

WEST DUNBARTONSHIRE COUNCIL

Report by the Executive Director of Housing, Environmental and Economic Development

Housing, Environment and Economic Development Committee: 2 November 2011

Subject: Winter Maintenance Strategy - 2011/12

1. Purpose

- 1.1** The purpose of this report is to inform the Committee of the Council's statutory obligations under Section 34 of the Roads (Scotland) Act 1984 and seek approval of the Winter Maintenance Strategy - 2011/12 appended hereto.

2. Background

- 2.1** Section 34 of the Roads (Scotland) Act 1984 requires the local roads authority to take such steps as they consider reasonable to prevent snow and ice endangering the safe passage of pedestrians and vehicles over public roads.
- 2.2** The Winter Maintenance Strategy - 2011/12 outlines the proposed procedures to fulfil this statutory requirement.

3. Main Issues

- 3.1** It should be noted that as all roads cannot be treated at once, the Winter Maintenance Strategy defines priorities. Conditions may however on occasion be so severe that all resources are initially directed to keep the priority (1) and some of the priority 2 roads open, to the detriment of other roads.
- 3.2** We have now experienced two severe winters. Last winter the primary routes were treated 119 times and over all classes of roads and footways, some 6111 tonnes of salt were used. Additional salt would have been spread however due to salt resilience measures being applied as a result of the severe weather and national shortage of salt stocks across the whole of the United Kingdom measures were introduced to limit the application of salt and an additional 2223 tonnes of grit/salt mix was also spread. In 2009/10 some 5450 tonnes of salt were used and primary routes were treated 94 times.
- 3.3** To improve our future resilience to severe weather our storage capacity of salt has been increased to ensure we commence winter operations with a minimum of 75% of the average salt usage through the previous 3 winters. This would equate to approximately 4500 tonnes of salt.

Historically we commenced winter operations with upwards of 2000 tonnes of salt in storage and drew down additional supplies as required. This year we have more than trebled the volume of salt in storage, some 6500 tonnes will be available from our stores for commencement of winter operations which is well in excess of our minimum resilience requirement of 4500 tonnes.

- 3.4 Nationally salt preservation procedures are being developed by the Scottish Government to ensure a consistent approach by all Road Authorities throughout Scotland. This winter strategy may require to be amended to comply with any obligations placed on Councils as a result of the national review of winter resilience.
 - 3.5 It should be noted that the A82 Trunk Road through West Dunbartonshire is maintained by Transerve and Amey Highways on behalf of the Scottish Government. The Strategy recommends that Council resources be utilised to provide assistance, if requested by these contractors, should they be unable to keep this vital strategic route open during severe weather.
 - 3.6 The Strategy defines the responsibilities relative to public roads as defined in the Roads (Scotland) Act 1984 and included on the Register of Adopted Roads. Housing, Environmental and Economic Development will liaise with other service departments to ensure that arrangements for snow clearing and gritting are in place.
 - 3.7 It is a statutory requirement to provide a winter maintenance service for public roads and the Council is open to public liability claims should this service not be provided. The standard of service provided in the Winter Maintenance Strategy - 2011/12 is consistent to maintain the level of service previously supplied to the residents of West Dunbartonshire. Our response to footway treatment is amongst the most pro-active in the country and this is recognised by our local communities.
 - 3.8 The following paragraphs relate to the footway service provision:
 - (a) priority pedestrian routes and footways are included in the Winter Maintenance Strategy - 2011/12
 - Category 1 - Major Urban Shopping Areas and access routes to/from sheltered housing complexes
 - Category 2 - High Pedestrian Areas (railway stations, schools, hospitals, etc.)
 - Category 3 - steep hills on main routes.
- It should be noted that treatment of these priority pedestrian routes will be undertaken during normal working hours but may commence with Category (1) carriageway routes should the weather forecast conditions merit this action.

- (b) Formal arrangements have been agreed with other Council services to ensure maximum use of resources during adverse weather conditions.
- 3.9** The carriageway and footway routes and grit bin locations as detailed in the Strategy document are reviewed at the start of each season, and may be subject to minor adjustments. Additional salt for gritting footways will be provided during periods of extended severe weather to allow and support individuals to keep their driveways and localised footways clear and passable. Individuals may also collect salt from our local depots for personal use, however this will be closely monitored as this service was abused last year.

In conjunction with this action a media campaign will highlight to the public the services provided and contact details should they require assistance. The contact number for winter enquiries is 01389 737000.

- 3.10** Proprietary spreading equipment has now mostly replaced hand-casting of salt for footways. This is a major success, with footways treated more quickly, with less material used and more consistent rate of spread possible. Such efficiency improvements are sought each year.
- 3.11** The winter duty managers will continue to receive real time weather information from weather stations at A811 at Gartocharn and on the A814 at Westcliff.

4. People Implications

- 4.1** Existing Council resources will be augmented with private sector assistance if necessary where severe conditions are experienced.

5. Financial Implications

- 5.1** Budgetary provision for 2011/12 in the sum of some £700,000 is based on costs incurred in an average year, but does not reflect a worst case scenario. It is difficult to predict accurately the outturn costs of this service.

6. Risk Analysis

- 6.1** The implications of not undertaking this service would result in unacceptable risk to all road users of West Dunbartonshire. Given the nature of the service, there is always a risk of service breakdown if the weather conditions are severe. However, the Winter Maintenance Strategy has been developed using risk analysis techniques, and the likelihood of service failure has been minimised.

7. Equalities, Health & Human Rights Impact Assessment (EIA)

- 7.1** No significant issues were identified in a screening for potential equality impact of this policy.

8. Strategic Assessment

- 8.1** The road infrastructure is fundamental in promoting social wellbeing in terms of aiding employment, business growth and tourism within West Dunbartonshire. The provision of this winter maintenance strategy also assists in the efficient management and maintenance of the road network and associated infrastructure thereby ensuring it remains fit for purpose.

9. Conclusions and Recommendations

- 9.1** West Dunbartonshire Council has a statutory duty to provide a winter maintenance service for its network of public roads, and the actions proposed to meet this duty are shown in the document: Winter Maintenance Strategy 2011 which is reviewed and approved annually.
- 9.2** The Committee is invited to:-
- (a) note the content of this report;
 - (b) delegate authority to the Executive Director of Housing, Environmental and Economic Development to provide assistance to Transerve and Amey Highways, if requested, to keep the A82 Trunk Road open during severe weather;
 - (c) approve the Winter Maintenance Strategy - 2011/12.

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Date: 10 October 2011

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Appendix: Winter Maintenance Strategy - 2011/12

Background Papers: None

Wards Affected: All