

## **Item: 10**

**Development and Infrastructure Committee: 7 September 2021.**

**Winter Service Policy and Plan.**

**Report by Interim Executive Director of Environmental, Property and IT Services.**

### **1. Purpose of Report**

To consider a review of the current Winter Service Policy and the draft Winter Service Plan 2021/22.

### **2. Recommendations**

The Committee is invited to note:

#### **2.1.**

That delivery of the Winter Service is based on guidance set out in the Well-managed Highway Infrastructure – A Code of Practice, as detailed in section 4 of this report.

#### **2.2.**

That a review of the Winter Service provision has been carried out, resulting in the options outlined in section 6 of this report, and further detailed in Appendix 4, with the preferred option being Option 2, namely to adopt a new Winter Service Policy 2021 to 2026 and a Winter Service Plan 2021/22 developed to suit available physical resources.

#### **2.3.**

That consultation has been carried out in respect of the winter service, with the outcome detailed in Appendix 3 to this report.

#### **2.4.**

The draft Winter Service Policy 2021 to 2026 and the draft Winter Service Plan 2021/22, attached as Appendices 1 and 2 respectively to this report, which have been updated to take account of the review and responses to the consultation process, referred to at paragraphs 2.2 and 2.3 above.

#### **2.5.**

That, should the Council wish to adopt a policy that differs from the advice suggested by the Well-managed Highway Infrastructure – A Code of Practice, it is essential that this is identified and the reasoning for such differences explained in the policy.

**It is recommended:**

## **2.6.**

That the draft Winter Service Policy for 2021 to 2026 and Winter Service Plan for 2021/22, attached as Appendices 1 and 2 respectively to this report, be approved.

## **3. Background**

### **3.1.**

Winter Service provision has historically been delivered through a Service Level Agreement (SLA). The purpose of the SLA was to ensure the provision of the Winter Service by Roads and Environmental Services on behalf of the Head of Service. It is now proposed that the SLA be superseded by the Winter Service Policy, which will be in place for a period of five years.

### **3.2.**

The Winter Service Plan will continue to be reviewed annually, following consultation with stakeholders. Where possible, minor requests for additional service are incorporated however additional route treatment is not possible within existing budgetary constraints or without committing additional resources to the service.

### **3.3.**

The Winter Service Plan should be in place by the end of September each year in order that it can be issued to Roads Operations in sufficient time for them to plan for the start of the winter season on 1 November.

## **4. Code of Practice**

### **4.1.**

Well-managed Highway Infrastructure - A Code of Practice (CoP), production of which was overseen by the UK Roads Liaison Group, is intended to apply throughout the UK. The Code is designed to promote an integrated asset management approach to highway infrastructure and has replaced the Well-maintained Highways, Management of Highway Structures and Well-lit Highways codes of practices.

### **4.2.**

The CoP adopts a risk-based approach to delivering roads maintenance including Winter Service provision. National Winter Service Research Group (NWSRG) guidance documents provide the technical specification for winter service delivery.

### **4.3.**

The Council has certain legal obligations that it must comply with and which may be the subject of claims for loss or personal injury or of legal action by those seeking to establish non-compliance by the Council. It is accepted that in such cases the CoP may be relevant. If the Council wishes to adopt a policy that differs from the advice

suggested by the CoP, it is essential that this is identified and the reasoning for such differences explained in the policy.

#### **4.4.**

The Council has used the CoP since 2016 as a guide to the delivery of the winter service however pressures on budgets has not allowed all aspects to be fully adopted. This has been a risk-based judgement that sets a level of service that is affordable and deliverable in the winter period.

## **5. Winter Service Policy and Plan**

### **5.1.**

Roads Authorities should formally approve and adopt policies and priorities for Winter Service, which are coherent with wider objectives for transport, integration, accessibility and network management, including strategies for public transport, walking and cycling and consider the wider strategic objectives of the Authority.

### **5.2.**

Authorities should develop policies and service levels which define the overall and core winter period, the level of resilience, and treatment networks. These policies and service levels should be developed with users and key stakeholders and should be based on a risk assessment to define the scope of the service.

### **5.3.**

Using the guidance set out in the CoP and NWSRG, officers have carried out a review of Winter Service delivery, which determined that an increase in the amount of salt should be used during certain conditions. New spread rates were introduced as a trial over the winter of 2020/21. The outcome of this trial has shown that considerably more salt was required leading to increased spend.

### **5.4.**

The Winter Service Policy for 2021 to 2026, attached as Appendix 1 to this report, is a five-year plan and details the operational requirements to ensure compliance with the Codes of Practice and guidance documents.

### **5.5.**

Delivery of the Winter Service Policy relies on suitable resources being available, including salt, fuel and trained staff and operatives. Any one resource in short supply puts a strain on service delivery.

### **5.6.**

The draft Winter Service Plan for 2021/22, attached as Appendix 2 to this report, will reduce the number of roads treated on a routine basis, ensuring that remaining roads are treated in accordance with the updated guidance and within existing budgetary constraints. This follows a thorough assessment of the network based on the level of risk.

## **5.7.**

This will be an annual plan outlining the treatment undertaken in accordance with the Winter Service Policy on a reduced network appropriate to existing budget. The current road network totals 985km, with 73% of the network to be treated on a routine basis as Priority 1 and 2 routes. The length of routes that will be treated are as follows:

- P1 – 372km (as previous years).
- P2 – Reduced from 410km to 342km including P2S School routes.
- P3 – Removed except for snow clearance.

## **5.8.**

The following stakeholders are consulted annually on the proposals within the Winter Service Plan:

- Elected Members.
- Community Councils.
- Scottish Ambulance Service.
- Police Scotland.
- Scottish Fire and Rescue Service.
- HM Coastguard.
- Orkney Health and Care.
- NHS Orkney.
- Council services including:
  - Education.
  - Transport.
  - Housing.
  - Marine Services.
  - Safety and Resilience Manager.

## **5.9.**

The responses to the draft plan for 2021/22 are summarised in Appendix 3 to this report.

# **6. Options**

## **6.1.**

A summary of the options for Winter Service are outlined below, with further details provided in Appendix 4 to this report.

- Option 1 – adopt new Winter Service policy 2021 to 2026 and plan 2021/22 as developed in accordance with the Code of Practice. This is the ideal solution

however would require an increased physical resource and consequently would result in an increased spend on winter treatment.

- Option 2 – adopt new Winter Service policy 2021 to 2026 and plan 2021/22 developed to suit available physical resources. This would be less onerous and require less physical resource than Option 1, however would still have an impact on current budget allocation.
- Option 3 – do nothing and continue to treat routes as previous years. This would mean that the Council would not comply with the Code of Practice and could leave the Council open to claims for loss or personal injury or legal action.

## 6.2.

Given the budget and physical resources available to deliver the Winter Service Plan, in line with the Policy, Option 2 is the preferred option.

## 7. Corporate Governance

The report relates to Council complying with governance and procedural issues and therefore does not directly support and contribute to improved outcomes for communities as outlined in the Council Plan and the Local Outcomes Improvement Plan.

## 8. Financial Implications

### 8.1.

The cost of the Winter Service is allowed for within the Roads Revenue budget. This includes for Flood Damage, Storm Damage and Winter Treatment. The cost for 2020/21 was £1,231,531 against an initial budget of £925,600. A virement of £370,000 was made to cover the additional spend as a result of new spread rates introduced as a trial in 2020/21 together with an above average cold winter. A budget of £944,200 has been set for financial year 2021/22.

### 8.2.

The table below shows the costs for the period 2018 to 2021 for Winter Service, including Flood Damage, Storm Damage and Winter Treatment.

Winter Service Cost 2018 to 2021							
	2018/19		2019/20		2020/21		2021/22
	Budget	Actual	Budget	Actual	Budget	Actual	Budget
<b>Flood Damage</b>	£97,500	£22,388	£100,500	£103,326	£103,100	£34,661	£105,300
<b>Storm Damage</b>	£23,900	£17,739	£24,600	£32,557	£25,300	£11,144	£25,800
<b>Winter Treatment</b>	£760,300	£740,865	£783,800	£827,666	£1,167,200	£1,185,726	£813,100
<b>Total</b>	£881,700	£780,992	£908,900	£963,549	£1,295,600	£1,231,531	£944,200

### **8.3.**

In accordance with the policy of presumption against new commitments a requirement exists to identify compensatory savings in the first instance prior to giving due consideration to service growth. In this instance, the increase in the scope and cost of the Winter Service for financial year 2021/22 should be managed within the wider Roads Service and Development and Infrastructure revenue budgets.

## **9. Legal Aspects**

In terms of section 34 of the Roads (Scotland) Act 1984 the Council, as a Roads Authority, has a statutory duty to take such steps as it considers reasonable to prevent snow and ice endangering the safe passage of pedestrians and vehicles over public roads. Adopting the Winter Service Plan will assist the Council in discharging this duty.

## **10. Contact Officers**

Hayley Green, Interim Executive Director of Environmental, Property and IT Services, Email [hayley.green@orkney.gov.uk](mailto:hayley.green@orkney.gov.uk)

David Thomson, Interim Head of Roads, Fleet and Waste Services, Email [david.thomson@orkney.gov.uk](mailto:david.thomson@orkney.gov.uk)

John Wrigley, Roads and Environmental Services Manager, Email [john.wrigley@orkney.gov.uk](mailto:john.wrigley@orkney.gov.uk)

Kenneth Roy, Roads Support Manager, Email [kenny.roy@orkney.gov.uk](mailto:kenny.roy@orkney.gov.uk)

## **11. Appendices**

Appendix 1: Winter Service Policy.

Appendix 2: Winter Service Plan.

Appendix 3: Stakeholder Consultation Summary.

Appendix 4: Winter Service Options.