

Report to: Communities Scrutiny Committee

Date of Meeting: 23 April 2015

Lead Member/Officer: Lead Member for Public Realm/
Head of Highways and Environmental Services

Report Authors: Network Manager/
Head of Highways and Environmental Services

Title: Rationalisation of Precautionary Gritting Routes
(Freedoms & Flexibilities outcome)

1. What is the report about?

The report describes how Highways & Environmental Services intend to deliver the reductions in precautionary salting mileages that were endorsed by members as part of the Council's Freedoms & Flexibilities (F&F) process.

2. What is the reason for making this report?

To enable the Communities Scrutiny Committee to satisfy itself that the required reductions in route mileage have been developed in a logical and rational manner, and that they will deliver the required savings.

3. What are the Recommendations?

That the Committee considers, comments and endorses the route changes that have been developed.

4. Report details.

- a) It is important to note that the proposed reductions affect precautionary gritting only. No changes are being proposed to the gritting routes that would be used in snow conditions.
- b) The purpose of the salting is to maintain a strategic route network in times of adverse weather, including links into villages. In line with most authorities, Denbighshire has traditionally salted all A and B class roads, together with a small proportion of the remainder of the network. In all the Council currently treats around 28% of the highway network (slightly below the national average).
- c) Each salting run involves 9 vehicles driving a total of 850 kilometres of which 570 kilometres is salted. These figures include Trunk Roads salting, which is paid for directly by Welsh Government, and therefore outside the scope of this report.

- d) The need for change is financially driven. As part of the F&F process, the Council has already endorsed a proposed reduction of £250,000 in the highways maintenance budget (for 2015-16). The figure of £250k included a proposed reduction in spend on precautionary salting of around £60k, which needs to be delivered next winter.
- e) Gritting costs are generated by a number of factors, including; the weather, forecasting accuracy, national guidance, the levels of risk that officers decide to accept when making their decisions, the efficiency of the routes that we employ in the delivery of the service, the cost-effectiveness of our fleet arrangements and our staffing arrangements,
- f) Some of these factors are external, but those that are under the control of the Council are reviewed and amended each year, with the aim of optimising our cost effectiveness. The Council then produces an Adverse Weather Plan (previously known as the Winter Maintenance Plan), which identifies which routes are to be salted.
- g) The optimisations that took place prior to the 2014/15 season did lead to some complaints from members of the public, so it is very clear that the reasons behind the changes in this report will have to be communicated in a planned and coordinated manner. This will include the use of the Council's web site, and publishing/publicising the 2015/16 Adverse Weather Plan. Advisory signs will also be displayed on the affected routes, on a risk assessed basis.
- h) In order to achieve the level of saving specified in the F&F process, it was estimated that a route reduction of around 10% (on our non-trunk roads) would be required. Obviously; the weather is different every year, so this is an estimated figure, based on an average year. Under these proposals; the length of the network that will no longer receive precautionary salting is 43.9 km. The saving produced will be around £10k in salt and £50k in operative and vehicle costs.
- i) The selection of routes is based largely on the availability of suitable alternative routes, and/or other reasonable mitigation factors. As indicated in 4a) above – in the event of snow the Council will treat these roads in the same way that they are treated now, i.e. until they are clear of snow and ice. For clarity; the proposed reductions apply to precautionary salting only.

5. How does the decision contribute to the Corporate Priorities?

The Council's F&F process was designed to deliver the necessary savings in a way that minimised the impact on corporate priorities.

6. What will it cost and how will it affect other services?

The changes will produce a typical net saving of around £60k p.a.

7. What are the main conclusions of the Equality Impact Assessment (EIA)?

The likely effects are on the drivers of vehicles only. It is not considered likely that there will be any disproportionate impact on any groups with protected characteristics. See Appendix 2.

8. What consultations have been carried out with Scrutiny and others?

The proposals contained within this report are also being shared with each of the relevant Member Area Groups

9. Chief Finance Officer Statement

Not obtained. (the basic decision has already been taken, as part of the F&F process).

10. What risks are there and is there anything we can do to reduce them?

- a) Risk of public disquiet about the reduction in service levels (see 4g above for mitigation).
- b) A marginal increase in the risk of accidents on the proportion of our roads that will remain untreated in frosty conditions (see 4g and the notes in Appendix 1 for mitigation).
- c) If the proposed reductions are *not* delivered, there is the risk of an *increase* in spend, because an extra route in the north might be required.

11. Power to make the Decision

Article 6.3.3 of the Council's Constitution sets out Scrutiny's powers with respect to policy development and review.

Contact Officers:

Network Manager

Head of Highways and Environmental Services

Tel. 01824 706875

Tel: 01824 706801