What is the Report About? (Executive Summary)

1. This annual report is produced in the light of experience gained during last winter and includes recommendations and issues for consideration. The report assesses the improvements introduced last year and it recommends courses of action going forward for this service.

Recommendation of the Corporate Director

Cabinet is recommended to:

2. Approve the Winter Maintenance Policy for 2016-19 as set out in Appendix 1.

3. Approve the continuation and promotion of Snow Champions with a view to further developing this role with the potential to take into account other services as set out in section 19 of this report.

4. Delegate authority to the Corporate Director – Economy and Highways Services in consultation with Members of the Core Gritting Group to trigger the district and parish salt support scheme as set out in section 21 of this report.

Background to the Proposals

5. Cumbria County Council as a Highway Authority has duties arising from The Highways Act 1980, “to ensure so far as is reasonably practicable, that safe passage along the highway is not endangered by snow or ice”, section 41(1A). This act also places a duty on the Highway Authorities, under section 150, to remove any obstruction of the highway resulting from, amongst other things “accumulations of snow”. In terms of the above legislation a road includes carriageways, footpaths, cycle routes and pedestrian areas.

6. Best practice guidance for highway maintenance is set out in the national code of practice ‘Well Maintained Highways’ (WMH) Appendix H (as amended September 2013). This guidance is adapted by the Council to suit local needs. This forms the basis for the operational plan. The Authority’s aim is to meet all its obligations within Appendix H by providing an effective and efficient winter service as set out in its policy. Under the policy all roads for which the County Council are responsible are priority ranked in the following way, P1, P2, P3 and P4.
The Review

As members are aware, Cumbria was subjected to a number of flood events during the winter of 2015/16. As these are well documented elsewhere, they will not be covered in detail in this report. Last winter was a real test for the service. Key aspects of the 2015/16 winter service to note include:

- The season was very sporadic due to the constant variance in weather conditions and road temperatures together with a large amount of flood activity.
- Community involvement was again undertaken to enable local gritting groups and Snow Champion volunteers.
- This was the second year following the MTFP reduction in budget of £750k. During 2015/16 the winter service was managed within the reduced budget envelope.

The review has included our existing treatment standards and compared these to other authorities to assess consistency and compare coverage. Below is a table which benchmarks our winter service against the authorities around Cumbria:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Authority</th>
<th>Network Length (Km’s)</th>
<th>Treated Length</th>
<th>% Treated</th>
<th>Number of Salt bins/heaps</th>
<th>Number of Gritters</th>
<th>Comments</th>
<th>Cost Per Km treated</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cumbria County Council</td>
<td>7900</td>
<td>2400</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>10,000</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>Contractors are used on a number of routes in the East/South</td>
<td>£24.55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lancashire County Council</td>
<td>6920</td>
<td>2306</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>1800</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>No Data</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northumberland County Council</td>
<td>3000</td>
<td>990</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>1600</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>No Data</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Durham County Council</td>
<td>4073</td>
<td>1833</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>2000</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>No Data</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Yorkshire County Council</td>
<td>9656</td>
<td>4300</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>TBC</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>No Data</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dumfries and Galloway Council</td>
<td>TBC</td>
<td>TBC</td>
<td>TBC</td>
<td>TBC</td>
<td>TBC</td>
<td></td>
<td>£26.44</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In total Cumbria County Council pre-treats approximately 32% of the highway network length for which it is responsible (P1s and P2’s). This compares to 33% in Lancashire, 34% in Northumberland, 45% in Durham and 45% in North Yorkshire.
11. In terms of treatment volumes by comparison to the previous winter 2014/15, the table below shows the treatment activity within all areas has reduced in kilometres travelled overall by 56,561kms. Members should also note that there has been a significant reduction overall in the number of full treatments carried out in 2015/16, 1864 compared to 2621 in 2014/15, a reduction of 757. This reduction is in spite of the number of treatment days remaining much the same, which suggests better residual salt management on the network during very sporadic weather conditions. It also shows better decision making reducing the number of full network treatments being carried out overall.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>No of Treatment days</th>
<th>No of full route treatment</th>
<th>Total Kms treated</th>
<th>Total Amount of Salt used</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>West</td>
<td>2013/14</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>475</td>
<td>43,185</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2014/15</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>409</td>
<td>35,165</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2015/16</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>371</td>
<td>31,634</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East</td>
<td>2013/14</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>1025</td>
<td>87,194</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2014/15</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>1095</td>
<td>91,192</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2015/16</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>789</td>
<td>69,553</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South</td>
<td>2013/14</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2014/15</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>1117</td>
<td>81,467</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2015/16</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>704</td>
<td>50,076</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total 2013/14</td>
<td>85*</td>
<td>1500</td>
<td>130,379</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total 2014/15</td>
<td>80*</td>
<td>2621</td>
<td>207,824</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total 2015/16</td>
<td>74*</td>
<td>1864</td>
<td>151,263</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

0 in 2013/14 relates to no data being available.

12. In 2015/16, it was proposed to take full advantage of the data collected to move towards Route Based Forecasting (RBF). This did not take place as a result of the service being heavily focused on response to flood events and the immediate flood recovery activity. It is proposed to work towards Route based Forecasting in 2016/17 which it is anticipated will further reduce both the salt applied to the network and the mileage travelled. A new forecasting contract is being tendered in support of this approach. The service is also undertaking a route efficiency review of the existing routes to ensure that we are completing the routes in the most efficient manner.

13. Following development work carried out in 2015/16, we have now digitised the current gritting routes to enable the development of the ‘Sat Nav’ system. This system will go live in 2016/17 and will enable increased consistency of the salted and non-salted routes.

14. A number of frequent and regular scheduled bus service routes in Cumbria were added to P2 treatment routes in 2014/15. These continue to work well with little or no disruption to the local bus services. A number of non-subsidised routes have remained in service as well as new ones being introduced. With this in mind, the service will continue to review the gritting routes to ensure we have an efficient service.
15. Cumbria has over 310 schools including primaries, secondaries and academies. About 40 of those schools (mostly rural primaries, e.g. Arlecdon, Bassenthwaite, Bewcastle, Milburn, Selside and Lindal & Marton) are located some distance away from the nearest P1 and P2 gritting routes. All have now been included in P3 treatment routes. These routes will be reviewed to reflect the on-going changes to the school transport services as and when required.

16. Following the return of the ‘claimed rights’ arrangement under which Carlisle City Council maintained certain roads in Carlisle. 2015/16 was the second year in which Cumbria County Council carried out the winter service within the city. These treatment arrangements were incorporated into the existing treatment routes within Carlisle. During the 2015/16 season these routes were closely monitored and following an event early on in the season which caused a number of delays in the City, changes in the treatment time have been made to reduce/remove this disruption to road users going forward.

17. Overall the existing P1 and P2 routes are considered to be appropriate for current traffic demands taking into account the proposed changes set out in this report. Existing P3 routes are also well established and provide access to additional towns and villages during periods of prolonged adverse weather.

Communications

18. During 2015/16 the service has received relatively few public comments despite it being a mild wet winter. The existing winter routes have been established over a number of years from feedback from Local Committees and local knowledge. Many drivers are very familiar with the treated network and road users continue to change their driving behaviour and their routes during winter weather events to take full advantage of the treated routes. Any changes to current P1s and P2s could result in problems for such drivers if not publicised correctly in advance. Over the winter period we have continued to use both the County Council’s web site and social media to keep the public better informed about weather conditions, driver safety and proposed treatments. Since the winter of 2012, arrangements were put in place to publicise our action decisions on a daily basis on the County Council website and social media. This enabled members of the general public to check whether we treated some or all of the P1 and P2 routes and busy shopping area footways. We now also publish the weather information on the County Council website, for example air temperatures, wind speed and direction and still camera images.

Community Delivered Services

19. Volunteer Snow Champions continued to be recruited last winter to keep local footways and footpaths clear of snow. During the winter period, we again made contact with the Snow Champions to ensure that the current contact details were up to date due to the fact that there has been little need to use this resource over the past two years. It is proposed to again promote the Snow Champion approach and also to review opportunities to extend this service to assist with flood response during prolonged periods of bad weather. This proposed change and promotion will help engagement throughout the year.
Parish Council Support

20. During prolonged cold spells in the 2009/10 and 2010/11 winters the Council offered all Parish councils a supply of salt / grit mix to enable parish volunteers to enhance the service locally. The supply was offered at roughly 7 tonnes to each participating parish. This proved to be a useful enhancement of the service and was well received. In both years, it was only offered once it became apparent that the weather had gone beyond what could be expected of a “normal” winter. As salt is a potentially difficult material to store for medium to long term because of its potential environmental impact. Preparations have been made to supply 3 tonnes of rock salt in 1 tonne dumpy bags to willing parishes. This process can be rolled out at very short notice, which is believed the correct approach. Again last winter 2015/16 despite its longevity, the core gritting group was not called into action.

21. In addition to this county-wide initiative it may be necessary in some exceptional local weather related incidents for immediate local decisions to release supplies to be made. For example very local showers of super-cooled rain (which freezes on contact with cold areas of ground) could trigger a decision by the local highways service without reference to the Chief Executive.

Winter Service Equipment

22. Following the Salt shortages in 2009/2010, local authorities were required to manage their salt stock in a more strategic manner with the additional requirement of holding a stock of resilient salt in the event of a further national shortage. This in mind, Cumbria took the decision to obtain 2500 tonnes of salt which is currently stored under a reinforced plastic cover at the Lillyhall Highway Depot. The current Salt stock has been on site now for 5 years and following recent testing for water content, the decision has been taken to use this salt to restock this year with a view to purchasing a new stock of resilience salt in 2016/17. Once this work has been completed, a new reinforced cover will be required to protect the new salt from the outside elements. The cost of this is around £20k and it is proposed to fund this from the winter budget.

23. To provide an efficient and effective winter service, the operational staff rely on sophisticated weather forecasting data which is obtained from the various weather stations around the county. Cumbria has access to data from 28 weather stations strategically placed around Cumbria. 14 are owned by Cumbria County Council, the remaining 14 belong to Highways England or Road Link (A69). To improve the service we provide and to further reduce the number of treatments we undertake, it is proposed to install a further three new weather stations in strategic locations at an approximate cost of £75k to further improve the data we receive. This purchase will mark the commencement of the programme to replacement the existing, aging equipment throughout the network.
Options Considered and Risks Identified

Option (a)

- Cabinet may agree to the recommendations made in this report.

Option (b)

- Cabinet may decide to reject some or all of the recommendations contained in the report.

Reasons for the recommendation/Key benefits

24. To ensure that as the Highway Authority, Cumbria County Council meets its legal responsible under the duty arising from The Highways Act 1980, “to ensure so far as is reasonably practicable, that safe passage along the highway is not endangered by snow or ice”, section 41(1A). It also places a duty on the Highway Authorities, under section 150, to remove any obstruction of the highway resulting from, amongst other things “accumulations of snow”. In terms of the above legislation a road includes carriageways, footpaths, cycle routes and pedestrian areas.

Financial – What Resources will be needed and how will it be Funded?

25. The approved winter maintenance budget for 2016/17 is £3.715m, with the exception of inflation; this is unchanged from 2015/16. With the intention to support a more efficient approach to the winter service, there are a number of additional requirements the cost of these is estimated to be £0.240m which would need to be funded through the 2016/17 budget.

Legal Aspects – What needs to be Considered?

26. The recommendations in this report are for Cabinet to determine. In particular it is for Cabinet to consider, and if satisfied approve, the Winter Maintenance Policy as a Council policy outside the Budget and Policy Framework.

27. The Council should have in place arrangements to ensure that it is able to meet its obligations under the Highways Act 1980 in respect of winter road conditions.

Council Plan Priority – How do the Proposals Contribute to the Delivery of the Council’s Stated Objectives?

28. As the Highway Authority the Council we will ensure that it meets its Corporate Objective of “Creating safe and secure communities and provides safe and well maintained roads.”
What is the Impact of the Decision on Health Inequalities and Equality and Diversity Issues?

29. The winter service ensures that all Emergency services can continue to deliver essential services during the winter period. The Council also ensured that all residents have equal access to the winter service provided by the Council, Community Groups and Self-help.

Appendices and Background Documents

(a) Appendix 1 – Winter Maintenance Policy 2016-2019

Key Facts

Electoral Division(s): ALL Cumbria.....

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Executive Decision</th>
<th>Key Decision Included in Forward Plan</th>
<th>Exempt from call-in</th>
<th>Exemption agreed by scrutiny chair</th>
<th>Considered by scrutiny, if so detail below</th>
<th>Environmental or sustainability assessment undertaken?</th>
<th>Equality impact assessment undertaken?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Previous relevant Council or Executive decisions

None

Consideration by Overview & Scrutiny

Not considered by Overview and Scrutiny

Background Papers

None

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