

HAMPSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

APPENDIX 2 to Draft Cabinet Report

Purpose of this appendix

1. The purpose of this appendix is to provide Cabinet with further detail on the Savings Programme 2025 (SP25) proposal for **Highways Winter Services** and the specific recommendations relating to this proposal for Cabinet approval as part of the overarching decision report '**Savings Programme to 2025 Revenue Savings Proposals**'.

Recommendation(s)

That Cabinet approves the following recommendations:

2. To note the outcome of the 2024 Future Services Consultation in relation to the proposal to reduce the annual budget for Highways Winter Services by £1 million.
3. That Hampshire County Council undertakes a review and then updates its Highway Winter Services in consideration of changes to travelling behaviours and recent updates to national guidance. The review and subsequent implementation are predicted to provide annual budget savings of £1 million from April 2025. This would be achieved through the revision and implementation of revised winter service treatment routes developed in accordance with current national guidelines, as well as through operational efficiency savings arising from the changes.
4. That authority is delegated to the Director of Universal Services, in consultation with Executive Member for Highways and Waste to implement these decisions, including to progress and make any necessary arrangements to agree and implement the revisions to Priority One, Priority Two and Community Route treatment networks.

Executive Summary

5. Over recent years, particularly since the Covid-19 pandemic, travelling and commuting patterns have evolved, changing the way many people use the road network. For many, working patterns have changed reducing the need to travel, more people are working from home and there has been an increase in demand for services that are delivered to the home, avoiding the need for people to travel themselves. There have also been changes to bus routes, the creation of new roads, new developments, and new schools.

6. The criteria that the County Council currently uses to determine which routes to include in its highways winter service was established using historic national guidance. Over time, and particularly since the current treatment routes were devised in the early 2000s, national guidelines have changed, the road network has grown, traffic patterns have changed, and many roads no longer meet the current criteria.
7. As a result of these changes, it is proposed to undertake a complete review of how the County Council delivers its Highway Winter Service and then update its service provision as a result. It is anticipated that this would result in a reduction of £1 million in the cost of the County Council's Highways Winter Service, which would contribute to the County Council's SP25 revenue savings proposals.
8. The review would include revising the road selection criteria in line with current national guidance and then updating the treated (salted) networks that are delivered by the County Council, and the implementation of other service efficiency opportunities that would arise across the service as a consequence of the changes.
9. Between 8th January and 31st March 2024, the County Council consulted on this proposal. The proposal received 4,665 responses. This consultation formed part of the County Council's wider Future Services consultation.
10. Data from the public consultation has identified that 60% of respondents disagree with the proposal and 27% are in agreement, 12% neutral and 1% don't know. Feedback regarding the impact of the proposal, alternative suggestions and other comments have also been obtained. The highest proportion of responses to these raise concerns regarding possible road safety issues and want to maintain the current service levels believing that safety/accessibility should be a priority. There are also comments relating to the condition of the road network.
11. In terms of road safety, the proposed reduction in the Priority One network, which is the main network treated during the winter period is around 5%. Under the current arrangement the vast majority of the road network, approximately 65%, is not treated, this is estimated to increase only by a small percentage in context of the overall size of the highway network. It is already accepted in law that not every road can be treated, and the revised network would follow the latest criteria from national guidance to ensure the highest priority roads are considered for inclusion.
12. To mitigate the impact of roads being reduced from the Priority One network a review of the placement of roadside salt bins would also be undertaken and existing bins may be relocated, new bins provided, or some bins removed.

13. Further measures would involve informing the public before and during the 2025/26 winter season (commencing October 2025) that some roads would no longer be treated as before and providing relevant information where necessary. Information regarding salt bins and how the County Council could be contacted in relation to them would also be provided.
14. It is estimated that the Priority One network would be reduced by 260 miles, which is a reduction of approximately six treatment routes. The revised Priority One network would then cover approximately 30% of Hampshire's road network, in comparison with the 35% that is currently treated. If the proposal is approved the new Priority One network would be confirmed and optimised to reduce the number of individual routes operated, saving costs associated with vehicle procurement, vehicle maintenance, fuel, (contractor) drivers, salt, and resources to manage the operational delivery of the service.
15. The Priority Two and Community Routes would also be comprehensively reviewed and updated, and it is anticipated that, as part of the reassessment process roads that have been removed from the current Priority One network may be added to one of these other treated networks, if appropriate. It is proposed that once the new networks are finalised approval for their implementation would be sought from the Director of Universal Services in consultation with the Executive Lead Member for Universal Services.
16. In the event that a particularly severe winter period is encountered the reduction of funding would not mean there would be a drop in the winter service provision, or that the service would have to stop because the funds were no longer available to continue. In extreme situations supplementary funding is provided by the County Council from reserves to ensure its statutory duty to keep roads free of snow and ice, as far as is reasonably practicable, is maintained.

Contextual information

17. Hampshire County Council, as the highway authority, is responsible for looking after Hampshire's 5,200 miles of publicly maintainable surfaced roads during the winter period, which runs from 1 October to 30 April each year. The County Council's winter service is currently delivered by a third-party contractor (Milestone Infrastructure Limited), as part of the wider highway maintenance service. This arrangement runs to 2029.
18. The County Council is not responsible for maintaining motorways and some major A-roads (historically known as trunk roads), which are maintained by National Highways. Similarly, the County Council is not responsible for maintaining 'unadopted' private roads, as this responsibility is held by the owners of properties which front onto such roads. As such, these parts of the road network are not included in this proposal.

19. In Hampshire, roads are prioritised for treatment so that only the highest priority roads routinely receive salting treatments - these roads take the bulk of day-to-day traffic. These are known as Priority One routes, and they are routinely treated throughout each winter period in advance of freezing conditions. The County Council also treats additional roads that are outside of the Priority One route network. These are the County Council's Priority Two and Community Route networks and these are implemented in snow or prolonged freezing conditions but only when the Priority One network is fully operational, and resources allow.
20. For many years the County Council has used an established set of criteria to define which roads we should treat following the forecast of snow or ice conditions to meet its statutory responsibility. The existing Priority One routes include:
 - Principal road network ("A" class roads)
 - Main access routes to important industrial and large educational establishments (500+ pupils)
 - Main access routes to major accident and emergency hospitals, and to important emergency service locations
 - Roads used as major bus routes (50 each way per day urban, 25 each way per day rural)
 - Roads passing through major shopping centres
 - Other routes busy during peak traffic periods
 - Routes to Prepared Rest Centres
 - Routes to major critical infrastructure (as defined by Hampshire County Council Emergency Planning team)
21. The current Priority One routes cover approximately 1,800 miles, which is approximately 35% of the road network and require 44 gritting vehicles. Priority One routes carry the majority of all daily traffic.
22. The current Priority One network is regularly updated and has been optimised on occasions to ensure it is running efficiently but has not been subject to a major review since the early 2000s. Over time, a large number of additional roads have been added to the Priority One network that are over and above the existing criteria and in excess of current national guidance. At the same time there have been changes in how some roads are used, for example, due to working, travelling and commuting patterns evolving as a consequence of the Covid-19 pandemic, the creation of new roads, new developments, and new schools, or due to changes to bus routes.
23. Currently, daily weather forecasts are reviewed for three distinct areas of Hampshire, i.e. North, Central and South. These are known as climate domains and the forecast for each domain is used to determine if a particular

set of routes should be treated, as well as the amount of salt to be spread. Treatment is normally carried out in advance of forecasted freezing conditions to achieve the most effective results. This is usually referred to as a precautionary treatment. Reactive salting treatments are also undertaken during prolonged freezing conditions.

Summary of service area proposal

24. Over recent years, particularly since the Covid-19 pandemic, travelling and commuting patterns have evolved, changing the way many people use the road network. For many, working patterns have changed reducing the need to travel, more people are working from home and there has been an increase in demand for services that are delivered to the home, avoiding the need for people to travel themselves. There have also been changes to bus routes, the creation of new roads, new developments, and new schools.
25. The criteria that the County Council currently uses to determine which routes to include in its highways winter service was established using historic national guidance. Over time, and particularly since the current treatment routes were devised in the early 2000s, national guidelines have changed, the road network has grown, traffic patterns have changed, and many roads no longer meet the current criteria.
26. As a result of these changes, it is proposed to undertake a complete review of how the County Council delivers its Highway Winter Service and then update its service provision as a result. It is anticipated that this would result in a reduction of £1 million in the cost of the County Council's Highways Winter Service, which would contribute to the County Council's SP25 revenue savings proposals.
27. This would be achieved by reviewing and updating the criteria used to determine which roads should be included and treated as part of the Priority One, Priority Two and Community Route networks and other efficiency savings. The overall length of the Priority One network, which is the main network treated during the winter season would be shortened and savings generated from reduced costs associated with vehicle procurement, vehicle maintenance, fuel, drivers, salt, and resources to manage the operational delivery of the service. The revised Priority One network would also be intelligently optimised to provide further operational efficiencies and savings, and also ensure optimal treatment times. Once the Priority One network has been confirmed the Priority Two and Community Route networks would then be reviewed and updated to ensure that they complement and support the new Priority One network.
28. A review of the Priority One network would use current national guidance and best practice, and also detailed knowledge of Hampshire's road network and how it is used to create a refreshed set of route selection criteria. The road

network would then be carefully and comprehensively assessed against this set of criteria to develop the revised set of Priority One routes. Identified risks associated with the changes have been mitigated through engagement with key stakeholders such as other County Council services and Emergency Planning teams.

29. Following approval, the Priority One network would be updated to treat all roads that meet the revised criteria. This could mean that some roads that are currently part of the Priority One route network may no longer be routinely treated, and that some roads that are not currently part of the Priority One network may now be added. Overall, the size of the treated network is expected to reduce.
30. The revised set of Priority One routes would be implemented from the beginning of the winter season 2025/26 that would commence in October 2025. Details of the roads that would no longer be treated as part of the revised Priority One routes would be communicated to the public and road users in advance of and during the Winter 2025/26 period.
31. The criteria for the current Priority One network have been in place for many years and were developed in accordance with guidance that has since been revised and updated. The current national code of practice for highway maintenance Well Managed Highway Infrastructure – a Code of Practice, published by the UK Roads Liaison Group promotes a hierarchical approach on how the highway asset is managed, with the adoption of a risk-based approach to service levels, replacing recommended service levels provided by earlier versions of the code. As part of the adoption of the current code of practice, a new network hierarchy was introduced that is used to strategically plan and deliver the highways service in Hampshire.
32. National guidance for the categories of roads to be considered as part of a precautionary salting network is produced by the National Winter Service Research Group (NWSRG) – Route Selection and Optimisation.
33. The national code of practice and guidance understands the financial constraints associated with the delivery of a winter service and that it is not possible to protect the whole network during freezing conditions. An extract from the NWSRG guidance states “all winter service is provided within financial constraints, and it is recognised that authorities cannot be reasonably expected to protect against ice and snow at all times on all parts of the network. The responsibility for the authority is to demonstrate that their policy is reasonable and meets their statutory duties in respect of the risks to road users posed by snow and ice”.
34. The revised Priority One network would be developed in full accordance with the national guidance. The development of the revised network would include consultation and input from various directorates and teams across the County

Council to ensure the roads selected include those that are essential to delivery of key public services. This included Childrens Services, Adults Health and Care, Waste and Environmental Services, Passenger Transport, Emergency Planning, Traffic & Safety, Legal and also frontline operational Highway teams.

35. The revised Priority One network would include roads within the following categories:

Roads within Carriageway Hierarchy 1, 2 & 3 (Primary Route Network, all "A" roads, some "B" roads, some "C" roads).

Roads within Carriageway Hierarchy 4 that are Traffic Sensitive (Traffic Sensitive unclassified roads). Remaining "B" Roads, not included within abovementioned hierarchies.

Arterial roads and connections to National Highways network.

Access routes to settlements with populations of 500+ residents.

Connecting routes to settlements with populations of 500+ residents.

Critical infrastructure.

Educational establishments with 400+ pupils.

Category 1 responder locations (Hospitals, Fire & Rescue, Ambulance, Police Stations, Maritime & Coastguard, Environment Agency etc.).

Care Homes (treated as part of current Priority One network).

Prepared Rest Centres.

Major bus routes (50 each way per day urban, 25 each way per day rural).

Treated roads from neighbouring authorities that adjoin the county boundary.

Major transport hubs (railway stations, bus stations, park & ride, seaports, airports etc.).

Major retail centres

Industrial sites

Military establishments

Highway depots

36. The revised network is estimated to reduce by 260 miles in length, which is equivalent to approximately six treatment routes and covers approximately 30% of the whole road network. The current Priority One network covers approximately 35%. The 30% network coverage is broadly consistent with other local authorities.

37. Once the new Priority One network has been confirmed the next step would be to define the individual routes that would cover the roads within the network. The current Priority One network is covered by 44 individual routes and this is expected to reduce in-line with the reduced network length. The

new network would undergo a complex optimisation exercise to identify new routes with the aim of reducing the free-travel time, i.e. where salt is not being spread, and also reductions in salt usage by enabling partial network treatments where routes are organised into new climatic domains. Hampshire currently has three climatic domains (North, Central and South) and this would be reviewed to see if the number can be increased. If the number of domains can be increased it would provide greater opportunities for more effective and targeted salting treatments, treating smaller areas where the freezing is forecast to occur as opposed to a blanket treatment of the whole domain where roads are less likely to freeze.

38. When the Priority One network has been confirmed a review of the Priority Two and Community Routes would be undertaken. Again, once these networks have been confirmed they would be optimised to ensure they operate as efficiently as possible. It is anticipated that many of the roads that have been removed from the Priority One network would be incorporated within another treatment network.
39. To mitigate the impact of reducing the Priority One network and discontinuing the precautionary salting of a number of roads, it is proposed to review the placement of roadside salt bins across the county, and this could involve the installation of new bins, relocation of existing bins to new locations, or the removal of bins. The salt bins that are currently on the network are inspected for damage and refilled every year, and damaged bins replaced when necessary. There are systems in place for members of the public to contact the County Council to request the provision of new bins or existing ones to be refilled. Information regarding salt bins would be communicated to the public as part of the proposed changes to the winter service.
40. Longer-term, innovative route-based forecasting will be explored where individual weather forecasts are provided for each of the routes and only the routes forecast to freeze would be treated, potentially reducing costs further.
41. The proposed reduction to the annual budget for the winter service would not expose the County Council from any additional risks from severe weather situations where the service could not be delivered due to a lack of funding. In extreme situations where the winter service budget allocation is not sufficient to provide the necessary service, supplementary funding would be provided to ensure the County Council can fulfil its statutory duties.
42. It is proposed to delegate to the Director of Universal Services, in consultation with the Executive Lead Member for Universal Services, the decision to agree operational revisions to the Priority One, Priority Two and Community Route networks.

Legal, financial and performance implications

43. By law (Highways Act 1980, Section 41 (1a)), highway authorities must do all that is reasonably practicable to keep the publicly maintained highway free of snow and ice. It is recognised nationally that it is not reasonable to treat every single road.
44. The County Council's annual budget for Winter Service is approximately £6.5 million and this is used to keep the busiest parts of the highway network clear of snow and ice during the winter, this figure also includes dealing with other severe weather events such as flooding, strong winds or extreme heat.
45. The County Council has a duty under the National Parks and Countryside Act 1949 (as amended by the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act 2023). This requires the County Council to seek to further the purposes of the National Park when considering proposals that relate to, or affect, land within a National Park. In this instance, the relevant purposes are of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage of the areas and of promoting opportunities for the understanding and enjoyment of the special qualities of those areas by the public.
46. The County Council fully recognises its duty in respect of the National Parks and continues to seek to further their relevant purposes through the delivery of its core services. This proposal would have a positive impact on this duty as the public highway would continue to be treated within the National Parks, albeit in a more efficient way through reduced salted miles, with consequential reductions in vehicle emissions that would help support a future net zero position with nature.

Future Services Consultation - Approach

47. An overview of the approach to the Future Services Consultation is set out within paragraphs 17 to 24 of the draft Cabinet report, including the approach taken to communicating and promoting the consultation (informed by a stakeholder analysis) to invite respondents to share their views on some or all of the proposals. Stakeholder mapping was conducted prior to the commencement of the consultation to identify all relevant parties that may be impacted by the proposals. This identified a number of different groups, partners, service users and organisations that could be impacted by the proposals and who we could target engagement towards.
48. Stakeholder mapping was conducted prior to the commencement of the consultation, engaging pertinent individuals within the Universal Services Directorate to ascertain and identify, as fully as possible, all relevant parties that may be impacted by the proposals.
49. Our engagement approach identified a diverse array of stakeholders across multiple sectors, including those residing with Hampshire, and those from outside, that may utilise Hampshire's highway network and therefore be

impacted by the proposals. As an example, engagement efforts were made with organisations that could be directly impacted by the proposals or, represent people that could have an interest in the proposals such as Hampshire road users, local cycle forums the Automobile Association (AA), Royal Automobile Club (RAC), schools and educational establishments and local bus operators.

Future Services Consultation - Feedback

50. An information pack outlining the consultation data is attached in the sub-appendix B. However, a summary of the responses is outlined below.

51. Feedback from the consultation provided useful information regarding the proposed changes to the winter service budget. The consultation asked the following question “To what extent do you agree, or disagree, with the proposal to reduce the amount the County Council spends on highways winter service by reviewing and revising the criteria that we use to determine which roads should be treated as part of our Priority One network, to align with current national guidance, and updating the network accordingly?”. The table below contains details of the overall responses to this question.

All Responses	Base	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Don't Know	Disagree Overall	Agree Overall
All Responses	4,552	1,668 (37%)	1,068 (23%)	560 (12%)	931 (20%)	300 (7%)	25 (1%)	2,736 (60%)	1,231 (27%)

52. From the information in the table there were a total of 4,552 responses to this question, 60% of which disagreed with the proposed reduction to the winter service budget and 27% were in agreement, 12% neither agreed or disagreed and 1% don't know.

53. Additional feedback from the consultation is included within sub-appendix A. The data has been collated and categorised for the protected characteristics that have been identified in the Equality Impact Assessment as having a Low Negative Impact (Age and Disability). Data is also included to highlight the responses to the question “Which of the following means of transport do you typically use to travel around Hampshire?” to highlight the answers in the context of different modes of transport used by respondents.

54. From the data in sub-appendix A, the 60% disagreement with the proposal is generally consistent across all the groups and modes of transport. The exceptions to these are categories where a relatively small number of

responses have been received and provides a different percentage value to the general opinion.

55. The feedback from the consultation also provides data on respondents' views of the impact of proposals, alternative suggestions and other comments. The most common responses to these questions are outlined below:

Impact of proposal: 60% of those who mentioned an impact, mentioned safety issues, where there were concerns that a reduction in the service could cause accidents, injuries and fatalities, or limit access in emergency or life-threatening situations. Comments around safety issues were also reflected in the unstructured comments.

Potential impacts: 600 of those who disagreed with the proposal commented on a potential impact of the proposal, of which: - 63% cited safety issues as a potential impact of the proposal. 20% also mentioned negative financial impacts for the public associated with an increase in vehicle repairs, and an increase costs in for the County Council due to additional legal and administration resources for dealing with claims for vehicle damage. 19% expressed a concern that the proposal could reduce day-to-day activities such as access to work, school or other commitments such as appointments.

Alternative suggestions: 728 out of 1,721 people (42%) who chose to provide comments on this proposal made a suggestion about alternatives. The most frequently maintained suggestions was that current service should be maintained (30% of those who made a suggestion) at the current level and not reduced or changed, and a further 9% suggested that the service should be increased with more investment needed and more roads needed treatment more often during winter condition 171 of those who agreed with the proposal gave a suggestion of which 23% commented that more personal responsibility should be encouraged among residents during winter conditions.

Other comments: 1,192 out of 1,720 (69%) of those who chose to provide comments gave a general comment rather than specifying any impacts or giving alternative suggestions. 34% commented on the condition of road surfaces and 28% commented that safety/accessibility should be a priority.

56. A The table below provides a summary of the key themes raised by respondents and the County Council's response to these.

57.

Key themes/concerns from the consultation	Response from Hampshire County Council
Safety issues – increase in accidents due to dangerous driving condition and may stop emergency services getting to people.	This is considered negligible. The proposed draft Priority One network would result in only a relatively small increase in the untreated road network. Most people would already be undertaking parts of their daily journeys on untreated sections of the road network. Currently, approximately

	65% of the road network is untreated when freezing conditions are forecast and this is anticipated to increase to around 70%
Roads in a state of disrepair – potholes, overgrown vegetation, flooding	The proposal to reduce the highways winter service budget by £1 million would have no impact on other routine highway maintenance activities such as the repair of potholes, cutting overgrown vegetation and drainage cleansing. In recent years the County Council has provided additional financial support for these activities, and this is not affected by this proposal.
Accessibility	It is considered that any impact on accessibility would be negligible. The proposed Priority One network would follow national guidelines and maintain accessibility to key essential services and transport hubs, such as bus and rail stations.
Current service should be maintained or increased	Increasing the service is not being considered, the current Priority One network has grown over many years and includes a significant number of the roads do not comply with the current national guidance. The proposed Priority One network would be compliant with national guidance and ensures the County Council is complying with the legal minimum standard.
Negative financial impacts – increase in future costs due to increase in damage to roads and claims for damage to vehicles	The proposed reduction in the winter maintenance budget is not anticipated to have a detrimental impact on network condition.
Reduction in day-to-day activities such as people (including key workers) not being able to get to work, people being unable to attend appointments, children unable to get to school	The proposed criteria for the Priority One network follows current national guidance. It ensures the roads used by the majority of traffic are treated and includes locations for some key workers, transport routes and links and educational establishments with a lower pupil number than the current criteria requires for inclusion.
More personal responsibility should be encouraged among residents during winter conditions.	It is proposed that changes to the Priority One network would be introduced for the winter of 2025/26.

	In advance of this a communications exercise would be undertaken to inform the public that some roads that were previously treated would no longer be treated. The communications would include advice on driving during winter conditions – this is already provided annually.
Environmental impacts – increase in car usage from cycling/walking. Positive impacts from use of less salt, less miles driven, reduction in emissions.	The change in car usage due to the proposed changes is anticipated to be largely negligible due the relatively small increase in the untreated network and that most people are already likely to undertake part of their daily journeys on untreated sections of the road network anyway. The proposed reduction in network length would have a positive effect on carbon emissions associated with less salt being used, less miles driven by large salt spreader vehicles, less fuel used etc.

58. The main concerns raised from the feedback have been noted. In response to the majority of concerns raised the proposed changes would only have a relatively small change to the length of untreated network during freezing conditions. Approximately 65% of roads are currently not treated in advance of freezing conditions and most people would undertake part of their daily journeys on untreated roads during the winter season. If the proposed changes are approved, it would result in only a small percentage increase to the untreated network. As part of the review some roads that no longer meet the criteria would be removed but other roads would be added to the network that were not previously treated. The national guidance provides criteria to be considered when determining what roads are to be included in treatment networks and the review would ensure the this is followed. The review has involved consultations with other directorates and teams across the County Council to ensure key public services are maintained.

Equality Impact Assessment

59. As previously noted in paragraphs 32 to 38 of the draft report to Cabinet, a key part of the SP25 Programme is ensuring that the County Council understands the impact of the SP25 proposals on people with protected characteristics and has due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation and any other conduct prohibited under the Equality Act 2010; to advance equality of opportunity between persons who

share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it; and to foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

60. Whilst councils are not mandated to conduct Equality Impact Assessments (EIAs), in keeping with good practice to record the steps taken in seeking to meet the County Council's Public Sector Equality Duty, Equality Impact Assessments (EIAs) previously completed in relation to the proposals set out within this Appendix have been reviewed and updated. These reflect the feedback received through the Future Services consultation and incorporate any additional impacts identified, so that these can be considered as part of the final decision taken by the Cabinet. The EIA is provided as an Annex.
61. By the very nature of the services that the County Council provides, there are inevitably changes that impact those people with protected characteristics. Whilst this does not mean that a proposal cannot be implemented, it does mean that the County Council needs to have an understanding, both individually and collectively, of the impact on those groups of people and look at ways of mitigating that impact.
62. The following paragraphs draw out any key points to note in terms of impacts identified in relation to this proposal for residents, service users, or staff, and any mitigations identified.
63. The public consultation asked respondents to identify the perceived protected characteristic groups that would be impacted by this proposal. The main groups identified are listed below.
 - 28% Age
 - 28% Disability
64. The EIA assessed all protected characteristic groups, and most have been assessed as experiencing a neutral impact. The groups of Age and Disability have been assessed as low negative impact. Older people and people with disabilities could find it particularly difficult to negotiate untreated roads and section of footway on foot. Younger and older people could be particularly disadvantaged by the inaccessibility of schools and community centres. To mitigate these impacts, the Priority One network would follow national guidelines and maintain accessibility to key essential services and transport hubs, such as bus and rail stations. Also, details of roads that have been removed from the Priority One network would be communicated to the public in advance and during the 2025/26 winter season. Further, the County Council would review the location of salt bins.
65. It is not anticipated that the impacts of these proposals would affect any other protected characteristics and so the impact on all other protected characteristics is considered to be neutral.

66. Whilst not protected characteristics for the purposes of the Equalities Act 2010, given the profile of the county, the County Council has chosen to understand the impact on poverty and rurality when making decisions. A low negative impact was identified for rural areas as roads in urban areas are more likely to be prioritised for treatment, thus disadvantaging some rural road users. The impact for poverty was assessed as neutral. It is not anticipated that the impacts of this change will disproportionately affect these groups.

Climate Change Impact Assessment

67. As noted in paragraph 39 of the draft Cabinet report, consideration is given to potential climate change impacts of decisions through the two decision-making tools which assess the carbon emissions and resilience impacts of a decision.

68. At this stage it is difficult to assess any specific climate change impacts relating to these proposals. However, as the implementation of these proposals progresses, we would continue to assess the potential impacts to ensure that consideration is given to how these would contribute towards the County Council's climate change targets.

Scrutiny Committee feedback

69. The recommendations set out in this appendix will be scrutinised by the Universal Services Select Committee, in advance of a decision by Cabinet.

70. To support the decision, written feedback will be separately provided by the Chairman of the Select Committee to the Cabinet, outlining any feedback and potential recommendations from the Select Committee, for consideration by Cabinet.

Rationale for the recommendations being made

71. As noted in the draft report to Cabinet, in response to a predicted two-year budget gap to 2025/26 of £132m, Directorates were asked last year to consider what savings could be made if they started to move towards a legal minimum service level. In October and November 2023, following a stage 1 consultation process on our options for balancing the budget, Cabinet and County Council respectively approved savings proposals totalling £90.4m. Since that time, following continued growth and high inflation across adults' and children's social care, special educational needs and school transport, the predicted budget gap for 2025/26 has increased to at least £175m, underlining the need for the County Council to secure recurring savings to help towards balancing the budget on a sustainable basis.

72. Through the Equality Impact Assessment process, it was identified that some of the proposals directly impacted on residents and users of the services and therefore a consolidated stage 2 consultation process for 13 of the proposals (totalling £17.5m) was launched at the beginning of 2024.
73. The final recommendations made to Cabinet have been informed by the feedback received as part of the consultation, alongside other relevant factors. These recommendations will achieve total savings of £16.3million, which is a reduction from the £17.5million originally identified, albeit there is some further work to be undertaken on some proposals. The proposals set out within this appendix account for £1.0m of this total.
74. Travelling patterns, journeys and road use have changed for many people in recent years, particularly since the Covid-19 pandemic. The County Council's Highways Winter Service has not had a major review in many years and recently updated national guidance is now available to provide consideration for how this service should be delivered.
75. As a result of these changes, it is proposed to undertake a complete review of how the County Council delivers its Highway Winter Service and then update its service provision as a result.
76. The feedback to the proposed reduction in the winter service budget attracted a relatively high number of responses (4,665 in total) and has provided a useful insight into the public's view of the proposal. The data has identified that 60% of respondents disagree with the proposal with 27% in agreement. The feedback cites concerns regarding potential safety issues, a wish to maintain the current service levels and comments regarding the condition of road surfaces.
77. The review of how the County Council delivers its Highway Winter Service and the subsequent update of its service provision would lead to a revised Priority One network in line with current national guidance. It is expected that this would result in a small reduction in the size of the network of less than 5%. It is anticipated that this would result in a reduction of £1 million in the cost of the County Council's Highways Winter Service, which would contribute to the County Council's SP25 revenue savings proposals.

REQUIRED CORPORATE AND LEGAL INFORMATION:

Links to the Strategic Plan

Hampshire maintains strong and sustainable economic growth and prosperity:	Yes
People in Hampshire live safe, healthy and independent lives:	Yes
People in Hampshire enjoy a rich and diverse environment:	Yes
People in Hampshire enjoy being part of strong, inclusive communities:	Yes

Other Significant Links

Links to previous Member decisions:	
<u>Title</u>	<u>Date</u>
Savings Programme to 2025 – Revenue Savings Proposals Executive Member for Universal Services	<u>18 September 2023</u>
Direct links to specific legislation or Government Directives	
<u>Title</u>	<u>Date</u>

Section 100 D - Local Government Act 1972 - background documents

The following documents discuss facts or matters on which this report, or an important part of it, is based and have been relied upon to a material extent in the preparation of this report. (NB: the list excludes published works and any documents which disclose exempt or confidential information as defined in the Act.)

<u>Document</u>	<u>Location</u>
None	

EQUALITIES IMPACT ASSESSMENT:

Equality Duty

The County Council has a duty under Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 ('the Act') to have due regard in the exercise of its functions to the need to:

- Eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation and any other conduct prohibited by or under the Act with regard to the protected characteristics as set out in section 4 of the Act (age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation);
- Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic within section 149(7) of the Act (age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation) and those who do not share it;
- Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic within section 149(7) of the Act (see above) and persons who do not share it.

Due regard in this context involves having due regard in particular to:

- The need to remove or minimise disadvantages suffered by persons sharing a relevant protected characteristic that are connected to that characteristic;
- Take steps to meet the needs of persons sharing a relevant protected characteristic that are different from the needs of persons who do not share it;
- Encourage persons sharing a relevant protected characteristic to participate in public life or in any other activity in which participation by such persons is disproportionately low.

Equalities Impact Assessment:

An Equalities Impact Assessment has been carried out to determine the impacts of these recommendations on both residents / users of the service, and staff that would be affected should they be approved.

The EIA assessed all protected characteristic groups, and most have been assessed as experiencing a neutral impact. The groups of Age and Disability have been assessed as low negative impact. Older people and people with disabilities could find it particularly difficult to negotiate untreated roads and section of footway on foot. Younger and older people could be particularly disadvantaged by the inaccessibility of schools and community centres. To mitigate these impacts, the Priority One network would follow national guidelines and maintain accessibility to key essential services and transport hubs, such as bus and rail stations. Also, details of roads that have been removed from the Priority One network would be communicated to the public

in advance and during the 2025/26 winter season. Further, the County Council would review the location of salt bins.

It is not anticipated that the impacts of these proposals would affect any other protected characteristics and so the impact on all other protected characteristics is considered to be neutral.

Whilst not protected characteristics for the purposes of the Equalities Act 2010, given the profile of the county, the County Council has chosen to understand the impact on poverty and rurality when making decisions. A low negative impact was identified for rural areas as roads in urban areas are more likely to be prioritised for treatment, thus disadvantaging some rural road users. The impact for poverty was assessed as neutral. It is not anticipated that the impacts of this change will disproportionately affect these groups.

Sub-appendix A
Future Services Consultation 2024
Winter Service Proposal Insight Summary

To what extent do you agree, or disagree, with the proposal to reduce the amount the County Council spends on highways winter service by reviewing and revising the criteria that we use to determine which roads should be treated as part of our Priority One network, to align with current national guidance, and updating the network accordingly?¹

All Responses	Base	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Don' t Know	Disagree Overall	Agree Overall
All Responses	4552	1668 (37%)	1068 (23%)	560 (12%)	931 (20%)	300 (7%)	25 (1%)	2736 (60%)	1231 (27%)

Protected Characteristic: Age	Base	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Don' t Know	Disagree Overall	Agree Overall
Age: Under 16	1	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Age: 16-24	35	13 (37%)	7 (20%)	4 (11%)	9 (26%)	2 (6%)	0 (0%)	20 (57%)	11 (31%)
Age:25-34	236	80 (34%)	53 (22%)	23 (10%)	50 (21%)	28 (12%)	2 (1%)	133 (57%)	78 (33%)
Age: 35-44	543	194 (36%)	133 (24%)	58 (11%)	109 (20%)	47 (9%)	2 (0%)	327 (60%)	156 (29%)
Age:45-54	851	299 (35%)	198 (23%)	99 (12%)	193 (23%)	60 (7%)	2 (0%)	497 (59%)	253 (30%)
Age: 55-64	1102	391 (35%)	246 (22%)	162 (15%)	224 (20%)	72 (7%)	7 (1%)	637 (58%)	296 (27%)
Age: 65-74	911	330 (36%)	215 (24%)	110 (12%)	192 (21%)	58 (6%)	6 (1%)	545 (60%)	250 (28%)
Age: 75-84	412	152 (37%)	114 (28%)	45 (11%)	87 (21%)	12 (3%)	2 (0%)	266 (65%)	99 (24%)
Age: 85 or over	56	16 (29%)	21 (38%)	10 (18%)	5 (9%)	3 (5%)	1 (2%)	37 (67%)	8 (15%)

Characteristic: Rurality	Base	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Don' t Know	Disagree Overall	Agree Overall
Rural	780	294 (38%)	173 (22%)	95 (12%)	168 (22%)	48 (6%)	2 (0%)	467 (60%)	216 (28%)
Urban	1755	598 (34%)	424 (24%)	210 (12%)	372 (21%)	139 (8%)	12 (1%)	1022 (59%)	511 (29%)

¹ All percentages are shown to the nearest whole percentage

Transport Used	Base	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Don' t Know	Disagree Overall	Agree Overall
Bus	1691	594 (35%)	427 (25%)	209 (12%)	333 (20%)	113 (7%)	15 (1%)	1021 (61%)	446 (27%)
Call & Go	19	4 (21%)	5 (26%)	3 (16%)	4 (21%)	3 (16%)	0 (0%)	9 (47%)	7 (37%)
Car	4045	1487 (37%)	935 (23%)	499 (12%)	847 (21%)	260 (6%)	17 (0%)	2422 (60%)	1107 (27%)
Bicycle	970	323 (33%)	199 (21%)	130 (13%)	225 (23%)	89 (9%)	4 (0%)	522 (54%)	314 (33%)
Dial-a-Ride	43	23 (53%)	8 (19%)	5 (12%)	4 (9%)	3 (7%)	0 (0%)	31 (72%)	7 (16%)
Ferry	344	116 (34%)	81 (24%)	58 (17%)	65 (19%)	23 (7%)	1 (0%)	197 (57%)	88 (26%)
Minibus Group Hire	29	12 (41%)	5 (17%)	1 (3%)	7 (24%)	2 (7%)	2 (7%)	17 (63%)	9 (33%)
Motorcycle / moped	116	47 (41%)	18 (16%)	15 (13%)	25 (22%)	11 (9%)	0 (0%)	65 (56%)	36 (31%)
Taxi	616	255 (41%)	122 (20%)	79 (13%)	110 (18%)	47 (8%)	3 (0%)	377 (62%)	157 (26%)
Taxi share	16	4 (25%)	6 (38%)	0 (0%)	2 (13%)	3 (19%)	1 (6%)	10 (67%)	5 (33%)
Train	1638	557 (34%)	363 (22%)	216 (13%)	369 (23%)	123 (8%)	10 (1%)	920 (57%)	492 (30%)
Walking	2668	909 (34%)	617 (23%)	350 (13%)	593 (22%)	186 (7%)	13 (0%)	1526 (57%)	779 (29%)
Wheelchair / mobility scooter	107	47 (44%)	24 (22%)	17 (16%)	11 (10%)	7 (7%)	1 (1%)	71 (67%)	18 (17%)
Wheels to work scheme	8	2*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Community transport schemes ³	93	35 (38%)	25 (27%)	9 (10%)	14 (15%)	7 (8%)	3 (3%)	60 (67%)	21 (23%)

Sub-appendix B – Future Services Consultation Proposal Insight Summary

² For samples below 10 the data has been suppressed and represented with an asterisk (*). This is to protect respondents confidentiality, and to mitigate the risks of interpreting the responses of very small groups.

³ This is a net total. This figure relates to the respondents that use any of the following: Call & Go, Dial-a-Ride, Minibus Group Hire, Taxishare or the Wheels to Work Scheme

Background

From 8 January to 31 March 2024, Hampshire County Council invited residents, partners, and stakeholders to provide their views on options to change and reduce some local services to help the Authority address a £132 million budget shortfall faced by April 2025.

One of the options proposed was to reduce the amount of money spent on the County Council's Highways winter service each year by £1 million. Specifically, the proposal was for Highways winter service to comprehensively review and revise the criteria used to determine which roads should be treated as part of the Priority One network to better align with current national guidance and reflect changes in travelling and commuting patterns, and to update the routes accordingly.

Who responded to the proposal?

- 4665 responses to this proposal were received via the consultation Response Form. 4552 responded as an individual, 44 responded in an official capacity on behalf of an organisation, group or business, and 43 responded in their capacity as a democratically Elected Representative of a constituency in Hampshire. 26 responses did not specify the capacity in which they were responding.
- Respondents were invited to add further comments to support their views on this proposal via an open-ended question. This allowed people to expand on impacts they felt the proposed changes would cause and suggest alternative courses of action. 1721 respondents left an open text comment in relation to the proposal. 8 respondents also commented on the Highways winter service proposal in the any further comments open text box at the end of the consultation, designed to capture any further feedback to any of the proposals in the consultation.
- In addition, 27 unstructured responses relating specifically to the Highways winter service proposal were received (via email or letter). Eight of these were from individuals, 16 from organisations, one from a DER and two were from multiple Councillors who had sent collective responses.
- In order to capture the views of young people about the consultation, an event was held during the consultation period in which members of the Hampshire Youth Forum were invited to attend a discussion group to share their feedback.

Who responded: Demographics of individual responses

- Nearly half (47%) of responses from individuals were from those aged 45 to 64, with a further third (33%) aged 65 or over. Only around 1% of responses were from those aged under 25, and around a fifth (19%) were aged 25 to 44.

- Over half (55%) of the respondents who responded to this proposal via the Response Form were female, compared to 44% who were male, and less than 1% were of non-binary gender.
- The majority of responses were from non-ethnic minority groups (i.e. White British, English, Welsh, Scottish or Northern Irish), with 9% of responses from an ethnic minority group.
- While the majority (65%) reported no health or disability issues, around 1 in 5 (20%) reported a health or disability issue that impacted their day-to-day activities either a little or a lot.
- Responses were received from residents of all districts in Hampshire, ranging from 125 responses from residents in the borough of Gosport, to 699 responses from those in the district of East Hampshire.
- Respondent's household income was generally proportional to the Hampshire population, although those on incomes up to £20,000 were under-represented in the proposal response compared to the Hampshire population.

No demographics were captured about the individuals who provided unstructured responses to this proposal.

Please note as this was an open consultation the respondents were self-selecting so do not provide a representative sample of the total Hampshire population.

Who responded: Types of organisations responding

- Among the 44 organisations who responded via the Response Form, 19 were from other local authorities (City, Borough, District, Parish or Town Councils), 15 from charity, voluntary or local community groups, four from local businesses or business representatives, one from a nursery, school, college or place of education, one from a public sector organisation and four from other types of organisations.
- Among the 17 unstructured responses from organisations, 15 were from other local authorities (County, City, Borough, District, Parish or Town Councils), one was from a charity organisation and one from a local NHS trust.

Who responded: Responses from service users

- Hampshire Highways provide a universal service, so service users are broadly anyone living, working, studying, visiting or travelling through Hampshire who use the roads. However, the mode of transport can vary which was captured in this consultation to understand any differences in views based on the type of transport being used on Hampshire roads.

- Around 9 in 10 (92%) of those responding to this proposal reported using a car, and just over a third reported using the bus or train (39% and 37% respectively). Around a fifth (22%) reported using a bicycle and 14% used taxi services. A smaller percentage reported using a motorcycle or moped (3%), a wheelchair or mobility scooter (2%) or a community transport scheme (2%).

Please note that respondents were able to select all of the different modes of transport they used so these categories were not exclusive.

Levels of agreement with the proposal

- Overall, a larger proportion disagreed with this proposal compared to those who were in favour, specifically:
 - 60% overall disagreement (37% strongly disagreed)
 - 27% overall agreement (7% strongly agreed)
 - 12% were neutral

Who is driving disagreement with this proposal?

- Certain groups of people were notably more likely to disagree with the proposal compared to the total sample, these were:
 - Those aged 75 and over (65% overall disagreement, 36% strongly disagreed)
 - Those with health or disability issues that impact their day-to-day activities (64% overall disagreement, 38% strongly disagreed)
 - The small number (20) of White Irish ethnic respondents (85% overall disagreement, 50% strongly disagreed)
 - Those on low incomes (£20,000 annual household income or less) (64% overall disagreement, 38% strongly disagreed)
 - Those living in East Hampshire (66% disagreed, 44% strongly disagreed) or the New Forest (66% overall disagreement, 40% strongly disagreed)
- A higher proportion of disagreement was also seen for wheelchair/mobility scooter users (67%) and community transport users (67%) so although these groups had a small base size these this is still worth noting when considering how the proposals may impact different types of road users.
- Another group where a higher proportion of disagreement was also seen was for local authorities (78%). Again, while this group had a low base size

it is still worth highlighting the higher opposition seen for this group due to their position as a key stakeholder.

What are the main reasons driving disagreement with this proposal?

600 of those who disagreed with the proposal commented on a potential impact of the proposal, of which:

- 63% cited safety issues as a potential impact of the proposal, specifically that the proposal could cause more accidents due to dangerous driving conditions on icy roads and that it may stop emergency services getting to people in need. Some also mentioned that the proposals could cause more fatalities on the roads.

"Any reduction in highways winter services, will lead to an increase in accidents and personal injuries."

- 20% mentioned negative financial impacts, commenting that the saving is a false economy and that it will lead to increased costs in the future due to increased damage to roads and more claims for damage to vehicles.

"Icy roads cause accidents and the resulting overall cost of repairs could outweigh the cost of treating the road initially."

- 19% expressed a concern that the proposal could reduce day-to day activities, such as people (including key workers) not being able to get to work, people being unable to attend appointments, children unable to get to school, and concerns about isolation during bad weather in areas where roads would not be treated, with rural areas mentioned specifically.

"By only treating major roads you will be leaving side streets unsafe and reducing the ability to get to and from work or appointments."

457 of those who disagreed with the proposal gave a suggestion, of which:

- 41% commented that the current service should be maintained, and no reduction should be made, an additional 12% went further and stated that the service should be increased.

"It's essential for the safety and wellbeing of all that the highways winter service is maintained."

793 of those who disagreed left a general comment about the proposal, of which:

- 39% gave a comment on the current state of the road and/or service, specifically that the roads are already in a state of disrepair (e.g. potholes and other hazards such as overgrown vegetation and flooding) and that the roads are not gritted or not gritted enough currently. A further 15% also specified that there are already safety issues currently, such as accidents caused by potholes and the roads already being dangerous to drive on.

“How can you reduce winter maintenance from bugger all. The roads are wrecked and dangerous because of lack of investment and overpaying contractors to cover holes with blue tac.”

- 35% made a general comment that safety and/or accessibility is important and should be a priority in any decisions and that it should not be compromised in order to save money.

“Roads should be made safe and there should be no compromise on this.”

- The groups who were most likely to disagree with the proposal shared similar concerns, with some slight variations:
 - Those on lower incomes were slightly more likely to comment that the service should be maintained, that the service has been reduced for years and that alternative ways of funding it should be found. However, they were less likely to cite safety issues as an impact.
 - Those in East Hampshire and New Forest were more likely to have commented on the current state of the roads and/or service.
 - Those using wheelchairs/mobility scooters or community transport schemes were more likely to mention that the proposal could limit day-to-day activities, and that it would have an impact on older or disabled people, particularly those with mobility issues, who would find it difficult to navigate icy streets and would impact their ability to travel.
 - Local authorities were more likely to cite impacts of the proposal on safety and limiting day-to-day activities, as well as the impact on rural areas and emergency services.
 - In terms of suggestions, organisations were more likely to comment that the current service should be maintained, and to call out specific roads or routes that should continue to be treated. Reducing speed limits and the number of road users, providing more salt bins for residents and the importance of notifying people of any changes also had a higher proportion of mentions from this group.
 - In the unstructured responses from local authorities, where there was opposition or concerns about the proposal these primarily related to safety issues.

Who is driving agreement with this proposal?

Despite the majority of respondents opposing this proposal, just over a quarter of respondents (27%) were in favour.

- Democratically Elected Representatives had higher levels of overall agreement (39%) with the proposal than individuals (27%) or organisations (22%).
- Agreement was also higher among younger age groups with support for the proposal decreasing with the increased age of the respondent, i.e. 33% of those aged under 35 agreed with the proposal, compared to 26% agreement from those aged 65 or over.
- Men were also more likely to agree with the proposal compared to women (31% agreement compared to 26%).
- Those with no health or disability issues were also more likely to agree compared to those who had issues that impacted their day-to-day activities (30% agreement compared to 23% agreement).
- Those with household incomes over £60,000 were also more likely to agree with the proposal (37%) compared to those on lower incomes (22% agreement among those with a household income of £20,000 or less).

What are the main reasons driving agreement with this proposal?

Those who agreed were less likely to mention any impacts of the proposal (only 38 impact comments from those who agreed compared to 600 impact comments from those who disagreed) and those that did comment were more likely to comment on the positive impacts on the environment (8% compared to 1% overall) or no/ minimal impact (13% compared to 1% overall).

171 of those who agreed with the proposal gave a suggestion, of which:

- 23% commented that more personal responsibility should be encouraged among residents during winter conditions.
- 20% suggested of specific roads or routes that should be treated (e.g. main roads / major routes).
- 20% commented that the service should only complete the statutory minimum.
- 17% felt that the service should be more efficient in their use of resources (10%).

"I would like to see communities take a more active role in dealing with the impact of wintry weather rather than total reliance on council. Advice from council on what to do would be welcome though !"

"With generally warmer winters a more targeted approach seems sensible. Approaches to main roads, especially sloped down approaches, should be treated if conditions require it."

220 of those who agreed left a general comment about the proposal, of which:

- 29% understood the reason for the proposal, such as the financial limitations and that regularly reviewing criteria based on current road usage seems sensible.
- A number of unstructured comments also stated that they agreed with the review process part of the proposal as this seemed sensible and necessary (although some stated they may not or would not support a reduction of the service as an outcome).
- 20% caveated that their agreement was based on the assumption that any changes would be properly considered, such as carrying out risk assessments and ensuring any impacts or are minimised and safety is not compromised.
- 20% also commented on the weather being less severe and warmer winters means there is less of a requirement on the service.

"I agree, that as with all services, reviewing and revising operational criteria is essential to providing an efficient and cost effective service, however the key issue is road safety, any cuts in budget should not cause cuts in road safety."

Main impacts of the proposed change

The overall comments provided about this proposal were also analysed to understand what potential impacts the proposal could have if it were to be implemented.

717 out of 1721 people (42%) who chose to provide comments on this proposal mentioned a potential impact of the proposal in their feedback.

- Overall, the most frequently mentioned impact was safety issues (60% of those who mentioned an impact), where there were concerns that a reduction in the service could cause accidents, injuries and fatalities, or limit access in emergency or life-threatening situations. Comments around safety issues were also reflected in the unstructured comments.

"This will be a safety issue, possibly stopping emergency services getting to people in need."

- This was followed by concerns that the proposal would limit day-to-day activities (18%) such as access to work, school or other commitments such as appointments.

"This may mean that people are forced to stay at home affecting services, schools and businesses."

- The proposal was also felt to have negative financial impacts (18%) such as costing more in the long run due to increased repairs and claims for damages, as well as financial implications on individuals if they were unable to get to work and lose out on income.

“Short sighted proposal, the roads will only get worse. Future costs will escalate and cause more budgetary heartache.”

- The main impacts mentioned by the Hampshire Youth Forum were also around safety, in particular that there would be more accidents due to slippery surfaces and potentially more deaths. They also mentioned that snow and ice would build up on non-priority roads.

Perceived impact on protected characteristics

Those who commented were asked whether the impacts they had highlighted related to any protected characteristics.

- The **protected characteristic most likely to be selected was rurality** with 42% of those responding selecting this as an impact, specifically that the roads would be less likely to be treated in rural areas. This could result in people in those areas being unable to travel and at risk of becoming isolated. It could also mean a greater risk of accidents or other safety issues in those areas.

“These roads are essential routes in rural areas and any removal will result in a greater chance of injury resulting from road crashes, given a lack of gritting. There is also likely to be a lack of other viable transport options (ie buses network) in rural areas, which makes the need to use a car and essential option.”

- Respondents living in rural areas were more likely to select rurality as an impact compared to those living in urban areas (50% compared to 36%).
- Just over a third (35%) of those responding felt that there would be an **impact on the environment**. In the open ended comments, feedback about the impact on the environment included both negative and positive impacts.
- Negative impacts on the environment included increased car usage due to people not wanting or being able to cycle or use other more sustainable transport options on untreated roads. This was also linked to the poor condition of the roads which it was felt would deteriorate further if the proposal was implemented. This could cause a greater need for repairs which would be damaging to the environment and that the poor road conditions (icy, increased potholes) could encourage people to drive larger and less environmentally friendly cars to cope, or increased braking and swerving causing more pollution.

“This has an environmental impact, as people are discourage from cycling, and for using motor vehicles the poor roads means that they have to slow down to avoid potholes and then accelerate. The poor roads cause

damage to motor vehicles which has both a financial impact on council tax payers, as well as having an environmental impact by increasing repairs.”

- Conversely, the positive impacts on the environment included the benefits of using less salt which people commented was damaging to the environment and can end up in water ways. Some also felt it would reduce the number of vehicles on the road if less people would drive in icy conditions and reducing the mileage of gritting vehicles.

“This will reduce mileage from the trucks, and hopefully reduce people trying to drive in the icy conditions to some degree, so a double environmental benefit.”

- **Age, disability and poverty** were also selected as being impacted by this proposal (28%, 28% and 14% respectively). The proposal was felt to impact these groups’ ability to travel and could lead to isolation or being unable to access vital services or travel to work. Some mentioned that winter was already a difficult time for these groups so this would add to their worries. It was also felt by some that older drivers may be more unsure how to drive on untreated roads which could lead to more accidents, and also the risk of more slips and falls for pedestrians.

Other characteristics were also mentioned but at much lower levels. All impact comments have been passed to the Department for consideration.

Suggested alternatives to the proposal

728 out of 1721 people (42%) who chose to provide comments on this proposal made a suggestion about any alternatives to the proposal or how they felt the service could be carried out differently.

- The most frequently mentioned suggestion was that current service should be maintained (30% of those who made a suggestion) at the current level and not reduced or changed, and a further 9% suggested that the service should be increased with more investment needed and more roads needed treatment more often during winter conditions.

“Roads are dangerous in the winter. More roads should be treated, not less.”

- 16% commented that it is the Council’s responsibility to ensure safety and that they would be directly responsible for any accidents caused by a lack of service.

“You have a duty of care to make sure roads are safe.”

- 12% commented that savings could or should be made by a better or more efficient use of resources, such as gritting at the right times, better use of forecasting and other data tools, and better planning and management of the service.

"If more money was spent during the year more wisely by permanent, experienced (years of service) staff, there may well be less need to spend money on winter maintenance."

- Also linked to efficiency, 11% suggested that only the essential/statutory minimum should be carried out, such as only gritting when it is absolutely necessary, and not going above and beyond national guidance.

"Only treat road when there is a credible threat and not just salt/grit road when it is cold and really no need."

- Some (11%) also mentioned specific routes or areas that should be or remain treated during icy conditions, specifically main or major roads and public transport routes. Fast roads, schools, access to emergency services, sloping roads and roads that encounter flooding or have significant potholes, or routes used for commuting were also mentioned.

"All major roads should be gritted and made safe"

- There were also suggestions that more education or communication is needed to encourage personal responsibility (8%), such as adapting to conditions such as changing travel plans or working from home or investing in better tyres, how to drive responsibly in winter conditions, and information and resources to help communities take responsibility for their local roads.

"A public education initiative might also be required to ensure people are aware of the importance of driving to the conditions."

There was a wide range of additional and detailed suggestions which have been passed to the Department for consideration, both in relation to preparing recommendations on this proposal and for managing the service generally.

General comments

In addition, 1192 out of 1721 (69%) of those who chose to provide comments gave a general comment rather than specifying any impacts or giving alternative suggestions.

Most of these comments were about the current state of the roads (34% of those who gave a general comment), the importance of safety and accessibility (28%), current safety issues (11%) and general statements of agreement / disagreement with the proposal.

The following feedback was also given about the proposal which may also be useful for decision making and mitigating any impacts:

- A number of comments were made about the weather that could have an impact on the service:
 - These included comments that the weather was getting worse / more severe (8%), specifically that weather is getting more extreme and unpredictable and that there is a greater risk of ice forming ice due to an increase in flooding and surface water.
 - Conversely, some also commented that the weather is getting warmer / less severe (6%), with some mentioning this was due to climate change, and therefore less winter treatment would be needed.
- In the unstructured comments, there was a number of mentions that it was difficult to comment on the impacts or give a definitive views until after the review of the roads had been completed so they knew which routes would be affected.
 - Local authorities also commented that they would expect to be consulted again after the review had taken place, ahead of any changes made to the current service.