

Report to **Scrutiny Committee for Transport and Environment**
Date **9 March 2011**
Report By **Director of Transport and Environment**
Title of Report **Scrutiny Review of Winter Service in East Sussex (Six Month Monitoring Report)**
Purpose of Report **To report on progress against the recommendations agreed by Cabinet on 12 October 2010, following the Scrutiny Review.**

RECOMMENDATION:

The Scrutiny Committee is invited to consider the progress made in delivering the recommendations of the Scrutiny Review of Winter Service in East Sussex.

1. Financial Appraisal

1.1 The 2010/11 winter maintenance service budget was set at £1.52million. Due to the coldest December on record, the budget will be exceeded with the final out-turn dependent on the weather until the end of the winter maintenance season. This will be met from the Winter Maintenance Reserve which stood at £0.5million on 1 April 2010.

1.2 The recommendations of the Scrutiny Review had a number of financial implications as detailed below:

Recommendation	Impact
2a	Increasing the length of road salted to include hospitals has had a small increase in expenditure, less than £500 as contract rates are based on the length of road treated.
2b	Inclusion of all bus routes in the Secondary gritting routes will increase expenditure by £4,000 per year, as contract rates are based on the length of road treated
5c	Provision of hippo bags has required the contractor to hire in additional equipment to load, transport and place the bags, which has cost in the order of £12,000 up to the end of January 2011.
6	New snow ploughs and associated fitting requirements to farmer's tractors will cost approximately £3,500. Total number required will be determined once coverage review completed (see Action Plan).

1.3 The overall financial cost of these recommendations will be dependent upon the severity of a winter.

2. Supporting Information

2.1 Progress on the action plan is attached as Appendix 1, and is in response to the recommendations made by the Scrutiny Committee.

3. Conclusion and Reason for Recommendation

3.1 It is recommended that Scrutiny consider the progress made on the recommendations contained in the review, which has already led to an improvement in our winter maintenance service.

RUPERT CLUBB
Director of Transport & Environment
9 March 2011

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Local Member: All

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

Transport & Environment Scrutiny Review of Winter Service in East Sussex – final report dated 15 September 2010 Agenda Item 6
Report by Director Transport and Environment to Cabinet on Scrutiny Review of Winter Service in East Sussex dated 12 October 2010 Agenda Item 9b

TRANSPORT AND ENVIRONMENT - SCRUTINY REVIEW OF WINTER SERVICE IN EAST SUSSEX – ACTION PLAN STATUS		
RECOMMENDATION	DIRECTOR’S ACTION PLAN	STATUS
1	<p>The East Sussex County Council (ESCC) winter service policy needs to be expressed in a clear and easily understandable way. Central to this policy is the description of how different categories of routes will be treated under different weather conditions (and clarity about the set of routes which won’t be treated within the County Council’s policy). To assist this process, more intuitive definitions could usefully be adopted to make the picture clearer; for example, ‘top priority routes’ instead of ‘standard routes’ and ‘secondary routes’ instead of ‘snow routes’ for example.</p> <p>The winter maintenance service plan is written to ensure the County meets its legal responsibilities, and the terminology used in the document is directly referenced within the Highway Works Contract and this ensures there is a consistency with documentation should these be needed to be presented to the courts. It is recommended that the winter service plan is retained in its current format to ensure this consistency is maintained.</p> <p>It is therefore proposed as an alternative that a winter service policy summary is produced, which will use more intuitive definitions as proposed by Scrutiny.</p>	<p>Winter service policy summary document was produced by the end of Oct 2010 and has been subsequently published on the website.</p> <p>COMPLETED</p>

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RECOMMENDATION		DIRECTOR'S ACTION PLAN	STATUS
2	<p>a) Adjustments to current operations are needed to extend winter treatments to areas which are crucial for the operation of essential public services such as emergency services accesses and access routes to the County's hospitals and bus stations/garages.</p> <p>b) Transport and Environment officers should contact the bus companies serving East Sussex to elicit the impact of the winter maintenance policy during 2009/10, and to ensure that all current bus routes are classified appropriately within the policy.</p> <p>c) The outcomes of the Equalities Impact Assessment on the winter maintenance policy should be reported to Transport and Environment Scrutiny Committee in due course so that the Committee can consider whether further amendment to the policy is required to comply with appropriate equalities legislation.</p>	<p>a) Roads adjacent to the main hospitals and majority of emergency service facilities are currently included within the pre-salting arrangements. The County, as highway authority, has no legal responsibility to salt private/service roads leading to these establishments. Discussions are currently being held with the Primary Care Trust on the feasibility of including these establishments within the pre-salting operations.</p> <p>b) Bus companies have been contacted and details of routes obtained. The operational and financial impact of ensuring all current bus routes are classified appropriately within the policy is currently being assessed.</p> <p>c) An Equality Impact Assessment will be undertaken and Assessment on the winter maintenance policy will be reported to Transport and Environment Scrutiny Committee.</p>	<p>a) Review of routes completed and hospitals across East Sussex included in Secondary routes by mid December 2010.</p> <p>COMPLETED</p> <p>b) Review of routes and costs assessed by the end of Oct 2010. The annual cost of adding bus routes to the primary gritting routes would be £142,000, whereas the cost of adding these to Secondary gritting routes would be £4,000.</p> <p>Secondary routes to be revised to include Bus routes by March 2010.</p> <p>c) Equalities Impact Assessment currently being drafted with report to be presented to Scrutiny at a date to be arranged.</p>

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<p>3 The County Council should engage with partner local authorities and other key agencies to improve future coordination and proactively encourage them to develop their own severe weather contingency plans; and offer to store and provide salt to them cost effectively.</p>	<p>The Transport and Environment Department has written to partner local authorities and other key agencies to proactively encourage them to develop their own severe weather contingency plans; and has offered to store and provide salt to them.</p>	<p>Details of engagement with following partners:</p> <p>East Sussex Downs and Weald Primary Care Trust – Emergency Planning team: mutual development of winter contingency plans, amended secondary gritting routes to include hospital accesses (see recommendation 2a).</p> <p>Brighton & Hove Unitary Authority/West Sussex County Council: mutual agreements in place to share salt.</p> <p>Sussex Police: discussions on winter contingency plans lead by ESCC Emergency Planning team.</p> <p>Lewes, Wealden, Rother District Councils, Eastbourne and Hastings Borough Councils: discussions with all local Councils, assistance and input into development of winter contingency plans. Agreements in place to purchase/store salt as follows:</p> <table border="0"> <tr> <td>Eastbourne</td> <td>50 tonnes</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Lewes</td> <td>50 tonnes</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Wealden</td> <td>100 tonnes</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Rother</td> <td>40 tonnes</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Hastings</td> <td>150 tonnes</td> </tr> </table> <p>See recommendation 5c for Hippo bag details.</p> <p>NB: normal and out-of-hours contact details plus lines of communication established for all above partners.</p> <p>COMPLETED</p>	Eastbourne	50 tonnes	Lewes	50 tonnes	Wealden	100 tonnes	Rother	40 tonnes	Hastings	150 tonnes
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<p>4 The expectation that householders and businesses in East Sussex will clear snow and ice from public areas near their properties during periods of severe winter weather should be actively promoted during the autumn in preparation for next winter; the promotion should include appropriate guidance on how to carry out snow clearance responsibly and encouragement to assist neighbours who are unable to clear snow themselves.</p>	<p>A communication strategy has been agreed which will encourage the public and businesses to undertake self-help during periods of severe winter. This will include press releases, use of county magazines and additional web based information.</p>	<p>Press releases completed and additional web based information provided by the end of October 2010</p> <p>COMPLETED</p>
<p>5 The Transport and Environment Department:</p> <p>a) Should proactively approach all parish, town, district and borough councils to offer the sale of salt and grit bins cost effectively under the current policy and extend the offer on similar terms to include residents associations or groups of residents and businesses.</p> <p>b) When issuing publicity around grit bins and hippo bags, should ensure that it emphasises that the salt provided is provided for public areas and not for private use, and provide suitable 'how to use' guidance.</p> <p>c) Determine the location points for hippo bags.</p>	<p>a) The District and Borough councils have been contacted about the storage and provision of salt. Parish and town councils have been approached to offer the sale of grit bins. This offer for the sale of grit bins is extended to any local resident association or business.</p> <p>b) All publicity emphasises that the salt is provided for use on the public highway and not for private use, and does provide suitable 'how to use' guidance.</p> <p>c) The Transport and Environment Department has written to partner authorities to determine suitable location of hippo bags and to seek agreement on the procedure for their deployment. (It should be noted these will only be deployed in extreme weather conditions.)</p>	<p>a) Undertaken in conjunction with recommendation 3.</p> <p>NB: up to the end of January 2011, 73 additional salt bins have been supplied to local Council's and residents/resident groups.</p> <p>COMPLETED</p> <p>b) Guidance issued in conjunction with recommendation 4</p> <p>COMPLETED</p> <p>c) Undertaken in conjunction with recommendation 3. Over 40 locations agreed (deployed 18-21 December 2010)</p> <p>COMPLETED</p>

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RECOMMENDATION	DIRECTOR'S ACTION PLAN	STATUS
<p>6 Transport and Environment should engage with East Sussex farmers either by advertising widely for new participants in the 'farmers' snow plough scheme' across the whole of East Sussex, or by targeting farmers in particular geographical areas where there would be demonstrably the most benefit; the purpose would be to explain what the County Council could offer farmers and vice versa.</p>	<p>The Transport & Environment department has a limited number of snow ploughs that can be issued to farmers; to increase the numbers of farmers available to the scheme would require additional resources to be made available. The cost of providing a snow plough and ensuring it fits to a farmer's tractor, is in the region of £3,500 each. The County would also have to commit to an increased annual service charge for each additional farmer.</p> <p>In order not to commit to additional expenditure, all current farmers equipped with County owned snow ploughs have been contacted to identify where snowploughs were not utilised and to arrange to redeploy these to farmers who have expressed an interest in the scheme.</p>	<p>All farmers contacted to identify if they would wish to remain in the snow plough scheme and to identify spare snowploughs. There were no spare snow ploughs identified in this process. There are currently 24 farmers (all equipped with ESCC owned ploughs) and 4 contractors on the call out list.</p> <p>There are 9 farmers wishing to join scheme at various locations across the county. Map of farmer's coverage compiled to identify areas where additional coverage is required. Initial indication is that at least 3 farmers may be invited to join the scheme for next winter. Review of coverage to be undertaken in April/May 2011. This will include a determination of usage through this winter to evaluate whether some existing farmers should remain on the list, or whether their ploughs should be reallocated.</p> <p>NB: There is a 3 month ordering process for new tractor fitted snow ploughs.</p>

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RECOMMENDATION		DIRECTOR'S ACTION PLAN	STATUS
7	<p>a) The information and advice that the Council can offer any farmer, individual or business with machinery capable of clearing roads of snow, but without a contracting arrangement with the Council, needs to be that the Council cannot endorse such action and a) they should assess whether they are capable of undertaking the task competently; b) that they are fully insured with a minimum of £10million public liability insurance cover and c) that they are made aware that they may be liable for injuries or for the repair of any damage they cause.</p> <p>b) That steps be taken to ensure that the publicity promoting community self help for winter preparedness under recommendation 4 or for promoting other forms of volunteering work on the highway (apart from winter emergencies) is not undermined by this stance.</p>	<p>a) This will be included in the action taken in response to recommendation 4.</p> <p>b) This will be included in the action taken in response to recommendation 4.</p>	<p>a) and b) Undertaken in conjunction with recommendation 4.</p> <p>NB: temporary reduction in public liability insurance cover to £5million arranged for winter 2010/11. To be reviewed during April/May 2011.</p> <p>COMPLETED</p>

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RECOMMENDATION	DIRECTOR'S ACTION PLAN	STATUS
<p>8 The communication of advance or planning information by the County Council should be improved by:</p> <p>a) Ensuring the Council's winter service policy is described in a much more user-friendly way, paying careful attention to the use of terms that may be misleading such as 'standard route' and 'snow route'.</p> <p>b) Publishing some key 'facts and figures' about winter service such as: the cost; the amount of salt spread, the number of miles of road covered, the number of gritting lorries; the location and usage of grit bins and hippo bags.</p> <p>c) Providing greater clarity, with clearer online maps, about exactly which roads are treated under the policy; importantly including a description of which types of road are excluded or receive a lesser priority treatment.</p> <p>d) A campaign on winter weather preparedness targeted at those without computer or Internet access.</p> <p>e) Using the County Council's Your County magazine and local media to provide positive encouragement and appropriate advice about community self help options and other cold weather precautionary advice as highlighted in the recommendations of the Residents' Panel survey report.</p>	<p>a) This will be included in the action taken in response to recommendation 1.</p> <p>b) Key facts are available on the website and have been published and additional information will be made available as part of recommendation 4.</p> <p>c) This will be included in the action taken in response to recommendation 4.</p> <p>d) This will be included in the action taken in response to recommendation 4.</p> <p>e) This will be included in the action taken in response to recommendation 4.</p>	<p>a) To be undertaken in conjunction with recommendation 1.</p> <p>COMPLETED</p> <p>b), c), d), & e) To be undertaken in conjunction with recommendation 4.</p> <p>COMPLETED</p>

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RECOMMENDATION		DIRECTOR'S ACTION PLAN	STATUS
9	<p>a) The needs of County Council Members should be explicitly recognised when communications systems for winter services are being revised in the light of the lessons from the 2009/10 severe winter weather.</p> <p>b) The roles of Members (including the specific role of the Lead Member for Transport and Environment) should be communicated to contact centre staff so that they are better enabled to provide the public with a more helpful and realistic picture of what is involved in changing council policy.</p>	<p>a) This will be included in the action taken in response to recommendation 4.</p> <p>b) Contact centre staff have been briefed on the roles of Members, including the specific role of the Lead Member for Transport and Environment).</p>	<p>a) Undertaken in conjunction with recommendation 4.</p> <p align="center">COMPLETED</p> <p>b) Contact centre staff briefed.</p> <p align="center">COMPLETED</p>