

# North Yorkshire Council

## Environment Executive Members

10 October 2025

### Review of Winter Weather Event in January 2025 - Proposed Actions for Future Winter Seasons

#### Report of the Assistant Director – Highways & Infrastructure

#### 1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To inform the Corporate Director of Environment, in consultation with the Executive Member for Highways & Transportation, and seek approvals for proposals to enhance elements of operational service delivery for the 2025/26 and subsequent winter seasons. This follows a review of the winter weather event that occurred in January 2025 and a report to Transport, Economy, Environment and Enterprise Overview & Scrutiny Committee (TEEEOSC) in July 2025, during which Scrutiny Members offered comments and suggestions.

#### 2.0 SUMMARY

- 2.1 This report includes a brief recap of the winter weather event that occurred in January 2025. Following that event, it was agreed with the (then) Executive Member for Highways and Transportation, Cllr Keane Duncan and Corporate Director that a review of the event would be undertaken. This resulted in a report to TEEEOOSC in July 2025 (the report was originally scheduled for the April 2025 TEEEOOSC but deferred to July due to the pre-election period). The findings of that review and feedback from TEEEOOSC have been considered when writing this report. It should be highlighted that the recommendations in this report are based around enhancements to operational service delivery including the introduction of supplementary resources, additional equipment, enhanced engagement & communications, and are considered to be within the existing winter service policy framework.

#### 3.0 BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The 11 July 2025 TEEEOOSC report outlined the change in weather patterns that had been experienced in more-recent winter seasons. Since October 2018, after the 'Beast from the East' in March 2018, winters have generally become increasingly milder and wetter. Until January 2025, snowfall, sub-zero temperatures and ice / frost hazards were still experienced during these winter periods but were generally more transient and not as prolonged or intense as that March 2018 'Beast from the East' weather event, when some 80,000t of de-icing salt was used during that whole winter season. This trend is also reflected in the volume of salt used during recent seasons:
- Salt usage 2017/18 (Beast from East year): 80,000 tonnes (t) of salt
  - Average salt usage between 2018/19 and 2021/22: 40,000 – 60,000t
  - Salt usage 2022/23: 32,163t
  - Salt usage 2023/24: 23,563t
  - Salt used 2024/25: 36,870t, 11,313t of which was used during the 4-13 January 2025 weather event (this equates to 31% to the salt used during the whole of the 2024/25 season and 48% of salt used during the whole of the previous 2023/24 season).

- 3.2 The July 2025 TEEEOOSC report also summarised the Council’s treatment regimes and January 2025 response alongside capturing specific comments from the review, which included feedback from Elected Members and other stakeholders such as Harrogate Chamber of Trade and Harrogate BID. Also included was a breakdown by highways area office of the 911 customer service cases received during that 4-13 January 2025 period and shown in the table below (the greatest number of service requests being received into the Boroughbridge area office / Harrogate area).

| Area Office           | Number of cases | % of Total |
|-----------------------|-----------------|------------|
| 1 - Brompton on Swale | 206             | 22.6       |
| 2 - Thirsk            | 50              | 5.5        |
| 3 - Whitby            | 49              | 5.4        |
| 4 - Kirby Misperton   | 23              | 2.5        |
| 5 - Skipton           | 205             | 22.5       |
| 6 - Boroughbridge     | 369             | 40.5       |
| 7 - Selby             | 9               | 1.0        |

- 3.3 Within the TEEEOOSC report, a series of nine proposals to enhance how the Council delivers its winter service was outlined. Those proposals comprised:
- i. Greater emphasis on footway clearance & treatment on Category 1 footway routes during snow events
  - ii. Review provision for footway treatments in proximity to Category 1 footway routes and other key locations during prolonged / sustained winter weather events
  - iii. Greater use of mechanical equipment to clear and treat footways in urban centres
  - iv. Promoting winter / community gritting partnerships, including (but not limited to) Parish & Town Councils, BIDs and other local resident / business group
  - v. Review resource availability within NY Highways & NYC in order to create a larger resource pool during extreme weather events
  - vi. Formalise access arrangements to personnel from other NYC departments to assist, and set triggers for enacting that assistance
  - vii. Enhancing existing winter service communications and initiatives, to include guidance on preparation for winter, snow clearance, myth busting and winter partnerships
  - viii. Review extent to which pre-treatments can be undertaken in advance of significant weather events
  - ix. Review criteria for grit bins, reinforce use on the public highway, QR codes for refills
- 3.4 During the 11 July TEEEOOSC meeting, it was highlighted that where any cost might be incurred, this would need to be carefully considered against the backdrop of the overall financial challenge on NYC and the Transformation Savings agenda. The report stated: ‘Any amendments to service provision in the future could have financial implications for the Council’, and ‘Any financial implications would be included in a future report for consideration by the Corporate Director Environment in conjunction with the Executive Member for Highways and Transportation’.
- 3.5 TEEEOOSC Committee Members were requested to note the information contained within the report and offer comments or suggestions where necessary, which would inform this report to the Corporate Director and Executive Member. The relevant extract from the minutes of that meeting has been included for ease of reference (Appendix A). For completeness, officer comments on those Member comments / suggestions have also been included. (Appendix B).

#### **4.0 PROPOSALS TO ENHANCE SERVICE DELIVERY**

- 4.1 Taking each of the proposals in Section 3.3 in turn, as well as feedback from Members of TEEEOOSC, officers have considered how these could be implemented, including any wider implications or considerations alongside the cost of such proposals.
- 4.2 Appendix C outlines those proposals and estimated costs. It should be noted that where 'one-off' costs have been highlighted, such as the purchase of plant / equipment, these are more easily quantifiable. However, where costs are associated with resource, the estimated cost of each occurrence would need to be multiplied by the number of times such a winter weather (snow) event occurred. That said, only a couple of snow events have occurred on average in recent winter seasons, most of which have been transient and with a thaw within a couple of days, so the number of predicted events based on previous seasons is low. Whilst resource costs could be offset by the fact that the proposals draw upon existing staff who may be reassigned for the duration of that extreme weather event, there is a recognition that such costs would need to be recharged to the winter service budget (see Section 9). (Appendix C).
- 4.3 In compiling the list of proposed plant / equipment to be acquired, consideration was given to existing equipment currently held by the Council's Parks and Grounds (P&G) team, as their inventory includes tractors in both Dean Road, Scarborough and in Harrogate. However, some of this equipment would be unsuitable for deployment in certain locations. For example, the gross weight of the Dean Road tractors is around four tonnes; coupled with their physical size, this would not be considered suitable for deployment in urbanised pedestrianised zones. The proposed tractors included in Appendix C / Section 9 are more akin to those that exist in Harrogate Parks & Grounds (or at the Malton Depot - brought into NYC by Waste & Street Scene from former Ryedale DC) and deployed in those parts of the county to assist with footway treatments / snow clearance.
- 4.4 It should be noted that within Appendix C there is one proposal relating to the pre-treatment of footways in advance of winter hazards, particularly snow. Typically, we will not pre-treat footways and the existing winter service policy outlines that normal overnight frosty conditions will not warrant treatment of footways either. However, the policy goes on to say that in exceptional overnight conditions which will give rise to black ice or during continuous frost / ice conditions, footways in main shopping streets may be treated. It is officers' views that the existing policy contains sufficient latitude and discretion for some pre-treatment of footways under certain (more-extreme) conditions. (Appendix C).

#### **5.0 CONSULTATION AND RESPONSES / LOCAL MEMBER ENGAGEMENT**

- 5.1 Prior to writing the 11 July 2025 TEEEOOSC report, all Elected Members were invited to share their views on the January 2025 snow event, responses from which were contained in that report. As mentioned earlier, TEEEOOSC minutes from the 11 July 2025 meeting containing Members' comments are appended to this report. (Appendix A).

#### **6.0 CONTRIBUTION TO COUNCIL PRIORITIES**

- 6.1 Delivering an effective winter service contributes towards the Council's ambitions around Sustainable and Connected Places as outlined in the Council Plan, which recognises the challenge posed by extreme weather events and the need for effective response and recovery following such events.

#### **7.0 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED**

- 7.1 This report considers the proposals in Appendix C to be reasonably practicable having reviewed the winter weather of January 2025 alongside feedback received as part of that review (and again, contained in the 11 July 2025 TEEEOOSC report).

## 8.0 IMPACT ON OTHER SERVICES/ORGANISATIONS

- 8.1 Some of the proposals contained in this report include calling upon support from the Council's Parks and Grounds service. These proposals have been compiled in discussion with the Head of Service for Parks & Grounds, although it is recognised in Section 15 that (if approved) any such proposals require further dialogue, including with HR. Additionally, the potential impact / any output from current scrutiny review of housing and associated grounds maintenance, including snow and ice clearance in the Selby and Richmond areas could have a bearing on resources in those areas.
- 8.2 Consideration was given as to whether support from Waste and Street Scene (WASS) could also be incorporated as part of an enhanced response. That option has been discounted as being potentially disruptive to WASS operations since, even during snow / ice events, WASS deploy resource to address fly-tipping and empty litter bins etc. except in the most sustained adverse weather conditions and even under such conditions that resource is always assigned to support in undertaking waste collections at the earliest opportunity in order to ensure schedules are recovered as soon as possible.
- 8.3 In a not-dissimilar manner, consideration was given to bringing in extra resource via NY Highways, who deliver the majority of the Council's frontline service, to assist. Increasing the complement of permanent establishment staff and / or bringing in additional temporary staff (either sub-contract or winter casual staff) could attract an increase in cost compared to redeploying existing Council employees from their substantive duties. Once the P&G capability has been finalised, the proposal is to discuss further / fill any gaps via NY Highways. For completeness, we will also investigate whether any additional farming contractor resource can be brought in to assist.

## 9.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 Some of the proposed amendments to service provision in the future will have financial implications for the Council. The estimated financial implications are included in this report in Appendix C for consideration by the Corporate Director Environment in conjunction with the Executive Member for Highways and Transportation. For ease of reference, and where those proposals would result in North Yorkshire Council incurring a cost, a summary of those anticipated costs [split into recurring costs based on one week-long snow event and one-off costs] is shown in the tables immediately below:

| Est. recurring costs for one 7 day extreme snow event |  |   |                   |
|---|--|---|-------------------|
| Report Reference Number(s)                            | Topic  | Item  | total cost        |
| 3.3i & 3.3v   | Greater emphasis on footway clearance & treatment on Category 1 footway routes during snow events plus Review resource availability within NY Highways & NYC in order to create a larger resource pool during extreme weather events | Standby payment for P&G Operatives                          | £6,160.56         |
| 3.3i & 3.3v   | Greater emphasis on footway clearance & treatment on Category 1 footway routes during snow events plus Review resource availability within NY Highways & NYC in order to create a larger resource pool during extreme weather events | Hourly cost of labour P&G Operatives                        | £30,880.00        |
| as above  | as above   | Supplementary resource if needed where P&G unable to assist | £21,000.00        |
| as above  | as above   | Tractor consumables   | £2,100.00         |
| as above  | as above   | Salt costs  | £380.00           |
| -   | -  | -   | <b>£60,520.56</b> |

| One-off investment costs in plant / equipment |   |   |                   |
|---|---|---|-------------------|
| Report Reference Number(s)                    | Topic   | Item  | total cost        |
| 3.3i  | Greater emphasis on footway clearance & treatment on Category 1 footway routes during snow events | 12 x pushed salt spreader   | £10,200.00        |
| 3.3i  | Greater emphasis on footway clearance & treatment on Category 1 footway routes during snow events | 3 x Kubota-type mini tractor with salt spreaders and mini ploughs | £48,000.00        |
| 3.3i  | Greater emphasis on footway clearance & treatment on Category 1 footway routes during snow events | 1 x Salt spreader and mini plough for existing Kubota tractor     | £3,000.00         |
| -   | -   | -   | <b>£61,200.00</b> |

9.2 Where proposals include delivering that enhanced element of service through Parks & Grounds (P&G) staff that results in 'opportunity lost' for those staff to undertake any element of work associated with their substantive role, it is clear that there will need to be a recharge from P&G budget to the winter service budget.

9.3 It is proposed that all additional costs associate with this enhanced level of service would be managed within the existing winter service budget of £8,330,100 i.e. P&G labour recharge and also any investment in additional plant and equipment. The capital element would be funded by a revenue contribution from the winter service budget. As is presently the case, the actual cost implications of dealing with delivering the overall winter service in any given winter season is always dependent on prevailing weather conditions, which vary from one winter season to the next.

## 10.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

10.1 The Council as highway authority has a statutory duty pursuant to Section 41 1A of the Highways Act 1980 'to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, that safe passage along a highway is not endangered by snow or ice.'

10.2 In complying with its duty the Council has a developed a Winter Maintenance Service, comprising its policy framework from which the operational response is derived. The report outlines proposals to enhance the existing operational response alongside other improvements in the areas of community engagement, communication etc.

## 11.0 EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

11.1 Consideration has been given to the potential for any adverse equality impacts arising from the recommendation. It is the view of officers that the recommendation does not have an adverse impact on any of the protected characteristics identified in the Equalities Act 2010 and a copy of the completed decision that "Equalities Impact Assessment is not required" form is included. (Appendix D).

## **12.0 CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS**

- 12.1 The most recent Met Office Climate Projections (UKCP18) state that in coming years we can expect an increased chance of warmer, wetter winters. The climate will continue to be subject to annual variation and some years may see days colder than the average, but the trend over time is likely to be a reduction in extreme cold.
- 12.2 Notwithstanding, if officer recommendations are supported and we do experience one of these more extreme events, then the impact on the environmental / climate change impact would be minimal. If an enhanced operational response is enacted during extreme winter weather events, then there would be a slight increase in vehicle travel / emissions to deliver that enhanced service, although every effort would be made to keep this to a minimum and deploy resource from the nearest local operational base. Any such increase in travel or emissions to deliver an enhanced service regarding footway treatments could equally be offset against fewer car journeys being made by highway users (who may choose to leave their vehicles at home and walk).
- 12.3 There would also be a slight increase in salt usage distributed on the network as a consequence of that enhanced operational deployment but given that proposed enhancement would be to facilitate pedestrian movements, this might reduce the number of car journeys people might otherwise have made. The Climate Change Impact Assessment form is complete. (Appendix E).

## **13.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

- 13.1 There are no policy implications as these proposals are considered to be within operational service enhancements as discussed in Section 4 of this report.

## **14.0 RISK MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS**

- 14.1 Any enhancement to operational service delivery capability will assist in demonstrating that the Council has ensured, so far as is reasonably practicable (and subject to the availability of resources) that it is managing the risk associated with the presence of winter hazards on the highway network.

## **15.0 HUMAN RESOURCES IMPLICATIONS**

- 15.1 Engaging support of colleagues from other services such as Parks & Grounds will require confirmation from HR that the duties being asked of those colleagues are commensurate or within the scope of similar activities with their existing Job Profiles or whether any changes to those Job Profiles / further engagement is required if this support is to be formalised. Additionally, working time directives, rotas, rest periods etc. would be part of such discussion alongside an appropriate level of staff engagement. A verbal update will be provided on this matter during the meeting of 10 October 2025.

## **16.0 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 16.1 The recommendations contained in this report are aimed at enhancing the operational service response to more extreme / sustained winter weather events.

## **17.0 RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 17.1 It is recommended that the Corporate Director of Environment in consultation with the Executive Member for Highways and Transportation:
- 17.2 To note the contents of this report.

- 17.3 To confirm which of the recommendations contained in this report, – items 1-9 in Appendix C are to be approved for inclusion in the council’s operational winter service response in the coming 2025/26 and subsequent winter seasons (where costs are anticipated, these are summarised in the tables in Section 9.1)
- 17.4 To confirm agreement that the interpretation of the existing winter service policy is such that the policy in its current form does facilitate pre-treatment of footways in main shopping streets where overnight conditions will give rise to black ice and / or continuous frost / ice conditions

**APPENDICES:**

- Appendix A - Minutes of TEEEOOSC 11 July 2025 relating to this agenda item
- Appendix B - Post-TEEOOSC Officer response to Member comments in Appendix A
- Appendix C - Proposals to Enhance Operational Service Delivery
- Appendix D - Initial Equality Impact Assessment screening form
- Appendix E - Climate Change Assessment

**BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS:**

- North Yorkshire Council’s Winter Service Policy
- Report of the Corporate Director – Environment (and minutes) from TEEEOOSC meeting of 11 July 2025 - Review of Winter Weather Event - January 2025

Barrie Mason  
Assistant Director – Highways & Infrastructure  
County Hall  
Northallerton  
25 September 2025

Report Author – Nigel Smith, Head of Highway Operations  
Presenter of Report – Nigel Smith, Head of Highway Operations