

COMMITTEE	Community, Housing & Infrastructure
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REPORT TITLE	Roads Winter Maintenance Operations 2016 - 17
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1. PURPOSE OF REPORT:-

This report is intended to provide Members with an overview of the strategy that the roads operations operated throughout the City during the winter of 2016/17.

The report also highlights some risks that face the Roads Winter Service in the next 24 months.

2. RECOMMENDATION(S)

It is recommended that the Committee

- a) note the contents of this report
- b) instruct Roads Operations officers to continue with the comparison of other similar urban authorities winter services both in terms of operation and cost
- c) instruct officers to incorporate where appropriate, within the Winter Services Plan for 2017-2018, those recommendations in relevant documents such as "Well Managed Highway Infrastructure" and other relevant documents not already included in the Winter Service Plan 2016-2017
- d) instruct officers to examine the implications of the anticipated additional maintenance burden for the Roads winter maintenance provision from the de-trunking of sections of the A90/A96 following completion of the Aberdeen Western Peripheral Road.

3. BACKGROUND/FUTURE DEVELOPMENTS

Background:

Winter Weather Pattern and Service Delivered

The start of Winter Maintenance operations for 2016-17 was again held back in order to achieve part of the previous approved budget savings. Early morning operations commenced 14 November. While the general perception was of a milder winter it was still recorded that the road surface temperatures were at or below freezing on 74 nights.

Number of treatments carried out during the 74 nights/days requiring treatment.				
Month	Pre-salts	Overnight operations	Early Morning operations	Snow/Ice operations
Nov 16	8	5	8	3
Dec 16	7	3	8	4
Jan 17	10	3	13	5
Feb 17	6	2	9	4
Mar 17	7	1	6	1

In order to carry out an appropriate comparison with the other three city councils authorities in Scotland, an analysis of their salt usage for this winter was carried out. Each council is allocated a resilience stock level which equates to the minimum daily amount of salt required to treat their priority routes. This figure was used for each council to calculate the equivalent number of resilience level treatments their actual salt usage equated to. From this analysis, Aberdeen City Council was required to carry out more treatments than Edinburgh and Glasgow but less than Dundee.

74 nights during the winter saw temperatures at or below freezing. The lowest temperatures recorded by the sensors around Aberdeen were -7.9 °C road surface temperature and an air temperature of -7.7 °C both on 20/11/2016.

Basic Winter Rota Operations

	<u>Commenced</u>	<u>Finished</u>
Early morning operations	14/11/2016	19/03/2016
Stand-by Operations	14/11/2016	19/03/2016

Response operatives and the night attendant are in attendance throughout the year to carry out operations when required.

These operations were for Priority 1 & part of the Priority 2 routes, where conditions will allow, along with Priority 1 footpaths as described in the approved Winter Service Plan. Along with these early morning operations to the priority routes, salting was also carried out to the access roads and car parks at the two park and ride sites.

This basic operating system for staff was carried out throughout the winter but operations were enhanced when a forecast of snow or severe ice conditions was received.

Footpath & Cycle Path Operations

The priority footpaths, as set out in the Winter Services Plan, were the only routes to be covered as part of the early morning operations. This change in operations was approved by the Policy and Strategy Committee in 2008.

Footpath operations were given additional support from Environmental Services when necessary. These operatives carried out hand spreading to some footpaths. With over 1200km of footways it was not feasible to have widespread coverage as anticipated by some members of the public. With a further 480 km of remote paths and areas within our Council housing estates requiring treatment the widespread expectation of “black” footpaths and car parks is not achievable in the worst winter conditions

As in previous years requests were received to carry out additional treatment to cycle paths. It was agreed that a trial would be carried out on cycle paths using a de-icing chemical that is anticipated will remain effective much longer than rock salt.

This winter did not provide suitable test conditions for this material. It is therefore intended that during the next winter the material will be trialed during forecast lengthy periods when road surface temperatures are due to remain below zero and wet conditions are forecast.

Grit Bins

Grit bins were filled prior to the start of the winter season and maintained throughout the period.

1 Tonne Salt Bags

This scheme which offers Community Groups who make requests a 1Tonne bag of salt for self-help as an alternative to grit bins, was continued this winter. 75 tonnes of salt in 1 Tonne bags were issued to community groups throughout Aberdeen. This is a reduction of 7 tonnes on the previous winter.

At the start of the Winter those who previously used this service were contacted to establish if they wish to continue receiving the salt bags. The feedback is generally positive, however a small number have decided that due to the recent milder winters they no longer wish to participate in this scheme.

Salt

A total of 4602 tonnes of rock salt was used on the Aberdeen City Roads network during the financial year. This is in comparison to 7,763 T in 2015/6, 9,483 T in 2014/5, and 5,600T in 2013/14. 7800 T were delivered during the financial year.

Future Developments

As the Aberdeen Western Peripheral Road nears completion it is anticipated that a considerable length of the current trunk road network, within the city boundary, will be de-trunked. The maintenance, including winter maintenance, of these de-trunked sections is expected to be transferred to the city council.

The continuation of the current level of winter maintenance service along these sections would result in a significant additional burden on the Roads Operations budgets.

Ongoing developments to the national standards such as included in “Well Managed Highway infrastructure” have been proposed but have not as yet been universally accepted as the best basis for preparation of winter service plans.

4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Members will be aware that the Council Revenue Budget for 2016/17 for winter maintenance was £1.727M, The final expenditure was £1.610M, and this is therefore £0.117M below the budget allocation.

This saving is largely attributed to the reduced tonnage of salt used as it was a relatively mild winter. The quantity of salt used was approximately 3,161 T less than last financial year, presenting a material saving of £108,000.

It should be noted that the expenditure for the previous three winters has been £1.752M in 2015-2016, £1.977M in 2014-2015 and £1.565M and in 2013-14. The long term average is therefore considerably higher than this winter expenditure.

5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

Failure to provide a robust “Roads Winter Service Plan” will leave the council more vulnerable to legal challenges and 3rd party insurance claims.

6. MANAGEMENT OF RISK

To ensure that the service meets its obligation in the coming years the risks identified in the Future Developments section of the report need to be addressed:

Risk Reputational/Technological/ Customer /citizen	Timescale	Risk Level	Mitigation/Controls
The development of new codes of practice superseding the current winter policies.	In the next 12-24 months	Medium	Monitor and consult on industry developments and adapt the Winter Service Plan to meet developing standards and practices.
Reduction in the number of Community Salt Bags, required at the start of winter, if milder winters continue, Then looking for the council to provide them should conditions deteriorate	In the next 12-24 months	Medium	Use Corporate Communications to continue to highlight the importance of the community salt

Risk Reputational and Financial	Timescale	Risk Level	Mitigation/Controls
The additional burden placed on the winter service from the de-trunking of sections of the A90/A96 following the completion of the Aberdeen Western Peripheral Route.	In the next 12-24 months	High	Ensure that resources are made available to identify the likely additional demands from the de-trunking of sections of the A90/A96 and to integrate the de-trunked sections of road into Winter Service Plan.
Allocated Budget will only cover costs of a standard winter, overspend at times of high snowfall will require the allocation of additional budget	In the next 12-24 months	High	Look at methods of introducing overtime winter operations into the mainstream work practices

7. IMPACT SECTION

Economy

The provision of an effective winter maintenance service that keeps the transport network working effectively is important to support the economy of Aberdeen during adverse winter conditions.

People

With a growing population and expanding roads network it is important that the winter service plan is reviewed and adjusted to meet the ongoing demands of the population.

The winter service plan seeks to have a positive impact on the public in general including those with protected characteristics by reducing the adverse effects of winter weather.

Place

The Council is committed to providing a winter maintenance service that will help to enhance Aberdeen as a place to invest, live and visit. An effective winter maintenance service will also make the city safer for all road and transport users.

Technology

The Council is committed to examining technological and innovative methods to solve winter maintenance problems and to communicate with the public regarding ongoing treatments.

8. BACKGROUND PAPERS

<http://councilcommittees.acc.gov.uk/documents/g3877/Public%20reports%20pack%2001st-Nov-2016%2014.00%20Communities%20Housing%20and%20Infrastructure%20Committee.pdf?T=10>

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