

**WINTER POLICY REVIEW**

*To:* **Cabinet**

*Date:* **26<sup>th</sup> October 2010**

*From:* **Acting Executive Director: Environment Services**

*Electoral division(s):* **All**

*Forward Plan ref:* **2010 / 051** *Key decision:* **Yes**

*Purpose:* **Purpose of the report is to inform Cabinet of the progress and outcome of the Winter Service Review and to consider a new Winter Service Policy**

*Recommendation:* **For Cabinet to approve**

**(i) the new winter policy as identified in section 6 of the report**

**(ii) the inclusion of roads identified in Appendix 1 and 2 of the report**

<b><i>Officer contact:</i></b>		<b><i>Member contact</i></b>	
Name:	Mark Kemp	Name:	<b>Councillor Mac McGuire</b>
Post:	Service Director: Highways and Access	Portfolio:	Cabinet Member for Highways and Access
Email:	<a href="mailto:mark.kemp@cambridgeshire.gov.uk">mark.kemp@cambridgeshire.gov.uk</a>	Email:	<a href="mailto:Mac.mcguire@cambridgeshire.gov.uk">Mac.mcguire@cambridgeshire.gov.uk</a>
Tel:	01223 715663	Tel:	01223 699173

## **1. BACKGROUND**

- 1.1 Following the exceptional winter seasons in 2008/09 and 2009/10 the Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Highways and Access instigated a review of the County Council's Winter Service Policy to see whether it was still fit for purpose. A review has been undertaken and further consultation work has been undertaken with City, District, Town and Parish Councils.
- 1.2 The review built on work undertaken in 2009 which included the following actions:
- i) A change in the interpretation of the policy identifying when a secondary run should take place.
  - ii) Treatment of certain cycle bridges as a precautionary measure.
  - iii) Increase of stock at the start of the season to full capacity.
- 1.3 Whilst it is always difficult to compare two winter seasons, Actions 1 and 2 above appeared to be successful in reducing the number of complaints relating to those specific issues. However, the 2009/10 season was more extreme than the 2008/09 season and resulted in a national shortage of salt. This meant that supplies were limited and, following a request from central government, the precautionary network in Cambridgeshire had to be reduced for the period February-April 2010.

## **2. PRECAUTIONARY NETWORK REVIEW**

- 2.1 The precautionary network in Cambridgeshire has developed over many years with various roads being added or taken away as their status changes. It is a network of roads that are treated in advance of sub zero temperatures based on a weather forecast provided on a 24 hour basis through the winter season.
- 2.2 The current policy that identifies which roads should be treated and which should not, is not as clear as it could be. In addition, when the routes had to be reduced as a result of the national salt shortage, a one-off decision had to be made to identify what the reduced network should be and to gain the necessary approvals.
- 2.3 It was clear from early in the review that a more robust policy identifying those roads that would be treated as part of the precautionary network and how that network would be reduced should circumstances require, was an important outcome of this piece of work.
- 2.4 Using national examples and in discussion with other Highway Authorities a hierarchy of roads has been developed as follows:
- P1
    - All A and B roads
    - Links to A&E hospitals and other emergency services
    - Strategic locations as defined by Central Government
    - Roads adjacent to major fen drains

- P2 - Routes where scheduled buses are timetabled on a frequency of 5 times or more per week.
  - P3 - Routes where scheduled buses are timetabled on a frequency of less than 5 times per week and links to hamlets.
  - P4 - Distributor Roads to industrial estates
- 2.5 Having identified the roads that fall into these categories City, District, Town and Parish Councils were consulted on a precautionary network that combined P1, P2 and P4. P3 was provisionally identified as the secondary routes which would then be treated when 5 or more days of sub zero weather is forecast.
- 2.6 The development of the routes for consultation also considered the following operational and practical issues:
- Seeking to optimise each route so that it takes no more than 2 hours to complete. This is the current time for a route and all existing equipment would provide this level of service. Any increase in this time would increase risk to the public and result in additional expense for the authority.
  - Reducing the amount of time when a gritter is travelling on an already treated road to increase efficiency.
  - Consideration of those roads which do not fall into categories P1, P2 or P4 but which are on a route for logistical reasons i.e. they are necessary to link roads that are identified.

### **3. CONSULTATION**

- 3.1 Having established the draft criteria of roads to be included in the precautionary routes, a letter was sent to all County Members, District Members, City Council, District Councils, Town Councils and Parish Councils requesting their views on the proposals. Whilst an initial request for responses by 10<sup>th</sup> September was sent out, Cllr McGuire has provided further opportunities for responses prior to the 27<sup>th</sup> September.
- 3.2 Generally, the responses so far have been supportive and positive, acknowledging the work to rationalise the network, although many of the Parish, Town and City Council's have requested more routes to be included in their areas without suggesting any compensating reductions. These requests will be reviewed and a reply to each will be issued following the Cabinet decision. Included within this letter will be clarification that the routes will be reviewed each year between 15<sup>th</sup> April and 1<sup>st</sup> October.
- 3.3 The replies to the consultations are included within Appendix 1, with a recommendation from Officers as to whether the requests should or should not be accepted with reasons.
- 3.4 Appendix 2 is a list of roads that are proposed to be treated to enable those that fit with policy to be linked. Should a route change these roads will be removed from the precautionary network if no longer required to complete a route.

#### **4. REVIEW OF CYCLEWAYS AND FOOTWAYS**

- 4.1 At present, plans are being drawn up for each City and Market Town to define the routes which should be treated to link schools and residential care homes, or sheltered housing with local shopping areas or major residential areas. These are being discussed with the District and City Councils to ensure that no site or significant route is missed.
- 4.2 During the next season it is proposed to trial the use of a Quad bike and brine sprayer to treat some longer lengths of the network within Cambridge City and knapsack sprayers in other areas. The quad bike will be used to treat the primary on and off-road network of cycle routes within the ring road as identified on the Cambridge Cycle Map produced by Cambridgeshire County Council (CCC). Following a review of this trial in the summer of 2011 a report will be brought to Cabinet regarding the possibility of rolling out the treatment of cycleways and footways across the County.

#### **5. WORKING WITH PARISH, TOWN, CITY AND DISTRICT COUNCILS**

- 5.1 The Lead Member for Highways and Access and the Service Director have discussed with all the City and District Councils to discuss how all the Authorities could work closer together when severe weather affects the County. All the meetings have been positive and work will continue to develop operational protocols and to address any further concerns.
- 5.2 At this time it is not expected that any work will be undertaken by third parties in normal precautionary situations this season although there may be some opportunities to work with Parish Council volunteers once the council's insurance situation and national advice on clearing footways have been finalised.
- 5.3 The meetings have highlighted the potential benefits of closer working with the Parish, Town and City Councils to utilise any resources they may have that could assist. The support that could be offered by local farmers to help during this severe weather also needs to be considered. These issues were covered in the consultation letter and a list of farmers and other possible resources that could be made available is being prepared. The cost implications of these options will be reviewed in the summer of 2011.

#### **6. PROPOSED REVISED PRECAUTIONARY SALTING NETWORK POLICY**

- 6.1 The proposed precautionary salting network will consist of roads that comply with the following criteria:

##### **Precautionary 1**

- All A and B roads
- Links to A&E hospitals and other emergency services
- Strategic locations as defined by Go East
- Roads adjacent to major fen drains

#### Precautionary 2

- Routes where scheduled buses are timetabled on a frequency of 5 times or more per week
- Distributor Roads to industrial estates

Other roads necessary to complete individual routes

- 6.2 The secondary network, which will be treated when five days or more of sub zero weather is forecast, will consist of roads that comply with the following criteria:

#### Secondary Routes

- Routes where scheduled buses are timetabled on a frequency of less than 5 times per week and links to small hamlets.

- 6.3 Any changes to the precautionary or secondary network will be agreed by the Portfolio Holder for Highways and Access in consultation with the Service Director for Highways and Access. A schedule of any changes will be maintained by the Service Director for Highways and will include an explanation for each change.
- 6.4 Changes to the precautionary or secondary network will only be agreed and implemented out of season, between May and October of each year, to ensure that a clear network can be published at the start of each season.

## 7. SIGNIFICANT IMPLICATIONS

### 7.1 Resources & Performance

Winter service policy represents a vital but significant element of the Network Management/Highways and Access budget. Equipment is used on only a relatively few days a year and therefore is vital to ensure Value for Money is achieved. For this reason it is proposed to trial the quad bike and sprayer solutions this year to enable the Authority to evaluate their value for money in advance of the 2011/12 season. Supplementing county resources by partnership working with other authorities and third parties will enhance service delivery in a cost effective way.

### 7.2 Statutory Duties/Requirements and Partnership Working

The Local Highway Authority has a duty to remove ice and like all responsible authorities Cambridgeshire County Council, partly fulfil this duty by undertaking precautionary treatment of the network.

Closer partnership working with district and parish councils will help deliver priority services that meet local needs.

### 7.3 Climate Change

There are no significant implications for any of the headings within this category.

### 7.4 Access and Inclusion

The delivery of a sensible precautionary salting network enables the public to

continue their normal lives in accessing jobs, education and services, and assists in supporting vulnerable members of the community.

## 7.5 Engagement and Consultation

The annual review of the precautionary routes will enable local communities to inform and influence future service delivery. The consultation process has been set out in section 3. above.

Source Documents	Location
None	