

**From:** Peter Osborne, Cabinet Member Highways and Transport  
Simon Jones, Corporate Director, Growth, Environment and Transport.

**To:** Environment and Transport Cabinet Committee – 9 September 2025

**Subject:** Winter Service Policy for 2025/26

**Classification:** Unrestricted

**Past Pathway of Paper:** N/A

**Future Pathway of Paper:** None

**Electoral Division:** All

**Summary:** Each year officers review the Council's Winter Service Policy and the operational plan that supports it considering changes in national guidance and lessons learnt from the previous winter. Due to the excellent work undertaken previously, there are no revisions to this year's policy. This report sets out an overview of this year's policy.

**Recommendation:** The Cabinet Committee is asked to consider and note the report.

## 1. Introduction

- 1.1 The 2025/26 winter season was reasonably mild when compared to previous years. The weather through the season was a mixture between periods of persistent rainfall and isolated cold periods where we had to undertake preventative salting of the network.
- 1.2 The overall winter season was average in terms on the number of salting runs undertaken when compared against previous years. We undertook a total of 57 primary salting shouts, compared with the budgeted 66 runs and used 11,503 tonnes of salt.
- 1.3 Operation Performance Measure 17 (OPM17) across the season for Salting runs completed within the specified timeframe 99%.

## 2. Financial implications

- 2.1 The allocated budget for winter service for 2025/26 is £4,364,600  
The budget is broken down as follows:

Pre-Salting Gritting Operation	1,676,100
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Plant & Equipment	2,481,400
Maintenance Of Farmers Ploughs	50,000
Weather Forecasting	21,300
Ice Prediction	37,300
Supply & Maintain Salt Bins	83,200
Supply Of Salt To Districts	10,300
Publicity Campaign	5,000
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>£4,364,600</b>

### 3. Winter planning

3.1 Over the 2025 summer period work has been undertaken to further refine and improve the winter service; this focused on:

- Reviewing winter service provision ready for the new HTMC
- Review of snow routes
- Salt bin replacement and filling
- Salt storage at depots – Planning for a salt barn at Faversham depot
- Review of our district plans and existing routes
- Review of local farmers snow plough agreements

#### **Winter route optimisation**

3.2 All of our gritting routes are contained within specific climatic domains, they have been grouped to improve the effectiveness of gritting decisions made, by only treating those routes that really need treatment. Previously, routes often crossed between domains, which would lead to treating parts of the network unnecessarily, as we were unable to split the routes, where they crossed domains. Further work has been undertaken to optimise the existing winter routes within the new domains, to further improve efficiencies and changes to the network.

### 4. Salt bins

4.1 There are over 3,000 salt bins in the county and this stock is considered sufficient to meet the needs of local communities. Like previous years, no new salt bins will be placed this winter. County Members can however utilise their Combined Member Grant to purchase salt bins, subject to meeting our salt bin assessment criteria.

4.2 Once again, following on from last season, all reports received regarding empty and damaged salt bins were actioned. For this coming winter season, we will continue utilising individual reports from the highways team and customer enquiries, to ensure salt bins are full prior to the start of the core winter period. In addition, we will be producing an article for Kent Association of Local Councils (KALC) newsletter to ask Parishes to report empty salt bins in their local area, via our online fault reporting tool.

- 4.3 Salt bins will be filled once during the season, however in the event of a snow event they may be refilled, subject to available resources. We will continue to monitor salt bin usage over the coming winter season, to ensure bins are appropriately located on the network.

## **5. Snow routes**

- 5.1 The winter service is focused on keeping open the network of primary routes comprising 1597 miles, (2571 km) which are the main A and B roads and locally important roads in the county. During snow events these remain the focus of our activity. However, it is recognised that other parts of the highway in the county are adversely affected by snow, and this can have a detrimental impact on communities relying on these roads to get to the main roads. Whilst policy, service levels and resources enable us to meet our statutory duty we are mindful that other parts of the road network do experience difficulties. These include hilly areas, exposed roads subject to drifting and other factors. These have been designated snow routes and will be treated, as resources allow, when there is a snow event. These routes have been digitised and loaded into the in-cab Navtrak system. Additionally, we will continue to have the support of our contracted farmers who clear snow from pre-approved areas of the rural network.

## **6. Winter resilience**

- 6.1 We have identified an Operational Winter Period which is October to April and a Core Winter Period which is December to February, and the stocks of salt needed during those periods to effectively treat the network in line with recommended resilience levels. The minimum levels of salt needed to maintain the resilient network (as defined in the Quarmby review 2012) is 16,800 tonnes. We maintain a salt stock of 23,000 tonnes (including 2,000 tonnes of a salt/grit mix which is held in a strategic stockpile at Faversham Highway depot) ensuring the recommended minimum levels are achieved. Arrangements are in place for salt deliveries during the winter to ensure we have the recommended resilience stock levels.

## **7. Collaboration with neighbouring authorities**

- 7.1 Mutual aid arrangements are in place with national highway Area 4 and Medway Council. The annual winter meeting with all southeast highway authorities to finalise arrangements is scheduled for late September 2025.

## **8. Media and communication**

- 8.1 As in previous years a media campaign will be used during the winter season. A series of infographics have been prepared which gives information about the winter service in an engaging manner. These will feature in a range of media, including social media.

- 8.2 The campaign will increase awareness of the service and encourage everyone to be prepared and undertake self-help when possible. This year radio, television and press will be provided with media briefs in advance of the winter season detailing the essentials of the winter service.
- 8.3 Key staff in Highways are working with the press office to prepare statements and press releases for rapid issue at the onset of winter conditions. These will be pre-approved for use during periods of severe conditions when the winter service delivery team will be busy.

## **9. Winter Service Policy and Plan 2025/26**

- 9.1 The Winter Service Policy is presented at Appendix B. Please note, no additions or amendments have been made to the policy for this coming winter season.
- 9.2 The Winter Service Policy is supported by an Operational Plan which has been updated in line with the Policy and discussions have taken place with our Highway Maintenance Service Provider to ensure that our plans are aligned.
- 9.3 The Plan is available for Members to view on request. In addition, district plans have been developed in conjunction with district and borough councils across the county and these will be used together with the Policy to deliver the winter service.

## **10. Strategic Statement**

- 10.1 Winter service is essential to “Framing Kents Future - Infrastructure for Communities - Priority 2”. To ensure residents have access to viable and attractive travel options that allow them to make safe, efficient and more sustainable journeys throughout Kent. It also contributes towards Kent residents having a good quality of life in all weathers, through local district winter plans, the provision of salt bins and the communication strategy that complements the winter service policy.

## **11. Equality Impact Assessment**

- 11.1 An equality impact assessment (EQIA) has been carried out on the Policy.

## **12. Conclusion**

- 12.1 The Winter Service Policy sets out the Council’s arrangements to deliver a winter service across Kent. There are no revisions that have been made to this year’s policy, due to the excellent progress made over the last few years, to ensure our winter service policy is robust and deliverable.

### **13. Recommendations**

13.1 The Cabinet Committee is asked to consider and note the report.

### **14. Background documents**

14.1 Well Managed Highways 2016; NWSRG Best Practice Guidance - Planning Section

### **15. Contact details**

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