1980.
Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2016.

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Background Papers:

'Transport Resilience Review 2014 – A review of the resilience of the transport network to extreme weather events' – Department for Transport.

Appendices:

Appendix A – Winter Service Plan 2015-16
Appendix B – Grit-bin Decision Flow-chart and Assessment Form