



REPORT TO: ECONOMIC GROWTH, HOUSING AND ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY COMMITTEE ON 6 OCTOBER 2020

SUBJECT: INFORMATION REPORT: WINTER MAINTENANCE 19/20 REVIEW

BY: DEPUTE CHIEF EXECUTIVE (ECONOMY, ENVIRONMENT AND FINANCE)

1. REASON FOR REPORT

- 1.1 This report is in response to the Notice of Motion raised at Full Council on the 12 February 2020. The report is to provide the Committee with an information update in respect of the impact recent reduction of Priority one routes and changes and to the gritting policy have had on the communities affected (i.e. accident data/complaints).
- 1.2 This report is submitted to the Economic Growth, Housing and Environmental Sustainability Committee following a decision of Moray Council on 17 June 2020 to agree a simplified committee structure as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. In the case of this Committee, the combining of the delegated responsibilities of Economic Development and Infrastructure, Community Services (Housing and Property) and Finance (budget, capital and revenue monitoring) (paragraph 9 of the Minute refers).

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The winter service provision within Moray Council is provided by the roads maintenance section from within Direct Services. It is planned to ensure that adequate resources are available at all times during the winter period to respond to adverse weather conditions.
- 2.2 The Council has a **statutory duty** to comply with the requirements of the Roads Scotland Act 1984 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*”.
- 2.3 The Council's policy objectives in relation to winter service are defined as “*the reduction, as far as practicable, of the effects of adverse weather conditions on the movement of people and vehicles, in order to provide safe travel on public roads within the boundaries of Moray*”.

3. CURRENT PRIORITY ONE SERVICE PROVISION IN MORAY

- 3.1 Priority one routes include all class A roads, and most class B roads along with an assortment of other classes of road in order to maximise route treatment efficiency. These roads will:-
- serve as the main routes between communities, or
 - be major traffic distributors within communities which carry heavy traffic flows, or
 - serve as public service bus routes, or
 - give access to public service, or emergency facilities providing an essential public service.
- 3.2 In special circumstances a road which does not meet the above definition may be considered a Priority one route if it is regularly used and presents special hazards because it is habitually liable to drifting snow, or freezing because of altitude or exposure etc.
- 3.3 Following an Area Based Review of Winter Maintenance a number of years ago, the P1 network was subdivided in 4 categories, P1a, P1b, P1c, P1d. With the requirement that P1a being 50% of the total P1 length at the time, and the other categories being selected based on the importance of the road.
- 3.4 In 2019/20 the P1 network in Moray, which is roads considered for daily precautionary salting treating in the evening and early morning, equated to 38% of the total carriageway length the council is responsible for. The Scottish average is reported as 45%.
- 3.5 Using the latest figures available from SCOTS (Society of Chief Officers of Transportation in Scotland), Moray would therefore rank 22nd out of 32 in terms of % of total carriageway network subject to precautionary salting treatment.

4. NOTICE OF MOTION RESPONSE

- 4.1 Following consideration of a Notice of Motion at the meeting of Moray Council on 12 February 2020 (paragraph 7 of the Minute refers), the Council agreed:
- i) to extend the gritting on the C13E road connecting Knockando with Dallas;
 - ii) to extend the gritting on the B9118 by a few hundred metres to the connecting Aberdeenshire road; and
 - iii) a further report to be provided to Economic Development and Infrastructure Services Committee on the impact the changes to the gritting policy have had on the communities affected (i.e. accident data/complaints).

Summary of Service Requests and Complaints

- 4.4 During the course of the winter season, the service receives numerous service requests from individuals, organisations and communities. Officers have monitored the number of these service requests received throughout the year and the results are reported in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Summary of service requests

Category	2018/19	2019/20
Ice or Snow on Carriageways	95	98
Ice or Snow on Footways	23	57
Grit Bins, Grit Piles etc.	19	89

- 4.5 It is clear that the level of service requests for ice/snow on carriageways has remained consistent during the last 2 years. It is difficult to prove otherwise, but the similar level of requests being received would suggest that the removal of the P1d roads has had no negative impact on the numbers of requests received.
- 4.6 There has been an increase in the number of footway and grit bin related requests being received and these are attributed to two particular unique 36 hour periods when we experienced freezing rain on already frozen surfaces. This led to an increased demand for a short confined period in providing assistance relating to footpaths. If these 2 events are discounted we would have recorded a similar number of footway requests as per previous year.
- 4.7 The service also deals with complaints and enquiries from Councillors, MP's and MSP's and those for 19/20 are summarised in Table 2 below.

Table 2: Summary of complaints and Cllr/MSP/MP enquiries 2019/20

Category	Member of Public	Cllr	MP	MSP
Gritting (carriageways)	4	2	5	2
Gritting (footways)	5		1	
Gritting (carriageways & footways)	1			1
Grit Bins / Grit Piles	2			3

- 4.8 The gritting route revisions in 2019/20 resulted in 81 sections of road being removed from Priority 1 routes. A summary of the number of complaints and enquiries received regarding each removed section of road from the P1 routes throughout the 2019/20 winter season is included in **Appendix 1**.
- 4.9 The key headline is that 11 out of the 26 complaints or elected member enquiries related to the two roads that were reinstated and are proposed to be included in future priority one routes.

Summary of accident data

- 4.10 Accident data the Council receives from the police is behind schedule and we do not have a clear picture what effect the changes to the gritting regime has had on the numbers of collisions. Additionally, it would be unwise to draw conclusions from one year as weather conditions and other factors out of our control can have an effect on numbers. It would be normal to take an average over a number of years to be certain.
- 4.11 However, none of the accidents recorded between 1 October 2019 to 31 March 20 mentioned ice/frost or snow as cause.
- 4.12 To conclude, there does not appear to be any significant impact on the number of enquiries, complaints and accidents that have been recorded that would suggest the removal of the P1d roads from our priority one routes has affected local communities.
- 4.13 A summary of the winter season is included as **Appendix 2** that details the financial, weather and communications overview for 19/20. Officers embarked on delivering a positive communications campaign and to move away from more traditional methods of communicating with our local communities to highlight what the Council is doing to protect the safety of road users and pedestrians. This approach was well received in the local press and other social media channels.

5. SUMMARY OF IMPLICATIONS

(a) Corporate Plan and 10 Year Plan (Local Outcomes Improvement Plan (LOIP))

Several objectives of these plans are influenced by the condition of the public roads network.

A Growing, Diverse and Sustainable Economy – the public road network is used by all sections of society, to access shops and services and to transport goods within and to and from Moray.

Building a better future for children and young people in Moray encouraging active travel options of walking and cycling require well maintained, and adequately treated during the winter months, facilities.

Empowering and connecting communities – road and footway hazards have the potential to cause injury. Winter gritting provision contributes to making communities safer.

(b) Policy and Legal

The Council is responsible for the maintenance of 1555km of road network which have been adopted by the Local Authority in terms of the Roads (Scotland) Act 1984. The Act places a duty on the Local Authority to maintain the roads, lighting units and structures so adopted, but does not prescribe the level of maintenance to be delivered.

Codes of Practice for Highway Maintenance Management, Management of Highway Structures and for Highway Lighting Management identify good practice and consideration has to be given to this advice.

The Council's Winter Maintenance Policy and Procedures set out requirements in relation to provision of a winter maintenance service.

(c) **Financial implications**

There is always a risk of exceeding revenue budget as weather conditions can vary from season to season and an increase in snow events/adverse winter weather will have an impact on the number of occasions when gritting treatment is required.

The reinstatement of the 2 roads identified within the report within the priority one routes will likely see an increase of £15k per annum, but this cost is subject to the number of times treatment is required throughout the year.

(d) **Risk Implications**

There are no staffing implications as a result of this report and no impact on the Council's staff establishment.

(e) **Staffing Implications**

There are no staffing implications as a result of this report.

(f) **Property**

There are no property implications as a result of this report.

(g) **Equalities/Socio Economic Impact**

The proposals for the route priority changes were designed to ensure access for groups including families with children, elderly and disabled people by ensuring that routes with significant points of interest, such as schools, public bus routes or blue light emergency services buildings are included in the maintenance programme.

(h) **Consultations**

The Principal Accountant, Legal Services Manager, the Equal Opportunities Officer and L Rowan, Committee Services Officer have been consulted and any comments taken into consideration.

6. CONCLUSION

6.1 Following a review of the 19/20 winter season we are able to provide information on a number of points, which include the following;

- **There have been very few enquiries received from local communities to suggest the removal of these P1d roads has**

caused significant impact or has resulted in any significant number of known accidents or incidents occurring.

- **The inclusion of the C13E Dallas to Knockando road and a small section of the C73H does not present either a significant operational or financial risk if these remain on the priority one routes.**
- **The change of approach in how we communicate with our local communities has been successful and how the service engages with local press/social media platforms etc. should be continued in future years.**

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Background Papers:

Ref: