

**The Highland Council**  
**Community Services Committee**

**3 November 2016**

Agenda Item	<b>10</b>
Report No	<b>COM 45/16</b>

**Winter Readiness 2016/17**

**Report by Director of Community Services**

**Summary**

This report provides Members with information on service readiness for the coming winter season.

**1. Weather Forecasting**

- 1.1. The Council's weather forecast provider commenced its full service on 14 October. Throughout the winter, the Council will receive 3 forecast updates per day timed at 6am, noon and 5pm. In addition to the daily forecasts a long range 5 to 10 day forecast is also provided to aid longer term planning of likely weather events.
- 1.2. As part of the Council's quality management process, key staff from local Area offices attended a weather forecasting refresher course in October. The refresher course is a requirement of the service's operational plan and will assist local decision makers in their action planning.

**2. Salt**

- 2.1. The total salt usage for winter 2015/16 was 50,300 tonnes and accounted for approx 30% (£1.27m) of the overall cost of the winter service last year.
- 2.2. Salt stocks have been replenished during September and October. It is planned that there will be circa 60,000 tonnes in our depots by the start of the main winter season which exceeds that used last year by a comfortable margin.
- 2.3. Our salt provider has indicated that he foresees no known issues with future salt supplies should additional stocks be required.

**3. Vehicle Fleet**

- 3.1. The winter fleet has been mobilised, serviced and salt spreading equipment calibrated.
- 3.2. The annual vehicle replacement programme for 2016/17 included for the renewal of 20 vehicles that are used in the delivery of the winter service. The programme is running to schedule. The first tranche of vehicles have been delivered with the remaining vehicles expected to be delivered by December.
- 3.3. On completion of this latest order the Council will have renewed 45 vehicles over the last two years representing approx 40% of the heavy fleet.

#### **4. Snow Blower**

- 4.1. The Council currently operates one snow blower which is mainly resident on the Cairngorm Ski Road. The blower was first purchased back in 1984 and is very much at the end of its operating life.
- 4.2. The cost of purchasing a new equivalent blower is prohibitive and has to be balanced against the likely use given the current trend of milder winters.
- 4.3. An alternative to a purpose built snow blower is now available at a much reduced price. It consists of a mobile cutter head which can be mounted on the front, or rear, of an agricultural tractor and is powered by the tractors' own hydraulics.
- 4.4. Two of these cutter heads have been ordered, to be based in Grantown-on-Spey and Applecross.

#### **5. Winter Resilience Assistance to Communities**

- 5.1. The Highland Council offers assistance to communities who wish to take action in their own area to help clear snow and ice from footpaths. The assistance takes the form of provision of salt (in either grit bins or heaps), shovels and snow pushers, gloves and hi-visibility vests.
- 5.2. Provision of equipment and training is co-ordinated by the local Community Services Area Offices. Responses from Community Councils will be acted upon as they are received.

#### **6. Winter Services Tender**

- 6.1. The Council recently advertised for small, medium or large scale providers to be included on a new list of suppliers able to provide winter services within the Highland area as part of a framework agreement.
- 6.2. To help publicise the tender a promoted post was lodged on Facebook. This generated considerable activity on social media with over 1,900 post engagements being recorded.
- 6.3. In total 60 suppliers/contractors expressed an interest in the tender. From the 60 that expressed an interest only 22 returned documentation. Of the 22 that returned documentation 16 were classed as incomplete and required further clarification of detail. Overall this has been a disappointing response given the initial interest shown.
- 6.4. Assessment of compliant submissions is ongoing. These will be presented to the Tender Board for approval during November.

#### **7. Implications**

- 7.1. This report has no known resource implications however there may be rural considerations where, in recognition of the winter policy, roads in remote areas will be treated later than those in the more populated areas due to the distances

that have to be travelled between communities.

- 7.2. There are no other known legal, equality, climate change/Carbon Clever or Gaelic implications arising from this report.

**Recommendation**

The Committee is invited to note the contents of the report.

Designation: Director of Community Services

Date: 11 October 2016

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