



Environment & Transport Select Committee
30 June 2011

REPORT OF THE WINTER MAINTENANCE TASK GROUP

Purpose of the report:

To outline to the Committee the recommendations made by the Winter Maintenance Task Group, as set out in the report attached as Annex 1.

Background

- 1 The Winter Performance Task Group reported to the Cabinet in September 2010, when various recommendations were approved for introduction in the 2010 /11 winter season and further actions for the Task Group were identified.
- 2 The Task Group reconvened in January 2011, and the report attached as Annex 1 sets out its findings and recommendations. Following consideration by the Select Committee, the attached report will be submitted to the Cabinet at its meeting on 26 July 2011.

Recommendation:

That the recommendations of the Winter Performance Task Group, as set out in the attached report, be endorsed and submitted to the Cabinet for approval.

Next Steps:

Following consideration of the recommendations by the Committee, the report will be submitted to the meeting of the Cabinet to be held on the 26th July 2011.

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Sources/background papers: None

SURREY COUNTY COUNCIL

CABINET

DATE: 26 July 2011
REPORT OF: Winter Performance Task Group
SPOKESMAN: Steve Renshaw
SUBJECT: Winter Service Development for 2011/12



KEY ISSUE/DECISION:

1. The Winter Performance Task Group last reported to Cabinet on 28 September 2010 when various recommendations were approved for introduction in the 2010 /11 winter season and future actions for the Task Group were identified. Following further Task Group meetings, beginning in January 2011, Cabinet is now asked to consider this update. Matters covered include the service operations and performance during the 2010/11 winter season, with recommendations for decision as to whether it continues to support the current levels of service and investment, or is prepared to consider service enhancement in what are considered to be discretionary winter service activities. This report also summarises feedback from members and officers, in providing a number of new or revised, costed options based on our new Highway Contract rates, to inform Cabinet's consideration and decisions.

DETAILS:

Background

2. The previous Cabinet report on 28 September 2010, documented in some detail the events and impacts suffered between December 2009 and February 2010, when Surrey and the rest of the UK experienced the most severe winter weather conditions for thirty years. [\[Link to report included for ease of member reference\]](#) This report considers events during the 2010 /11 winter season and the affect of operational improvements and additional funding approved by Cabinet for that season, together with organisational changes and partnership working arrangements.
3. Very early in the 2010 /11 winter season Surrey was again affected by unusually extreme weather conditions. This included prolonged periods of ice and snow between 29th November and 24th December. Following such an early event, it was not unreasonable to expect and prepare for further similar events. On this occasion nothing of significance occurred again during the winter season, although certain contingency measures had been undertaken, including the provision of additional salt stocks that arrived in Surrey in January, as planned.

4. Reference has previously been made to the routine, or 'average' Surrey winter, which was calculated as 38 precautionary salting runs per season, based on seven years data to 2009/10. Prior to the 2010 /11 winter season the revised calculation was 51 runs per season and following the events of 2010/11 the 'average' figure is currently 52 runs per season. This is important, because our basic calculations for precautionary salting next season, 2011/12, form a significant part of the budget build up and financial forecasting for winter activities. Operations in excess of this figure may be regarded as an 'extreme' winter.
5. For reference, there were actually 62 (52 in west and 62 in east) precautionary salting runs completed during the 2010 /11 winter season, but as has already been noted, there was little requirement for response following the New Year. However, during the pre-Christmas events, there was a significant call on additional resources, including farmers and District and Borough partners.
6. Further recognition of the scale and severity of the winter events on our highway network in 2010/11, is demonstrated by the response of central government in the form of an additional £200 million for English highway authorities to spend on road maintenance. The allocation to Surrey was £4 million. That has enabled an extra programme of schemes to be undertaken countywide and many sites have already been completed under the new works contracts.
7. The Winter Service Task Group is continuing to focus specifically on Highway activities, but we are aware that the Safer and Stronger Committee are continuing to review progress on cross-cutting winter service activities and any identified issues are being dealt with and responded to separately. A further meeting of this group, which includes representatives from all affected council services, has been arranged for July. Highways representatives will attend to report our progress and ensure continuity of response with other services, building on progress achieved during 2010/11. This will include communications issues referred to later in this report.
8. Members will be aware that the Operations, Highways and Countryside Service (OHC) entered into a new highway term maintenance contract with May Gurney (MG) on 28 April 2011. This has enabled all highway service provision to be reconsidered with MG, during 2010/11 and to date. As a result new and generally more competitive rates have been negotiated for many activities, including winter service provision.
9. In addition, it has been possible to engage the experience, knowledge and purchasing power that a national company like MG can bring to the new contract, including winter service provision. Since the start of their mobilisation period in January, MG have been working with us on all elements of our essential services, which includes the updated provision of

our gritting fleet and optimisation of the gritting routes, to maximise efficiency and reduce costs, by reducing the number of vehicles.

10. This joint report clarifies a number of ongoing issues from previous years and includes updated information and in some cases proposals and recommendations, with indications of cost where appropriate. These are made by the Winter Performance Task Group for consideration and potential adoption as policy by Cabinet. Many recommendations will have both member and officer support while some may have one or other noted with supporting rationale.

Duties and Liabilities

11. Section 41a of the Highways Act 1980 states that local authorities 'have a duty to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, that safe passage along a highway is not endangered by snow or ice'. The qualification of 'reasonably practicable' means that it is not an absolute duty. However, the county takes its Winter Service responsibilities very seriously, as demonstrated both by the ongoing Task Group review and the extent of approved recommendations and additional budgetary support, approved by Cabinet last year. However, highway authorities are permitted to take preventative measures against the accumulation of snow and ice to protect the highway over and above the minimum statutory requirements. While continuing to recognise the ongoing difficulties caused by limited finances, the recommendations in this report are made for Cabinet to consider as amendments to current policy and to again fund, as they consider appropriate, within the overall Surrey County Council budget.
12. Section 58 of the Highways Act, provides local authorities with a statutory defence against claims made as a result of ice and snow on the highway, on the basis that they have taken reasonable measures to ensure that problems are dealt with swiftly. Provided these measures have been implemented properly a claim can be rejected, but when this defence cannot be maintained, any successful claim is paid from the Highways service revenue budget, which results in further budgetary pressures on all Highway activities. Improvement in the implementation of these measures can hence be described as an opportunity to 'invest to save' and may often prove to be cost neutral.

Gritting Routes

13. In response to the Cabinet's concern last year, that our gritting routes should be reviewed to provide a 'people solution', the Task Group has investigated placing enhanced emphasis on community access and topography, which has detrimentally affected the ability of some people in certain areas, to go about their daily routine during severe weather events. Area Highway Managers (AHM) and engineers, who have direct contact with the public and members during such events were, therefore, involved in the review. The resultant alterations, totalled approximately five additional kilometers of treated P1 route (including 3km from the

detrunking of the A3 Portsmouth Road). Due to time constraints, these have already been discussed with our contractor and included in their route optimisation process for treatment in 2011/12 (at an estimated cost of £2,000 for an “average” 52 salting runs per season).

- 14.** A further and more extensive option in enhancing a ‘people solution’, discussed by the Task Group, involved consideration of extending the P1 precautionary salting network by up to a nominal 10%, together with the inclusion of primary schools on a new P3 network. This to be included with the P2 salting network, during snow clearing. In determining the criteria it was recognised that all of the the P2 elements are important; hills, schools, stations etc. and with the exception of hospitals, ambulance stations and special schools it would be difficult to prioritise. In developing the criteria the rationale has , therefore, been to consider any P2 route that meets 2/3 of the criteria.
- 15.** This proposal would include approximately 172kms (10%) of additional P1 route. The contractor is aware of this option and has been asked to evaluate the proposal for inclusion in the 2011/12 winter season. If Cabinet were to approve such expenditure at their July meeting it may not be possible to provide a full pre-wet solution for these routes on immediately, but MG have proactively suggested they may be able to equip and treat with dry salt, until new pre-wet vehicles are available.
- 16.** It is appreciated that the cost in terms of labour, plant, materials could be considered significant, although the route optimisation undertaken by MG has identified efficiency gains. These would offset the additional cost of incorporating additional lengths onto the priority salting network, within the existing budget (the cost of treating an additional 172kms of P1 network is estimated to be approximately £210,000 p.a.).
- 17.** The Task Group noted that this would be offset by a further reduction in the number of grit bins of between 20 and 73 with a potential saving of between £3,000 and £11,000.
- 18.** Vehicle types and specification have been discussed with the new contractor who has committed to trial two quad bikes, suitable for gritting in more restricted areas such as housing estates, at no cost to the council during 2011/12. The Task Group has also asked for alternative winter vehicle types to be identified and costed by MG. Two alternatives sizes and types of machines have been investigated for potential use (at an estimated cost of £53,000 per season for a quad bike and £88,000 per season for an All Terrain Vehicle (ATV) with snowplough. As the two quad bikes are already included by MG for this winter season the additional cost for one ATV, to be used as a substitute vehicle for one of these quad bikes in the trial, is approximately £35,000).
- 19.** In order to compare and evaluate the use and performance of these different vehicle types is proposed that they should be located for use primarily in and around Oxted in the East and Haslemere in the West,

subject also to the extent and severity of any snow event affecting Surrey. Details of the evaluation process will be agreed by SCC with MG.

- 20.** We now have two years countywide feedback on particularly difficult, hilly sites, especially on the P1 precautionary gritting network. In these cases arrangements are to be formalised, so that the contractor works with an identified farmer or contractor, who can provide the skills and equipment necessary to clear and in such circumstances, grit in specific areas e.g. Hogs Back, Newlands Corner, Young Street etc.

Salt Management

- 21.** Surrey has continued to develop its salt purchase and management arrangements over recent years. As a result only minor amendments are required to comply with the recommendations of The Quarmby Report, published in October 2010, that suggest the total of salt we require is 14,400 tonnes, an increase of 1,400t on our current resilience level.
- 22.** The following table identifies existing salt stocks and their distribution across highway depots, together with barn capacity figures and options for additional storage proposed by our contractor at Merrow for 2011/12: -

Depot	Barn Capacity 2010/11 (tonnes)	Current Stock Levels (tonnes)	MG Proposal (tonnes)		Retained by Highways 2011/12 (tonnes)
Godstone	4000	2991	4000		
Kingswood	1900	1011			1900
Beare Green	900	766			900
Bagshot	3500	1025	3500		
Merrow	1750	1261	1750	3000	
Witley	1800	802	1800		
Total	13850	7856	11050	3000	2800
Combined Capacity (MG + Highways) for 2011/12					16850

- 23.** The maximum countywide salt storage capacity available in 2011/12 is calculated as 16,850 tonnes, using alternative storage facilities proposed by our contractor. We, therefore, have the capacity to order a further 2,450t of salt at summer rates, with a potential saving of between £40,000 (based on lower winter rate figure) and £105,000 (based on premium winter rate figure).

- 24.** Boroughs, Districts, Town and Parish Councils have no official winter 'duties' on the public highways in their own areas, but SCC previously provided 20 tonnes to each for highway use (town and village centre

footways) and this was increased to 40t in most cases last year. Where District and Borough Councils commit to these works during severe weather events, the Task Group considers this shared approach should be encouraged to continue and be recognised on the winter service web site (at an estimated cost of £21,000 for £40t of salt for each of nine D&B's who may potentially participate).

25. The county procurement team, using a framework contract with the Eastern Shires Purchasing Organisation (ESPO), is managing salt procurement for the 2011 /12 winter season (9,000t on order) and the tender will be awarded on 1 July. It is projected that this process could save £35,000 (Strategic Project Plan – Salt Supply).
26. In future years ESPO, a consortium of London Boroughs and SE7, may again offer alternative framework arrangements for procurement. All options will continue to be pursued as and when they are available, to ensure best value provision of salt at summer rates whenever possible.
27. Approximately 11,000t of salt was brought onto the network in 2010/11, with 4,575t being delivered during the winter season. Had additional storage capacity been available, it has been calculated it would have offered a potential saving of £154,000 p.a. on the cost of salt (summer rate: £32/t; winter rate: £48/t to £75/t). Therefore, in order to properly store additional salt at alternative sites, could be the cost of a 2,500t salt barn, approximately £130,000, which could be recovered within one year, while also enhancing our resilience.
28. Our local and regional salt storage strategy requires further consideration with adjacent counties and our contractor. The Task Group has also asked to be appraised of the operational use and success of our depot facilities for highway maintenance purposes in due course. Furthermore, if any highway depot is declared surplus to requirements at some point in the future, there is a member expectation that OHC will benefit from all, or part of the capital receipts from this exercise, for use on highway services.

Provision and Use of Grit Bins

29. Significant work has been undertaken to update the asset inventory of highway grit bins and map their locations across the county. The total of 1743 highway grit bins has now been identified with an additional 51 recorded at, or near, fire stations provided as part of their own business continuity plans.
30. In addition, each site has been assessed, by members of the Local Delivery and Customer Services Group, in accordance with criteria agreed by Cabinet on 28 September 2010. The criteria basically assess vehicular and pedestrian movements in the locality of the grit bin, site geometry and traffic density, with a score of 100 points or more being required to warrant necessity.

31. The countywide survey results are shown below: -

Grit Bin Criteria (points)	Grit Bins (No.)	Comments
100 plus	1055	Meet with criteria
90-99	39	
80-89	63	
70-79		
60-69	27	
50-59	125	
25 plus	149	With the exception of being on the non-treated network, these grit bins have no rating.
P1 network	255	Grit bins placed on or adjacent to the Priority 1 salting network. By including the supplementary P1 network (172kms) this would increase by a further 20 – 73 grit bins (the +5km has no affect on numbers)
n/a	30	Private/Duplicate/Not found
	1743	

32. In order to further clarify the distribution of grit bins countywide, the following table includes a breakdown of the assessments in each Borough and District area: -

Grit Bin Criteria (points)	Elmbridge	Epsom & Ewell	Guildford	Mole Valley	Reigate & Banstead	Runnymede	Spelthorne	Surrey Heath	Tandridge	Waverley	Woking	Total
100 plus	37	66	129	109	247	24	10	90	86	198	59	1055
90-99	0	2	13	1	3	2	0	9	0	9	0	39
80-89	0	0	0	0	23	2	1	14	7	15	1	63
70-79	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
60-69	1	5	6	0	0	0	0	4	7	4	0	27
50-59	0	6	10	3	2	7	0	40	24	33	0	125
25 plus	1	3	40	7	0	3	0	12	33	50	0	149
P1 network	12	40	20	42	1	3	10	15	65	34	13	255
n/a	0	0	0	6	1	0	0	5	7	11	0	30
Total	51	122	218	168	277	41	21	190	229	353	73	1743

33. Last September, Cabinet approved a recommendation that all grit bins assessed and not meeting the full criteria (100 points), should be removed from the network and re-used at other sites that do meet the criteria.

34. It is proposed that members should identify new sites that meet the criteria within their communities and discuss these with their local Community Highway Officer (CHO) in order to gain approval for retention and

relocation. A reciprocal arrangement between CHO's and their local members is also encouraged.

- 35.** However, with the data now available above, the Task Group has pragmatically re-considered the number of assessed, non-compliant grit bins currently sited on the highway network. As a result, the following priorities, and possible basis for a staged action programme, for the removal and re-use of these grit bins are now suggested. An indication of the approximate savings to the service budget are also included (assuming two grit bin refills per annum):-
- a) Those grit bins sited on the current P1 precautionary salting network – 255 grit bins would be removed at an estimated annual cost saving of approximately £37,000
 - b) Those grit bins sited on the potential 172 kms extension of the P1 precautionary salting network - further survey work is required but it is calculated that between 20 and 73 grit bins may be removed, subject to their current use on the mainline or at side road junctions, at an estimated annual cost saving in the range of approximately £3,000 to £11,000 (assumed £7,000)
 - c) Those grit bins with a score less than 75 – 301 grit bins would be removed at an estimated annual cost saving of approximately £44,000
 - d) Those grit bins located on highway land but not highway maintained – 30 grit bins would be removed at an estimated annual cost saving of approximately £4,000
 - e) Those grit bins with a score of between 75 and 100 points – 102 grit bins would be removed at an estimated annual cost saving of approximately £15,000.
- 36.** The total savings on grit bin management and maintenance, based on the figures above, is, therefore, £107,000 per annum. The Task Group considers this significant saving could be more efficiently and effectively used in contributing to an extended P1 precautionary salting network, which would provide more benefit to more people in Surrey.
- 37.** As the number of non-compliant bins is considerably greater than the 10% assumed previously, it is noted that not all may be immediately relocated and those remaining (excluding those which have no residual life), will be retained in store for future use as replacements.
- 38.** All grit bins included in the inventory and retained on the highway network, will be located with GPS and suitably labelled as SCC, by our contractor during the summer, as previously agreed by Cabinet.
- 39.** The Task Group also noted that micro chipping each grit bin and providing sufficient hand held devices to record maintenance visits by the contractor, would enable this large and widely dispersed asset to be more effectively

monitored during future winter seasons and provide useful 'real time' management information. It is anticipated that this could be published on the winter service website, to enable members of the public, and other stakeholders, to update directly on grit bin maintenance, so further reducing the demand on officers to respond to such enquiries. (TRL estimate an approximate cost of 50p per chip (x1500) plus hand held scanners at £1,000 each (x6): Total = £7,000. Funding to label our grit bin asset was agreed by Cabinet last September and micro chipping them at the same time results in little or no additional labour cost).

- 40.** The Task Group considers that local groups and businesses that fund the provision of a new grit bin through the approved county process may 'advertise' in accordance with details to be provided in the Winter Service Plan 2011/12 (cost: £0 – cost to the provider).
- 41.** The cost of providing and maintaining a grit bin, in accordance with the previously agreed county process, has been reviewed to reflect new contract rates. At the same time, the Task Group has reviewed feedback on the cost and duration of any agreement from members and other stakeholders, who have, or may wish to, purchase a grit bin. It has now been calculated that the revised cost of a grit bin, including two fills per season, is £1,000 for a 4 year period and that this cost and timescale more appropriately reflects potential demand. It is also confirmed that all new grit bins provided and funded through this process will be included on the service asset register and be managed and maintained by OHC.
- 42.** It is noted that during the 2010 /11 winter season, various interested parties have proposed, or made prior arrangements to supply and install grit bins in their area. It is reiterated that Cabinet did not support this approach in September 2010. All applications must continue to be processed through the county procedure, in order to maintain both asset records and maintenance schedules, which enable operational resupply at the agreed standard.
- 43.** Privately provided grit bins may very helpfully be placed at safe sites adjacent to, but off, the public highway. As is normal council practice, any unauthorised obstruction, including a grit bin, placed on the highway will be removed to the nearest depot.
- 44.** The Task Group noted that more than one grit bin refill was performed again during 2010/11. This was due to the demands created by the nature and duration of the weather events. In these circumstances it is considered prudent to provide an estimate for both an initial and subsequent grit bin refill. Assuming no reduction in the current asset at this stage, the estimated maintenance cost of 1743 grit bins (plus 51 Fire and Rescue) is:-
 - £152,000 for pre-season maintenance (10% grit bin replacement) and fill.
 - £110,000 for a single fill.

- Total = £262,000 for two fills and 10% replacement programme.

45. In comparison, if the number of grit bins countywide is reduced to 1055 (plus 51 Fire and Rescue), the number surveyed and identified as meeting the approved criteria, the estimated maintenance costs are:-

- £94,000 for pre-season maintenance (10% grit bin replacement) and fill.
- £68,000 for a single fill
- Total = £162,000 for two fills and 10% replacement programme.

Footways Policy and Self-Help

46. The discretionary aspect of responsibility for gritting footways, allows the Council to focus resources on maintaining the road network as the main priority. It is recognised that footways often clear without specific treatment by the time roads have been fully gritted to an appropriate standard. As such, the Task Group continues to believe that the public should be clearly informed that the County will not be responsible for gritting footways, and that this should be promoted, through negotiation, as a Borough, District, Town and Parish Council function.

47. Members of the public are unlikely to be held liable, following an incident related to their snow clearance or salt spreading, as long as the condition of the road/footway is no worse than it was before they carried out the work. This information was communicated to the public last autumn through the winter edition of 'Surrey Matters' and on the winter service web site. It was pleasing to note that many more residents and frontagers did appear to accept responsibility and undertake effective 'self help' locally. This benefitted both themselves and others passing by. No particular issues were identified as a result and the Task Group both supports and encourages this type of practical, local solution.

48. Following legal clarification of the above, prior to the severe weather events last winter, the Task Group was pleased to note that more residents and frontagers appeared to commit to self-help of this type than ever before. In addition, the number of public enquiries reduced substantially due to the effective communications campaign and winter web site information provided.

Borough/District Responsibilities

49. As previously reported, Borough, District, Town and Parish Council winter service responsibilities on the public highway are limited. However

partnership-working opportunities and arrangements have been and will continue to be progressed.

- 50.** Following the Cabinet meeting on 28 September 2010, all Borough and District Councils were provided with the opportunity to receive 20t of SCC salt prior to the start of the winter season, for use specifically on the public highway. In some cases this amount was doubled, to enable continued supporting action during the extended period of severe weather.
- 51.** In addition, each Borough and District was offered the use of three hand-propelled spreaders, to improve the speed and efficiency of spreading salt on pre-determined lengths of the footway network. There was also an opportunity to receive appropriate training to use and maintain the machines. The majority of Boroughs and Districts received this opportunity for collaboration positively, and the resultant improvement in efficiency is welcomed. After consideration of the current arrangements, and confirmation that our contractor will provide fifteen hand spreaders for similar use by their own workforce, a further allocation to Boroughs and Districts is not felt to be a priority this year.
- 52.** During last winter, most Boroughs and Districts were involved in supporting the county to maintain footways. These arrangements were largely informal and based on historical arrangements for assistance.
- 53.** However, this year, each Borough and District has been contacted with a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) and supplementary schedules, describing the location and priority of works that they may wish to commit to for the 2011/12 winter season, should the need and opportunity arise. A response from each authority was requested by 26 May 2011 and at the time of writing this report 4 (including Waverley - meeting arranged to confirm) have responded and expressed their interest in principle. The outcome of this proposal will form part of the Winter Service Plan and be displayed on the winter service web site for public information.
- 54.** Liability and insurance issues have been discussed at length with our Risk and Insurance Team and a very pragmatic approach to sharing risk and managing any claims that may arise, has been suggested for the 2011 /12 winter season. This approach will be reviewed at the end of the season and any necessary amendments considered, should they prove to be required. No cost is envisaged to the council under the currently proposed arrangements.
- 55.** Based on the success of partnership working arrangements with some Boroughs and Districts in previous years, the Task Group is supportive of 40t of salt (two lorry loads) being supplied direct to each Borough and District that is committed to assisting with snow and ice clearance works on the public highway, should the circumstances arise. The MOA and attached schedules should enable each Borough and District to reconcile salt stock use, to the frequency of salting operations in their areas. It is emphasised again, however, that no SCC salt supplies are to be used for activities off the public highway, including car park clearance or similar and

if any Borough or District is found to do so again, then they should receive no further supplies of salt. (based on an assumed nine of eleven Boroughs and Districts taking up the offer, at an estimated cost of £21,000).

- 56.** The Task Group noted the intention of OHC to undertake a trial with Tatsfield Parish Council during the 2011 /12 winter season. Here, trained parish volunteers may, in communication with the Operations Group, place advisory signs at predetermined sites, to educate and assist driver decision making on roads with particularly hazardous hills, bends etc. in severe weather conditions. The results of this one-year trial will be used to fully establish the necessary criteria for such cooperation and consider whether there are any benefits for an extension of similar local arrangements elsewhere in Surrey.
- 57.** Officer discussions on collaborative working with Boroughs and Districts are still proceeding in a number of forums, including winter service. However, the Task Group considers that the consistency of response to joint working opportunities will be further promoted and enhanced by the contribution of senior officers and members in liaison with their Borough and District counterparts. The Task Group is, therefore, supportive of this being actively encouraged.

Farmers, Contractors and Equipment

- 58.** In order to support the Council's snow clearance and gritting response during times of severe winter weather, 39 local farmers were identified to provide additional assistance in 2010/2011. It is noted that not all these resources were available throughout the periods when support was required, so it is considered that further capability will be needed, in order to free up MG staff to deploy more widely.
- 59.** During the winter period, our 'pool' of potential resources has expanded to include the following: -
- a) 41 Farmers/contractors who have worked for us
 - b) 18 who have been included on a 'reserve' list but not yet used
 - c) 26 who have expressed an interest in working.
- 60.** The total potential 'pool' resource is, therefore, currently 85. Each of these has now been plotted on a map base to illustrate the distribution of resources and equipment across the county, with some also being based outside.
- 61.** In order to establish the actual 'core' support available for this work discussions have progressed, with Legal Services, to provide an appropriate agreement and pricing framework for plant, labour and materials that can be supplied by each farmer/contractor. The documentation has been forwarded to a small sample of farmers who have

already worked in Surrey and a meeting has been arranged for the end of June to discuss and agree the detail for both parties and gauge the level of interest. A representative from the Procurement Group is also involved, to resolve existing issues regarding rates etc. The consultation will then continue with a meeting of all other interested parties by the end of July, to identify a reasonable distribution countywide. The priority duties for each can then be determined and recorded in plan format for operational purposes.

- 62.** To maximise the speed of response and reduce the need for continuous operational management it is suggested that the 'trigger' for action, based on the agreed prioritised plan of work, will be a forecast snowfall event of 50mm and greater. This can then be communicated to all farmers involved, through a text system possibly, by the Operations Group in advance of the forecast event.
- 63.** Regardless of where the farmers are based, their expertise and equipment will need to enable them to be flexible and operate 'county-wide' and as such it is not just rural areas that benefit from their services. Details of these individuals have been recorded countywide, in order that operational officers, who are solely responsible for their contact and deployment, can utilise their services effectively, during periods of need. The farmers and their sub-contractors have been told that they can only accept instruction from Highways staff, which is confirmed in their contracts.
- 64.** The Task Group supports the creation of a well distributed 'pool' of 50 farmers/contractors in Surrey, from the 85 currently available, in order to support the council if circumstances require (at an approximate annual cost of £60,000 based on 2 days activity for all 50). It was, however, also noted by the Task Group that this activity is very much dependent on the occurrence of 'extreme' weather conditions across part(s) or all of the county and so could be zero cost.
- 65.** By increasing the number of farmers in the 'pool' to 50, there is also a need to review the number and distribution of ploughs provided countywide. The council has previously provided 20 ploughs to farmers within the 39 who have previously worked for us. With an increase in numbers, it is likely that a further 10 ploughs will be required, for further distribution to those without this basic equipment (at an estimated cost of £28,000 based on £2,500 per plough plus £288 annual servicing cost). These costs reflect the need for 'fit for purpose' equipment and suitable maintenance regimes to fulfil ongoing safety requirements.
- 66.** The opportunity to engage with farmers and contractors, who can provide alternative types of equipment, will be identified through the consultation, when responses are received to the agreement and attached schedules. If smaller vehicles and operatives are identified, every effort will be made to enable their use in higher density, urban areas locally e.g. major housing areas with limited width or obstructed access etc.

Communications

- 67.** Task Group members recognised the improvements achieved in communicating information and data to stakeholders through the winter web site. There were, however, concerns over the currency of some data and what had been achieved or proposed daily, during particularly difficult periods of severe weather. The provision of standard Q&A responses, daily bulletins including works completed, daily decisions made and works proposed were identified. These matters have been raised with the contractor, whose new systems will interface with the councils web site, to provide the speed and quality of information required.
- 68.** The Task Group is keen to promote successful partnership working arrangements, particularly with Boroughs and Districts. Where joint arrangements are achieved, e.g. on footway maintenance, these will be highlighted in operational plans and on the Council's winter web site etc.
- 69.** The Task Group is similarly concerned that Boroughs and Districts should also communicate widely, what they will do to assist the public with highway services during severe weather events, in order to maximise the use and availability of resources at such times. Members are encouraged to use their influence with Boroughs and Districts to promote this.
- 70.** The quality, coordination and availability of real time information for stakeholder enquiries and management, are also matters for the corporate communications team, who attend the cross cutting service group on winter response. Highways and Democratic Services representatives will continue to present the Task Group's views accordingly, to ensure continued development in this area. This will include the communication of operations completed by MG to the Surrey bus companies, so they can then make informed decisions about their service provision, especially in snow conditions.
- 71.** Officers are in ongoing discussions with MG to provide additional interactive data (e.g. grit bin information) that can be accessed by stakeholders on the winter web site. This will increase the opportunities for public self-help and reduce officer time spent handling calls and enquiries.

Finance

- 72.** The revenue budget for Winter Service activities in 2011/12 is confirmed as £2,657,000, with an additional £500,000 available as a contingency to deal with severe weather events such as prolonged ice and snow. These figures continue to reflect the increases approved by Cabinet in 2010 to cover actual operational costs incurred in Surrey as a result of extreme winter weather.
- 73.** Members are informed that business cases for both the salt procurement referred to previously and the renewal of the winter service weather information service used by the council, have been submitted and approved by the Procurement Review Group (PRG).

74. The following table summarises the various approximate, additional costs identified in the body of this report:-

Description of cost	Estimated cost avoidance (£)
Additional 5kms of P1 route	2,000
Additional 172kms of P1 route	£210,000
Alternative winter service vehicle types for 2011/12 trial (1xquad bike & 1xATV)	£35,000
Purchase of 2,450t of salt at summer rates to maximise resilience at the most competitive prices	£78,000
40t of salt for an assumed 9 of 11 D&B's	21,000
Removal of grit bin obstruction	N/a
1,500 grit bin chips and 6 hand held scanners	7,000
'Private' grit bin provision@ £1,000 for 4 year period	N/a
'Pool' of 50 farmers/contractors (this is a potential cost avoidance based on two days activity for all 50, that will only occur in the event of severe weather)	60,000
10 snow ploughs & maintenance	28,000
Total	439,000

75. The following table identifies approximate, significant, potential savings identified in the body of this report:-

Description of potential saving	Estimated saving (£)
Procurement of salt through Eastern Shires Purchasing Organisation (ESPO) framework to meet Quarmbury recommended standards	Projected 35,000 in 2011
Reduction in grit bin maintenance costs e.g. reduction of 586 grit bins x £150 each	Approximately 88,000 p.a.
Total	123,000

Member input:

- 76.** In accordance with the Cabinet recommendation(s) on 28 September 2010, the Task Group has met regularly since January 2011 to review key aspects and activities, related to the winter service provision in Surrey.
- 77.** This report is intended to once again summarise progress made and identify areas where further action is required, based on member feedback through the Task Group membership.
- 78.** It is intended that the draft report will be made available to Local Committee Chairmen and Vice-Chairmen during the week commencing 20 June, so that they may consult colleagues and comment, prior to the Environment and Transport Select Committee (ETSC) on 30 June and Cabinet on 26 July.
- 79.** The Task Group has expressed the view that a short report on contract mobilisation and winter readiness should be submitted to the ETSC meeting on 10 November 2011.
- 80.** The Task Group is also of the view that it should reconvene in March 2012 to review performance during the winter and report on this, the quad bike / ATV trial and Tatsfield Village collaborative working (criteria to be confirmed).

WINTER PERFORMANCE TASK GROUP RECOMMENDATIONS TO CABINET:
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Gritting Routes:

- a) That Cabinet agrees alterations totalling approximately five additional kilometers of treated P1 route for the 2011/12 winter season (at an approximate cost of. £2,000).
- or
- b) That Cabinet agrees extending the P1 precautionary salting network by approximately 172 kms (at an approximate cost of £210,000).
- c) That Cabinet agrees the provision and use of two alternative vehicle types on a trial basis during the 2011/12 winter season, to facilitate access to isolated communities and/or locations of restricted width (at an approximate additional cost of £35,000) The evaluation process and trial areas to be agreed by SCC and MG, primarily in the Oxted and Haslemere areas.

Salt Management:

- d) That Cabinet agrees Surrey should purchase an additional 2,450t of salt at summer rates to maximise countywide capacity at 16,850 tonnes (at an approximate cost of £78,000).
- e) That Cabinet agrees to provide 40t of salt (two lorry loads) supplied direct to an assumed 9 of 11 Boroughs and Districts that are committed to assisting with snow and ice clearance works on the public highway (at an approximate cost of £21,000).

Grit Bins:

- f) That Cabinet have a choice of the following and agrees those criteria and a priority for the removal and re-use of grit bins. In addition, that members should identify locations that meet the criteria within their communities and discuss these with their local Community Highway Officer in order to gain approval for retention and relocation:
 - i. Those grit bins currently sited on the P1 precautionary salting network (saving approximately £37,000)
 - ii. Those grit bins sited on any future extension of the P1 precautionary salting network (saving approximately in the range of £3,000 to £11,000)
 - iii. Those grit bins with a score less than 75, (saving approximately £44,000) or
 - iv. Those grit bins with a score > 75 but < 100 points (saving approximately £15,000)
 - v. Those grit bins located on highway land but not highway maintained (saving approximately £4,000).
- g) That Cabinet confirms any unauthorised grit bin placed on the public highway will be removed, without notice, to the nearest depot.
- h) That Cabinet agrees to the purchase of 1500 chips and six hand held scanner devices to enable real time management information of our extensive grit bin asset (at an approximate cost of £7,000).
- i) That Cabinet agrees a revised charge and endorses only the currently approved process for the provision and maintenance of a 'private' grit bin on the public highway (at a total cost of £1,000 for a 4 year period).

Farmers/Contractors and Equipment

- j) That Cabinet approves the creation of a well distributed 'pool' of 50 farmers/contractors across Surrey, from the 85 who have expressed an interest (at an approximate cost of £60,000 based on 2 days activity for all 50).

- k) That Cabinet approves the purchase of a further 10 snow ploughs for distribution to farmers/contractors without this basic equipment in order to facilitate a well distributed resource 'pool' across the county (at an approximate cost of £28,000).
- l) That Cabinet delegate approval of the Surrey Winter Service Plan 2011/12 to the Cabinet Member for Transport and Assistant Director, OHC.
- m) That Cabinet supports the Task Group and ETSC and requires a report on MG winter service preparation to be submitted to the meeting on 10 November 2011.
- n) That Cabinet agree the Winter Task Group should reconvene in March 2012 to review winter service operations and trials during the 2011/12 winter season and then report back to Cabinet (and ETSC) in or around June 2012. The Task Group will then either confirm completion of their involvement in the review and scrutiny of winter service activities at present or identify where and when further improvement is desirable, with costs for Cabinet approval.

Next Steps:

Any approved recommendations will be implemented as part of the Winter Service Plan 2011/2012, if it is possible to do so under current contractual arrangements.

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Consulted:

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Stephen Cooksey, Councillor and Task Group Member
Jenny Isaac, Assistant Director, Operations, Highways and Countryside

Informed:

Ian Lake – Cabinet Member for Transport

Sources/background papers:

Previous report of the Task Group to the Cabinet – 28 September 2010
Quarmby Report – October 2010
