

AUDIT REPORT 19'022**ROADS - WINTER MAINTENANCE****EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

The 2018/19 audit plan called for a review of the application of the winter maintenance policy. The Council has a statutory duty to comply with the requirements of the Roads Scotland Act 1987 which states that "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".

Moray Council reviews its Winter Maintenance Policy each year based on guidance from both the Well Maintained Highways Code of Practice, and the Society of Chief Officers of Transportation in Scotland (SCOTS). All council roads have been given a 'priority for treatment' rating with currently 17 gritting routes across Moray designated as Priority 1. Local contractors support the service as and when conditions dictate.

The annual budget for winter maintenance is £1.65m in 2018/19 (£1.67m - 17/18) whilst spend historically is dictated by the severity of the winter season. The average spend per season over the last 10 years has been £2.22m.

The scope of the audit was to evaluate the reasonableness of decision making processes, both at policy and operational level. Audit testing was carried out during what the service reported as being a mild winter with actual spend on winter maintenance as at the end of March 2019 amounting to £1.69 million.

The principal findings from the audit were:

Decision making at a strategic level was broadly in line with national guidance, taking into account discretion for individual local authorities to consider local circumstances including, geographical location of its routes and road surface types. As such it was noted that council policy provides for slightly higher salt spread rates for some treatments, generally where salt stock piles are not covered (wet salt) or conditions are extreme.

The implications of this are evident, albeit difficult to quantify, in increased cost (more salt used), greater wear and tear on equipment and time requirements to clear blockages that may occur. Leaching from salt stocks over time reduces its effectiveness and also has environmental implications in the immediate vicinity of the salt piles. There may be an opportunity to address this with additional salt storage provision, although a cost benefit analysis would be required for each location.

A service contract for weather forecasting has been entered into with an external provider covering the period to April 2020 and this is used to inform day to day decisions on the nature and scope of work to be undertaken.

Vehicle tracking information is in use for monitoring progress with treatments on each route, for driver safety and as evidence of work carried out in the event of insurance claims being raised by third parties. The tracking information for some gritting routes was not always reliable due to radio 'black spots', caused by a

combination of the geography of gritting routes and dated technology. The fleet, as it is updated, is being fitted with an improved GPS tracking system that provides better and more reliable coverage.

Costs of winter maintenance, like other roads services, are accumulated as direct costs of staffing, plant and materials and bought in supplies. An overhead rate is applied to each cost to cover central management and back office staff. The bases for the overhead rates have not been confirmed recently and it has been recommended these rates are reviewed in consultation with accountancy and updated as appropriate.

Recommendations: Roads – Winter Maintenance

Risk Ratings for Recommendations						
High	Key controls absent, not being operated as designed or could be improved. Urgent attention required.	Medium	Less critically important controls absent, not being operated as designed or could be improved.		Low	Lower level controls absent, not being operated as designed or could be improved.
No.	Audit Recommendation	Priority	Accepted (Yes/ No)	Comments	Responsible Officer	Timescale for Implementation
Key Control: Storage and monitoring of salt usage.						
01	Management should review current arrangements for salt storage, and consider any developing a business case for any improvements that are considered feasible.	Low	Yes	Business case to be developed for covered barn at a strategic location in the east of Moray, in conjunction with the wider depot needs and rationalisation project .	Roads Maintenance Manager	March 2020
Key Control: Winter drivers are managed well, taking into consideration UK and EU driving regulations.						
02	GPS trackers should be installed as soon as is practicable on all lorries deployed on winter gritting duties.	Low	Yes	A review of fleet need and future replacement of	Roads Maintenance Manager/ Fleet Services Manager	November 2019

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No.	Audit Recommendation	Priority	Accepted (Yes/ No)	Comments	Responsible Officer	Timescale for Implementation
				gritting vehicles is ongoing with tracking system to be fitted to new vehicles and to current vehicles on a phased approach		
Key Control: System for costing works.						
03	The overhead recovery rate for back office functions should be reviewed to ensure it is representative of current costs of administering the winter maintenance service.	Low	Yes	.	Roads Maintenance Manager	March 2020