

WINTER MAINTENANCE 2009/2010

Report of the Executive Director of City Services

**Strategic Priorities sp5 Attractive and Inclusive City
Corporate Priorities c103 Efficient and Effective Council**

1. WHY HAS THIS REPORT COME TO COMMITTEE?

- 1.1 To update Members on winter maintenance operations undertaken during the winter season 2009/2010.

2.0 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The Code of Practice for Highway Maintenance Management 2005 produced by the Department of Transport and the Local Government Association recommends that each responsible authority should prepare a Winter Service Policy Statement which is reviewed annually and endorsed by elected members.
- 2.2 Sunderland's Annual Winter Service Policy Statement for 2009/2010 was agreed by Portfolio Holder for Attractive and Inclusive City in October 2009. The statement describes the level of resources and defines the standards to be achieved in respect of a defined hierarchy of carriageways and foot paths.
- 2.3 The Winter Service policy is available on the internet and a link to the document is provided on the Members Service Directory. It also includes salt bin locations and criteria used to allocate salt bins around the city.

3.0 WINTER 2009/2010

- 3.1 The National Meteorological Office (Met Office) has advised that the winter of 2009/2010 was the most severe the country has experienced for 30 years.
- 3.2 Treatments of primary and secondary routes on the highway network commenced on 6 November 2009. From the 17 December 2009 until mid January 2010 gritting was carried out continuously in accordance with the Winter Service Policy Statement.
- 3.3 At the commencement of the winter season the council had a stock of 15,100 tonnes of salt stored in two operational bases at Beach Street, Deptford and Market Place, Houghton le Spring. Salt usage for the council in the previous five winter seasons ranged between 7,000 to 10,000 tonnes. At the end of December 2009 approximately 7,000 tonnes of the original stock had been used.

- 3.4 The severity of the winter gave rise to a national salt shortage, which resulted in the Salt Cell being introduced on 6 January 2010. Salt Cell membership comprised of representatives of Department for Transport, the Devolved Administrations (Scotland and Wales), the Highways Agency, and the Local Government Association (LGA). County Surveyors Society. Met Office, Department for Communities and Local Government and the Cabinet Office.
- 3.5 In order to preserve salt stocks nationally on the 8 January 2010 the LGA advised councils to reduce salt usage by 25% subsequently reduced to 40-50% on the 12 January 2010.

In Sunderland this necessitated

- the sourcing and use of road chippings
- reducing spread sites
- selected treatment of routes

- 3.6 As at 31 March 2010, 16,000 tonnes of salt had been used in Sunderland together with 2,400 tonnes of road chippings.
- 3.7 Throughout the winter the Council has been able to maintain treatment of the whole of the priority network as well as treating some side roads, including those where refuse collection was due to be undertaken the following day.
- 3.8 Staff involved worked a significant number of consecutive long shifts periods, with drivers hours regulations for those involved in winter services being relaxed for a period of time by the Secretary of State to meet with the demands of the winter.
- 3.9 At the Staff Talent and Recognition Scheme Awards Ceremony March 2010 the Winter Maintenance Team were awarded the Leaders Choice Award for hard work and dedication in carrying out their duties.

4.0 FURTHER ACTION

- 4.1 Officers with representatives from other authorities are scheduled to attend a meeting with Government Office North East (GONE) on the 15 April 2010 to discuss lessons to be learned from this severe winter and planning for future occurrences.

5.0 RECOMMENDATION

- 5.1 Members are requested to note the content of this report.