

CABINET ITEM COVERING SHEET PROFORMA

AGENDA ITEM

REPORT TO CABINET

28 OCTOBER 2010

**REPORT OF CORPORATE
MANAGEMENT TEAM**

CABINET DECISION

**Environment – Lead Cabinet Member – Councillor Mrs J Beaumont
Regeneration & Transport – Lead Cabinet Member – Councillor R Cook**

REVIEW OF WINTER MAINTENANCE SERVICES

1. Summary

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 at a time. These were, at times, combined with sub-zero Road Surface Temperatures (RST's) and air temperatures amongst some of the lowest seen in decades.

This report builds upon an initial report which was presented to the Executive Scrutiny Committee in February 2010 and provides Members with an overview of the provisions of the existing Winter Maintenance Plan, whilst at the same time providing a range of additional options which need to be considered which, if implemented and resource would ensure that Stockton is effectively able to deal with similar weather conditions in the future. The recommendations do take account of those comments which were made as part of the consultation with Elected Members, public and staff. These recommendations have also been approved by the Regeneration and Transport Select Committee on 16th August 2010.

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

It is also critical to note the damaging effect the severe weather has had on the infrastructure of the Borough's roads. A full inspection of the road network was undertaken when the snow cleared which resulted in significant increases in both footway and carriageway damage; attributable to the combined effects of continual freezing conditions, which does result in cracking surfaces, as well as well as the effects of the gritting treatment. The Council has 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 also be at the forefront of our planning. In effect local authorities need to be mindful to follow advice issued by the government and restrictions placed upon local authorities during severe weather events. Restrictions on gritting operation can be required by the "Salt Cell" which comes into operation during extended cold periods to help conserve salt supplies and prioritise salt deliveries. If local authorities fail to follow the advice issued by Central Government and preserve salt supplies to protect our own resilience by concentrating effort on those areas of greatest need i.e. primary gritting routes and a minimum winter network when applicable, the

implications will be that we will be deemed to be a lower priority as we have chosen to reduce our salt stocks by gritting more than was necessary. Therefore there is a significant risk involved in having a winter maintenance plan and snow plan which may be construed as being wasteful.

The proposed improvements will also need to take account of the current financial constraints and direct scarce resources to the priorities identified. Some potential areas which can be improved may at this point be considered as desirable and may be worthy of further consideration as and when financial resources become available.

The following will be detailed within this 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. The Snow Plan consists of a set of actions, which can be brought into operation at the start of a Snow Event which will better meet the Public expectations. It should be noted that this Plan would be introduced in times of severe and prolonged bad weather where the Winter Maintenance Plan is insufficient for the conditions.
3. An improved Communications Action Plan is currently being prepared, and will be ready for the start of the 2010/11 season, in order to improve resident's knowledge and ensure regular and updated information regarding SBC winter maintenance activities is easily accessible.

2. Recommendations

1. That Members note the creation of and approve the actions contained within the Snow Plan.
2. That Members approve recommendations made with regard to revision of the salt bin assessment criteria in line with the recommendations of the Regeneration and Transport Select Committee.
3. In order for Members to approve the implementation of the service improvements associated with an improved car park treatment regime and salt bin refilling the costs of £96,508 in year one with annual costs of £77,108 thereafter (cost detailed at **Appendix D**) needs to be found. Its is therefore recommended given the current financial restraints that any decision is taken in the context of setting the Councils Budget, the Councils MTFP and other Council priorities at the time the budget is set.
4. That Members note and approve the recommendation to signpost residents to a range of local suppliers who will be able to make salt available during the winter period.
5. That Members note the option to extend the existing salt storage facility at Cowpen Lane Depot will be reviewed on an annual basis, taking account of availability of both finances and salt supplies and prevailing weather conditions.
6. That Members note 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.

7. That Members note marketing priority for Winter Maintenance publicity is identified by the Central Marketing Team in line with the Communications Plan as detailed in **Appendix E**.

3. Reasons for the Recommendations/Decision(s)

To improve the Councils 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. Members' Interests

Members (including co-opted Members with voting rights) should consider whether they have a personal interest in the item as defined in the Council's code of conduct (**paragraph 8**) and, if so, declare the existence and nature of that interest in accordance with paragraph 9 of the code.

Where a Member regards him/herself as having a personal interest in the item, he/she must then consider whether that interest is one which a member of the public, with knowledge of the relevant facts, would reasonably regard as so significant that it is likely to prejudice the Member's judgement of the public interest (**paragraphs 10 and 11 of the code of conduct**).

A Member with a prejudicial interest in any matter must withdraw from the room where the meeting considering the business is being held -

- in a case where the Member is attending a meeting (including a meeting of a select committee) but only for the purpose of making representations, answering questions or giving evidence, provided the public are also allowed to attend the meeting for the same purpose whether under statutory right or otherwise, immediately after making representations, answering questions or giving evidence as the case may be;
- in any other case, whenever it becomes apparent that the business is being considered at the meeting;

and must not exercise executive functions in relation to the matter and not seek improperly to influence the decision about the matter (**paragraph 12 of the Code**).

Further to the above, it should be noted that any Member attending a meeting of Cabinet, Select Committee etc; whether or not they are a Member of the Cabinet or Select Committee concerned, must declare any personal interest which they have in the business being considered at the meeting (unless the interest arises solely from the Member's membership of, or position of control or management on any other body to which the Member was appointed or nominated by the Council, or on any other body exercising functions of a public nature, when the interest only needs to be declared if and when the Member speaks on the matter), and if their interest is prejudicial, they must also leave the meeting room, subject to and in accordance with the provisions referred to above.

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

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The resilience of Stockton Borough Council to cope with significant snow events and prolonged cold periods must also be at the forefront of our planning. In effect local authorities need to be mindful to follow advice issued by the government and restrictions placed upon local authorities during severe weather events. Restrictions on gritting operation can be required by the "Salt Cell" which comes into operation during extended cold periods to help conserve salt supplies and prioritise salt deliveries. If local authorities fail to follow the advice issued by Central Government and preserve salt supplies to protect our own resilience by concentrating effort on those areas of greatest need i.e. primary gritting routes and a minimum winter network when applicable, the implications will be that we will be deemed to be a lower priority as we have chosen to reduce our salt stocks by gritting more than was necessary. Therefore there is a significant risk involved in having a winter maintenance plan and snow plan which may be construed as being wasteful.

The proposed improvements will also need to take account of the current financial constraints and direct scarce resources to the priorities identified. Some potential areas which can be improved may at this point be considered as desirable and may be worthy of further consideration as and when financial resources become available.

The following will be detailed within this 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. The Snow Plan consists of a set of actions, which can be brought into operation at the start of a Snow Event which will better meet the Public expectations. It should be noted that this Plan would be introduced in times of severe and prolonged bad weather where the Winter Maintenance Plan is insufficient for the conditions.
3. An improved Communications Action Plan is currently being prepared, and will be ready for the start of the 2010/11 season, in order to improve resident's knowledge and ensure regular and updated information regarding SBC winter maintenance activities is easily accessible.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Approve the creation of and the recommendations contained within the Snow Plan.
2. Approve recommendations made with regard to revision of the salt bin assessment criteria in line with the recommendations of the Regeneration and Transport Select Committee.
3. In order for Members to approve the implementation of the service improvements associated with an improved car park treatment regime and salt bin refilling the costs of £96,508 in year one with annual costs of £77,108 thereafter (cost detailed at **Appendix D**) needs to be found. It is therefore recommended given the current financial restraints that any decision is taken in the context of setting the Councils Budget, the Councils MTFP and other Council priorities at the time the budget is set.
4. Note and approve the recommendation to signpost residents to a range of local suppliers who will be able to make salt available during the winter period.
5. Note the option to extend the existing salt storage facility at Cowpen Lane Depot be reviewed on an annual basis, taking account of availability of both finances and salt supplies and prevailing weather conditions.
6. Note 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.
7. That marketing priority for Winter Maintenance publicity is identified by the Central Marketing Team in line with the Communications Plan as detailed at **Appendix E**.

DETAIL

Background

1. The cold weather seen at the end of 2009 leading into the early part of 2010 has been described as a "one-in-thirty-year event". Prolonged snow and ice linked to the extreme weather seen in February 2009 suggested that a review of Stockton Borough Council

Winter Maintenance policy would provide an opportunity to revise operational responses to these extreme events to more readily meet the expectations of residents.

2. The temperatures in early January 2010 were so extreme the River Tees in Stockton froze. This is an indication as to the severity of the extreme prolonged weather conditions and suggests our policies will benefit from a review. During the extreme weather event Stockton received many compliments for the work undertaken and some complaints where resident's expectations were not met. The Council as a Highway Authority has a statutory duty under the Highways Act 1980, to remove snow and maintain the highway so far as is reasonably practicable so that safe passage along a highway is not endangered by snow or ice.
3. The Council has a hierarchical approach to road gritting activities. The current Gritting Priority 1 Routes include principal roads, important commuter routes, roads to industrial establishments, important bus routes and roads serving shopping centres. These routes are gritted each time the gritting crews are called out. The Council also has Priority 2 Routes which support frontline Services (Refuse-Recycling), known trouble and accident spots not covered in Priority 1's and all other authorised bus routes.
4. During the extreme weather there was significant action taken during the period from 18th December 2009 up until 10th January 2010 and during that period we completed an unprecedented 68 gritting runs using 4000 tonnes of salt covering approximately 17,000 miles of network. This is a significant increase in the number of gritting runs as the same period during 2008/9 only required 20 gritting runs.

Summary of Customer Comments and Complaints

5. Feedback, Comments and Complaints.

Member's comments can broadly be summarised as:-

- Suggestions for Extending of Priority Routes
- Suggested additional Salt bins and policy review
- A review and potential re prioritisation of areas to be hand gritted
- Additional Allocation of Resources to winter maintenance to improve response times and coverage

6. From 1st December 2009 to 5th January 2010 a total of 1679 Winter Maintenance requests and enquiries were received, this included 220 requests for a new salt bin (of which 22 were approved), compared to the same period in 2008/09 where we received 516 enquiries in total.
7. There were also 51 complaints/comments through the corporate route.
8. From analysis of the enquiries and complaints a total of 31 areas had requests of 3 or more for gritting and require further action.
9. Many of the complaints received related to estate roads and pavements in particular areas with gradient slopes and bends. Also many requests related to areas where there are high numbers of elderly residents. We have responded to this by including these areas on a gritting route where possible and have also included OAP accommodation areas within manual clearance routes within the Snow Plan.

Summary of Staff Comments

10. Merge Priority 1 and Priority 2 routes.
 - Additional 5 vehicles required in order to effectively combine the current 7 Priority 1 routes with a further 5 Priority 2 gritting routes.
 - Additional standby crews required which will require an additional 3 staff per vehicle (15 staff in total) in order to ensure that there is adequate rota coverage.
 - Additional salt stocks required and associated storage capacity.
 - Priority 2 routes cannot be ploughed due to width of the road, car parking, traffic calming schemes and the close proximity of domestic gardens to many roads.

The Winter Service Plan

11. The current Winter Service Plan (2009/10) is based on the recommendations contained in *Well-maintained Highways – Code of Practice for Highway Maintenance Management – 2005* and *Lessons from the Severe Weather February 2009*.
12. In December 2009 the UK Roads Liaison Group introduced Complementary Guidance to 'Well-maintained Highways' which completely re-wrote Section 13 and Appendix H that deal with Winter Service.
13. Stockton's Winter Service Plan for 2010/11 and the proposed Snow Plan will be based on the recommendations contained in the Complementary Guidance. It should be noted that the Secretary of State has commissioned an independent review of Winter Service delivery in England and its findings are due to be published in two stages: first recommendations in July 2010 and second in autumn 2010. Any findings that are relevant to the delivery of winter service in Stockton will be incorporated in the Winter Service Plan and Snow Plan.
14. Analysis of the Complementary Guidance shows that Stockton's current Winter Service Plan is closely in line with its recommendations and there are only a few areas that need fine-tuning or addressing, namely:
 - Minimum Winter Network to be established defining gritting routes which will provide the minimum essential service to the community. This will be during periods where central government salt rationing controls, through the Salt Cell group, are implemented nationwide in order to ensure that stocks are distributed evenly and effectively to those areas in priority need i.e. where stocks are running lowest.
 - Establish an effective communications action plan with public before and during both normal and severe weather conditions.
 - Treatment routes to be defined for carriageways, footways and cycle ways for pre-salting and snow clearance where appropriate.
 - Consider the position regarding mutual aid with other authorities.
 - Consideration to be given to establishing a local/regional salt storage facility in conjunction with neighbouring authorities.
15. The issue of mutual aid depends on neighbouring authorities' treatment policy, their salt stocks and re-supply schedules. However, it should also be noted by Members that the availability of salt is likely to be considered through Central Government intervention via

Government Office North East (GONE). During the national salt shortage of last winter and the implementation of the central government Salt Cell, all the north east local authorities had to provide regular returns indicating their salt stocks and re-supply deliveries to GONE Regional Resilience Team who collated the data before providing it to the Salt Cell. North east local authorities have expressed an interest in continuing a version of this arrangement in future winters i.e. one local authority would act as a regional co-ordinator and the others would regularly provide details of their salt stocks and re-supply schedules to the co-ordinating authority who would collate the data and make it available to the participating authorities. From this data council's could make decisions on mutual aid based on accurate information. Provision of this service starting in winter 2010/11 is currently under discussion with the other north east local authorities.

16. As regards the establishment of a salt storage facility with neighbouring authorities, preliminary talks on establishing a local/regional salt storage facility have been held with North East authorities but there are numerous issues to be resolved before any decisions are reached i.e. location of storage facility, method of operation, projected costs.
17. As a measure to aid gritting action decision making it is intended to commission a new permanent weather station on the A67 Thirsk Road (immediately south of Kirklevington) and purchase a mobile non-invasive weather station to gather weather data at various locations throughout the borough. These will be operational during the 2010/11 season and have already been purchased within existing resources.

The Snow Plan

18. The introduction of the Snow Plan for Stockton will provide a contingency plan to come into force during times of severe weather conditions i.e. blizzard conditions and/or heavy snowfall with a 5-day weather forecast indicating further snowfall and temperatures at or below freezing. Given the recent national difficulties with salt supplies three scenarios will be devised, each one dealing with a different scenario:
 - Salt stocks at normal operational levels with re-supplies arriving on-time and time for the quantities to be ordered.
 - The normal service, as defined within the Winter Maintenance Plan, in addition to existing treatments as described within the Snow Plan.
 - National/Regional salt shortage with supplies unpredictable and for reduced amounts with supply being controlled by Government Office North East.
19. The Snow Plan will provide details on the following items:
 - Guidance for Winter Service Duty Officers on treatment actions and salting rates of spread.
 - Level of salt stock resilience, rationing of salt
 - Clearance of snow on carriageways and footways
 - Merging of the current Priority 1 and Priority 2 Gritting Routes
 - Snow Ploughing Routes
 - Footway snow clearance routes
 - Minimum Winter Network
 - Re-stocking of Salt Bins
 - Communications
 - Public
 - Members
 - Media
 - Other interested parties (emergency services, public transport companies, schools, Council departments etc)

20. It is anticipated that the Snow Plan will be completed in time for winter 2010/11 however operational elements of the Snow Plan have already been completed and are included at **Appendix A.**

Priority 1 Gritting Routes

21. The existing seven Priority 1 gritting routes are fit for purpose and all routes are operating at their maximum capacity, however they will be updated following Member consultation.

Priority 2 Gritting Routes

22. The existing five Priority 2 routes are to be reviewed and it is proposed to mirror them to support the Refuse and Recycling Collection Rounds.
23. Not all the roads on the Refuse Rounds would be treated as this would be impractical and uneconomic but areas where refuse vehicles have encountered problems in icy weather have been identified. These areas will be added to the Priority 2 routes and checked to determine if they present access problems for gritting vehicles and if so what alternative solutions are available.
24. It is proposed that the Priority 2 routes will be treated alongside the Priority 1 routes. This will have an affect on gritting fleet resources though this will only be in cases when the Snow Plan is introduced. This arrangement is included within the Snow Plan although will only be viable when the authority is able to secure enough supplies of salt to be able to treat a combined network of priority 1 and priority 2 routes.

Priority 3 Roads

25. This refers to the remainder of the highway network not designated on a Priority 1 or 2 Gritting Route and any treatment is at the discretion of the Duty Officer.

Ploughing Routes

26. A set of Ploughing Routes will be created to provide snow clearance to:
- the strategic road network
 - access to emergency service facilities
 - busiest public transport and commuter routes (not on roads restricted by traffic calming measures)
 - access to industrial estates
 - at least one route into rural communities

The use of ploughing routes will be introduced at the discretion of the Duty Engineer during heavy and prolonged snow events.

Minimum Winter Network

27. It is recommended in the Complementary Guidance to Well-maintained Highways, Code of Practice for Highway Maintenance Management, December 2009 that a Minimum Winter Network is established by local authorities for possible use in times of severe weather conditions and/or salt shortage.
28. This network will be created in consultation with the emergency services, public transport companies, neighbouring authorities and Cleveland Emergency Planning Unit and is intended to treat those routes which will provide a minimum essential service to the public. It is also expected that during the implementation of the Snow Plan and when the minimum

network is established, a reduction in the grit spread rate used in gritters will be established in order to protect our salt supplies, e.g. a reduction from a 20 gramme to 10 gramme spread in many cases.

Salt Bin Provision

29. The use of salt bins may be considered on Priority 2 routes and Priority 3 roads, provided this use is confined to difficult sites i.e. steep gradients, severe bends, road junctions and known trouble spots. Salt heaps may be used but, bearing in mind the damaging environmental effects, they should be used sparingly and only at difficult sites or where regular water flow from verges occurs. The Council will consider requests for new salt bins and will undertake salt bin risk assessments.
30. As part of the winter maintenance review, a full benchmarking exercise has been undertaken in order to identify how other authorities manage salt bins within their areas. A range of authorities have been contacted as well as contact made with the Association of Public Service Excellence (APSE) where our current policy was compared against that of other authorities.
31. After considering the assessment criteria details of many other UK LA's including Durham CC, North Yorkshire CC, Lancashire CC and Cumbria CC, It was agreed in consultation with the Regeneration and Transport Select Committee to keep the current criteria as prescribed within the SBC Winter Maintenance Plan. A copy of the salt bin assessment form is included at **Appendix B**.

Salt Bins for Footway Purposes –Policy

32. Salt bins in residential areas are intended to be utilised by members of the public for application of salt on adjacent footpaths.
33. In exceptional circumstances the use of salt bins containing salt or a mixture of salt and grit may be considered for difficult footway areas:
 - approaches to, and across the structure of, footbridges
 - approaches to, and through, subways
 - well-used footpaths on steep gradients
34. Their use should be considered carefully, bearing in mind the resources available for spreading the grit and the subsequent increased cleansing requirements. The Council will consider requests for new salt bins and will undertake salt bin risk assessments.
35. Removal of snow and/or salting of footways will only be undertaken by labour employed on the highway in their day-to-day activities, and those workers employed on street cleansing and horticultural services. Activities shall initially be confined to those footways, footbridges and subways are shown in the Snow Plan.
36. An assessment of all salt bins currently in the borough has been undertaken and the results are shown below; of all the 'historic' bins using the current form only 50% should be sited and using the new proposed bin only 39% would be sited.
37. Following further discussions with the Regeneration and Transport Select Committee, Members were not in favour of a large-scale reduction on the current level of salt bins which are placed around the Borough. It was felt that this would lead to significant complaints and general dissatisfaction from the public and the lack of salt bins may also lead to an increase in accidents in locations where salt bins have been removed. Officers have reviewed the proposed salt bin policy contained in the original report presented to Regeneration & Transport Select Committee on 19th July 2010.

38. Officers have been asked to consider the feasibility of retaining the existing number (316) of salt bins, though adopting a hierarchy to re-stocking, in a similar way to the road network hierarchy.
39. Using the recommended best practice guidance produced from DfT and used by other Local Authorities, would lead to 157 bins being sited across the Borough. These will in effect become our key strategic network or Priority 1 salt bins that will be re-stocked twice weekly with salt between the months of December and February. When salt rationing occurs, it may be necessary to re-fill with a sand mix or other suitable alternative to rock salt, to help maintain supplies.
40. The remaining 159 salt bins will then in effect become supplementary or Priority 2, salt bins and will be fully stocked with salt at the beginning of the winter season and will be re-filled once all Priority 1 salt bins have been re-filled and when it is reasonably practicable to do so. Thereafter, priority 2 salt bins will be re-filled with a sand mix or other suitable alternative to rock salt, to help maintain supplies. No further priority 2 bins will be allocated.
41. At the meeting of the Regeneration & Transport Select Committee on 19th July 2010, Members advised on the option of retaining salt bins all year round. Officers evaluate that of the total 316 salt bins, 237 may be sited all year round. This option remains for Members to further consider.
42. At the meeting of the Regeneration & Transport Select Committee on 19th July 2010, Members advised on the option of utilising larger salt bins, to compensate for the potential reduction in the numbers of salt bins, should Members wish to implement national codes of good practice. Given the proposal to retain the existing numbers of salt bins under a hierarchical approach, this option has now been discounted.
43. The table below provides Members with details of Salt Bins within the Borough and their new priority rating

WARD	PRESENT			PRIORITY	
	SALT BIN	SALT HEAP	TOTAL	PRIORITY 1	PRIORITY 2
Billingham Central	5	0	5	4	1
Billingham East	8	0	8	4	4
Billingham North	7	0	7	6	1
Billingham South	11	2	13	7	6
Billingham West	7	2	9	2	7
Bishopsgarth & Elm Tree	15	0	15	7	8
Eaglescliffe	23	0	23	13	10
Fairfield	14	0	14	4	10
Grangefield	15	0	15	8	7
Hartburn	13	0	13	1	12
Ingleby Barwick East	11	2	13	3	10
Ingleby Barwick West	3	2	5	2	3
Mandale & Victoria	6	0	6	5	1
Newtown	14	0	14	9	5
Northern Parishes	9	3	12	7	5
Norton North	24	0	24	16	8
Norton South	19	0	19	11	8
Norton West	15	0	15	5	10

Parkfield & Oxbridge	5	0	5	3	2
Roseworth	7	0	7	4	3
Stainsby Hill	3	0	3	1	2
Stockton Town Centre	17	0	17	7	10
Village	6	0	6	2	4
Western Parishes	9	0	9	7	2
Yarm	37	2	39	19	20
TOTAL BINS ISSUED			316	157	159

44. Currently, bins are brought in and stored between April/May (depending on weather conditions) and 30th September. This results in additional labour costs in relation to the time taken to complete this exercise.
45. It is viable to leave the majority of bins out throughout the year saving time and labour costs annually; an assessment has been undertaken which results in approximately 237 of the current 316 bins being suitable for siting all year round. However, it should also be noted that if the new salt bin assessment policy was introduced, the number of salt bins sited within the Borough would decrease therefore reducing the time spent on placement and removal of bins.
46. It currently costs £4400 to site bins at the start of each winter period and then remove them and store them at the end of each winter. If the 237 bins were left out all year round (with the remainder being taken in and stored over the summer months) there would be a one-off cost of £4485 to fix the bins permanently although there would be no further costs for placing bins out for the new season / taking in and storing after the end of each winter period.

Salt Bin Re-filling

47. Concerns were expressed by residents during this latest winter period about the time it took the Council to refill salt bins. This was inevitable in view of the extent of the weather conditions as well as the fact that many residents were using this salt provision inappropriately by choosing to take salt to treat their own private property and drives. This reduced the effectiveness of the salt as the advice issued to residents is that salt should only be used to treat carriageways and footways (in association with pavement clearance).
48. In conjunction with the review of the type and volume of salt bins that are currently in use, the proposal is to respond to the concerns raised in relation to the salt bin refilling process by refilling twice per week for the 157 priority 1 bins and at the start of each season and when resources allow thereafter for the 159 priority 2 bins (in periods where the Snow Plan is implemented). A full list of all Priority 1 and 2 bins are included at **Appendix C**.
49. The table below indicates the range of costs associated with the refilling of salt bins on a twice weekly basis during the months of December to February. This is based on a requirement of refilling for 10 weeks over the winter period on the proposed 157 bins which would be deemed as priority 1 with the remaining 159 being refilled at the start of the winter season and thereafter when resources allow.

	Costs for Removing and resiting bins	Purchase and replacement costs	Material and labour costs	Total costs for Year One	Total Costs – Year Two onwards
Current Provision Based upon refilling 316 bins once every two weeks (based on 10 weeks)	£4400 in labour costs	Replacement costs of around £1120 annually for damaged and missing bins	£31,540 (£9560 in material costs and £21980 in labour costs).	£35940	£35940 (Current Cost)
Revised Provision based on 316 bins (priority 1 and priority 2 refilling regimes) provision of 316 salt bins with twice weekly refilling between December and February for priority 1 bins and a reduced frequency for priority 2 bins(based on 10 weeks) – with bins being left out all year round	Initial cost of £4485 for the permanent fixing of 237 bins (with the remainder being taken in and stored in the summer)	Replacement costs of around £1120 annually for damaged and missing bins.	£57,340 (£17,380 material and £39,960 labour)	£61,825	£57,340

50. The table above indicates two scenarios for salt bin refilling, However if Members wanted the current allocation of 316 bins refilled within half a day, the implications would be significant as the current provision is that salt bins are refilled in 11 days using 2 men. To increase to capacity to be able to refill 316 bins within half a day would require the use of 22 men and 11 vehicles – this is operationally and financially impractical.
51. Members should also note that in periods of extreme weather e.g. in cases where the Snow Plan is introduced and/or in periods where Salt Cell restrictions are enforced, the authority will need to prioritise salt reserves in order to ensure that gritting routes can be treated either universally or as part of a minimum winter network. This will require the use of sand only in salt bins for a temporary period of time until restrictions can be lifted.

Sale of Salt

52. During the latest winter, increased requests from residents were received in relation to the sale of salt. We were unable to provide a service in view of the salt rationing that was enforced through the government's Salt Cell. It is highly likely that the provision of salt rationing will continue to be a theme for local authorities in the coming years as there is already a prediction of a national shortfall of over 250,000 tonnes for salt availability for the coming season, based on normal usage by local authorities. Therefore, this severely limits our potential to make salt available for sale to the public especially given the proposals to use more salt as part of the Snow Plan. In addition this will reduce the council's salt resilience and be in direct conflict with recently issued Government guidance.
53. A consultation exercise has been undertaken with garden centres / hardware stores / DIY centres across the Borough it was found that 95% were intending to sell grit over the next winter using their own suppliers.

54. The other options considered which are operationally unfeasible are:

Council providing salt for sale via a delivery basis from a central store

55. The only depot which could be considered would be Yarm Road, however the store would need to be manned by a suitable operative with a fork lift licence; the store would need to be equipped with appropriate moving / lifting gear and resources for taking delivery. A major issue would be the ability of a dedicated operative to keep up with the demand if we encounter the severe and prolonged weather we experienced last winter. This could also have knock on effects with other services if extra workforce needs drafting in to cover higher demands, sickness and holiday cover. Also, if demand cannot be met due to the sheer volume of salt required or if the salt cell arrangements are established, a result would be to customer dissatisfaction and further complaints and damage to reputation.

56. Another major area of concern associated with this option is the requirement for additional site security in order to safeguard salt supplies as well as the associated finance resource implications which would be required to process payments for salt.

Council providing salt for sale from Collection Points throughout the Borough

57. There are numerous drop in points across the Borough, Cowpen Depot, Municipal, Thornaby Library which can be used, however, these locations would again need to be manned by an appropriate operative with a fork lift licence or the store would need to be equipped with appropriate moving / lifting gear. The major issues for these locations would be storage facilities and also it would have a severe impact on staffing capabilities in times of high demand and as mentioned above there are issues over sickness, holiday cover and customer dissatisfaction if salt cell kicks in. For the same reasons as identified above, it is also recommended that this option is rejected.

From Partnership's with businesses within the Borough e.g. garden centres/hardware stores/DIY centres.

58. This option is more viable than those others considered as it allows an effective signposting service to our residents. A list of local suppliers would be posted on the Councils Website informing of where salt could be purchased. After consultation with the garden centres / hardware stores / DIY centres, all agreed to be included on the list. The suppliers cover the full Borough which will make purchasing the grit much easier than purchasing from The Council. A list of those suppliers in the Borough who will be making salt available this year is below. In view of the operational difficulties associated with the sale of salt, as well as salt availability it is recommended with support from the Regeneration and Transport Select Committee, that we signpost residents only to a list of local suppliers where salt will be available for sale including, if charged, their delivery costs.

- Bennett DIY - 102 Westbury Street Thornaby Stockton on Tees, Cleveland, TS17 6NA 01642 676087
- Fix-it DIY - 24 Myton Road Ingleby Barwick Stockton on Tees, Cleveland, TS17 0WA 01642 767575
- KP DIY - High Newham Court Stockton on Tees, Cleveland, TS19 8PD 01642 646003
- Marlin DIY and Building Supplies - 2 Rimswell Parade Stockton on Tees, Cleveland, TS19 7LB 01642 355400
- JT Dove Ltd - Cheltenham Road, Stockton on Tees. TS18 2AD 01642 673215

- Build Centre - Riverside, Town Centre, Stockton-On-Tees TS18 1BZ - 01642 604 646
- James Burrell Ltd - Lockheed Close, Stockton-on-Tees TS18 3 - 01642 660 820
- Jewson Ltd - Junction Road, Stockton-on-Tees TS19 9PB - 01642 672 155
- Joseph Parr Ltd - Blue House Point Road, Stockton-on-Tees TS18 2PJ - 01642 679 381
- MKM Building Supplies - Unit 1a, Lockheed Close, Preston Farm Industrial Estate, Stockton-On-Tees, Cleveland TS18 3SE 01642 853530
- Burdens Ltd - Crofton Rd, Portrack Lane, Stockton-On-Tees, Cleveland TS18 2QZ
Tel: 01642 608806
- B & Q - Cheltenham Road Portrack Lane, Stockton-on-Tees, Cleveland TS18 2SA
- 01642 667 800
- Wickes Building Supplies Ltd Stockton on Tees, Lustrum Avenue, Stockton on Tees, Cleveland, TS18 2RB. 01642 633136
- Peter Barrats Stockton - Yarm Rd, Stockton-On-Tees, Cleveland TS18 3SQ Tel: 01642 613433
- Sir Plants-A lot - Aranvale, Sandy Lane West, Billingham, Cleveland TS22 5NB
Tel: 01740 644977
- 24 Mill Lane Billingham, Cleveland TS23 1HF - 01642 533 359
- Archibald Co Limited, Lockheed Close, Preston Farm Industrial Estate, Stockton-on-Tees, TS18 3SE 01642 677 656
- GCH Gardens Cowpen Lane Billingham TS23 4AT 01642 563951/07785510140

Salt Depot Re-Stocking

59. The current salt storage facility holds 3,500 tonnes of 6mm rock salt. The current site has enough space to increase the current storage capacity by nearly two-fold, meaning that we could store up to 6,500 tonnes of rock salt based upon predictions of around 150 gritting runs per season, this equates to 280 x 10 gramme gritting runs or 140 x 20 gram gritting runs. Based on current estimates of salt stocks within the UK, there is no guarantee that even with an extended salt barn we would be able to effectively increase our stock holding of salt before the start of the 2010/11 winter season. Costs for this extension are included at **Appendix D**.
60. With regard to obtaining supplies of salt, this has proven problematic over the past two winters as a result of the severity of the winter which has had an effect upon salt availability across the UK. Consequently, restrictions have been placed on LA's and salt suppliers which have made it almost impossible to build up adequate salt reserves; so much so that many LA's have taken the decision to restrict operations and reduce coverage on principal and secondary routes. However as demonstrated in below, extending the salt barn will not actually guarantee being able to obtain sufficient salt to increase our stock levels as we are being closely monitored by the Salt Cell; non-compliance of issued guidance is highly likely to result in restrictions being placed upon supplies which may impact upon our ability to cover priority gritting routes and salt bin refilling.
61. The potential to increase the storage capacity of the current salt store is only a viable option if we are able to stock-pile adequate tonnage during the summer months and if ordering restrictions have been lifted at this time. The Regeneration and Transport Select Committee

agreed with the deferment of the extension to the existing salt storage facility and recommended that this, and the additional stock-piling of salt, be reviewed on an annual basis. Other options that will be considered include a joint procurement and storage arrangements with other Tees Valley partners as well as additional reserve sites elsewhere in the Borough e.g. Yarm Road depot.

62. The following advice was issued to all Local Authorities by John Dowie, Director of the Regional and Local Transport Directorate at the DfT on 14th April 2010:

'Over the past 2 winter seasons, the UK has experienced salt shortages as a result of extended periods of winter weather. In each of these seasons, the situation was severe enough to warrant the initiation of the 'Salt Cell'. Salt Cell 2010 compiled information from all UK Highway Winter Service Authorities, provided delivery advice to salt suppliers which supported the decision to request salt efficiency savings.

*Following such a severe winter, public expectations seem to be that winter service must be improved for the coming season. **In response, intelligence suggests that some authorities are considering increasing their treatable network through 'self help' and providing an extending salting regime for highways. These two actions will only serve to lower the already strained resilience of UK salt stocks and their effect should be seriously considered against this fact before any policy is implemented.***

One option is to increased pre-seasons salt stocks, albeit this merely buys time rather than resolves the structural shortfall between UK production and UK consumption of salt.

*After such a prolonged period requiring heavy sating treatment, national salt stocks have only recently started to recover. As of the 15th March 2010, the UK salt stockpile stood at less than 330,000 tonnes. Having received the initial stockholding intentions of all Highway Authorities going into next season and taking account of probable production rates from UK salt mines, **current projections indicate a deficit in the region of 250,000 tonnes going into November 2010.***

With UK salt mines already running at full capacity, the only way to acquire extra supplies would be to secure salt from overseas. However, indications are than many countries in Europe who are in a similar position have already begun to procure supplies, restricting the amount available for the UK market.

In light of this, as well as looking to increase pre-season stocks, it is vital that consideration is also given to increasing resilience through more effective salt usage.

Areas for efficiencies include: the approaches taken to dealing with snow, treatment material selection, salt storage, vehicle calibration, spreading rates and improved treatment matrices. It is only by maximising the potential resilience within each authority that the national problem can be properly addressed.

63. In summary, if we do not follow the advice issued by Central Government and preserve salt supplies to protect our own resilience by concentrating effort on those areas of greatest need i.e. primary gritting routes and a minimum winter network when applicable, the implications will be that we will be deemed to be a lower priority as we have chosen to reduce our salt stocks by gritting more than was necessary. It is therefore there is significant risk involved in having a winter maintenance plan and snow plan which may be construed as being wasteful.

Community Engagement and PR and Marketing

64. This aspect will be crucial to the success of future winter maintenance operations. The level of telephone calls and other contact from residents increased significantly during the period

of severe weather in December 2009 and January 2010. In order to ensure that the Council is effectively communicating details of the service that we provide in severe conditions, we will produce a specific marketing and publicity plan which will be used to increase the awareness of our residents on what provision exists and what measures they can take to reduce the effects of the weather on their everyday life.

65. Examples of areas that will be covered include a public information leaflet on winter maintenance, articles in Stockton News and the local press, improved information via the website (including information on gritting activities via a new map-based facility), increased information to Elected Members on services provided as well as attendance by Officers at residents meetings to cover any questions on provision.
66. There has been some coverage in the press in recent years of legal challenges brought by residents who may have slipped on treated areas of footways, either through interventions by the local authority or private residents. In what is an increasingly litigious society, research has been conducted with other LA's as well as advice sought from Legal in relation to what the Council, and indeed residents can do themselves, when undertaking pavement clearance.
67. The advice received does conclude that it is acceptable for the Council or private residents to make reasonable efforts to clear pathways etc in adverse weather conditions as long as their actions are not negligent or in any way that would foreseeably make the situation more dangerous e.g. placing hot water onto a pathway to clear snow which is likely to freeze over again quickly therefore creating a greater hazard. It is suggested that 'reasonable' interventions would be looked upon favourably by the Courts should any legal challenge follow.
68. During prolonged periods of bad weather the level of customer requests and queries increases significantly. This tends to be in relation to comments and complaints in relation to gritting routes and salt bin refilling as well.
69. In order to provide a greater degree of customer information, it is proposed to provide up to date gritting information on the Council's website. This is something that is already provided although does not go into significant detail about gritting arrangements for specific routes although maps are also available through Maps@Stockton.
70. A project is currently ongoing which will provide map based gritting treatment information which can be accessed by residents through the corporate website. This is something new to LA's although it is hoped that this facility will be available from October 2010.
71. An effective marketing and awareness campaign is required to ensure that residents and Elected Members receive constant and up to date information on both weather and winter maintenance activities. Officers are meeting with colleagues from the Internal Communications Team in June in order to produce and effective plan which will be introduced from October 2010 onwards. **Appendix E.**

Car Park Clearance

72. The table overleaf indicates the current winter maintenance provision that is currently provided within the Council's car parks throughout the Borough.

Property	Location	Salt Bin	Gritting	Notes
ART GALLERY	Billingham			
BULLGARTH	Billingham	Y		
ROTHBURY STREET	Billingham			
LOW GRANGE AVENUE	Billingham			
MARSH HOUSE AVENUE	Billingham			
STATION ROAD	Billingham			

HARPER TERRACE	Hartburn			
HARPER PARADE	Hartburn			
BOWESFIELD LANE	Parkfield			
ST PETERS	Parkfield			
BONE STREET	Stockton			
BRIGHT STREET	Stockton	Y	Y	
ALBERTO STREET	Stockton			Height Restrictor
BATH LANE EAST	Stockton	Y	Y	
BATH LANE NORTH	Stockton	Y	Y	
MARITIME	Stockton	Y		
BISHOP STREET	Stockton	Y	Y	
SKINNER STREET SOUTH	Stockton	Y		
THOMPSON STREET WEST	Stockton	Y	Y	
HUME STREET	Stockton	Y		
BUCHANAN STREET	Stockton			
LAING STREET	Stockton	Y		
PARLIAMENT STREET	Stockton		Y	
SKINNER STREET NORTH	Stockton	Y		
MUNICIPAL BUILDINGS	Stockton	Y		Barrier Controlled
THOMPSON STREET EAST	Stockton	Y	Y	
TOWER STREET STOCKTON	Stockton	Y	Y	
CHURCH ROAD INNER	Stockton			Barrier controlled
CHURCH ROAD OUTER	Stockton			Barrier controlled
DAIRY	Stockton			Barrier controlled
LAWSON STREET	Stockton			
LODGE STREET	Stockton	Y		
LORD NELSON	Stockton			
PRINCE REGENT STREET	Stockton	Y		
RIVERSIDE	Stockton		Y	
THE SQUARE	Stockton	Y	Y	
WEST ROW	Stockton	Y	Y	
PEEL STREET	Thornaby			
CHELMSFORD STREET	Thornaby			
THE OLD MARKET	Yarm	Y		
CASTLE DYKE WYND	Yarm			
YARM STATION	Yarm		Y	
FORUM	Billingham			Shut down

73. In order to ensure that there is a consistent approach throughout all areas of the Borough, it is proposed that all sites are included either on a gritting route or through the provision of a salt bin. It should also be noted that the practice of locking salt bins (as in the case with the winter of 2009/10) should be terminated to ensure that parking staff and CFYA operatives have access to undertake manual salting activities. Associated cost in **Appendix D**

Other Measures

74. In locations where potential roads closures are required, i.e. Leven Bank it is also suggested that consideration should be given for the use of snow barriers, the same as those deployed on the A66 Pennine section, which are used by the Police to close the road in cases of severe bad weather.
75. Please refer to **Appendix D** for the costs associated with this option.

Holiday and Standby Arrangements

76. In order to comply with the requirements of the Snow Plan, which could be introduced at any point during the winter period, it is proposed that CFYA identify a range of operational staff to be placed on stand-by in order to provide adequate coverage for snow clearance functions – this is in addition to the arrangements which exist for stand-by arrangement for winter maintenance gritting activities.

77. Managers will also be required to closely monitor the amount of annual leave which is being authorised over the winter period to ensure that a core amount of staff within Highway Maintenance and Horticultural Services is always available in order to fulfil the priority treatment areas which are contained within the Snow Plan. A core workforce of 50 people will be required to cover actions within the Plan which will be managed through holiday restrictions and stand-by payments where required.
78. It should also be acknowledged that restrictions on holiday entitlement over the winter period is likely to impact upon our ability to maintain service levels at other times of the year. For example, horticultural services staff may be required to provide snow clearance cover in the winter which would result in more annual leave being taken in the Summer, at a time when as many resources as possible are required for grass cutting and other summer maintenance activities. Additional labour from approved agencies may also be deployed when required.

Post Snow Inspection and Repairs

Roads & Footpaths

79. Upon the onset of prolonged severe weather (as per this year) the inspections team will initiate increased frequencies of safety inspections (weekly or fortnightly) of all our priority routes to identify any repairs requiring attention, deterioration of the carriageway surfacing and any areas which require urgent gritting action. Upon the snow thawing all priority monthly walked inspections will be undertaken immediately followed by three monthly detailed inspections of other priority routes – as these areas have a high level of pedestrian footfall, and subsequently a higher potential risk of injury and accidents caused by frost heave to the footpaths.

Culverts

80. As soon as there is any evidence of thawing then inspections teams will immediately check all the culverts within the borough for which we are responsible, and arrange for any debris to be removed as a matter of urgency to reduce the risk of any flooding problems due to the increase in levels due to thawing snow.

Principal Inspections of Highway Structures

81. Carried out by Arup's on a 6 year cycle with approx one sixth of the stock inspected each year. These are very detailed inspections including underwater surveys, use of 'cherry-pickers' to inspect undersides of structures, crawl spaces, etc.

General Inspections of Highway Structures

82. Carried out by Arup's on a 2 year cycle with approximately one half of the stock inspected each year. These are general, visual inspections with no special provision made for access to structures.
83. There is no specific regime in place for post-winter inspections. All inspections would be ad-hoc resulting from reports/complaints received from the public, Police, other council departments, highways inspectors etc.

Flooding

84. Following periods of heavy snow, it is inevitable that localised flooding will occur across the Borough. A Flood Management Plan is currently being produced by Technical Services and post inspection arrangements will be linked to this Plan through the use of Highway Asset Inspectors and Liveability Technicians and, where applicable, those provisions contained within Emergency Planning documentation.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

85. The financial implications will vary depending upon the level of service provided by the authority as part of any Snow Plan conditions. For example, if we were able to source enough supplies of salt to warrant the extension of the current salt storage facility there would be a one-off capital cost of between £150k-£175k. Similarly, the merged priority 1 and priority 2 gritting routes (when weather condition result in the Snow Plan being introduced) would require an additional capital investment of £100k for an additional 5 gritting vehicles. A full overview of costs with a range of options which will be determined by salt availability are included for reference at **Appendix D**.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

86. The recommendations are in line with SBC's responsibilities to highway maintenance.

RISK ASSESSMENT

87. This Report is classed as Low to Medium Risk.

SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY STRATEGY IMPLICATIONS

88. None

EQUALITIES IMPACT ASSESSMENT

89. None

CONSULTATION INCLUDING WARD COUNCILLORS

90. Consultation has taken place with ward Members and staff. Comments received from members of the public have also informed this report.

Corporate Director of Development & Neighbourhood Services

Name of Contact Officer: Jamie McCann

Telephone No: 01642 – 527071

Email Address: jamie.mccann@stockton.gov.uk

Background Papers

Ward(s) and Ward Councillors:

All

Property