ABSTRACT:
This report sets out the proposed Winter Service Policy and details the proposed service provision for preventative treatment and snow clearing during the winter period 2011/12 together with contingency arrangements to cater for extreme conditions prevailing, in conjunction with the operational issues detailed in the supplement placed in the Members’ Lounge.

1 RECOMMENDATIONS

1.1 It is recommended that the committee:

(i) adopts the policy for the Winter Service during the forthcoming winter as stated in Appendix 1;

(ii) approves the proposed arrangements for the coming winter 2011/12 which are broadly similar to the arrangements for 2010/11 subject to the alterations detailed in this report;

(iii) notes the arrangements proposed to meet the costs of the winter service during 2011/12;

(iv) agrees to delegate authority to the Head of Roads to deviate from the treatment decision matrix and introduce salt conservation techniques as proposed in the report if difficulties are experienced or anticipated in obtaining sufficient salt supplies;

(v) agrees to delegate authority to the Head of Roads to instruct additional treatment over the Christmas/New Year period where conditions so justify as described in the report;

(vi) notes that 100 extra grit bins have been purchased and consultation is currently underway involving members, Community Councils and local Community Partnerships as to the location of these;

(vii) notes the continuing use of “red” diesel for agricultural tractors for treatment subject to continued approval by Her Majesty’s Revenue and Customs and the payment of the relevant fuel duty;

(viii) notes that the second year of a two year contract has been awarded to the Met Office for weather forecasting;

(ix) agrees to the additions to priority gritting routes as detailed in the report;

(x) notes that advice will be issued through the “winter watch” section of the council’s website and any other public relations which is carried out in the lead up/during winter to promote community resilience including encouraging the self help message and citizens stocking their own salt widely available including from DIY stores, and garden centres.
2 DETAIL

2.1 Winter 2011/12

2.1.1 The severe weather conditions experienced together with the costs of providing the winter roads service in 2010/11 were set out in Committee Report No 396/11 Winter Maintenance 2010/11 Activity Review considered by this committee in May 2011.

2.2 Statutory Duty

2.2.1 The Roads (Scotland) Act 1984 Section 34 places a duty on the roads authority to take such steps as it considers reasonable to prevent snow and ice endangering the safe passage of pedestrians and vehicles over public roads. It is therefore incumbent on Angus Council to determine the measures which it deems appropriate for the winter service on its public roads taking into account its overall priorities and available resources.

2.2.2 In order to ensure that the council can demonstrate that it is meeting its legal obligations and is doing so in a way which ensures that its resources are being deployed in the most economic, effective and efficient way an essential pre-requisite is a clear statement of policy endorsed by elected members. This policy statement then provides a framework for planning the preparatory arrangements and operational procedures to be implemented and allows clear guidelines to be given to those involved in the delivery of the service.

2.3 Established Policy and Practice and Proposed Changes

2.3.1 The Infrastructure Services Committee of 24 August 2010 (Report No 600/10) approved the Winter Services Policy and Provision for 2010/2011. This policy has proved to be robust and effective, and is unchanged from previous years.

2.3.2 In order to make best use of available resources it is necessary to operate a priority system for the treatment of carriageways and footways. Strategic routes including important bus routes, important commuter routes, roads serving hospitals, ambulance stations, fire stations, shopping centres most schools, and major industrial centres are classed as "priority routes" (Category 1) and, accordingly, are given a higher level of service and priority over other "non-priority" (Category 3) roads. In the same way footways are classed as priority (Category 1) or non-priority (Category 3) taking into account the level of pedestrian usage.

2.3.3 Priority (Category 1) routes are:

- given extended winter maintenance coverage
- treated before non-priority routes
- during prolonged snow conditions are kept open or are opened up in preference to non-priority routes.

Auxiliary (Category 2) Routes:

- are non-priority routes treated, when necessary, Monday to Friday, in advance of the morning school bus routes which are particularly prone to icing (generally Glen routes)
- Glen routes/routes north of A90/A926/B957 and the C52 Westhills to Cockhill from the B9128 at Drazin to Redford on the B961 and the U338 Auchterhouse, The Brae generally at the same time as priority routes on weekend mornings and public holiday mornings only when necessary
- start later than priority routes but before the other non-priority routes.

Non-priority (Category 3) routes are:

- given a lesser winter maintenance coverage than priority routes
- only treated after priority routes
• dealt with after priority routes have been satisfactorily cleared during prolonged snow conditions.

2.3.4 The background detail and previous operational detail have been established over many years and are included in the Supplement (Operational Details) to this report which has been placed in the Members’ Lounge. It is proposed to continue operational practices in accordance with the established criteria, detailed in the Supplement. These remain largely unchanged except for the details provided in paragraphs 2.3.11 to 2.3.15 and 3 below. The details including authorising the Head of Roads to order a temporary increase in the level of service in heavy snow conditions and to react as required in severe weather to genuine life and limb emergency situations or incidents involving serious damage to property.

2.3.5 The winter weather and snow conditions over the last three years have seen a reversal of the trend towards milder winters over the previous years and the council and the public have had to adapt to the events accordingly. The events of the 2010/11 season and the operational response, as in previous years, have been reviewed to seek out lessons learnt and make continuous improvements.

2.3.6 The council’s winter service policy has been established for many years, as required under the statutory duties imposed by the Roads (Scotland) Act 1984. This and the operational procedures were fundamental in delivering the service in 2010/11. However as the weather persisted with frequent snow falls and extreme freezing temperatures, particularly during December 2010, the operations needed to diversify from the normal priorities to action more aligned with the Civil Contingencies Act 2004 and business continuity to enable restoration of other council services such as school transport and waste collections.

2.3.7 The conditions presented a number of issues in regard to the council’s obligation under the Roads (Scotland) Act (as well as many other service difficulties) including:

• Due to the depth of snow particularly in the north west area of the county, footway ploughs were unable to operate;
• Due to the repeated snow falls and repeated ploughing snow build up at the side of roads, reduced available widths for traffic and needed digging out;
• The demand for services from our residents and businesses was overwhelming;
• The very low temperatures meant that salt was less effective and had limited effect on compacted snow and ice;
• There was a diverse number of issues and demand for services to be balanced, particularly during the event when accurate weather forecast information is limited to five days ahead. Thus demands to clear town centres, car parks and side roads had to be balanced with demands for resources elsewhere such as schools and transport hubs.

2.3.8 The early heavy and repeated snow falls of 2010 stretched the Road division’s resources. There are real benefits in dealing with snow as quickly as possible by making maximum use of available resources while conditions persist and authority is delegated to the Head of Roads, or in his absence the Senior Service Manager (Roads), to authorise the expenditure involved in providing a temporarily increased level of service (e.g. permitting weekend and evening work on non-priority routes and bringing in extra resource).

2.3.9 During 2010 additional resources from private contractors were deployed to dig out and transport the snow away. These resources were in addition to the Tayside Contracts establishment who continued to deliver salt/grit spreading, snow ploughing and snow clearance. As the winter conditions continued it was necessary to prioritise ongoing demands, essentially prioritising the snow clearing on the road network. This allowed allocation of the additional resources to the areas of need rather than reacting to diverse customer demands. These “secondary priorities” are now put forward for approval by committee, noting that these areas are only addressed once the priority network is cleared which during extreme conditions such as prevailed during November/December 2010 may be several days later, and each of these secondary priorities may take many days to address.
2.3.10 The priorities remain:

- Priority (Category 1) road network, as per previous policy and as set out in the Operational Plan.
- Auxiliary (Category 2) road network, as per previous policy and as set out in the Operational Plan.

2.3.11 Once these main transport routes are in an acceptable condition, noting that with further low temperatures or additional snow they may require re-treatment, then in heavy snow conditions (as experienced in the winter of 2010/11) resources will be used to address the other issues, in the following general order. **The hierarchy below will be followed in principle and will be delivered in a practical and economic way subject to the prevailing circumstances.** The process will be in accordance with the council's incident management procedures and will seek to maximise the productivity of the resources whilst focussing on the hierarchy and this operational management is delegated to officers.

- Snow clearance of town centre areas;
- Treatment of areas of public transport difficulties (i.e. at or around bus stations, widening of specific routes to safe passage of buses);
- Routes to schools – see below;
- Areas requiring clearance for specific road safety issues (such as narrowing routes due to continued ploughing), particularly for school transport routes;
- Town centre car parks, once other services are being restored to enable off street parking;
- Health care areas such as doctors' surgeries, improved access to hospitals;
- Nursing homes and elderly resident areas (through customer contact and specific requests);
- Residents/business requests – whilst these are the majority of our ACCESSLine calls, we will have to limit our response to (potentially) serious issues. Life and limb situations will be assessed and addressed as appropriate.

2.3.12 This process was the basis of the hierarchy followed in the 2010 events and consequently snow clearance was initially focussed on town centres and then radiated out of town centres to areas of transport, schools and health centres. The committee are asked to confirm this operational approach for future years.

2.3.13 As part of the actions to clear non-priority routes, and in order to maximise the effect as quickly as possible, footways on one side of the road only were cleared. Thus double the length of footways could be cleared with the available resources, allowing increased access to services for the public. This did create some concerns from residents on the uncleared side but gave reduced difficulties to the wider burgh town populace. The committee are asked to confirm this operational approach for future years where conditions so require.

2.3.14 As a consequence of the 2010 event, certain pedestrian areas for snow clearance around schools are in the process of being agreed with the Education Department and school head teachers. These areas are those considered to be a priority by the head teacher where they are part of the adopted road. Depending on the school they may include walking routes, bus drop off points and areas used by parents to drop off children. They do not, however, imply the clearance of all routes to the school or in some cases continuous routes. This information will then be passed out to parents to advise the areas and routes that will be cleared. The priorities for the Education Department are that services are restored to secondary schools ahead of primary schools such that the disruption to pupils preparing course work or undertaking preliminary examinations is minimised.
2.3.15 The Education Department have in place processes for making decisions regarding school closures and notifying the media and parents and these are not detailed in this report. Education arranges for the snow clearance of schools grounds as deemed appropriate.

2.3.16 Subsequently to the agreed areas at schools being cleared, restoration of school transport services became the Education Services priorities. While some of these routes are auxiliary routes, additional clearance works are required to provide safe passage of school transport including widening at corners and clearance of passing places on narrow roads often made narrower by accumulations of snow including from ploughing operations. Again priority is given to transport routes for secondary school pupils.

2.3.17 Members are asked to confirm this operational approach for future years.

2.3.18 There were a number of operational issues, including where to deposit the excavated snow and these have been documented where necessary in the operational details for future years.

2.3.19 As in previous years, resources from Neighbourhood Services may be available to assist in snow clearance. Where operatives are unable to carry out their normal activities due to the weather they are available to assist in snow clearance activities. Neighbourhood Services already undertake third party contracts for winter treatment and these remain their priority due to the contractual commitments. These contracts include access and car parks for the health service, courts, and major retailers. Other Neighbourhood Services resources, and the resources undertaking the contract works once complete, are utilised in snow clearance operations for the council on a wider basis than duties under the Roads (Scotland) Act. This includes clearance of council staff office car parks and council business/industrial estates. This increases the council’s winter resilience and assists in restoring council services affected by the weather related issues. These resources are managed through the council’s incident management team during extreme weather conditions such as those experienced in 2010. Operational issues are coordinated but there are resource implications, particularly the ability for operatives to be transported which limits their potential use.

2.3.20 Assistance was provided during the 2010 event by Community Service Criminal Justice Services operatives and these resources were self managed.

2.3.21 There have been a number of reviews of the UK and Scotland response to the last two winters. This Committee Report, the Operational Details and associated documentation has taken account of the latest updates to the national Code of Practice and national winter reviews and advice and is determined to be broadly in line with the recommendations and advice given.

2.4 **Budgetary Provision and Expenditure Control**

2.4.1 The provision of a winter service must take into account the vagaries of local winter weather which can vary widely from year to year in both the severity and the occurrence of wintry conditions (snow and ice). The unpredictable nature of the climate requires a pragmatic and reactive approach to the provision of resources. In practice resources have to be available to allow a measured response to an "average winter" and contingency plans made to take account of particularly abnormal (mild or severe) winters.

2.4.2 The recommended approach is:

(i) to differentiate between "fixed costs" and "variable costs";

(ii) to adjust the level of service to contain fixed costs and variable costs for an average winter to keep within budget; and

(iii) to have contingency arrangements in place to deal with a projected overspend or underspend as a result of "abnormal" weather. These contingency plans must take account of the possibility of prolonged severe weather very late in the financial year while still working within an overall cash limited budget.
2.4.3 Fixed costs include plant and equipment, storage and handling charges for salt, grit bins, fixed costs of standby payments, training and costs of office, depot and garaging facilities. The majority of these items form part of the standing charges submitted by Tayside Contracts.

2.4.4 Variable costs include running costs of plant, salt used, driver costs and payments to outside contractors for assistance with snow clearing.

2.4.5 Whilst the fixed costs are broadly independent of the number of treatment activities occasioned by the weather conditions and can be estimated with some confidence, the variable costs are dependent on the prevailing weather conditions.

2.4.6 In the event of a sustained period of severe winter weather and the likelihood of the budgetary provision being exceeded the Director of Infrastructure Services would report the situation to the Head of Finance/Director of Corporate Services and the Infrastructure Services Committee in accordance with the council’s financial regulations.

2.4.7 If the severity of the winter weather is such that other road works cannot be carried out then it is sometimes possible to transfer the “underspend” from these works to Winter Service operations, thus assisting in containing the total expenditure within the overall Infrastructure Services Department revenue budget. Conversely, if all the indications are that expenditure on Winter Service operations will be less than the budget allocation any “underspend” can be transferred to other roads revenue works.

3 OPERATIONAL ASPECTS

3.1 The main operational aspects of the winter service are detailed in the Operational Details/Supplement placed in the Members’ Lounge. This Supplement includes details of the hours of service; prioritised routes; type of plant and equipment; type and quantity of salt. The committee are asked to approve these operational issues which are substantially similar to those applied during the 2010/11 winter. Some operational adjustments have been made following experience gained over the winter past including to the decision making matrix which broadly aligns with “Well- maintained Highways Code of Practice for Highway Maintenance Management July 2005”; the standby arrangements for Tayside Contracts; clarifying decision making on when treatment should be carried out; some minor routing alterations for vehicles; and clarification in terms of periods of cover for the provision of the winter service.

3.2 These operational aspects and the Winter Services Policy are recommended for approval and set out the proposed arrangements for 2011/12. The changes proposed for this season are set out below.

3.3 Members will be aware of the proposals to construct salt storage at the Forfar depot (Committee Report 867/10). The contract for the design and construction of a 6000 tonne salt storage facility was awarded in May 2011. The contractor is in the process of pursuing planning permission for the building and it is anticipated that the structure will be constructed in October 2011. Given the demands for salt supplies both for Scotland and the UK with the early snow last year, salt deliveries of marine salt are already complete in Angus and rock salt will be delivered as soon as it is available.

3.4 Approximately 19,000 tonnes of salt has been ordered which is 1,500 tonnes more than 2010/11 agreed holding and slightly more than used last winter. 6,000 tonnes of the 19,000 tonnes is to be rock salt which will in the future be stored in the building as noted above in the Kirriemuir Road Depot, Forfar. The remaining salt will be marine salt. Marine salt can be treated with a thatching agent and can be stored outside without cover. Grit sand was used last winter in accordance with central government guidance from the UKRLG and SCOTS salt conservation measures.

3.5 Given the possibility of salt shortages in the future it is recommended that the Head of Roads be delegated the authority as previously to apply similar salt conservation measures in future
entailing varying the decision matrix in the policy to allow the use of 50/50 grit sand/salt mixes as may be appropriate or in some cases to broadcast grit sand only. Grit sand can help with traction. It also can be of benefit where salt is less effective where temperatures are below minus 5 degrees C. Grit sand, although cheaper than salt can have some negative effects in that unlike salt, which more or less completely disappears as it dissolves, grit does not, and can block drainage pits and stays on surfaces with extra cost in terms of drainage cleaning and sweeping, at the end of the winter.

3.6 The future weather conditions cannot be forecast with certainty and members are asked to note the salt conservation measures as may be required as set out above and in the Supplement (Operational Details) in the Members’ Lounge and accordingly note that the Head of Roads may deviate from the gritting/salting decision matrix and introduce salt conservation techniques if future difficulties are experienced or anticipated in obtaining salt supplies.

3.7 Public holidays combined with weekends led to a four day holiday period over the Christmas/New Year period and lengthy sub zero temperatures lead in accordance with policy to reduced gritting of non-priority routes. For future years the ability to mobilise gritters onto non-priority routes before the end of the four day holiday period (when the holiday period so falls) when deemed operationally appropriate would be beneficial and would reduce the cost of subsequent treatment. It is therefore recommended that the Head of Roads be delegated authority to take appropriate action should circumstances and conditions so justify. In addition it has been necessary in consultation with Tayside Contracts to review the number of operatives kept on standby over the holiday period. Similar four day public holiday periods will arise this coming festive period. Standby costs are covered in the standing charges.

3.8 100 extra grit bins have been purchased and consultation is currently underway involving members, Community Councils and Local Community Partnerships as to the locations of these bins, as agreed in Committee Report 396/11.

3.9 Efforts have been made through the council’s website and winter maintenance leaflet to increase clarity that the hours of cover and start and finish times are not the definite start and finish times for the individual route treatments nor the times that routes will necessarily be treated nor are they continuous. The council’s policy is to use resources available for winter maintenance in the most efficient, effective and economic way to prevent, as far as considered reasonably possible by Angus Council, snow and ice endangering the safe passage of pedestrians and vehicles over public roads.

3.10 As agreed last year the addition to the auxiliary route of the section to the Glen Doll Ranger Service will continue on a shared cost basis with the Neighbourhood Services Department. It is proposed to alter one of the priority gritting routes to include a section of the C60 and C59 known locally as Balcathie from the A92 south of Arbroath to Arbirlot aiding access for the school bus and also to add a section of the C1 from the A92 from Upper Victoria to Craigton known as The Marches for operational and safety reasons. The gritter has the capacity and completion times for the route will not be unduly increased.

3.11 Members will recall the issues regarding Hydrocarbon Oil Duty as detailed in Report 811/08 (Winter Service Policy and Provision for 2008/09). Through extensive work with colleagues in the Finance division just prior to the start of that winter, HM Revenues & Customs allowed “farmers” subcontracting to Tayside Contracts permission to use red diesel to carry out winter treatment operations provided the fuel duty difference between white and red diesel is paid in advance thereby obviating the practical difficulties of the vehicles running on “red” diesel for their normal agricultural operations and requiring to switch to clear diesel for winter maintenance purposes. It is intended that similar arrangements will apply for this winter.

3.12 This is the final year of a four year contract previously agreed by committee with Vaisala for the maintenance of ice stations and data management in Angus. A new contract will be required for 2012/13.
A second year has been agreed with the Met Office for forecasting provision for 2011/12. This contract involves Dundee City, Fife and Perth and Kinross Councils also as previously agreed.

The recent winter weather endured across the UK highlighted issues which have not previously been perceived as a significant issue. One such issue is clarification of treatment of level crossings, and with only two level crossings in Angus this is not significant. However it has been agreed through SCOTS that the council’s approach to winter treatment should be clarified and agreed with the Network Rail. Network Rail’s preferred approach is that salt is not spread across the area of level crossing and similarly snow ploughing does not take place in order to minimise the risk of damage to their tracks. Network Rail is responsible for the area of road between the level crossing barriers and any liability for the ice/snow clearing falls to them. This has been the practice in Angus for many years and this has been confirmed to Network Rail by the Head of Roads. The committee is asked to note the agreed procedures.

Advice will be issued through the “winter watch” section of the council’s website and any other public relations which is carried out in the lead up/during winter to promote community resilience including encouraging the self help message and citizens stock their own salt widely available including from DIY stores and garden centres. The Council publishes a winter leaflet with the policy which is distributed to local garages, libraries, etc and is also placed on the website. Articles are published in the council’s newspaper “Angus Life”. Communication takes place with the Police regarding closures, etc and messages are relayed to the media.

A question has been posed as to whether it would be possible and appropriate to sell salt direct to members of the public for snow/ice clearing. This was considered in Report 396/11 and determined not appropriate for operational and commercial reasons in that the council may be accused of undercutting commercial sellers and so may affect certain sections of the local business community. Making recommendations on who the public should purchase from is not possible as the council are unable to endorse any specific supplier because of the potential to miss out suppliers or raise accusations of favouritism or bias. The same advice would be given to Community Councils to avoid naming specific suppliers.

The approved budget for Winter Service third party payments for 2011/12 has been established at a sum of £2,490,000.

As in previous years the intention is to provide the best level of service possible within the available budget. In practice winter service operations are dictated by the prevailing weather and the response required in accordance with the council’s policy and agreed level of service. Some costs (related primarily to ensuring a state of "being prepared") are fixed and will be predictable once the relevant charges and rates have been agreed with Tayside Contracts. Other costs are variable and are proportional to the treatment activity required in consequence of the severity of the winter and, as detailed above, a severe winter can greatly increase the expenditure required to provide the approved level of service.

The Head of Roads will monitor costs closely as the winter progresses, and if there are indications that the projected expenditure is likely to be at variance with the budget a report will be prepared in conjunction with the Director of Corporate Services, with proposals for any necessary budget adjustments for the consideration of the appropriate committee.

There are no human rights implications arising from the proposals in this report.

There are no human rights implications arising from the proposals in this report.
6.1 The issues dealt with in this report have been the subject of consideration from an equalities perspective (as required by legislation). An equalities impact assessment has previously been carried out.

7 ANGUS COMMUNITY PLAN AND SINGLE OUTCOME AGREEMENT

7.1 This report contributes to the following local outcomes contained within the Angus Community Plan and Single Outcome Agreement for Angus 2011-2014:

- Our communities are safe, secure and vibrant.
- Individuals are supported in their own communities with good quality services.

8 STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

8.1 The issues dealt with in this Report have been the subject of consideration from a strategic environmental impact assessment perspective as required. A pre-screening assessment has been carried out and a strategic environmental assessment determined not to be required.

9 CONSULTATION

9.1 The Chief Executive, the Director of Corporate Services, the Head of Finance, the Head of Law and Administration, the Director of Education, the Director of Neighbourhood Services, the Chief Constable and the Managing Director of Tayside Contracts have been consulted in the preparation of this report.

9.2 Report No 414/10 noted the UK Roads Liaison Group (UKRLG) recommendations for councils to consider in regard to their resilience for winter weather published in August 2009 by the UKRLG in terms of a Winter Resilience Review. The recommendations included wider consultation with bodies including health authorities and public transport providers. This consultation process was carried out in late 2010 with feedback resulting in additional treatment to Arbroath bus station.

10 CONCLUSION

10.1 The council has a statutory duty to take such steps as it considers reasonable to keep public roads safe during adverse winter weather. Notwithstanding the difficulty in predicting the duration, severity and geographical distribution of winter conditions it is necessary to have a clear policy and an agreed level of service to allow the planning and preparation necessary for the delivery of a winter roads service.

10.2 If during the course of the winter abnormal or particularly extreme weather conditions are experienced the Director of Infrastructure Services in conjunction with the Director of Corporate Services will report the position to the committee and will recommend appropriate contingency arrangements and any necessary compensatory budgetary adjustments.

10.3 On the basis described therefore the proposed winter service arrangements for 2011/2012 will continue to provide value for money and a targeted level of service delivery.

ERIC S LOWSON
DIRECTOR OF INFRASTRUCTURE SERVICES

NOTE:
The background papers, as defined by Section 50D of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 (other than any containing confidential or exempt information) which were relied on to any material extent in preparing the above report are:


Roads/JG/DH
ANGUS COUNCIL
WINTER SERVICE 2011/2012
POLICY

Angus Council will endeavour to use the resources available for winter maintenance in the most efficient, effective and economic way to prevent, as far as is considered reasonably possible, snow and ice endangering the safe passage of pedestrians and vehicles over public roads and to minimise the inaccessibility of public roads and temporary disruption of traffic directly attributable to adverse weather conditions.

The Council will therefore operate a system of winter maintenance which gives priority to the more important and heavily trafficked sections of the public road network (both carriageways and footways).

The Council will encourage the use of self-help measures.

The Council will not provide winter maintenance on private roads or prospective public roads. The Council will however carry out winter maintenance on effectively adopted public roads (i.e. roads which have been constructed to the Council's standards and have been accepted for adoption at the end of the one year maintenance period but which have not yet been added to the List of Public Roads).