

**STOCKTON-ON-TEES BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**CABINET RECOMMENDATIONS**

**PROFORMA**

Cabinet Meeting .....28th October 2010

1. Title of Item/Report

Review of Winter Maintenance Services

2. Record of the Decision

Members considered a report relating to a review of the Council's Winter Maintenance Services.

Members were reminded that during December 2009 and January 2010, Stockton-on-Tees and the rest of the UK experienced periods of extreme weather conditions with snow events lasting for weeks. These were, at times, combined with sub-zero Road Surface Temperatures (RST's) and air temperatures amongst some of the lowest seen in decades.

It was noted that an initial report was presented to the Executive Scrutiny Committee in February 2010 and provided Members with an overview of the provisions of the Winter Maintenance Plan. Members were also provided with a range of additional options for consideration which, if implemented and resourced, would ensure that Stockton was effectively able to deal with similar weather conditions in the future. The recommendations took account of those comments which were made as part of the consultation with Elected Members, public and staff and had been approved by the Regeneration and Transport Select Committee on 16th August 2010.

Any suggested increase in the Council response to severe weather events needed to be considered within the tight financial constraints that the Council faced and the advice and guidance from DfT.

Members noted the damaging effect the severe weather had had on the infrastructure of the Borough's roads. Following the severe weather, a full inspection of the road network revealed a significant increase in both footway and carriageway damage; attributable to the combined effects of continual freezing conditions and the gritting treatment. The Council had identified a one-off resource of £300k, in addition to the £208k received from Central Government, to spend on responsive repairs to the highway network with 50% being spent on resurfacing schemes and the remainder on the responsive repairs service.

The resilience of Stockton Borough Council to cope with significant snow events and prolonged cold periods must be at the forefront of its planning. The Council needed to be mindful to follow advice issued by the government and restrictions placed upon local authorities during severe weather events. Restrictions on gritting operation could be required by the "Salt Cell", which would come into operation during extended cold periods to help conserve salt supplies and prioritise salt deliveries. If local authorities failed to follow the advice issued by Central Government and preserve salt supplies to protect its own resilience the implications would be that the Council would be deemed to be a lower priority as it had chosen to reduce its salt stocks by gritting more than was necessary. Therefore, there was a significant risk involved in having a winter maintenance plan and snow plan, which may be construed as being wasteful.

It was explained that the proposed improvements would also need to take account of the current financial constraints and direct scarce resources to the priorities identified. Members noted that some potential areas, which could be improved may, at this point, be considered as desirable and may be worthy of further consideration as and when financial resources became available.

Members noted the main elements of the report:-

1. The review of the Winter Maintenance Plan in light of the severe weather experienced over the last winter.
2. An overview of the Snow Plan with options for additional snow clearing activities and service improvements.
3. A Salt Bins for Footway Purposes Policy
4. An improved car park treatment regime and salt bin refilling. It was noted that the costs of these improvements would be £96,508 in year one with annual costs of £77,108 thereafter (cost detailed at Appendix D to the report). Given this it was suggested that, in view of the current financial restraints, any decision be taken in the context of setting the Council's Budget, the Council's MTFP and other Council priorities at the time the budget was set.
4. An option to extend the existing salt storage facility at Cowpen Lane and the consequent option to combine priority 1 and priority 2 routes.
6. An improved Communications Action Plan was currently being

prepared, and would be ready for the start of the 2010/11 season, in order to improve residents' knowledge and ensure regular and updated information regarding SBC winter maintenance activities was easily accessible.

RESOLVED that:-

1. the actions contained within the Snow Plan be approved.
2. recommendations made with regard to revision of the salt bin assessment criteria in line with the recommendations of the Regeneration and Transport Select Committee be approved
3. a decision with regard to the implementation of the service improvements associated with an improved car park treatment regime and salt bin refilling be taken in the context of setting the Council's Budget, the Council's MTFP and other Council priorities at the time the budget is set.
4. the recommendation to signpost residents to a range of local suppliers who will be able to make salt available during the winter period, be approved.
5. the option to extend the existing salt storage facility at Cowpen Lane Depot, to be reviewed on an annual basis, taking account of availability of both finances and salt supplies and prevailing weather conditions, be noted
6. the option of incorporating the existing Priority 1 and 2 gritting routes, including the associated costs of vehicle purchases and staffing costs (in accordance with the Snow Plan) should the actions within Recommendation 5 be delivered, be noted
7. the marketing priority for Winter Maintenance publicity be identified by the Central Marketing Team in line with the Communications Plan as detailed in appendix E of the report.

3. Reasons for the Decision

To improve the Council's response to significant snow events by targeting existing resources in line with the snow plan and to consider additional resources to extend and provide additional Winter Maintenance Activity.

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

By no later than midnight on Friday 5 November 2010.

Proper Officer  
01 February 2010