

PERTH AND KINROSS COUNCIL

Environment and Infrastructure Committee

21 August 2019

Policy and Level of Service for Winter 2019 / 2020

Report by Depute Director (Housing and Environment) (Report No. 19/218)

This report recommends the level of service to be approved by the Council for the gritting and snow clearing of roads and footways in Perth and Kinross during the winter of 2019 / 2020 using plant and labour resources of Tayside Contracts and other Council Services. *Amendments and additions to this report from 2018-19 winter season are depicted in italics*

1. BACKGROUND / MAIN ISSUES

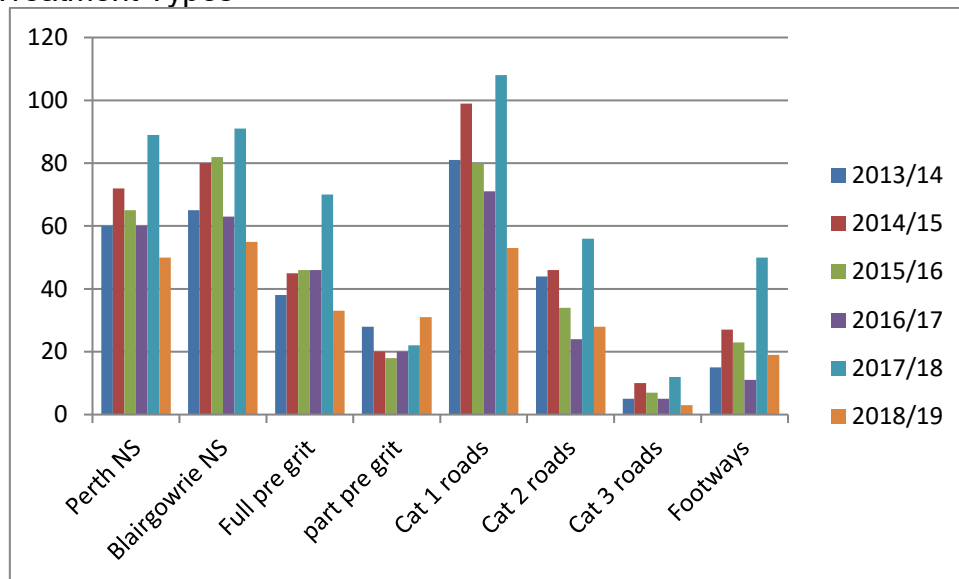
- 1.1 Within Perth and Kinross there is a variety of arrangements for the Winter Service on Public Roads. Around 910km of the Council's 2,500km road network is designated as having a high priority for winter service. These priority routes receive precautionary treatment that aims to keep them generally ice-free, although this can never be guaranteed.
- 1.2 The Council also provides a high level of service on priority footways in busy urban areas. Lower levels of treatment are provided on the remainder of the carriageway and footway network, as and when required during normal working hours.
- 1.3 Some very low priority carriageways and footways are normally not treated unless hard packed snow or ice threatens to prevent access for essential services.
- 1.4 In periods of prolonged severe weather, resources are targeted towards keeping strategic roads and footways network open. As a result, it can be a considerable time, in some cases several days, before lower priority routes are reached. The availability of operatives also impacts on the level of cover that can be provided for footway treatment.
- 1.5 The Scottish Government is responsible for the winter service on the 250 km of trunk road network within Perth and Kinross covering the M90, A90, A9 and A85. This service is provided by the Operating Company - BEAR (Scotland) Ltd.
- 1.6 Experience of the recent winters has shown that the level of service is generally satisfactory, although severe snow and ice events, such as experienced in 2017/18, do fully stretch the available resources.

- 1.7 *Last winter, 2018/19, was milder than the average, and around 2.0C above the seasonal norm. Consequently it was the 3rd lowest cost to the Council in the last 10 years, and this is demonstrated in Table 1 Winter Statistics and Figure 1 – Treatment Types, which detail the level of activity carried out over the winter period compared to other winters. In particular there were only 7 days of snowploughing (measured as across 50% minimum of the network), with the next lowest being 24 days in 2013/14. Only 12,191 tonnes of salt was spread, last winter, against an average of 21,800 tonnes.*
- 1.8 It is good practice to review and evaluate the arrangements for dealing with winter and this should be undertaken in the context of the likelihood of severe weather happening and other demands on the Council budget.
- 1.9 At the end of each winter season a review of operations is carried out with stakeholder consultation. Changing weather patterns, resources and personnel constraints mean that the winter service is an evolving service and these management reviews seek to provide an acceptable level of service whilst containing costs, complying with EU Working Time Directives and managing the work/life balance for personnel.
- 1.10 The proposals in section 2 show minimal proposed changes for winter 2019/20
- 1.11 It should be noted that containing costs brings with it a risk of resources being fully stretched when adverse weather is encountered, especially if this occurs early or late in the season. Perth and Kinross Council continues to provide a reduced level of vehicles during the lead in and lead out periods to winter, which is for a longer period than adjacent authorities. This reduces resilience levels for responding to severe snow or ice events during these periods. If required, volunteers from within the workforce (but who are not on formal standby for the period), are sought to supplement resources, to react to any unseasonal severe weather over this period.

Table 1 – Winter Statistics

	12/13	13/14	14/15	15/16	16/17	17/18	18/19
Number of treatments							
Perth night shift routes treated	n/a	60	72	65	60	89	50
Blairgowrie night shift routes treated	n/a	65	80	82	63	91	55
Full pre-grit to Category 1 routes	50	38	45	46	46	70	33
Part network pre-grit to Category 1 routes	29	28	20	18	20	22	31
De-ice or snow clearing on Category 1 routes	103	81	99	80	71	108	53
De-ice or snow clearing on Category 2 routes	62	44	46	34	24	56	28
De-ice or snow clearing on Category 3 routes	20	5	10	7	5	12	3
De-ice or snow clearing on Footways	68	15	27	23	11	50	19
Number of snow days (treating at least 50% of the network)	51	24	42	37	29	35	7
All crews attend but stood down (number of times no action)	22	20	20	10	8	7	26
Crews attend but selective routes stood down (number of times no action)	40	39	32	28	24	8	18
Crews called from home to attend (unplanned treatment required))	15	12	12	5	5	11	5
Alerts called							
Blue	16	2	10	6	5	7	3
Orange	16	2	8	3	2	10	0
Red	0	0	0	0	0	9	0
Salt Usage (Tonnes)							
Carriageway	23,716	13,534	21,212	21,300	13,301	30,632	12,191
Grit Sand	6,368	505	1,083	466	965	3,322	875
Failure to meet level of service							
Vehicle breakdown	7	16	21	7	11	2	0
Other	6	4	4	0	3	8	3

Figure 1 Treatment Types



Graphical representation of total number of treatments carried out
 NS = Night shift route PG = pre grit Cat 1 = Priority routes Cat 2 = Non priority routes
 Cat 3 = routes not normally treated unless conditions are severe - see Appendix 2a for full description of route hierarchy

2. PROPOSALS

- 2.1 All roads and footways in Perth and Kinross are categorised according to their relative importance. The finite resources are allocated to ensure that the safety of the public is maximised and that accessibility is maintained on the most heavily used roads and footways, however severe snow events may prevent access at times.
- 2.2 The policy in place is designed to deal with a typical winter and resources will always be tested in snow events. During prolonged periods of snow the most important routes within the Category 1 network (now designated Category 1a) will be prioritised for gritting and snow clearing treatments as listed in Appendix 3.
- 2.3 *The two additional night shift gritting routes introduced last winter were not tested in 2018/19 but based on the introduction of previous nightshifts, are anticipated to add value in a more typical winter, and as such will remain in place. There are now a total of 6 nightshift routes overall, which can cover 490km per night during the main standby period.*
- 2.4 It is proposed to continue with the night control, staffed on a rotational basis, to manage and monitor the nightshift operation. The night control will monitor conditions, amend instructions based on actual conditions that were previously given based on forecast, and deploy resources as required by the conditions following completion of planned routes. In addition, during periods of mild weather, when no winter treatment is required, the controller will instruct and monitor the crew on routine maintenance activities as required.

- 2.5 The level of service complies with the recommendations laid down in Code of Practice 'Well-managed Highway Infrastructure' (the code). The code refers to practical guidance by the National Winter Service Research Group (NWSRG) *that has only recently been published. This new guidance is based on, but is less prescriptive than, the previous code of practice.*
- 2.6 The Society of Chief Officers for Transportation in Scotland (SCOTS) previously agreed their recommendations for compliance with the code and the Council's Winter Service Policy fully complies with these recommendations.
- 2.7 Cover will be provided between 7th October 2019 and 5th April 2020. Appendix 1 details the resources available over this period which *include extending the main cover period by 1 week either end of winter. Experience over the last 4 winters has proven that the available standby personnel generally require bolstered by staff volunteers who are not on rota, for out of hours cover, over these two weeks.*
- 2.8 Appendix 1 details the times of the day during which the agreed level of service will be provided if actual or predicted weather conditions dictate that treatment is required. However in periods of prolonged severe weather, this level of service is often not achievable given the need to ensure that the pool of operatives are not overstretched and are given adequate (statutory) rest breaks. This is particularly evident during the lead-in/lead-out period to winter *however the alteration to the length of lead in/out should mitigate this.* Similarly, weekends or public holidays are affected when a reduced number of relief drivers are available.
- 2.9 In severe weather conditions, the higher priority routes may have to be treated several times before resources can be diverted to lower priority routes. There is little point in clearing less important routes if the more important roads, to which they give access, have not been cleared.
- 2.10 In severe conditions in low usage areas, treatment may be restricted to clearing only the carriageway or one footway. Restricting the activity in this way will help to ensure that the limited resource is as widely spread across communities as possible.
- 2.11 Response Time: 1 Hour - the maximum time between the decision to begin treatment and vehicles leaving the depot. (For un-planned activities this includes calling operatives from home).
- 2.12 Target Completion Time - during the main cover period, the target completion time for routine morning de-icing of Category 1 carriageways is 07:30 (09:00 on Sundays and nationally recognised public holidays). The treatment time in severe weather conditions will be longer. As soon as snow falls it could take twice as long to complete treatment, as vehicles need to travel more slowly and ploughing must be undertaken in both directions. With the exception of the six nightshift routes which operate during the main standby period, no treatment will routinely extend beyond 21:00 (see Appendix 2a):

- Category 1 priority roads will be treated seven days per week as detailed above.
- Category 2 roads will be treated five days per week (Monday to Friday) as resources permit between 08:00 – 15.00.
- Category 3 routes comprise of roads which are not normally treated, except in prolonged ice or snow conditions and only when resources become available. Each treatment route will be arranged so that the most important parts are treated first, whilst taking account of operational efficiency.

2.13 Footways receive treatment according to their usage and importance in the public road network (see Appendix 2a). Based on this assessment:

- Category 1 priority footways will be treated seven days per week within the main winter period, with extended hours on weekdays if an alert is called. No footway treatment will be carried out on Christmas Day and New Year's Day as in general shops are not open on those days.
- Category 2 footway routes will be treated five days per week (Monday to Friday) as resources permit between 08:00 – 15.00.
- Category 3 routes comprise of footways which are not normally treated, except in prolonged ice or snow conditions and only when resources become available. Each footway treatment route will be arranged so that the most important parts are treated first, whilst taking account of operational efficiency.

2.14 In most areas, the footway on one side of the road only will be treated. This releases resources to provide more widespread treatment across other areas. *Treatment routes are being revised to include the pedestrian routes to and from Bertha Park school, and this may impact on other previously treated routes*

2.15 The use of social media such as Facebook and Twitter as well as the Council web site, enables officers to provide real time information on the local roads and footways network over winter. Perth and Kinross Council liaises with Police Scotland when providing the travelling public with real time information on road conditions / closures during snow and ice events.

2.16 Stakeholder feedback has highlighted our communities have a desire to help themselves, and officers have consulted with various stakeholders, including Community Councils and other interested community groups. It is hoped to continue to build on support for interested/able local individuals willing to treat sections of footway that the Council cannot ordinarily treat through:

- Another 20 push along barrows will be available for community use for winter 2019/20
- Criminal Justice Community Payback services are available to assist with labour resources during snow conditions and it is intended to develop this further over the coming winter.

- 2.17 The use of a salt : grit sand mix have been implemented successfully on rural non priority carriageway routes during previous winters and it is proposed that this approach is continued.
- 2.18 There is a UK-wide agreement, managed by the Scottish Government, to monitor and report on salt use and stock levels which is reported nationally. The Council remains committed to reporting and complying as required.
- 2.19 For 2018/19 the salt order was 23,000 tonnes which is similar to the total amount of salt used routinely over a typical winter season. *Although last winter season saw only 12,191 tonnes used, it is intended to again hold a starting stock of 23,000 tonnes.* The collaborative use of Tayside Contracts in providing the winter service ensures there is scope for mutual aid across Tayside, should restocking become an issue.
- 2.20 The Council currently provides in excess of 1,300 grit bins. This large number reflects the Council's desire to encourage self-help and its decision not to treat some minor roads routinely. The Council is currently at saturation point where we can service and replenish these containers, and therefore any request for additional grit bins will require to be offset by relocating another grit bin where, from experience, has shown it to be little used. Grit bins are generally provided on steep gradients, tight bends, and steps; or in some special cases where there is a specific community need. They are normally not provided on routes, which are treated routinely. Grit bins will generally be filled with a salt/sand mixture, but when salt conservation measures are required, will be filled with grit sand only.
- 2.21 Grit bins are provided for use on public roads and not on private areas *and are not routinely checked by officers through the winter, instead the Council relies on reports of empty bins from members of the public which can be done by utilising MyPKC on the Council website.* Private occupiers should purchase salt from DIY stores and builders merchants for use on their own properties.
- 2.22 There are currently voluntary arrangements with 69 farmers to whom the Council supplies snow ploughs which they fit to their own vehicles, enabling them to clear snow on specified lengths of public road, as well as to clear their own private roads. The number of farmers *participating in the scheme increased from 67 to 69 during last winter.* These arrangements cover around 300km of road, which is just under 8% of the overall Council road network. Council officers are happy to hear from any farmers interested in the scheme, however will only be able to add farmers from areas where presently there is little coverage. The Council indemnify the farmers against 3rd party liability claims but do not insure against damage to their own vehicle or themselves.
- 2.23 In addition 32 *farmers* have indicated that they are available to be employed in severe conditions to undertake snow clearing of additional lengths of road. These farmers are called on for Orange Alerts and once these additional resources are utilised, benefits become apparent.

- 2.24 The following replacement items of winter maintenance plant will be available for winter 2019 – 2020 as replacements for old plant that has been scrapped.
- *Two 4 x 4 gritter replacement*
 - *Three 6m³ demount bodies*
 - *Four footway tractors*
- 2.25 The weather forecast contract for the winter of 2019 – 2020 will again be provided by MetDesk Weather Services. Winter 2018/19 was the second year of a 3 (plus 1 plus 1) year contract with MetDesk. *Despite the often marginal conditions when the temperatures hovered around 0 degrees to +2 degrees celcius making forecasting for decision making a challenge, Metdesk delivered 87.7% accuracy in their forecasts.*
- 2.26 The Council has 7 weather stations and 8 camera sites (3 sites have dual directional cameras) placed strategically across the network. The station data and images are shared with neighbouring authorities & BEAR Scotland and their information is shared with the Council. The camera images are also available on the Council website alongside a community camera at Spittal of Glenshee (which the Council helped fund) and Braemar. This infrastructure is maintained and information retrieved / interpolated by Vaisala. The MetDeska and Vaisala contracts are administered by Tayside Procurement Consortium on behalf of seven Councils working collaboratively to achieve economy of scale.
- 2.27 Situations occur which require that restrictions on hours, routes, employment of contractors etc. should be relaxed, in order to deal more effectively with the emergency. This is allowed and controlled by a system of 'Alerts'. In serious situations, either an Orange or Red Alert can be authorised, to allow working arrangements outwith the 'normal' policy. A Blue alert is called operationally to mitigate a potentially short term hazardous situation.

3. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 It is recommended that the Committee agrees that:
- i. The winter maintenance service should be delivered as outlined in this report.
 - ii. The Executive Director (Housing and Environment) is authorised to make arrangements out with the policy and level of service in exceptional conditions such as snow emergencies.
 - iii. *The main winter period is extended by one week either end of winter, to mitigate the need for regular volunteers to be sought to cover these periods.*
 - iv. The budget is set at £3.715m; and to agree that this budget be used to also fund other weather related emergencies, such as works to mitigate immediate risk of flooding to properties/roads and wind damage, directly affecting free movement across the roads network.

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Approved

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Keith McNamara	Depute Director (Housing and Environment)	19 July 2019

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1. IMPLICATIONS, ASSESSMENTS, CONSULTATION AND COMMUNICATION

Strategic Implications	Yes / None
Community Plan / Single Outcome Agreement	Yes
Corporate Plan	Yes
Resource Implications	
Financial	Yes
Workforce	Yes
Asset Management (land, property, IST)	None
Assessments	
Equality Impact Assessment	Yes
Strategic Environmental Assessment	Yes
Sustainability (community, economic, environmental)	Yes
Legal and Governance	None
Risk	Yes
Consultation	
Internal	Yes
External	Yes
Communication	
Communications Plan	Yes

1. Strategic Implications

Community Plan / Single Outcome Agreement

- 1.1 The winter maintenance service is provided to ensure that transport links essential to economic and social activity can continue to be used safely throughout most of the winter. However, it is not the intention and is not possible to keep all roads free from ice and snow at all times.
- 1.2 The Council's policy is set out in Report 96/180 "Summary of Council Policies for Roads and Transport" approved by the Roads and Transport Committee on 24 April 1996: (Art. 63/96). It is deemed that this policy is still relevant.
- 1.3 Policy 5 of the above report - The Council will operate a priority system of winter maintenance which will, as far as reasonably practicable, permit the safe movement of vehicular and pedestrian traffic on the more important parts of the road and footway network, taking into account the finance which has been made available. The priority system will be applied uniformly and will, as far as possible, contain costs to an acceptable level.
- 1.4 The objective of this policy is to enable the Council to comply with its statutory duty as set out in Section 34 of the Roads (Scotland) Act 1984 which states: "A roads authority shall take such steps as they consider reasonable to prevent snow and ice endangering the safe passage of pedestrians and vehicles over public roads." The policy allows the Council to meet its statutory obligations by providing the most effective winter maintenance service it can

within the constraints of its finite resources. During severe weather, the Council will endeavour to keep delays to a reasonable minimum.

Corporate Plan

1.5 The Council's Corporate Plan lays out five Objectives which provide clear strategic direction, inform decisions at a corporate and service level and shape resources allocation. This report impacts on the following:-

- i) Promoting a prosperous, inclusive and sustainable economy
- ii) Supporting people to lead and independent, healthy and active life
- iii) Creating a safe and sustainable place for future generations

2. Resource Implications

Financial

2.1 The following table illustrates the pattern of expenditure in recent years.

Year	Budget	Standing Charges	Operating Costs	Outturn Cost
2004/05	£2.826m	£1.359m	£1.241m	£2.600m
2005/06	£2.911m	£1.378m	£1.477m	£2.855m
2006/07	£2.888m	£1.275m	£1.086m	£2.361m
2007/08	£2.888m	£1.433m	£1.202m	£2.635m
2008/09	£2.888m	£1.549m	£1.966m	£3.515m
2009/10	£2.888m	£1.752m	£3.333m	£5.085m
2010/11	£2.795m	£1.794m	£4.169m	£5.963m
2011/12	£2.795m	£1.776m	£1.765m	£3.541m
2012/13	£2.880m	£1.997m	£2.387m	£4.384m
2013/14	£3.317m	£1.317m	£1.676m	£2.993m
2014/15	£3.617m	£1.986m	£1.895m	£3.881m
2015/16	£3.617m	£2.088m	£1.568m	£3.656m
2016/17	£3.617m	£2.148m	£1.223m	£3.371m
2017/18	£3.717m	£2.185m	£2.857m	£5.042m
2018/19	£3.714m	£2.147m	£1.424m	£3.571m
Mean				£4.149m

2.2 The actual expenditure on the Winter Service will be dependent upon the severity of the weather throughout the winter and other emergencies throughout the year and will be closely monitored and reported regularly to the Strategic Policy & Resources Committee.

2.3 The costs of providing a winter service is split into two distinct areas:

- Standing Charges – these are the costs involved in having specialised plant, depots, hired plant and standby personnel etc in place to provide the service. these are effectively “up front” costs incurred irrespective of weather conditions.
- Operating costs – cover the cost of fuel, routine repairs, salt, grit sand and the actual cost of paying staff and operatives to provide the service.

- 2.4 As detailed in the table in paragraph 2.1 the mean outturn cost over the past ten years is £4.419m which exceeds the budget figure. Last winter reduced this mean value and indeed was £143k under budget. In half of the last ten winters, the budget has not been exceeded Three winters cost in excess of £5m each, which increases the mean cost, and overall, the budget is at an appropriate level. Council will continue to utilise reserve funds to meet the full cost of the Winter Service. Underspent Winter Service funding is added to the reserve fund, to offset additional costs in more severe winters.
- 2.5 The Council has this year set a budget for £3.715m for winter 2019/2020. The Council will continue to implement operational and efficiencies savings to contain costs but as winter is unpredictable the cost will vary.

Workforce

- 2.6 The staff and the operatives of Tayside Contracts and the Council Services who provide the service, have demonstrated over the life of the Council, that they have the experience and expertise to tackle the worst of winter weather. Although Winter 2018/19 was a less than typical example, Winter 2017/18 before it provided an exceptional performance being given by all involved in dealing with several winter storms (Beast from the East).

3. Assessments

Equality Impact Assessment

- 3.1 An equality impact assessment has been completed with the following outcomes for functions, policies, procedures or strategies in relation to race, gender and disability and other relevant protected characteristics. This supports the Council's legal requirement to comply with the duty to assess and consult on relevant new and existing policies.
- 3.2 The function, policy, procedure or strategy presented in this report was considered under the Corporate Equalities Impact Assessment process (EqIA) with the following positive outcome:
- (i) The Winter Manual will have a list of priorities for snow clearing. It will include also include giving priority to clearing bus stops disabled parking bays and pedestrian crossing points (both designated pedestrian facilities, and at road junctions) to assist pedestrians, to complete the link between cleared footways and carriageways.
 - (ii) Publicity information on the Winter Service via, local media and www.pkc.gov.uk will recommend that members of the community should look out for vulnerable community members and see if they can provide any assistance to them. It will also emphasise that the Council needs the assistance and support of as many members of the community as possible in order to restore the roads and footways to a safe condition.

Strategic Environmental Assessment

- 3.3 Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) is a legal requirement under the Environmental Assessment (Scotland) Act 2005 that applies to all qualifying plans, programmes and strategies, including policies (PPS).
- 3.4 The matters presented in this report were considered under the Environmental Assessment (Scotland) Act 2005 and pre-screening has identified that the PPS will have no or minimal environmental effects. It is therefore exempt and the SEA Gateway has been notified.
- 3.5 The reasons for concluding that the PPS will have no or minimal environmental effects is that over the years the roadside verges have already been impacted and have adapted, resulting in vegetation, particularly grass, which is tolerant to the salt. It is not anticipated that there will be any long-term, frequent, permanent or cumulative environmental effects, or impacts on areas of high biodiversity or cultural heritage value, as a result of the policy.

Sustainability

- 3.6 Under the provisions of the Local Government in Scotland Act 2003 the Council has to discharge its duties in a way which contributes to the achievement of sustainable development. In terms of the Climate Change Act, the Council has a general duty to demonstrate its commitment to sustainability and the community, environmental and economic impacts of its actions.
- 3.7 Perth and Kinross Council also has the following mitigation measures in place to ensure there is minimal environmental effect as a result of the Winter Service Policy including:
- Salt Management – gritters are calibrated and data from IEWS system and the specialist weather forecast enables treatment to be targeted at the areas that require it.
 - The majority of the salt storage is in buildings or covered in tarpaulins in locations which have been approved by SEPA, thus helping to prevent leaching into the ground.
 - Discharge of surface water from new developments addresses the potential environmental effects to prevent pollution.
 - The Winter Service is reviewed on an annual basis to take account of changing climatic factors and planning for extreme weather events.

Risk

- 3.8 The Council as Roads Authority have a statutory duty as set out in Section 34 of the Roads (Scotland) Act 1984 which states: "A roads authority shall take such steps as they consider reasonable to prevent snow and ice endangering the safe passage of pedestrians and vehicles over public roads."

- 3.9 This policy allows the Council to meet its statutory obligations and minimise exposure to risk by providing the most effective winter maintenance service it can within the constraints of its finite resources. During severe weather, the Council will endeavour to keep delays to a reasonable minimum.

4. Consultation

Internal

- 4.1 As in previous years Elected Members were given the opportunity throughout the winter and in April 2019 to become involved in agreeing the route categories with the Roads Maintenance Partnership. The policy also allows unadopted roads with an important community use to be included within the categorisation and is not restricted to adopted roads.
- 4.2 As local circumstances, and travel patterns change, winter maintenance categories are subject to change and Elected Members have a role in identifying and agreeing such changes. However the resources available to carry out winter maintenance are finite, so if the relative priority of a road or footway is to be raised then that of another road or footway within a particular Ward must be reduced.
- 4.3 The Council is likely to receive complaints about the winter maintenance service due to high public expectations, limited available resources and the vagaries of the weather. A distinction has to be made between complaints related to proven failures to meet the approved level of service and complaints regarding the policy.
- 4.4 At the end of the *2018 - 2019* winter comments on the winter service provision were invited from Elected Members and from Community Councils.
- 4.5 Responses were received from individuals or groups throughout the winter and Appendix 4 details the principal issues raised. Within available resources, it is possible to address some but not all of these issues.

5. Communication

- 5.1 Communication will take place leading up to winter and the policy and level of service, along with specific detail on gritting routes and times will be made available on the Council website. Ongoing winter action and road conditions will be made available via Council facebook and twitter.

2. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 2.1 Well Managed Highway Infrastructure 2016
- 2.2 Road (Scotland) Act 1984

3. APPENDICES

3.1 Appendix 1 - Periods of Cover

3.2 Appendix 2a - Level of Service & Priority Systems (Carriageways)

3.3 Appendix 2b - (Footways)

3.4 Appendix 3 - Category 1A Carriage Snow Routes

3.5 Appendix 4 –Record of Complaints/Feedback Winter 2018/19