

**STOCKTON-ON-TEES BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**CABINET RECOMMENDATIONS**

**PROFORMA**

Cabinet Meeting .....20th May 2010

1. Title of Item/Report

Winter Damage - Highway Repair Strategy

2. Record of the Decision

Cabinet considered a report that provided an update on the impact that the prolonged severe winter weather had had on the Borough's highway network, highlighted an action plan in place to deal with the impact and request additional funding to address the inordinate number of repairs required across the Borough..

It was explained that Officers had been working since January of this year using inspection regimes, communication with Ward Councillors and public reports to identify the additional maintenance needs. To date, the cost to repair the damage from winter weather alone was in the region of £500K.

Members noted that in order to respond to the many complaints that had been received and to ensure highway safety was maintained, Direct Services had continued to carry out responsive repairs over and above their usual maintenance activities. This had led to a pressure on the existing maintenance budgets in the year 2009/10.

Cabinet was reminded that the Government's budget statement of March 2010 had allocated £100M of additional support for Local Authorities to aid repairs as a result of the winter weather damage. The allocation to each Authority was based on the formula used to determine capital maintenance allocations, which is predominately factored on road lengths. For Stockton-on-Tees, this equated to £208,700.00 grant to be made available this financial year 2010.

In order to effectively deal with the winter backlog, further resources in the region of £300K would need to be made available to meet the estimated £500K demand. Any opportunities for further Government support were not available through discussions with Government Office North East. The existing commitments to highway maintenance from LTP capital, SBC capital and revenue remained in place to contribute to the ongoing programme for 2010/11. Therefore there Cabinet was

informed of three options that it could consider:

- i. Divert existing funding streams into the pothole backlog, meaning that programmed works would be reduced and reactive maintenance repairs would significantly increase. It was explained that this may have an adverse impact on the public perception, opinion polls and potentially on national indicators.
- ii. Only carry out pothole repairs to the value of the grant offer of £208K, leaving nearly 60% of the backlog to be either dealt with using existing funding streams as above or untreated. Again Cabinet noted that the risk associated with this may have an adverse impact on the public perception, opinion polls and potentially on national indicators. Moreover, failure to discharge a statutory duty to maintain the highway would inevitably result in an increase in insurance claims. The Authority would be unable to repudiate the claims resulting in an increase in liability and escalating costs to the Authority.
- iii. Provide an additional 'one off' resource for 2010/11 to the value of £300K, to enable the winter backlog to be dealt with as it is currently understood. This would allow existing highway maintenance programmes to continue and contribute towards a continued high public perception and a good return on national indicators throughout 2010 and going into 2011.

Whatever level of funding could be made available, the Acting Head of Technical Services in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Transport, would work with the Head of Communications to ensure that the use of resources was effectively branded and communicated to the Borough's residents and road users, using all opportunities for written, electronic and visual media.

RESOLVED that

1. the impact on resources as a result of the prolonged winter period be noted.
2. the £208,700.00 grant from central Government as the Council's share from the national allocation of £100M and ring fence the funding towards highway repair operations be noted.
3. Authority be delegated to the Acting Head of Technical Services in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Transport to agree the final programme of works and ensure the appropriate communications, under the 'Passionate about Roads' banner were put in place to keep residents informed of progress.

4. The Acting Head of Technical Services comply with the condition from DfT that a report be published by October 2010 indicating where the additional funding had been spent. This would consist of a report on the Council's web-site together with a copy to the DfT

RECOMMENDED to Council that

5. £300,000.00 be released from Council's balances to supplement the Government grant to ensure that the additional repairs can be completed.

3. Reasons for the Decision

The effective use of additional resources would assist in addressing the damage caused to the highway network as a result of the prolonged freezing conditions during the last winter period. The use of additional resources would enable the Authority to maintain a safe highway for road users and meet its statutory duty to maintain the highway. The efficient use of additional resources would help reduce accident claims and the potential additional costs that might ensue.

4. Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

None

5. Declared (Cabinet Member) Conflicts of Interest

None

6. Details of any Dispensations

Not applicable

7. Date and Time by which Call In must be executed

Midnight, Friday 28 May 2010 in respect of decisions 1 – 4 only

Proper Officer  
24 May 2010