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**EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE
TUESDAY, 4 DECEMBER 2018**

A MEETING of the EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE will be held in the COUNCIL CHAMBER, COUNCIL HEADQUARTERS, NEWTOWN ST BOSWELLS, TD6 0SA on TUESDAY, 4 DECEMBER 2018 at 10.00 am

J. J. WILKINSON,
Clerk to the Council,

27 November 2018

BUSINESS		
1.	Apologies for Absence	
2.	Order of Business	
3.	Declarations of Interest	
4.	Minute (Pages 3 - 8) Minute of meeting held on 20 November 2018 to be approved and signed by the Chairman. (Copy attached).	2 mins
5.	Annual Taxi Fares Formula Review 2018 (Pages 9 - 30) Consider report by the Service Director Regulatory Services. (Copy attached).	
6.	Digital Scotland Superfast Broadband Programme in the Scottish Borders: Outcome of Review by Audit & Scrutiny Committee (Pages 31 - 58) Consider covering report by Clerk to the Council and Outcome of Review report from the Audit and Scrutiny Committee . (Copy attached).	15 mins
7.	Winter Service Plan for Year 2018/19 (Pages 59 - 94) Consider report by Service Director Assets & Infrastructure. (Copy attached).	
8.	Any Other Items Previously Circulated	
9.	Any Other Items which the Chairman Decides are Urgent	

NOTES

1. **Timings given above are only indicative and not intended to inhibit Members' discussions.**
 2. **Members are reminded that, if they have a pecuniary or non-pecuniary interest in any item of business coming before the meeting, that interest should be declared prior to commencement of discussion on that item. Such declaration will be recorded in the Minute of the meeting.**
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Membership of Committee:- Councillors S. Haslam (Chairman), S. Aitchison (Vice-Chairman), G. Edgar, C. Hamilton, E. Jardine, T. Miers, S. Mountford, M. Rowley, R. Tatler, G. Turnbull and T. Weatherston.

Please direct any enquiries to Eileen Graham Tel:- 01835 826585
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**SCOTTISH BORDERS COUNCIL
EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE**

MINUTES of Meeting of the EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE held in Council Chamber, Council Headquarters, Newtown St Boswells, TD6 0SA on Tuesday, 20th November, 2018 at 10.00 am

Present:- Councillors S. Haslam (Chairman), S. Aitchison (Vice Chairman), G. Edgar, C. Hamilton, T. Miers, M. Rowley, R. Tatler

Also present:- Councillors S. Bell, H. Scott

Apologies:- Councillors E. Jardine, S. Mountford, G. Turnbull and T. Weatherston

In Attendance:- Chief Executive, Executive Director (R. Dickson), Executive Director (P. Barr), Service Director Customer & Communities, Service Director Assets & Infrastructure, Chief Financial Officer, Service Director HR, Democratic Services Team Leader, Trainee Democratic Services Officer (E Graham)

1. MINUTE

The Minute of the Meeting held on 6 November 2018 had been circulated.

DECISION

AGREED that the Minute be approved and signed by the Chairman.

2. MONITORING OF THE GENERAL FUND REVENUE BUDGET 2018/19

There had been circulated copies of a report by the Chief Financial Officer providing the budgetary control statements for the Council's General Fund based on actual expenditure and income to 30 September 2018 and providing explanations of the major variances between projected outturn expenditure/income and the current approved budget. The report explained that the Council was experiencing significant financial pressures, primarily in Assets and Infrastructure and Health and Social Care, attributed to increased costs and delayed delivery of planned savings in the revenue budget. The underlying pressure in the account indicated that the pressures would result in an adverse variance at the year-end of around £3m. The Corporate Management Team had reviewed the position and had taken action through a range of alternative measures to identify savings which, if delivered, would offset the position and deliver a balanced budget by 31 March 2019. The Chief Financial Officer, Mr Robertson noted it was increasingly evident that the Council was finding it more and more difficult to balance the revenue budget given the sustained service demands e.g. in Adult Social Care. It was essential to ensure the financial sustainability of the Council that the revenue budget was balanced and that this was achieved through the delivery of permanent savings in line with the timescales approved in the financial plan. As shown in Appendix 4 of the report as at 30 September 2018, 89% (£14.63m) of the £16.4m of savings required by the financial plan had been delivered within the current year. A further 11% (£1.784m) was profiled to be delivered during the remainder of 2018/19. Emphasis during 2018/19 needed to be placed on delivering the savings permanently as planned. The monitoring process demonstrated that in the current year over £7.5m of required savings had been delivered on a temporary non recurrent basis to compensate for delays in project delivery and revisions to savings which were originally envisaged in the 2018/19 financial plan. The Chief Financial Officer noted that this position was not sustainable and must be addressed as part of the 2019/20 financial planning process on a permanent basis. The full details of pressures, risks and challenges and the significant majority of the areas of the Council's operation where

budget plans remained on track were detailed in Appendix 1 to the report. In response to a concern on the pressures of £1.2m in Assets & Infrastructure and the need for more detailed information required, the Chief Financial Officer reported that a more detailed indication on the position of Assets & Infrastructure was included in Appendix 4 of the report. There had also been a concern raised on the challenges faced in trying to balance the Health and Social Care budget. The Chief Executive responded highlighting the degree of complexity required to keep more people at home and referred to investment in dementia care and housing for the elderly. There was also a concern on the risk of moving budgets around and there appeared to be a lot of temporary savings with an ongoing trend being a particular threat. The Chief Executive reported that there would not be an adverse variance at the year end and measures would be taken to manage the budget. In response to a question regarding fleet management, the Chief Executive reported that a new member of staff had been appointed to address the issue of fleet management across the whole Council. With regard to the transfer of the SB Cares Bordercare Alarms, Mr Barr reported that the transfer had been a success and the savings would be delivered on a permanent basis by the end of April 2019. A concern was raised over the budget transfer from housing benefit to fund digital transformation. Mr Robertson explained that surplus funding had been identified which could be used to support digital transformation and no one entitled to housing benefit would lose out as a result of this management action. It was proposed that recommendation (c) be amended to read “note the progress made and the risks involved in achieving Financial Plan savings shown in Appendix 4 to the report”: It was also agreed to add the following recommendation: request that a report would be brought to the Budget Working Group highlighting savings that had only been delivered on a temporary basis in the budget and the risks associated with these.

DECISION

AGREED to:-

- (a) note the projected corporate monitoring position reported at 30 September 2018, the underlying cost drivers of this position and the identified areas of financial risk including the position reflected in Appendix 1 to the report;**
- (b) approve the virements attached as Appendix 2 & 3 to the report;**
- (c) note the progress made and the risks involved in achieving Financial Plan savings shown in Appendix 4 to the report;**
- (d) note the Corporate Management team directive to ensure all managers operate within revised budgets for the remainder of the financial year therefore ensuring a balanced outturn position is delivered in 2018/19; and**
- (e) request that a report would be brought to the Budget Working Group highlighting savings that had only been delivered on a temporary basis in the budget and the risks associated with these.**

3. BALANCES AT 31 MARCH 2019

With reference to paragraph 3 of Minute of Executive Committee dated 21 August 2018, there had been circulated copies of a report by the Chief Financial Officer providing an analysis of the Council's balances as at 31 March 2018 and advised Members of the project balances at 31 March 2019. The report explained that the unaudited Council's General Fund useable reserve (non-earmarked) balance was £6.672m at 31 March 2017. This reflected a balance of £6.315m in line with the approved Financial Strategy presented to Members in September 2018. The projected balance as at 31 March 2019 remains £6.315m. It was noted that any increase from the level budgeted would require to be drawn down from reserves in 2018/19. The Council's allocated reserve balance was £5.058m at 31 March 2018. The projected balance in the allocated reserve at 31 March

2019 is £2.828m and was as a result of approved planned draw-downs during 2018/19. The total of all useable balances, excluding developer contributions, at 31 March 2019 was projected to be £20.528m, compared to £28.793 at 31 March 2018. The projected balance on the Capital Fund of £5.922m would be affected by any further capital receipts, developer contributions, interest credited and any expenditure authorised to be financed from the Fund during the remainder of the financial year. In response to clarification on the pay award, Mr Robertson stated that the Council had budgeted for a pay award of 3% for staff paid under £80,000 per annum in line with stated Scottish Government pay policy and pay award negotiations were ongoing with the Unions. However, if a higher award was agreed this would need to be met from reserves.

DECISION

NOTED:-

- (a) **the projected revenue balances as at 31 March 2019 as per Appendices 1 & 2 to the report;**
- (b) **that any shortfall associated with pay award negotiations may require to be drawn down from reserves in 2018/19; and**
- (c) **the projected balance in the Capital Fund as per Appendix 3.**

4. MONITORING OF THE CAPITAL FINANCIAL PLAN 2018/19

There had been circulated copies of a report by the Chief Financial Officer providing an update on the progress of the 2018/19 Capital Financial Plan and seeking approval for projected outturns and associated virements and the relocation of funds. The monitoring tables in Appendix 1 to the report detailed actual expenditure to 30 September 2018. Key issues identified in these tables were summarised within the main report. The tables identified a projected net variance of £2.21m against the approved budget. The net in year budget decrease of £2.21m is primarily due to net budget timing movements to future years of £2.263m, the most significant of which were Asset Rationalisation, £1.12m, Street Lighting, £0.505m and Waste Transfer Station £0.380m. Appendix 2 contained a list of the block allocations approved for the year and the various approved and proposed projects to be allocated from them within the 2018/19 Capital Plan. Appendix 3 contained a list of estimated whole project capital costs for single projects which would not be completed in the current financial year. The Corporate Management Team had arranged a session to review progress in delivering the block programmes and projects within the capital plan. The aim of this exercise was to ensure the capital plan was realistic and to identify any areas where current practice with projects initiation, delivery and monitoring could be improved. This exercise would inform the development of the capital strategy and investment plan for 2019 /20 onwards, the ongoing delivery of programmes and improvements in project initiation. Any budget associated with projects that were delayed would be carried forward and the revised completion date of the projects would not affect the delivery of the service.

DECISION

AGREED:-

- (a) **the projected outturns in Appendix 1 to the report as the revised capital budget and approves the virements required;**
- (b) **to note the budget virements previously approved by the Chief Financial Officer and Service Director Assets & Infrastructure detailed in Appendix 2 to the report under delegated authority;**
- (c) **to note the list of block allocations detailed in Appendix 2 to the report;**

- (d) to note the list of whole project costs detailed in Appendix 3 to the report; and
- (e) to note that CMT is reviewing progress in delivery of the block programmes and projects within the capital plan which will inform the development of the capital strategy for 2019 /20 onwards.

5. **OUR PLAN AND YOUR PART IN IT: SBC'S CORPORATE PERFORMANCE AND IMPROVEMENT REPORT (QUARTER 2 2018/19)**

- 5.1 With reference to paragraph 2 of the Minute of Executive Committee dated 4 September 2018, there had circulated copies of a report by the Chief Executive presenting a summary of Scottish Border Council's quarterly performance information with details contained within Appendices 1a, 1b, and 2 of the report. The report also included reporting on the progress of change and improvement across the Council, replacing what was the separate Corporate Transformation report. Council had approved a revised Corporate Plan ([Our Plan and Your Part in it 2018-2023](#)) in February 2018, with four corporate themes. In order to monitor progress against the four themes, a review of performance and context information would be undertaken quarterly and presented to Executive Committee. Section 4 provided a summary of the progress of Change and Improvement projects, with further information contained in Appendix 1a to the report. Change and Improvement Projects were monitored on a weekly basis by Corporate Management Team and through the SBC Financial Plan and associated monitoring. Section 5 set out any additions or changes to SBC performance indicators in this report (as this is a dynamic process), followed by a high level summary of performance in Section 6, with details provided in Appendix 1b to the report. To reflect the significant investment made by the Council during 2018/19, an overview of the work and impact of Police Scotland's Community Action Team was provided at Section 7 and within Appendix 2 to the report. The information contained within the report and appendices was also made available on the Council website using the public facing part of SBC's Performance Management software (Pentana). This could be accessed at www.scotborders.gov.uk/performance.
- 5.2 The Service Director Customer & Communities gave a brief introduction on the detailed report and advised that Members requirements highlighted at the previous meeting were now reflected in the report under the four corporate themes. She also said that an annual performance report would be presented every June, as well as regular quarterly reports, and would show longer term trends. The Policy, Performance and Planning Manager, Mrs Sarah Watters summarised the successes and challenges outlined within the report. In the ensuing discussion, Members welcomed the new reporting format both in respect of the summary infographics and more detailed analysis behind each performance and context indicators. It was noted that cumulative energy usage was higher for Q1 and 2 of 2018/19, when compared to the same period in 17/18, as the average temperature had been lower over the 6 month period. Consumption costs had also increased due to both the temperature and the rise in unit cost. However, energy efficiency measures were having a positive effect overall. Councillor Rowley highlighted that the Community Action Team hours of high visibility foot patrol seemed to be low, although he did acknowledge that the impact of the team was positive overall. Mrs Watters agreed to take this back to the Safer Communities team for clarification. In response to a query on why there was no comparison figures contained within the infographic for delayed discharges from hospital, Mrs Watters explained that this information was reported through the Integration Joint Board and would provide this for Members.

DECISION
AGREED:-

- (a) to note the progress update relating to Change and Improvement Projects, referenced in Section 4 and detailed further in Appendix 1a to the report;

- (b) to note the changes to performance indicators outlined in Section 5 of this report; and
- (c) to acknowledge and note the performance summarised in Sections 6 and 7 of the report, and detailed within Appendices 1b and 2 and the action that is being taken within services to improve or maintain performance.

*(Note: Following the meeting in respect of the query regarding delayed discharge it was ascertained that there was an error in Appendix 1 to the report. On page 40 of the agenda pack it stated in the left hand column “**Bed days associated with delayed discharges in residents aged 75+; rate per 1,000 population**” and therefore did not match the graph and the commentary. It should have stated “**Bed Days associated with emergency admissions, per 1000 population age 75+**”*

The meeting concluded at 11.20 am

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TAXI FARES FORMULA REVIEW 2018

Report by Service Director Regulatory Services

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

4th DECEMBER 2018

1 PURPOSE AND SUMMARY

- 1.1 **This report advises Members of the recent consultation on a revision of the current process the Council uses to review taxi fares (known as "the formula").**

1.2 The Council is required to carry out a review of the scales for fares and other charges in connection with the hire of a taxi at intervals not exceeding 18 months. Since 2009 the Council has used the same formula to undertake these reviews. Following the fare review in 2014/15 the Executive Committee agreed that the formula itself should be reviewed at three yearly intervals. A review has now been carried out and the recommendations flowing from that review are set out in this report.

2 RECOMMENDATION

- 2.1 **I recommend that the Executive Committee:**

- (a) **Retains the current criteria used in the formula but amends the percentage weighting criteria as follows;**

- **A reduction of 5% is applied to the Wages criteria of the formula to give both elements of the formula an even 50/50 split**
- **A reduction in the existing weighting applied to the purchase of motor vehicles from 10% to 5%**
- **An increase in the weighting to vehicle tax and insurance from 3% to 8% and to include in this category medical costs and license costs**
- **An increase in the weighting applied to fuel and oil from 15% to 20%**
- **Retain the current 17% weighting for maintenance**

- (b) **Agrees that the revised formula will come in to effect at the next taxi fares review in 2019**

- (c) Agrees that future taxi fare reviews should be undertaken using the Citizen Space or similar tool in addition to intimation by advertisement in a newspaper circulating in the area as required by Section 17(3)(b) of the civic Government (Scotland) Act 1982, although it has been pointed out to us that this is now somewhat draconian it remains a statutory requirement under the Act.**

3 BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The Council as licensing authority is required in terms of Section 17 of the Civic Government (Scotland) Act 1982 ("the Act") to review the scales for fares and other charges in connection with the hire of a taxi at intervals not exceeding 18 months of the last review. The current scales came into effect on 19th March 2018
- 3.2 Since 27th January 2009 Scottish Borders Council has used the same formula to calculate the annual revision of taxi fares. There is no nationally adopted tool for reviewing taxi fares; each review is undertaken separately by Councils or Licensing Authorities using their own adopted method.

The formula currently used by Scottish Borders Council was devised by the Council's Business Information Unit in accordance with guidelines advised by the Traffic Commissioner. All of the figures used in the formula are sourced from the Office of National Statistics.

- 3.3 In previous years the use of the formula has resulted in fare revisions of between 0 and 5%. In the last four reviews three have resulted in no increase being applied.
- 3.4 Following the review of taxi fares in 2014/5 the Councils Executive Committee agreed to review the formula at three year intervals. That review commenced in the summer of 2018.

4 FORMULA REVIEW PROCESS AND OUTCOME OF CONSULTATION

- 4.1 The on-line consultation via the Councils Citizen Space tool was opened on 2nd July 2018 and closed on 7th October 2018. It appeared on the Councils website and was advertised on the Councils social media pages. A copy of the consultation and an explanation of the current formula is attached as APPENDIX 1
- 4.2 71 people responded from groups including taxi operators, taxi drivers, taxi users and other interested parties

Respondent Type	Count	% of 71
Taxi Operator	6	8%
Taxi Driver	11	15%
Taxi User	28	39%
Parent of Taxi User	2	3%
Member of the public	35	49%
Other	3	4%

This represents a significant improvement on previous taxi related reviews where the average number of responders to the annual taxi fare reviews has usually been in single figure for both the trade and public consultations. Officers believe the use of Citizen Space has been invaluable in achieving an improved response rate.

- 4.3 In response to the question "Do you think the above elements above Executive Committee – 17 October 2017

(the current formula) are the most suitable for calculating any change in taxi fares?" the outcome was that 61% of those who responded agreed that the current formula was still relevant

Current Formula still relevant	Count	% of 71
Yes	43	61%
No	27	38%
Not Answered	1	1%
Grand Total	71	100%

- 4.4 In response to the question "Do you think that this formula should continue to be used to calculate the changes in taxi fares?" 68% of those who responded agreed that the current formula should be retained and of those; half agreed that slight changes may be required.

Keep as Current	Count	% of 71
Yes	24	34%
Yes with slight changes	24	34%
No	21	30%
Not Answered	2	3%
Grand Total	71	100%

- 4.5 Detailed responses to the survey, including comments from those who responded to individual questions are provided in APPENDIX 2.
Responses have been broken down by:
- Fair Formula comments (those who thought the current formula was not relevant – this is added here as balance)
 - Slight Change – those who thought the current formula was still relevant but a slight change may be needed
 - Some suggestions on the content for a future or new formula
 - Some final comments relating to the responder type; taxi operator, taxi driver, taxi user etc.

- 4.6 From those comments some common themes emerged:
- Taxi fares are considered already high by users
 - There are a number of items that are not included in the current formula that were raised by predominantly the taxi trade; these included the cost of driver medicals and the cost of taxi licenses.

Given that 68% of all responders agreed that the formula should be kept "as current or with a slight change" officers considered that these costs should not be included in the current formula as a separate category but could be included in the current category for tax and insurance which would then be inflated from 3% to 8% as described in section 2.1 (a) above.

- 4.7 Comments relating to keeping the current formula with "a slight change" were:
- a reduction in the % weighting given to the "Wages" element of the formula; in effect reflecting the customers' ability to pay
 - a reduction to the % weighting given to purchase of motor vehicles. Several responders considered these part of the operators costs and should not be included in the formula.

- c) an increase in the % weighting given to the price of fuel or insurance.
- 4.8 Officers considered the range of responses and made the recommendations shown in section 2 of this report. A summary of the changes is also shown in Appendix 3
- 4.9 The next formula review will be scheduled to commence following the fares review of 2022/23.

5 IMPLICATIONS

5.1 Financial

There are no costs to the Council, other than officer time in the reviews, attached to any of the recommendations contained in this report.

5.2 Risk and Mitigations

The Council does have a statutory duty to consider reviewing taxi fares within 18 months of the previous review and therefore may risk a legal challenge and reputational damage if it does not comply with this requirement. Preparation and consideration of this report and its recommendations mitigates this risk.

5.3 Equalities

An Equality Impact Assessment has been conducted and no negative impacts have become apparent. Indeed maintaining the licence fee will lead to a positive impact for the whole community as access should remain status quo.

5.4 Equalities will need reviewed for impact if any increase recommended

5.5 Acting Sustainably

The Council has a statutory responsibility to review taxi fares within 18 months of the previous review.

5.6 Carbon Management

Taxis are a carbon consuming service. However this fact must be balanced against the level of provision particularly in rural areas where mainstream local bus services cannot or do not operate.

5.7 Rural Proofing

Not applicable as this is not a new policy.

5.8 Changes to Scheme of Administration or Scheme of Delegation

No changes to either the Scheme of Administration or the Scheme of Delegation are required as a result of the recommendations in this report.

6 CONSULTATION

- 6.1 The Chief Financial Officer, the Monitoring Officer, the Chief Legal Officer, the Chief Officer Audit and Risk, the Chief Officer HR and the Clerk to the Council have been consulted in the preparation of this report.

Approved by

Service Director Regulatory Services Signature

Author(s)

Name	Designation and Contact Number
Timothy Stephenson	Passenger Transport Manager – 01835 825182

Background Papers: **None**

Previous Minute Reference: Executive Committee 17th October 2017

Note – You can get this document on tape, in Braille, large print and various computer formats by contacting the address below. Jacqueline Whitelaw can also give information on other language translations as well as providing additional copies.

Contact Jacqueline Whitelaw, Place, Scottish Borders Council, Council Headquarters, Newtown St Boswells, Melrose, TD6 0SA, Tel 01835 825253, Fax 01835 825071, email JWhitelaw@scotborders.gov.uk.

Taxi Fare Review 2018

Overview

The law states that The Council as licensing authority is required in terms of Section 17 of the Civic Government (Scotland) Act 1982 to review the scales for fares and other charges in connection with the hire of a taxi at intervals not exceeding 18 months of the last review.

Why we are consulting

As part of the review the Council is obliged to consult with persons or organisations appearing to it to be, or to be representative of, the operators of taxis operating within its area and members of the public.

About You

Who are you?

(Required)

Please select all that apply

- Taxi Operator Taxi Driver Taxi User Parent of Taxi User
 Member of the public Other (Please specify below)

Current Taxi Fare Formula

This table illustrates the yearly potential change in taxi fares and is based on the weightings below.

Vehicle Related Costs	SBC Weighting (%)
Purchase of Motor Vehicles	10
Maintenance of Motor Vehicles	17
Petrol and Oil	15
Vehicle Tax and Insurance	3
Local Wage Rates (Clients' ability to pay)	55
Total %	100

The current taxi tariff which came into effect in March 2018 can be seen here

Do you think the above elements above are the most suitable for calculating any change in taxi fares?

Please select only one item

Yes No

If no, please explain your answer.

Future Taxi Fare Formula

Do you think that this formula should continue to be used to calculate the changes in taxi fares?

Please select only one item

Yes Yes with slight changes No

Slight change

The table below is used to calculate future changes in taxi fares.

Vehicle Related Costs	SBC Weighting (%)
Purchase of Motor Vehicles	10
Maintenance of Motor Vehicles	17
Petrol and Oil	15
Vehicle Tax and Insurance	3
Local Wage Rates (Clients' ability to pay)	55
Total %	100

What slight changes would you suggest?

New suggestion

What would you suggest?

Final thoughts

Do you have any other comments regarding changes in taxi fare charges?

Respondent Type	Count	% of 71
Taxi Operator	6	8%
Taxi Driver	11	15%
Taxi User	28	39%
Parent of Taxi User	2	3%
Member of the public	35	49%
Other	3	4%

Fair Fare?	Count	% of 71
Yes	43	61%
No	27	38%
Not Answered	1	1%
Grand Total	71	100%

Keep as Current	Count	% of 71
Yes	24	34%
Yes with slight changes	24	34%
No	21	30%
Not Answered	2	3%
Grand Total	71	100%

Fair Fare Comment

Fair Formula Comment (No)
3% for taxi insurance is miles of the mark, 10% for vehicle purchase.... sbc region competing with other areas which do not have age barriers on cars as strict as sbc i.e. Berwick upon tweed, Lothian etc. hence cars are more expensive to buy
Drivers are earning less than minimum wage
far too expensive
I don't understand what it means or how it is used to calculate changes in taxi fares
I think due to the volatility in fuel pricing more of the price should be tied to the price of fuel, Scottish borders council also stipulate that the cars should be up to 10 years old this is quite a substantial cost which should also be reflected in the percentage of fare.
It's so expensive. I understand they have to pay the running costs as well as make a profit. But it just makes people not want to use them because they're so expensive. It also gives people ideas to get a taxi somewhere and not pay for it as it's not worth it.
Local wage rates are determined by the market, which of course will seek the most economical rate. However taxi running costs are determined by policies of local and national governments on items such as fuel duty, road tax, VAT etc. Hence consideration should be given to these forces that are imposed nationally, which when applied do not consider local conditions.
No mention of any hidden costs such as taxi licence , PVG and medical etc.
Not enough weighting on Local Wage Rates (Clients' ability to pay) as any more than a short ride is simply unaffordable
out of date not fit for porpoise, traffic commissioner could not even work it out and recommended it be scrapped,
SBC Charges for Cars & Drivers
Drivers Medicals Charges
Drivers PVG
All hidden extra costs that are not included with in the costs for taxi operators and driver
Should be per mile or part of per mile after initial charge m, easier for public to understand if journey less than 1 mile minimum 1 mile charge
Taxi fares in the Borders are extortionate compared to elsewhere. It is a disgrace that you encourage train users to decamp in Galashiels as opposed to Tweedbank when they wish to continue east.
Taxi to expensive
Taxis expensive
Thank you for the opportunity to be involved in the Taxi fare review.
Unfortunately, in my opinion, the procedure is fundamentally flawed on various levels.
A/ The formula has been formulated from information and/or data that have no transparent basis of fact.
B/ The collating of the formula are not transparent and the access to this information is blocked from general investigation as the portal is not open to general access.
C/ The Local Authority source data from this formula and presume that the formula is relevant within its area of authority (Scottish Borders) without showing that they actively seek information from another source as a comparison.
D/ The Local Authority manipulate responses to any input from the Taxi trade to provide data that portrays the trade in an inferior position. This portrayal is designed to show that the Taxi trade are not active in the procedure and presents a false interpretation.
E/ This false interpretation are presented to decision makers in a way that leads to a negativity towards the trade and subsequently reduces the ability of decision makers to make a fair and/or

even judgement.

F/ Decision makers (Elected Councillors) have not proven that they understand the concept of the Taxi Trade and are therefore making decisions that they have no relevant experience in.

G/ During the decision process (Licensing Meeting), no input is invited or requested by the decision makers from the local trade to allow a fair and open discussion relating to the data in front of them.

H/ The Local Authority use taxi services. Fare increases financially impact on the Local Authority. That in its self should raise questions as to whether an organisation should control the pricing structure of independent companies if the organisation are themselves affected by the decisions.

Regards



The above weighting is fine but prices should not change after 10pm. The cost of a car, people's wages, etc. do not change after 10pm so why should the rate that the taxi charges?

The purchase of motor vehicle is too high and should be less given that the vehicles have a taxi restricted life span but can operate 24 hrs a day 365 days a year they are more than covered in potential earnings and should not be subject to a 10% weighting.

We are all being cheated on the cost of fuel

We independent businesses, do you ask a bar the price of a pint to reflect local wages, or a fish and chip shop etc. these are all licensed by the council too.

What people earn in the area should be of no consequence.

Why should this be decided by law, if slightly cheaper more people would use taxi

your local ability pay is way too high

Slight Change Comments

15% for 1st3 then 5% then 50%
A drop in purchase allowance and check made on accounts confirming that 17% is spent on maintenance as most cabs seem to be needing some maintenance and general servicing. These are overheads that any business should be building into their own accounts not pushed onto clients as part of a fixed fee. Some operators deserve it and supply very good vehicles but some are well below par.
A percentage for hidden extras i.e. taxi licence , PVG and medical etc.
a percentage for hidden extras IE:
SBC Charges for Cars & Drivers
Drivers Medicals Charges
Drivers PVG
All hidden extra costs that are not included with in the costs for taxi operators and driver
An increase in the purchase weighing as this is the biggest cost
clients ability to pay get them to use alternative transport e.g. bus
Consider nationally imposed charges and their effect on issues who exist in localised environments.
Increase Vehicle tax and insurance
Increase petrol and oil
Both the above are rising all the time, and taxi fares (and hence take-home pay) are stagnant.
Less % towards maintenance and more towards wages
Less weighting on Local Wage Rates
Local wage rate
Local wage rates??
More weighing on tax to encourage low tax eco-friendly cars
Petrol and tax should probably have slightly higher weighting with wages and/or purchase being reduced
Purchase of motor vehicle, there should be a cap of some sort. Some Taxis are models more expensive than needs to be.
Purchase of motor vehicles should come from the business itself
Purchase of vehicle goes up to 15% and wages down to 50%
Sort the cost of fuel out!
That the language used by taxi drivers whilst sitting with their windows open is modified. Anyone heard using offensive language be either fined.
The insurance I pay is a joke. That figure needs to be higher
Think fuel should be 20% very expensive
Why is it possible for [REDACTED] taxi driver able to work 28nights straight without a night off

New Suggestions

Strict pence per mile at a much reduced rate. Let's get Uber here.
Calculations on the living wage, licence fees , and the medicals should also be included, and no more increases in licence fees for at least the next 5 years, drivers badges should be issued for 3 years at no extra cost, as per best practice and the law commission report, that states, drivers badges are ring fenced and a council can only charge what it costs to produce that licence
Cheaper rates. Young People are often putting themselves in danger because they can't afford a taxi fare.
Cheaper taxi fares
Fares just slightly higher
I think you should use a cost + formula to determine the fares.
Leave it to the free market
Look at other places Edinburgh black cabs are cheaper than here
Make taxi costs cheaper
On the same basis as sbc introduce their price rises to the trade
Same rate no matter what time of day, no different rate before and after 10pm.
See first question comment
Taxi fares should follow in line with:
National based cost indexes.
These are used regularly within the passenger transport trade to control Trains/Buses Etc.
Additionally, these figures are known to be independent and remove the requirement for additional costs required to manage legislation locally.
there should be set fares for each town you are travelling too as currently I can pay anything between £17 and £22 for a 9 mile journey
To drop the price and make it cheaper. That way more people will use their services.

Final Comment by Respondent Type

Comments are repeated if respondent ticked more than 1 type

Taxi Operator

Fuel has gone up over 30 % in the last two years ,
Not at this time.
There is no mention of waiting time which I believe has not been increased for over 15 years at least. It stands at about 10 per hour, so how can we meet min wage costs on this rate?
Yes fare should rise from £2.25 to £2.50 day time, and from £2.80 to £3.00 night time, so a 25 pence increase on days and 20 pence on nights drivers badges to run for 3 years at no extra costs

Taxi Driver

No
Not at this time.
Taxi fares are about right & fare to all
The taxi fares need to rise
Think start fare should increase by 15 pence day 20 pence night but not distance is fine
Unsocial hours should start at 6pm Friday and continue till 7am Monday in addition to 10pm Monday to Thursday. Also bank holidays should be at three Xmas rate
Yes fare should rise from £2.25 to £2.50 day time, and from £2.80 to £3.00 night time, so a 25 pence increase on days and 20 pence on nights drivers badges to run for 3 years at no extra costs

Taxi User

Different taxis are charging different prices, even if it's a 6 seater it should be a 4 seater fare and taxis rip off people on nights out
Expensive
Far too expensive. Should have a standard charge per town. Or per journey.
It's almost a cartel almost all taxis charge the highest rate that you set.
Low wage rates also apply to passengers so that should be kept in mind when setting prices
Not at this time.
Taxi drivers are taking home a lot less than they did 5-10 years ago. Not many of their passengers have suffered similarly. It's a gig economy job - no pension, no safeguards - they should earn more.
Taxis should not be allowed to charge extra for after midnight service. The cost of fuel does not go up after midnight. Pubs don't put their prices up at midnight, why should Taxis be allowed to?
Taxis you could transport your bicycle on for a small extra cost - e.g. £5- £10 a journey would be great in this area e.g. Galashiels to glen tress
The tariff is too open to misuse by drivers seeking to "go the long way round".
The fares are now too expensive for regular use, so I am reluctantly only using taxis in exceptional

circumstances.
The fares are high enough and the operators also get the extras available through the sbc framework which is a guaranteed amount. Along as you have your contract which the majority use as a process to make money and cover all costs so the rest is profit over and above there overheads which is as much as they want depending on the hours they work after their school runs etc.
too expensive for rural location need more late buses

Member of the Public

"Unaffordable"
A vital service in my locality and current prices affordable to the majority. A major hike in prices to the public would not only affect the public but the hardworking companies and their drivers while at best scrap by on low profit and ever increasing hours up stay afloat
Cheaper
Drivers should be fully employed no zero hour contracts
Far too expensive. Should have a standard charge per town. Or per journey.
Given the issue of rural isolation across the Scottish Borders taxi fare's should be at least halved
I have absolutely no idea what that formula jargon is.
However, as a taxi user and a member of the public, charging £15 for a 6 mile ride (gala/Selkirk) is absolutely outrageous!
I was also charged £26 from Selkirk to St. Boswells using █ taxis (another 6 mile ride) because they implemented a boundary charge.
Another example would be £20 from BGH to Selkirk, again only a short distance!
I have no idea who comes up with these fares, but there is no possible way to justify these prices when I can go to Edinburgh or Glasgow and get a reliable taxi for half the price on the same journey.
There needs to be change and not for the worse.
If taxi fares continue to rise then it will put some small operators out of business. The cost now to travel out of town is expensive. I never complain when I need a taxi but my parents are elderly, often can't manage to walk to the bus stop so have to get a taxi. It costs the best part of £50 to go from St Boswells to Galashiels and back. That in my opinion is very expensive when you're doing this maybe twice a week. I think the council should bring in a cap on how much can be charged for elderly to get about, especially for getting to nearest town to them. I know everyone needs to make a profit but a £50 return fare is a bit steep.
If the taxi company is not based in outlying villages charged high prices I once had to pay £20 after midnight from Newtown St Boswells to St Boswells shocking discrimination against people in outlying villages when we live in a rural area
Living in the country it's a very expensive thing to get a taxi at the moment. If you put the fares up too much then there's an idiotic element of the public that could drive instead of taking a taxi due to the expense. I understand costs going up but wages aren't rising as fast as a lot of the costs!!
More should be done to encourage taxis to operate on Sundays.

No.
Not at this time.
taxis in the borders fares are far too high considering the public transport is so poor I work in Pebbles and start at 7am and because live in Newtown I have to get a taxi to Gala to get the first bus to pebbles as the first bus from Newtown doesn't get me into gala in time what I suggests is you really look at the bus services before the taxi fares
They are scandalous; I can travel further in Edinburgh in a more suitable vehicle for less especially in the evening.
Too expensive, Tweedbank to gala £10. So a night out would cost £20 in travel. If slightly cheaper I think more people would use a taxi, 25% after 10pm is wrong. Most people don't get an extra 25% on their wages at 10pm
Too expensive. £20 from Gala train station to Selkirk square is ridiculous.
Why is it possible for a night shift taxi driver for [REDACTED] taxis able to work 28 nights straight without a night off
Yes, reduce them.

Other

Rank charges should be reduced

Appendix 3

Current Taxi Formula agreed in 2009

Vehicle Related Costs	SBC Weighting (%)
Purchase of Motor Vehicles	10
Maintenance of Motor Vehicles	17
Petrol and Oil	15
Vehicle Tax and Insurance	3
Local Wage Rates (Clients' ability to pay)	55
Total %	100

Proposed Taxi Formula to come in to effect from 2019

Vehicle Related Costs	SBC Weighting (%)
Purchase of Motor Vehicles	5
Maintenance of Motor Vehicles	17
Petrol and Oil	20
Vehicle Tax and Insurance plus Medical and License costs	8
Local Wage Rates (Clients' ability to pay)	50
Total %	100

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DIGITAL SCOTLAND SUPERFAST BROADBAND PROGRAMME IN THE SCOTTISH BORDERS: OUTCOME OF REVIEW BY AUDIT AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Report by Clerk to the Council

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

4 December 2018

1 PURPOSE AND SUMMARY

- 1.1 **This report presents the outcome of the Audit and Scrutiny Committee review of the Digital Scotland Superfast Broadband Programme in the Scottish Borders.**
- 1.2 With the Digital Scotland Superfast Broadband programme entering its final phase, at its meeting on 21 August 2018, the Executive Committee agreed to ask the Audit and Scrutiny to undertake a review of the progress made in delivering improved broadband services in the Scottish Borders through DSSB.
- 1.3 The Audit and Scrutiny Committee met on 4 separate occasions during November 2018 to consider the programme, receiving briefings from Council officers and representatives from the Scottish Government DSSB team. Having considered all the evidence and established the main findings of the review, the Audit and Scrutiny Committee agreed seven recommendations at its meeting on 27 November 2018. The report of the review by the Audit and Scrutiny Committee is attached as Appendix 1 to this report.

2 CONCLUSION

- 3.1 **The Committee is asked to consider the findings and recommendations of the Audit and Scrutiny Committee's review of the Digital Scotland Superfast Broadband programme in the Scottish Borders as detailed in the report attached at Appendix 1.**

3 BACKGROUND

- 3.1 Robust digital connectivity is already central to the delivery of private and public services and in meeting the needs and expectations of consumers, businesses and visitors; this will continue to be the case into the future. Scottish Borders Council has played a crucial role in the development of digital infrastructure in the South of Scotland. From 2012, Scottish Borders Council has been part of the national programme to deliver next generation broadband infrastructure across Scotland, committing £8.4m to extend coverage within the Scottish Borders. The programme was originally called Step Change 2015 and latterly became DSSB – Digital Scotland Superfast Broadband.
- 3.2 With the DSSB programme entering its final phase, at its meeting on 21 August 2018, the Executive Committee agreed to ask the Audit and Scrutiny to undertake a review of the progress made in delivering improved broadband services in the Scottish Borders through DSSB.

4 THE REVIEW

- 4.1 The terms of reference for the Review were:
 - (a) An assessment of the final coverage delivered by Contract 1 of the DSSB Programme and the associated 'Gainshare' project;
 - (b) The quality of that coverage and any variations between premises in towns, villages and the countryside. This would include speed coverage, long-line issues and other limitations that have become apparent during the rollout period;
 - (c) How appropriate and effective the communication processes used during the roll-out were, and whether appropriate information sharing and openness was evident to all stakeholders throughout the programme;
 - (d) Did the DSSB Programme deliver appropriate value for money in relation to the Council's £8.4M investment;
 - (e) How successful the take up of superfast broadband services has been across the Scottish Borders; and
 - (f) Identify appropriate lessons for future programmes, such as the new R100 Programme.
- 4.2 The Audit and Scrutiny Committee met on 4 separate occasions during November 2018 to consider the programme, receiving briefings from Council officers and representatives from the Scottish Government DSSB team. Having considered all the evidence and established the main findings of the review, the Audit and Scrutiny Committee agreed seven recommendations at its meeting on 27 November 2018. The report of the review by the Audit and Scrutiny Committee is attached as Appendix 1 to this report.

5 IMPLICATIONS

5.1 Financial

There are no costs attached to any of the recommendations contained in this report.

5.2 Risk and Mitigations

Any risk associated with the DSSB programme has been identified within the review outcome document.

5.3 Equalities

It is anticipated that the recommendations in the review outcome will not have any adverse impact on the basis of age, disability, gender, race, sexual orientation, pregnancy and maternity or religion and belief and where possible they promote equality and good relations with equality groups.

5.4 Acting Sustainably

Any economic, social or environmental effects of the review are identified in the outcome document.

5.5 Carbon Management

The review recommendations have no impact on the Council's carbon emissions.

5.7 Changes to Scheme of Administration or Scheme of Delegation

No changes are required to either the Scheme of Administration or the Scheme of Delegation as a result of the proposals in the report.

6 CONSULTATION

- 6.1 As this is a report of a review by the Audit and Scrutiny Committee, no consultation has taken place with the Chief Financial Officer, the Monitoring Officer, the Chief Legal Officer, the Chief Officer Audit and Risk, the Service Director HR, although officers of the Council were involved in previous reports to Council and the Executive, and provided support to the Audit and Scrutiny Committee during their deliberations.

Approved by

Jenny Wilkinson
Clerk to the Council

Signature

Author(s)

Name	Designation and Contact Number
Jenny Wilkinson	Clerk to the Council, Tel 01835 825004

Background Papers: Nil

Previous Minute Reference: Audit and Scrutiny Committee, 27 November 2018

Note – You can get this document on tape, in Braille, large print and various computer formats by contacting the address below. Jenny Wilkinson can also give information on other language translations as well as providing additional copies.

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Digital Scotland Superfast Broadband Programme in the Scottish Borders: A Review of the process and outcomes of the Programme



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Foreword from the Chairman of Audit and Scrutiny Committee

Good, consistent, high quality digital connectivity is crucial to the lives of people and businesses within the Scottish Borders, and is now considered an essential utility, much in the same way as water or electricity.

At a time of fast moving technological changes, the Digital Scotland Superfast Broadband (DSSB) programme has provided a boost to the availability of digital infrastructure in the Scottish Borders, although this coverage is not equal across the area. In the course of this review of the roll-out of the DSSB Programme we have assessed the amount and quality of digital infrastructure coverage delivered; the communication process during the roll out; the value for money for the Council's investment; and the take up of superfast broadband services across the Scottish Borders. This has allowed us to identify appropriate lessons for future programmes, such as the new R100 Programme.

Much thought has been given to the information provided by Council officers and members of the Scottish Government's DSSB Team, which has allowed the Committee to arrive at its conclusions. I wish to thank the Members and officers for their time and energy, commending the findings and recommendations to you.

Councillor Stuart Bell
Chairman, Audit & Scrutiny Committee



27 November 2018

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY and RECOMMENDATIONS

- a) Access to Superfast Broadband was, and is, a significant practical and political concern where the public continually asks all Councillors about progress. Scottish Borders Council considered the Digital Superfast Broadband programme on a number of occasions. At its meeting on 21 August 2018, the Executive Committee requested the Audit & Scrutiny Committee to review the programme and ascertain if there were any lessons which could be learned for future projects.
- b) The Audit and Scrutiny Committee met on 4 separate occasions to consider the programme, receiving briefings from Council officers and representatives from the Scottish Government DSSB team:
 - 1 November 2018
 - 5 November 2018
 - 21 November 2018
 - 27 November 2018
- c) The scope of the Review covered the following:
 - (1) An assessment of the final coverage delivered by Contract 1 of the DSSB Programme and the associated 'Gainshare' project;
 - (2) The quality of that coverage and any variations between premises in towns, villages and the countryside. This would include speed coverage, long-line issues and other limitations that have become apparent during the rollout period;
 - (3) How appropriate and effective the communication processes used during the roll-out were, and whether appropriate information sharing and openness was evident to all stakeholders throughout the programme;
 - (4) Did the DSSB Programme deliver appropriate value for money in relation to the Council's £8.4M investment;
 - (5) How successful the take up of superfast broadband services has been across the Scottish Borders; and
 - (6) Identify appropriate lessons for future programmes, such as the new R100 Programme.

- d) Having considered all the evidence and the main findings of the review, the Committee agreed the following seven recommendations at its meeting on 27 November 2018:

Recommendation One

The Leader should write to the Scottish Government stressing the importance of the Scottish Borders getting a larger share of the 'Gainshare' uplift in Broadband connections, as this was supposed to add to the 'coverage' from the core funding. At present, 'Gainshare' connections are merely helping get coverage to the expected 93.8%.

Recommendation Two

To ensure transparency, there needs to be absolute clarity in any future programme of work on the definition of "coverage", particularly as it applies in specific localities. It is not enough to identify national coverage percentages due to the wide variations within relatively small geographic areas. Coverage must be based on the actual service provided to the end user.

Recommendation Three

Within the fast changing world of technological advances, it is important that future-proofing is included within a contract and that a break is built into a contract to cover any major change in technology.

Recommendation Four

Progress in implementation must be communicated to all stakeholders at regular intervals during the contract period; with absolute clarity on any technical or logistical problems encountered or delays to previously advised timescales.

Recommendation Five

Rurality, geography, topography, and existing networks must be accounted for within the parameters of any new contract.

Recommendation Six

Simple, specific measurable outcomes must be built into any future contract to allow stakeholders to judge what success will look like.

Recommendation Seven

Any third party investors to a new contract must have deliverables specified and a clawback clause included – to cover situations where these deliverables fail and a new deliverable cannot be agreed by either party.

Section 1: INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Over the past decade, it has become clear that good digital connectivity is crucially important to the future economic development and competitiveness of the Scottish Borders. Robust digital connectivity is already central to the delivery of private and public services and in meeting the needs and expectations of consumers, businesses and visitors; this will continue to be the case into the future. Scottish Borders Council has played a crucial role in the development of digital infrastructure in the South of Scotland.
- 1.2 On 25 August 2011, Scottish Borders Council agreed an indicative funding model to form the basis of the Local Broadband Plan (produced by the South of Scotland Alliance). In January 2012 this Plan became the model for the Scottish Government's National Infrastructure Plan to roll out Superfast Broadband to all of rural Scotland. This sought to deliver next generation broadband infrastructure (speeds of 24Mbps+) to 75% and broadband (2Mbps) to 100% of each local authority area in Scotland. It was anticipated that overall, 85% of Scotland's premises would be served through this activity by 2015. At its meeting on 13 December 2012, Scottish Borders Council agreed to formally commit £8.4m towards the rollout of Programme 1: NGB Step Change 2015 across the South of Scotland. That funding, over 3 financial years (2013 – 2016), was provided subject to the Council having direct discussions with the appointed supplier and was specifically for the provision of maximum coverage of next generation broadband in the Scottish Borders, over and above the 75% coverage funded by the Scottish Government programme.
- 1.3 On 3 July 2013, the Council entered into a Minute of Agreement with Scottish Government to deliver the Next Generation Broadband project (Step Change 2015). This Agreement set out the contract for the delivery in the 'Rest of Scotland' area of Step Change 2015 between Scottish Government and the supplier; that Scottish Government would manage the overall contract and use the transferred Local Authority uplift funding to deliver specified local priorities; and the payment mechanism for the transfer of the local authority funding. In order to fully participate in the procurement process, the Council signed a non-disclosure agreement with Scottish Government which covered all elements of the procurement process and Programme delivery. The Rest of Scotland area covered all of Scotland that had not been included in the Highlands & Islands NGB Programme that had commenced in 2012.
- 1.4 In February 2016, Council received an update on progress with the Digital Scotland Superfast Broadband Programme (DSSB – a change of name from Step Change 2015). At that time, 70 new superfast broadband cabinets had been installed as part of the roll out, enabling the provision of new services to over 17,500 premises

in the Scottish Borders. This roll out would continue until the end of 2017, aiming to service approximately 94% of all the premises in the area. Although work was progressing, concerns were raised about the lack of information from BT on the download and upload speeds of the areas already covered, or to be covered, by the DSSB roll out. The exact details of premises in exchange areas which would be covered by the provision of superfast broadband only became clear once cabinets were activated.

- 1.5 In June 2016, the Executive Committee received an update report on the Exchange areas already covered by DSSB; those exchange areas expected to have a level of coverage within 6 months; those exchange areas planned and in scope for a level of coverage through 2016 into 2017, subject to survey; and those exchange areas which remained under evaluation by BT to determine what coverage would be possible within existing budgets or with new funds. In January 2018, the Executive Committee received a further update report, advising that up to the end of September 2017, 82.7% of premises had been connected to fibre enabled cabinets or exchanges. More than 130 new superfast broadband cabinets and exchange upgrades had been delivered as part of the roll out, connecting over 31,800 premises in the Scottish Borders.
- 1.6 A number of challenging issues remained to be addressed within the programme. One key issue was that although a home or business may be connected to the new fibre technology, if they were located too far from the cabinet or exchange then it was likely they would have no improvement in their broadband service (the 'long lines' issue). While fibre optic technology was used coming in to the cabinet/exchange, premises were usually still connected via their existing copper telephone lines, with the speed of broadband diminishing over distance on copper lines. It would be helpful – although possibly not achievable, given the national nature of the contract – that accurate figures based on the premises that have actually received an improved service were provided as part of the outputs of the DSSB programme.
- 1.7 The Scottish Government then announced its commitment to investing £600m to extend superfast broadband access to 100% of premises across Scotland by the end of 2021. This is due to be delivered through the R100 Programme which aims to cover the remaining premises not reached by DSSB.
- 1.8 Scottish Borders Council has played a key role in the roll-out of broadband infrastructure across the area, lobbying at national level for a greater focus on rural communities. At its meeting on 21 August 2018, the Executive Committee requested the Audit and Scrutiny Committee to review the DSSB Programme and ascertain if there were any lessons which could be learned for future projects, such as the R100 Programme.

Section 2: TERMS OF REFERENCE

- 2.1 The Terms of Reference for the Review were set out by the Executive Committee on 21 August 2018. As the Council would have the opportunity to influence delivery of the Government's R100 programme with the outcome of the review there was some urgency for this work to be completed. Executive Committee agreed to ask the Audit and Scrutiny Committee to report its review findings at its meeting on 4 December 2018.
- 2.2 The Audit and Scrutiny Committee review has set out to include a range of issues related to the DSSB Programme in its scope. The review scope includes the following elements:
- (a) An assessment of the final coverage delivered by Contract 1 of the DSSB Programme and the associated 'Gainshare' project;
 - (b) The quality of that coverage and any variations between premises in towns, villages and the countryside. This would include speed coverage, long-line issues and other limitations that have become apparent during the rollout period;
 - (c) How appropriate and effective the communication processes used during the roll-out were, and whether appropriate information sharing and openness was evident to all stakeholders throughout the programme;
 - (d) Did the DSSB Programme deliver appropriate value for money in relation to the Council's £8.4M investment;
 - (e) How successful the take up of superfast broadband services has been across the Scottish Borders; and
 - (f) Identify appropriate lessons for future programmes, such as the new R100 Programme.
- 2.3 Support for the Review was provided by the Chief Officer Economic Development and representatives from the Scottish Government's DSSB Team.

Section 3: HOW THE REVIEW WAS CARRIED OUT

- 3.1 The Audit and Scrutiny Committee has worked through four steps in order to deliver its review of broadband improvements in the Scottish Borders. The Committee has undertaken this work ‘at pace’ in order to ensure it met its reporting target of 4 December 2018.
- 3.2 The four steps of the review have been:
- 1) Building the Committee’s understanding of the technologies involved in the DSSB Programme, including the limitations of those technologies and the technical challenges of implementing those technologies;
 - 2) Seeking direct feedback from the Scottish Government’s DSSB Team to understand the work that they have undertaken in delivering the Programme, including taking the opportunity to question the progress made and the challenges faced by the Programme;
 - 3) Seeking to understand the role that Scottish Borders Council played in establishing the DSSB Programme and how its financial, technical and strategic input has supported delivery of the Programme in the Scottish Borders; and
 - 4) Discussing and agreeing a series of findings and related recommendations, as set out in this report.
- 3.3 By following these four steps, the Committee has been able to consider all of the issues highlighted in the scope of the review and its findings and recommendations are highlighted in the subsequent sections of this report.

Section 4: DIGITAL SCOTLAND SUPERFAST BROADBAND PROJECT

- 4.1 The Scottish Borders covers some 4,732 square kilometres and is predominantly rural in nature, with the largest town being Hawick. Out of a total population figure of 114,040, 50,633 (44.4%) live in a rural or very rural location. The Digital Scotland Superfast Broadband Programme has been a major engineering project that has been improving broadband connectivity in the Scottish Borders since 2014. The technologies and processes involved in this major project are complex and subject to ongoing adaptation and improvement as new technologies and engineering solutions became available. Before detailed consideration of each of the scope points, it is useful to explain this complex mix of technologies and processes, as understood by the Committee.
- 4.2 The widely accepted definition of superfast broadband is a service that provides download speeds of at least 24Mbps. This was the benchmark adopted by the DSSB programme when it began in 2013. Since then, the EU has re-defined superfast broadband as speeds of more than 30Mbps. It was noted that the Minute of Agreement signed by the Council in July 2013 included the definition of Next Generation Access (NGA) as 30 Mbps. However, the Scottish Government has focused on 24Mbps as the target speed figure for DSSB. It is also worth noting that for future programmes, the Scottish Government has adopted the 30Mbps speed figure now used by the EU.
- 4.3 The main technology being used at the start of the DSSB programme was Fibre to the Cabinet (FTTC). This technology extends the fibre optic network by introducing new Digital Subscriber Line Access Multiplexer (DSLAM) cabinets at key locations across an area. The DSLAM is linked to the fibre network and it in turn links to an existing Primary Connection Point (PCP) cabinet that takes the superfast broadband signal into the existing copper cable network to provide an enhanced service to the premises connected. Speeds of up to 80Mbps are possible through this system. This technology was predominant at the start of the DSSB Programme as it is an effective way of delivering upgraded services in those areas where there are more properties.
- 4.4 Another key technology that has been used in the DSSB Programme roll-out is the upgrading of 'Exchange Only' lines. Many telephone lines in villages and more rural areas are known as 'Exchange Only' (EO) lines because they run directly into a local telephone exchange, rather than being routed through a Primary Connection Point (PCP). It was some considerable time after the Programme started that BT Openreach finalised its technical solution to Exchange Only lines. This essentially involved putting two new cabinets into locations where EO lines existed – a new DSLAM and a new PCP cabinet. Recently it has been possible to fit

all of this technology into one joint cabinet. Speeds of up to 80Mbps are possible through this system.

- 4.5 The final key technology in use by the DSSB Programme has been Fibre to the Premises (FTTP). This involves running fibre all the way to each premise from the DSLAM cabinet, thus bypassing the final copper network connection to the premises. This technology is more expensive to install and has only started to be used in rural areas in the Scottish Borders in 2018. The key benefit of FTTP is that it provides download speeds of up to 330Mbps at present, and has the technological potential to provide much higher speeds in the future as the technology is further developed. This technology is starting to be used as a higher proportion of the roll-out in the current phase as Openreach is now willing to string fibre cables on telegraph poles. This is a much more cost effective solution compared to its previous policy of only using undergrounded fibre cables; it is much more expensive to dig trenches to lay fibre underground.
- 4.6 Fibre to the Premise (FTTP) offers the most effective connection solution, but is available for few premises at present. The Fibre to the Cabinet (FTTC) solutions that have been most common have a fundamental limitation due to the use of copper line connections from the PCP cabinet to the premise. The broadband speed reduces the greater the length of a copper line between cabinet and premises. The further the broadband data has to travel over copper, the more the speeds will be affected. This generally means that for lines more than 1.2km from the green cabinet, a superfast service will not be achieved. Speeds can also be affected by the number of users in premises, the type of equipment being used, and the service from a commercial provider.

An assessment of the final coverage delivered by Contract 1 of the DSSB Programme and the associated 'Gainshare' project:

- 4.7 An open market review was carried out in 2012 to establish predicted commercial coverage; this was reported as 39.3% for the Scottish Borders. The original Step Change 2015 Programme for superfast broadband included the expectation by Scottish Government that each local authority area would take infrastructure coverage to at least 75%. With the additional local authority contribution made by Scottish Borders Council, it was expected that coverage should be taken beyond 85%. There was a phased approach to delivery, and planning and monitoring of the contract was carried out on a postcode basis. In effect, this meant that if one premise was connected to superfast broadband infrastructure in a particular postcode area, then the whole postcode was deemed to be connected. Coverage was referenced as Total Homes Passed (THP), still using a postcode basis for mapping and information, rather than individual premises.

- 4.8 Scottish Borders Council had contributed £8.4m of additional funding to the project "to increase the Network to provide access to Next Generation Access (NGA) to the greatest percentage possible beyond those premises which are delivered using the Scottish Ministers' subsidy to achieve its objective of 75% NGA coverage in the Councils' area....". The Council's funding was only for use beyond the 75% coverage objective and could not be used to get coverage to that level. Further funding for the project also came from "Gainshare" whereby the more superfast broadband was taken up by people/businesses, the more funding would come back into the Programme. In effect, the contract profit for the infrastructure had been capped. Technological issues – Exchange Only lines, long lines and copper re-arrangement - all played their part in causing difficulties with the implementation of the Programme.
- 4.9 The coverage target was key and varied depending on connection type and speed. As at 1 November 2018, Thinkbroadband.com, an independent website that tracks the progress of broadband availability, reported that Scottish Borders coverage (includes both business and residential premises) was as follows:
- Superfast UK >24 Mbps = 83.94%
 - Superfast EU >30 Mbps = 83.54%
 - Ultrafast >100 Mbps = 1.58%
 - Fibre partial/full at any speed = 93.81%
- 4.10 As the coverage for broadband is based on postcode level and not number of premises, the level of coverage will vary across the Scottish Borders and also within a particular postcode. The more rural the area, the more likely that coverage and speed will be less than urban areas. In the most rural areas, coverage will be considerably less and will not necessarily be deliverable through the DSSB Programme.
- 4.11 At the Audit and Scrutiny Committee meeting on 5 November 2018, the DSSB Team reported that coverage in Scottish Borders had reached 93.7% THP. This was just short of the 93.8% indicative target that had been highlighted in July 2013 when the Council signed the Minute of Agreement with the Scottish Government. It is important to note that the 93.8% target was supposed to be met by 31 December 2017; the 93.7% figure was reported as at 30 September 2018.
- 4.12 Another key factor in relation to the latest 93.7% coverage figure is that this also includes coverage that has been delivered by activity funded through 'Gainshare'. A proportion of the £15.6M that has been injected into the Rest of Scotland area of the DSSB Programme has been spent in Scottish Borders, reflecting the priority given to the Local Authority areas where there had been significant additional

financial contributions from the Council. However, there is a strong argument to be made that the 'Gainshare' coverage should have been adding further coverage beyond 93.8%, rather than helping the Programme deliver what was already expected of it.

The quality of that coverage and any variations between premises in towns, villages and the countryside. This would include speed coverage, long-line issues and other limitations that have become apparent during the rollout period

- 4.13 A key challenge for the DSSB Programme is that the range of technologies being used (FTTC, EO, FTTP) means that there is a range of experiences of improved broadband services across towns, villages and the countryside. In towns, coverage has mostly rolled out effectively and users have been able to receive strong broadband signals, often close to the maximum 80Mbps from FTTC. However, it is not unusual for some premises in towns and villages to be quite close to a new DSLAM cabinet, but not get a significantly improved service because of the 'long lines' issue. The copper network that provides the final connection to each premise has developed in an organic way over many decades, rather than in an efficient, planned way. Another issue faced in towns, and some villages, has been strong uptake of superfast broadband services that has then led to the new cabinet being 'full' and customers having to wait for further slots to be created in the high demand cabinet before they can be connected.
- 4.14 The 'long lines' issue is one of the fundamental limitations of the FTTC and EO approaches to the superfast broadband roll-out. Where the length of copper line connection to the cabinet to the premises is longer than 1.2km there is a dramatic fall-off in connection speed so that users may find that they have no appreciable improvement in broadband service, even though they are connected to the new DSLAM cabinet with the new technology. It was June 2016 before the Council was properly aware of the scale of the 'long lines' issue so even when a cabinet went 'live', it was not clear which premises would get a properly improved service
- 4.15 In villages and more rural areas the experience has sometimes been more frustrating as there are more instances of 'long lines' in these areas, so the speed uplifts experienced by customers have been more variable. There have also been more instances of Exchange Only (EO) lines in these areas. This meant that superfast services were slower to be deployed in these areas and, again, long lines were an issue. The increased use of FTTP in the latest phase of the Programme should go some way to mitigate this challenge, but the reality is that many premises that are connected to the new network do not receive the broadband speed uplift that they would have expected.

- 4.16 From a local customer perspective, and also from the experience of Local Members, the most common experience with the DSSB Programme has been one of major customer frustration and uncertainty. Broadband connectivity has been a common cause for concern at a local level for some time. However, following the commencement of the DSSB Programme and the associated increase in expectations of service availability, broadband became a significant issue raised with Council and Councillors on an almost daily basis. At times it was the main issue being raised with Local Members.
- 4.17 The Council was hampered in its ability to provide as much information as it would have liked to communities and businesses by the confidentiality agreement it had signed. This caused a major limitation in terms of what information could be shared, which in turn added to the frustration of both broadband customers and Elected Members.
- 4.18 The practical reality of the Programme delivery was that BT Openreach was unable to accurately predict when any given cabinet would 'go live' because of the technical challenges around installing each cabinet. Although there was a known range of challenges, each cabinet faced a different mix of those challenges, so it was difficult to accurately estimate service availability timescales. However, even when a cabinet went 'live', it was not clear which premises would get a properly improved service.
- 4.19 Download and upload speeds only became apparent after an area went 'live', with no way to tell beforehand. Thus, it only became clear after cabinets went live which premises would be properly served and which would not see any significant improvement in service. Understandably, communities and businesses were frustrated at this lack of information and the seeming inability of the Programme to be clear about where and when improved services would become available. This lack of information was raised with the Depute First Minister in February 2016 as part of the South of Scotland Alliance's regular discussion with Mr Swinney MSP.
- 4.20 In view of the large numbers of premises that do not actually receive >24Mbps broadband services, it is clear that there is still a major task ahead for the R100 Programme. It must tackle these premises that have been connected to the fibre network, but are not currently receiving an improved service.

How appropriate and effective the communication processes used during the roll-out were, and whether appropriate information sharing and openness was evident to all stakeholders throughout the programme

- 4.21 Communication and publicity was a key element of the Programme to ensure awareness and take-up. The Scottish Government put a significant effort behind this activity to ensure that there was a high profile for the roll-out in each area.

This was a sensible approach as it is crucial that as many users as possible actually sign up to use the new broadband infrastructure. More users, especially business users, help to demonstrate that the Government's investment delivered value for money and positive economic impacts.

- 4.22 The DSSB Programme recruited a range of regional advisers who helped to ensure press coverage in local press; organised special events; manned a Broadband Bus that made a number of appearances across the Scottish Borders; and arranged stands and presence at local events. Local Elected Members were involved in DSLAM cabinet launches across the area to demonstrate the Council's role in the roll-out, and to ensure that local newspapers picked up on the story. All of this activity was also driven by the 'Gainshare' principle that the more take-up, the more should come back into the Programme at later stages.
- 4.23 Overall however, the main issue around communications was the fact that the Programme was unable to provide an accurate picture of where and when improved broadband services would become available. As noted above, this led to considerable frustration in communities and undermined the positive impact that was being made by the roll-out. It is understandable that BT Openreach did not want to unrealistically raise expectations of delivery of services in particular areas – because of the risk of then failing to deliver on what it had said. However, the lack of information did lead to a negative perception of the roll-out and is one of the key lessons for future programmes. Crucially, it was into 2017 before there was an effective web-site that allowed households and businesses to check when they might be connected. Unfortunately, it still could not tell them what quality of service they would receive once they were connected.

Did the DSSB Programme deliver appropriate value for money in relation to the Council's £8.4M investment

- 4.24 The original Step Change 2015 programme contracted for 75% coverage of each local authority area which included the Scottish Borders. At that time, commercial coverage within the Scottish Borders was predicted at 39.3%, leaving a minimum shortfall of 35.7% to be achieved through the programme rollout. Given the rural or very rural nature of the Scottish Borders topography and the technical issues which arose throughout the Programme from the original telephone network, and which are still causing issues to date, it is likely that those areas closest to urban populations or technical "hubs" would have been prioritised in the rollout. As implementation of the infrastructure programme over the last few years has progressed, improvements in the technology available have been incorporated into the works on the ground. However, the use of postcode data to show coverage may still mean that broadband speeds are still variable to particular premises in the same area.

- 4.25 Value For Money is a key consideration for the Committee in view of the Council's £8.4M investment, agreed in 2012. At a simple level, the Council's investment has helped to ensure a 93.7% (and increasing) level of coverage in the Scottish Borders. This is beyond the 75% coverage that the Scottish Government was expecting to deliver at the start of the Programme, and is beyond the 85% that the South of Scotland Local Broadband Plan had targeted in 2012. It is undeniable that the Programme has ensured a 'step-change' in the coverage of superfast broadband in the area and that it can be argued to have delivered an appropriate return on investment for the Council's funding.
- 4.26 However, it has also been made clear in the submissions to the Committee that the 93.7% coverage that has been delivered is not the same thing as 93.7% of premises having proper access to superfast services. The Thinkbroadband website highlights that, at 1 November 2018, 83.94% of premises have >24Mbps superfast broadband speeds. So 16.06% of premises have broadband speeds that are lower than 'superfast', with 11.47% of premises being below 10Mbps. There are still a significant number of premises in the Scottish Borders that need to receive a proper superfast broadband service.
- 4.27 It is difficult to ascertain whether the Council's financial contribution on its own would have brought the infrastructure coverage up to the present day 93.7%, or whether 'Gainshare' funding has made the difference. It is likely to be a combination of both. The Council's additional £8.4m could be looked upon as pump priming for rural and very rural areas, providing a more equitable infrastructure across the Scottish Borders.
- 4.28 A further way of considering the value for money that has been delivered for the Council's funding is to look at what may have happened if the programme had been delivered at a South of Scotland level, which was the planned approach in 2012. It is likely that the DSSB Programme delivered more coverage than if it had been a Local Broadband Plan programme, but there is a question as to whether a South of Scotland programme would have delivered the coverage more quickly as it would have been fully focused on the south, rather than having to have phases running all over Scotland at the same time.
- 4.29 Would a Local procurement have delivered the same amount of coverage? Perhaps not in a situation where there may well only have been a single supplier and where the South of Scotland Local Authorities would have had even less leverage with the supplier than the Scottish Government did. It is also likely that a Local Programme would have faced the same technological challenges and similar information and data challenges. It is therefore likely that the Scottish Government-led procurement and Rest of Scotland Programme has delivered more for the Scottish Borders than a Local Programme could have. That suggests that

the Council probably received better value for money from being part of the larger DSSB Programme than it would have secured as part of a much smaller South of Scotland Programme.

- 4.30 In comparison to other areas that also made a significant financial contribution towards the DSSB Programme, such as Dumfries & Galloway, Scottish Borders is in a similar position with regards to coverage. Dumfries & Galloway Council signed up to an agreement that highlighted an indicative target of 95.0% coverage. The Thinkbroadband website reported the current coverage figure for D&G as 94.8%, close to the target of 95.0%, but, as with Scottish Borders, a delay in reaching the target. It is worth noting that Aberdeenshire Council made the largest financial contribution to the Programme, at approximately £16M, Dumfries & Galloway Council made the second largest contribution at £12.6M and Scottish Borders Council made the third largest contribution. These financial allocations reflected the scale of the rural challenge in these three Council areas, and the desire of these Councils to extend coverage through DSSB to include as many businesses and households as possible.

How successful the take up of superfast broadband services has been across the Scottish Borders

- 4.31 Originally, the supplier contract was based on a take-up rate target of 20%. The take-up of superfast broadband services has been reasonable in Scottish Borders, with the most recent figures showing 44.2% take-up. However, this is slightly behind the overall Rest of Scotland figure of 46.2%. These figures mask a variation of take-up across the Scottish Borders. It has been reported that Coldstream, Duns, Earlston, Eyemouth, Melrose, Selkirk, St Boswells and West Linton have been high take-up communities, but that Kelso has been a relatively low adoption community.
- 4.32 It was some way through the Programme before the DSSB Team realised the importance of highlighting to households and businesses that they needed to specifically sign up for the new superfast broadband service when it became available. Most customers had been used to experiencing broadband speed uplifts without having to sign up for new services; this was due to technological improvements with the existing copper line based services (Asynchronous Digital Subscriber Line ADSL). There is an ongoing need to remind businesses and households that they need to specifically sign up for Superfast Broadband, as well as a need for on-going activity to encourage uptake and use of the new infrastructure – in order to maximise the return from the investment.

Identify appropriate lessons for future programmes, such as the new R100 Programme

- 4.33 Scottish Borders Council has been at the forefront of the drive for better digital connectivity in the Borders and across the South of Scotland, in partnership with the South of Scotland Alliance. It is important to maintain this focus and lobbying pressure as it is clear from this review that there are still many premises that remain without effective superfast broadband connections. The R100 Programme is the new Scottish Government Programme that will tackle the next phase of broadband improvements, and this review has useful lessons to offer the new R100 Programme.
- 4.34 The R100 Programme aims to deliver superfast connectivity to 100% of premises by 2021. R100 is in procurement stage at present, which is expected to conclude in Spring 2019 with implementation following soon after. A key lesson from the DSSB Programme is the importance of taking a 'premises' level focus to planning for the new programme as the 'postcode' basis of DSSB was not helpful. It was the use of postcode level information that caused much of the uncertainty and vagueness of the DSSB Programme, although it is accepted that a premise by premise approach was probably not deliverable in 2012/13. It seems that R100 is being taken forward on a 'premises' basis and that the Scottish Government has already learnt that lesson. However, there are other lessons that can be highlighted to Scottish Government to inform the R100 roll-out.
- 4.35 Communications are crucial – future programmes need to be able to give communities, businesses and households a better idea of when the service will 'go live' for them. They also need to be able to provide a better sense of what level of improvement will actually be provided. The experience gained through the DSSB Programme would suggest that these ambitions are deliverable in future programmes if they are planned in at the start.
- 4.36 Although it is difficult to address, it is also clear that there needs to be a better way of expressing how a particular technology will deliver the outcomes that are sought by a programme. The issue of 'long lines' was not clear at the start of the DSSB Programme, and has had a significant impact on the real-world impact of the Programme at a local level. The Scottish Government may or may not have understood what this meant for the end outcome of the DSSB Programme, but this has meant that the 'coverage' percentages have given an optimistic view of what has actually changed on the ground.
- 4.37 In 2012 when Step Change/DSSB was being planned, superfast broadband was a relatively new service and was available in a limited number of locations. Many users wondered whether they would really need superfast speeds of up to 80Mbps. However, it has become even clearer since then that broadband connectivity is

crucial to the future economic competitiveness of rural areas. Technology has also moved on, with far more FTTP services being available in urban areas and the future of connectivity clearly relying on Fibre To The Premises wherever possible. R100 needs to deliver as much FTTP as it can if it is to ensure that the infrastructure investment is a future-proof as possible. Otherwise, rural areas will remain under-served and at the back of the 'technology curve'.

- 4.38 Another challenge that has been apparent in the DSSB Programme has been that the market failure that justifies Government intervention in digital connectivity for rural areas feeds through in a real-world way to the procurement process. The market failure manifests itself as limited private sector interest in taking on delivery in rural areas and also limited capacity to deliver in the most rural areas. In turn, this hampers the Government's ability to achieve value for money in these investments.
- 4.39 Another challenge thrown up by the DSSB Programme has been how to balance commercial confidentiality with effective communication to communities and businesses. There needs to be an effective system of answering / responding to household and business queries in place for the start of any new roll-out. Otherwise there is a risk of customer frustration and negative publicity for the new programme.
- 4.40 Finally, there needs to be an ongoing focus on utilisation of the new infrastructure. It is important that there is support for communities and businesses to help them utilise the new infrastructure in creative and innovative ways, again helping to maximise the return on investment and to realise the full step-change potential that good broadband connectivity can deliver.

Section 5: KEY FINDINGS and RECOMMENDATIONS

FINDINGS

An assessment of the final coverage delivered by Contract 1 of the DSSB Programme and the associated 'Gainshare' project;

5.1 The DSSB Programme has delivered in spirit if not to the letter of the Minute of Agreement. 93.8% was an interpretation of a contract that in the 'letter' only undertook to get as far as possible over 75% (which would be delivered without Council support). There was talk of getting coverage to 85% and modelling said it could be 93.8%, but there was no specific commitment to this; it was clearly an indicative target. In practice, the 93.7% coverage that is claimed to be delivered at 30 September 2018 (note that Contract 1 should have finished at 31 Dec 2017) is being financed by 'Gainshare' monies (see below), and whilst this runs to March 2019, we have no statement on the target coverage at that date.

The quality of that coverage and any variations between premises in towns, villages and the countryside. This would include speed coverage, long-line issues and other limitations that have become apparent during the rollout period;

- 5.2 There have been major problems with the quality of the coverage. Many customers in towns and villages have an excellent service and have seen a real improvement in their broadband service when they have signed up for superfast broadband. However, other customers have faced massive problems in relation to the quality of service they have received, with many still unable to enjoy the benefits of superfast broadband, although they are technically 'connected' to the new network.
- a) Quality and speed of connection can only be judged once the end customer connects to the new network.
 - b) If quality is defined as 'meeting expectations' then the poor communications and genuine lack of certainty about what could be delivered have together resulted in unrealistic expectations in some sections of society, and those expectations have not been met. If quality is defined as 'meeting expectations', then there has possibly been a poor quality of delivery.
 - c) To be fair to the supplier, they did not know at the outset all of the technical and logistical problems that the rollout would face. Many of these problems were exacerbated by rurality, combining a low density of premises and long distances to cabinets and exchanges.
 - d) 'Coverage' itself was so variable in its definition that this led to public confusion. Whilst there was a widespread expectation that each premises would get the faster connection and that this 'utility' would just be automatically upgraded without the end customer having to take any action, in reality i) 'coverage' was defined by postcode and not by individual premises (so

just one premises connected in a postcode = coverage for that postcode); and, ii) the success measure was the very revealing term 'premises passed'.

- e) A direct consequence of the above is that measurement was inherently difficult, leading to poor feedback and poor understanding of how the Programme was actually progressing.
- f) Significantly, the Council did not really understand until later in the process the extent of, and impact of, degradation of signal strength to the extent that premises further than 1.2km down a copper line might see no improvement in speeds. Whilst the impact of this problem may not have been fully understood by the contractor, something went wrong if this was not well enough understood by the Council and ultimately the end customers.

How appropriate and effective the communication processes used during the roll-out were, and whether appropriate information sharing and openness was evident to all stakeholders throughout the programme;

- 5.3 Whilst it is clear that a lot of effort went into publicity and communications, the quality of communication was poor – in part because of the complexities outlined above; in part because of the confidentiality agreements that were necessary as part of the contract; in part because there were many players in the process so that transparency and openness was not properly achieved.

Did the DSSB Programme deliver appropriate value for money in relation to the Council's £8.4M investment;

- 5.4 Possibly. Measured against the prediction that without the Step Change/DSSB Programme the predicted 'coverage' in the Scottish Borders was expected to be 39.3% - it went well. Measured against the stated 'coverage' of comparable rural authorities the Borders probably got as good an outcome as those comparators. There will be some very satisfied end customers in the Scottish Borders and some who continue to be dissatisfied. The whole process was a project on a heroic scale and it has probably made a step change in Superfast Broadband services – but it has also exposed that many more steps are needed.

How successful the take up of superfast broadband services has been across the Scottish Borders;

- 5.5 Originally, the supplier contract was based on a take-up rate target of 20%. The take-up of superfast broadband services has been reasonable in Scottish Borders, with the most recent figures showing 44.2% take-up. However, this is slightly behind the overall Rest of Scotland figure of 46.2%.

Identify appropriate lessons for future programmes, such as the new R100 Programme

- 5.6 In the first instance, notwithstanding the forthcoming R100 Programme, the Council should write to Scottish Government stressing the importance – the fairness elements – of our area getting a larger share of the 'Gainshare' uplift in Broadband connections, as this was supposed to add to the 'coverage' from the core funding (from the EU, UK Govt, Scottish Govt). What we see at present is that the 'Gainshare' connections are just helping get coverage to the expected 93.8%.

- 5.7 In relation to R100 there are a number of lessons that can be fed back to Scottish Government:
- a) Need for honesty about the challenges and transparency about the progress and issues and performance. Step Change was done to us... R100 needs to be done with us.
 - b) There is a clear need for comprehensive but simple of communication to the public about what is and is not included in the R100 Programme, what it will mean in terms of actual services provided, and what the end customer needs to do to sign-up to the improved service. The Audit and Scrutiny Committee members benefitted greatly from the explanations of the articulate experts who addressed the Committee – the messages we received and understood need to get out to the Borders public.
 - c) Much that the Audit and Scrutiny Committee came to understand as issues and opportunities need to be incorporated into the R100 Programme:
 - The importance of Fibre To The Premises connections being used wherever possible;
 - Simple web-sites that give a premise by premise indication of what might be delivered, and when;
 - The benefit in rural areas of multiple/mixed solutions;
 - The need to address the very distant and dispersed premises and not just “pass them by”.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation One

- 5.8 The Leader should write to the Scottish Government stressing the importance of the Scottish Borders getting a larger share of the ‘Gainshare’ uplift in Broadband connections, as this was supposed to add to the ‘coverage’ from the core funding. At present, ‘Gainshare’ connections are merely helping get coverage to the expected 93.8%.

Recommendation Two

- 5.9 To ensure transparency, there needs to be absolute clarity in any future programme of work on the definition of “coverage”, particularly as it applies in specific localities. It is not enough to identify national coverage percentages due to the wide variations within relatively small geographic areas. Coverage must be based on the actual service provided to the end user.

Recommendation Three

- 5.10 Within the fast changing world of technological advances, it is important that future-proofing is included within a contract and that a break is built into a contract to cover any major change in technology.

Recommendation Four

- 5.11 Progress in implementation must be communicated to all stakeholders at regular intervals during the contract period; with absolute clarity on any technical or logistical problems encountered or delays to previously advised timescales.

Recommendation Five

- 5.12 Rurality, geography, topography, and existing networks must be accounted for within the parameters of any new contract.

Recommendation Six

- 5.13 Simple, specific measurable outcomes must be built into any future contract to allow stakeholders to judge what success will look like.

Recommendation Seven

- 5.14 Any third party investors to a new contract must have deliverables specified and a clawback clause included – to cover situations where these deliverables fail and a new deliverable cannot be agreed by either party.

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WINTER SERVICE PLAN FOR YEAR 2018/19

Report by Service Director Assets & Infrastructure **EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE**

4 December 2018

1 PURPOSE AND SUMMARY

- 1.1 **This report presents a review of the performance of Scottish Borders Council's Winter Service during 2017/18, and presents, at Appendix 1, SBC's Winter Services Plan for 2018/19.**
- 1.2 SBC provides a winter service on nearly 3,000km of roads across the Scottish Borders. An annual Winter Plan is prepared to outline the steps that will be taken to ensure that the roads network is safe, within available resources.
- 1.3 The winter of 2017/18 was significant in terms of both snow and ice. In December 2017, temperatures were close to average in most areas of the UK, including Scotland. Rainfall varied greatly across the country but was close to average overall, while sunshine was slightly up. January 2018 was similar in temperature terms but Scotland was somewhat lower than average. Rainfall overall was 10% above average, with sunshine close to average overall. February 2018, was a cold month with mean temperatures 1.3 degrees below average. Rainfall however was significantly lower than average across the UK at 73% of normally expected levels. Sunshine was well above average everywhere and the second sunniest for the UK since 1929. Of particular note was the prolonged length of the 2017/18 winter with a cold frosty finish to November, significant snowfalls into March and treatments continuing into April.
- 1.4 The most significant event of the year was in late February / early March when strong easterly winds swept winter weather from Siberia towards the British Isles. The so called "Beast from the East" brought very heavy snowfall and freezing conditions for almost a week closing much of the road network and placing a significant strain on the emergency response; particularly in relation to driver availability and the need to comply with driver-hours regulations. In addition to dealing with the initial impact of the "Beast from the East" there were subsequent flooding issues in many areas in the following days as heavy rainfall combined with snow-melt.
- 1.4 The Winter Service Plan for 2018/19 is similar in terms of policy, priorities, routes, call out arrangements and resource planning. Officers have considered the current Winter Service Plan arrangements, and for 2018/19 do not propose any significant changes to the current plan which is robust in determining this Councils standards and level of winter service.

- 1.5 Officers will continue to monitor and review existing winter service arrangements throughout this winter, noting any deficiencies in service provision, with a view to bring forward any further amendments for the 2019/20 Winter Plan.

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 I recommend that the Executive Committee:**
- (a) Notes the performance of the SBC Winter Service during 2017/18;**
 - (b) Endorses the Winter Services Plan for 2018/19 contained in Appendix 1; and**
 - (c) Agrees to consider, no later than the end June 2019, amendments to the Winter Services Plan for season 2019/20.**

3 BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The Council undertakes a Winter Service on nearly 3,000km of local road network. The Service is provided by the Assets and Infrastructure Department. Under the Roads (Scotland) Act 1984, Section 34, all roads authorities are required to '*take such steps as they consider reasonable to prevent snow and ice endangering the safe passage of pedestrians and vehicles over public roads*'. The safe passage of people on the road network during winter is very important for the social and the economic needs of the area.
- 3.2 To assist in meeting the legal requirements the Department produces an annual Winter Service Plan which describes what steps will be taken to maintain the local road network free from ice and snow as far as it is considered reasonable within the available budget. The Plan is primarily based on a route treatment hierarchy where priority routes have been determined depending on various factors such as traffic volumes, bus routes and access to schools, shops and medical centres. Officers have updated the Council's Winter Plan for 2018/19.
- 3.3 How the Council keeps the road network operating safely and effectively is taken forward in 2 ways:
 - Prevention – by pre-salting roads to reduce the effect of frost and frozen conditions, taken forward on a routine, planned basis. The road network is currently split into Primary, Secondary and Tertiary Networks. Planned "pre-salting" is only undertaken on the Primary Network. The remaining road network will then come under the "post-treatment" of secondary and Tertiary networks. The Secondary network is treated after the primary routes, as time and resource permits and it is believed that the freezing conditions will continue. The Tertiary network will only be treated when extended weather conditions persist, all primary routes have been treated, resources have been committed to treat secondary routes, and resources have become available.
 - Intervention – through large scale snow clearance following extreme winter conditions, taken forward on more of an ad hoc basis, involving emergency actions and community resilience. This is co-ordinated by the Council's Emergency Planning processes.
- 3.4 Officers have presented to the Executive Committee a number of reports on the Winter Service over the last five years. Previous reports defined the primary and secondary salting route network and presented an update of the overall Winter Plan document. These reports have put the Council in a robust position in terms of defining the standards and levels of service delivered through its Winter Service Plan.

4 REVIEW OF THE SERVICE DURING WINTER OF 2017/18

- 4.1 The Winter of 2017/18 was significant in terms of snow fall and to a slightly lesser extent low freezing temperatures. Both salt usage and planned actions were significantly higher than experienced in the previous 5 winters and in line with the extreme winter of 2011/12 (271 Planned actions and 43,000 tonnes of salt) In large part this was because of a more prolonged period of low temperatures and snowfall than would be expected and in particular "The Beast from the East" in early March". The following key parameters illustrate this.

Years	12/13	13/14	14/15	15/16	16/17	17/18	Comment
Planned Actions	202	204	213	194	196	243	Call outs to undertake preventative actions – annual average 209
Salt							
Usage (,000T)	23	24	33	28	26	47	Used on Local & Trunk roads

4.2 The following represents an assessment of the weather experienced **across the UK** during Winter 2017/18 (December, January, and February) and how it compares with the 1981 to 2010 average. **Text Highlighted in 'bold' refers specifically to Scotland.**

- (a) The 2017/18 winter generally was rather unsettled, with weather systems coming in from the west predominantly, allowing only brief settled spells. Temperatures fluctuated either side of the average, with some mild spells but also periods with widespread frosts. The most widespread cold weather arrived at the end of the season. Rainfall was close to average overall, though some areas were rather wet in the first two months. Sunshine overall was above average, with few exceptions.
- (b) **Temperature**
There was a cold finish to November with widespread frosts. December 2017 saw temperatures close to average in most areas, and slightly above in the south-west and the far north; the UK monthly mean temperature was 0.2 °C above the long-term average. January 2018 was warmer than average across England and Wales, **but somewhat colder than average in northern Scotland, and the UK as a whole saw mean temperatures 0.4 °C above average.** February was a cold month generally, with a mean temperature 1.3 °C below average. This pattern continued into March with exceptionally cold easterly flow bringing heavy snow and sub-zero daytime temperatures at the onset of the month and a second less significant front in week three.
- (c) **Rainfall**
December was rather drier than average in some north-eastern areas, but central and south-east England, especially East Anglia, were rather wet. Overall the UK had 99% of average rainfall. **January was rather wet in some western areas, but dry in Aberdeenshire.** The UK overall had 110% of average rainfall in January. February was rather drier, especially in the second half, with 73% of average for the UK overall.
- (d) **Sunshine levels**
Many areas had a little more sunshine than average during December, although some western and northern fringes were duller. **January sunshine was above average across northern Scotland,** and broadly close to average elsewhere. February was sunnier than average nearly everywhere, and the second sunniest for the UK in a series since 1929. Sunshine totals for the UK overall were 115% of average in December, 103% of average in January, and 137% in February.

4.3 In terms of both salt usage and planned actions 2017/18 was considerably above what had been experienced in recent winters, albeit this particular one was prolonged much later than would be normally expected. This presented a very challenging time for the Council with resources stretched to the limit. Should the area experience a similar or more severe winter period of prolonged snow with many roads closed this is likely to prove to be extremely challenging to manage with existing resources. Ongoing decisions should continue to be taken to maintain a level of resources to respond to such extreme weather conditions. In this regard the service is currently in the process of supplementing its pool of suitably qualified drivers through a combination of recruitment and requests to other areas of the service.

5 PROPOSED AMENDMENTS TO THE WINTER SERVICE PLAN FOR 2018/19

- 5.1 Officers have considered the current Winter Service Plan arrangements, and for 2018/19 do not propose any significant changes to the current plan which is robust in determining this Council's standards and level of winter service.
- 5.2 The Winter Service Plan, at Appendix 1, will be the Winter Service Plan for winter 2018/19. In terms of policy, priorities, routes, call out arrangements and resource planning these will be as per Winter 2017/18. The 2018/19 Winter Plan is a robust plan and clearly defines and has an agreed approach to primary; secondary; and tertiary salting of the Council's adopted road network.
- 5.3 Officers will continue to monitor and review existing winter service arrangements throughout this winter, noting any deficiencies in service provision, with a view to bring forward any further amendments for the 2019/20 Winter Plan. As a consequence of continuing fiscal constraints however, reducing budgets and the need to deliver financial plan savings, it is likely that significant changes to the Winter 19/20 plan will be proposed as noted in Recommendation 2.1 (c).

6 IMPLICATIONS

6.1 Financial

- (a) In 2018/19 the winter service will continue to be delivered as a funded service. The basic cost of all plant and vehicles required to deliver the winter service are also fully funded from within the NS budget. This will change to reflect the agreed Roads review which will disaggregate the NS budgets into two discrete budgets for Roads and Environmental Services and which will be fully completed for financial year 19/20.
- (b) Due to the continuing financial pressures affecting the Council, there is a need to continue modernisation of our approach to winter delivery and reducing the overall salt usage on priority road and footpath routes.

6.2 Risk and Mitigations

The "Beast from the East" could reasonably be viewed as a robust test of the Winter Plan developed last year and being recommended for adoption this year. This has however emphasised the need to keep resources to a level that can cope with unexpected, unusually inclement and/or sustained weather conditions in the future. The Roads Service, in conjunction with officers across SBC and partners, will monitor and review arrangements throughout this winter, noting any deficiencies in service provision, with a view to bring forward any further amendments for the 2019/20 Winter Plan.

6.3 Equalities

An Equalities Impact Assessment has been carried out on this proposal and it is anticipated that there are no adverse equality implications.

6.4 Acting Sustainably

There are no significant economic, social or environmental issues associated with this report.

6.5 Carbon Management

There are no significant impacts on the Council's carbon emissions that are additional to current operation.

6.6 Rural Proofing

There are no rural proofing impacts resulting from this report. The Winter Service Plan recognises the rural nature of the Scottish Borders and the importance of maintaining links during the winter months.

6.7 Changes to Scheme of Administration or Scheme of Delegation

There are no changes which are required to either the Scheme of Administration or the Scheme of Delegation as a result of the proposals in this report.

7 CONSULTATION

- 7.1 The Chief Financial Officer, the Monitoring Officer, the Chief Legal Officer, the Chief Officer Audit and Risk, the Chief Officer HR and the Clerk to the Council are being consulted and any comments received will be reported at the meeting.

Approved by

Martin Joyce

Service Director Assets & Infrastructure Signature.....

Author(s)

Name	Designation and Contact Number
Brian Young	Infrastructure Manager

Background Papers:

Previous Minute Reference: None

Note – You can get this document on tape, in Braille, large print and various computer formats by contacting the address below. Jacqueline Whitelaw can also give information on other language translations as well as providing additional copies.

Contact us at Jacqueline Whitelaw, PLACE, Business Support, Scottish Borders Council, Council Headquarters, Newtown St Boswells, Melrose, TD6 0SA, Tel 0300 100 1800, email JWhitelaw@scotborders.gov.uk.

Scottish Borders Council Winter Service Plan 2018/19



October 2018



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1. INTRODUCTION

Ice and snow affects the safety of the travelling public as well as the availability and reliability of the road network throughout the winter period.

As such the successful delivery of the winter service is absolutely key to supporting the economic and social well-being of the Scottish Borders.

This Winter Service Plan explains the arrangements for dealing with ice and snow on the region's roads and outlines the efforts that will be made to inform the public of these interventions.

Generally, our winter service is defined to begin on 1 November and end on 31 March, however, as conditions dictate this period can change.

The unpredictability of winter weather can have a significant impact on our communities and tested the resilience of all our services and whilst Scottish Borders Council's road service coped well, which has been recognised by our customers, we recognise that there is always potential for improvement.

It should be noted that naturally occurring rock-salt is the treatment of choice in the Scottish Borders, although the term 'gritting' continues to be used.

The Council's website carries a variety of information pertaining to the winter service and should be referred to for information on gritting routes, self-help, etc.

www.scotborders.gov.uk

During the summer of 2013 the Council undertook to review the impact of the winter weather and the Council's response to it. Neighbourhood Services contributed to this review and we have considered the findings along with our own assessment of the best practice that exists both within Scottish Borders and elsewhere.

Scottish Borders Council works with many partners over the winter period, and in particular:

- * Transport Scotland
- * AMEY as trunk roads operator
- * Police Scotland
- * Public transport operators
- * Local media outlets
- * ELBF and other local authorities

ELBF is a joint working partnership consisting of Edinburgh, Lothians, Borders and Fife Councils that meet regularly to maintain a dialogue on best practice, opportunities for collaboration and knowledge sharing.

The overarching aim of this Winter Service Plan is to allow the safe passage of pedestrians and vehicles on priority routes, to control delays due to winter weather and carry out operations safely.

1.1 Legal requirement and standards

Under Section 34 of the **Roads (Scotland) Act 1984**, the Council has a duty to "take such steps as they consider reasonable to prevent snow and ice endangering the safe passage of pedestrians and vehicles over public roads."

The Code of Practice for Well Maintained Highways (2011 revision) recommended that local authorities should demonstrate that they are taking reasonable steps to keep the public safe during winter periods. Appendix 'H' of this code amended in 2013 suggests a framework for local authorities to follow.

The management of the winter service is audited against our registration to BS EN ISO 9001:2015.

1.2 Weather, climate and forecasting

To provide a reliable, secure and robust winter service the Council have a number of forecasting tools at their disposal to plan the best possible treatment regime throughout the winter period.

We subscribe to the Met Office "Transport Weather Manager" service during the months of October to April and receive the following via the Vaisala Bureau Service:

- * 24 hour forecasts
- * 5 day forecasts
- * Ice prediction graphs
- * Road surface condition information
- * 24 hour consultancy service from the Met Office
- * Ice prediction web page

The forecasts are based on global and national information supplemented by six roadside weather stations strategically placed at sites throughout the Scottish Borders.

We will continue using this domain based forecasting as the basis for our decision making throughout the season.

Flood sensors are located throughout the region and can be monitored remotely by the Council's Flood Team to check water levels at weirs and grills. Bordercare receive activated alarm calls from these sensors during periods of unpredicted weather which are passed to operational resources for attention.

1.3 Communications

Neighbourhood Services will be responsible for providing winter service information to Scottish Borders Council's Corporate Communications Team.

Information will be supplied on an 'as required' basis by Neighbourhood Services to provide frequent communications with Scottish Borders Council during periods of severe winter weather.

In order to ensure that consistent information is given out, contact with the media on winter service operations will generally be through the Council's Corporate Communications Team, supported by Neighbourhood Services Team.

Communications will detail:

- * Road closures
- * Driving advice
- * Gritting routes
- * Snow clearance

The Council's website has a Winter Service section that will provide a wealth of relevant information for the public to view and will be updated with the aim of creating as close a 'real time' situation as practicable to assist the public in making informed decisions on travel.

www.scotborders.gov.uk

Twitter, Facebook, SBAlert and local media outlets will be used to help spread relevant winter information and advice to the public.

1.4 Resilient communities

Whilst the legal obligations of the Council as a roads authority focus on the safe passage of traffic we recognise that prolonged and severe winter conditions can lead to significant issues in other service areas such as health and wellbeing.

Scottish Border Council continues to lead a Resilient Communities Initiative to enable communities to better prepare, organise and respond to emergency situations such as severe weather, fire, power failure or other major incidents, working along with partner agencies, communities as well as third sector organisations.

1.5 Financial resources

In the current financial climate all public sector services are facing cuts in the available funding and our approach to the delivery of winter service is not immune to this challenge. However, we are continuing to plan so that we can cope with a severe winter by ensuring that we do address the core requirements of our winter service.

It should be noted that it is not possible to provide the winter service on all parts of the network nor to ensure running surfaces are kept free of ice or snow at all times, even on treated parts of the network.

To carry out the core requirements of winter service we will:

- * focus on a clear set of priorities
- * continue to introduce efficiencies
- * make prudent and timely investments that will best ensure the resilience of the service
- * deliver a safe and reliable road network for our customers

1.6 Informing future plans

It is noted that changes in the extent and scope of winter treatments can have significant implications for the service, and may require significant investment to facilitate the desired change, for example the addition of a road to the priority gritting routes may lead to the need for an additional gritter, driver and salt.

We do recognise the importance of this service to our communities and our need to further our understanding of what is wanted from our winter service. With this in mind we have sought the views of our customers through the Household Survey and the National Highways & Transport (NHT) Network public subcontractor survey which will inform the development of the future service. In addition to this, as for all road services we welcome comments, requests for service or inquiry through our customer services feedback.



2. POLICY

COUNCIL POLICY FOR WINTER SERVICE

"Scottish Borders Council aims to assist road users in adverse winter conditions by providing a service which it considers reasonable to prevent snow and ice endangering the safe passage of pedestrians and vehicles, using available financial and operational resources"

2.1 Policy introduction

The Winter Service Plan contributes to the delivery of the four core aims of the Road Maintenance Plan, being

- * Safety
- * Serviceability
- * Sustainability
- * Customer Services

These aims support delivery of the Council's Local Access and Transport Strategy, the key priorities of the Council and our many partner organisations.

It is recognised that there are three principle activities when considering the winter service:

- * Pre-treatment-precautionary salting
- * Post-treatment – continuing salting following the formation of ice
- * Clearance of snow

The Council's website should be consulted for the most up to date route information with regard to roads and footways.

2.2 Delivery

The winter service has developed over time combining established practices for the clearance of snow and ice with:

- * developments in salt products
- * forecasting technology
- * automated salting

We aim to deliver a service that is efficient, timely and supports our environmental objectives.

We are committed to minimising pollution from the leaching of dissolved salt and to make most effective use of salt by using it only when conditions require.

To ensure timely delivery we aim that:

- * all planned early morning treatments are completed before 8.30am
- * all treatment runs are completed in 2½ hours
- * in response to a call out, our gritters respond within 1 hour of the instruction to treat;

These aims are subject to the severity of prevailing weather conditions and safety considerations.

2.3 Primary network (roads)

We are responsible for the maintenance of 1841 miles (2963 km) of roads throughout the region.

Approximately 717 miles (1154 km or 39% of all roads) have been identified as primary routes whenever carriageway surfaces become, or may become, dangerous through frost, ice and snow.

These routes are those where traffic volumes and speed are likely to be higher and as such the risk to the safety of road users is similarly high if they were to remain untreated.

The rural routes have been established using the following criteria

- * routes of importance to the emergency services
- * topography
- * strategic A class roads
- * main commuter and school routes
- * regular rural public transport routes with weekday frequencies of 2 hours or better
- * other heavily trafficked routes

The urban routes have been established using the following criteria

- * routes around town centres
- * routes leading to town centres
- * routes leading to town buildings, public buildings, schools, hospitals and community centres

2.4 Secondary network (roads)

During severe winter periods treatment may extend to other routes. Traffic volumes and speeds on these routes are typically lower than on the primary routes, as such the risk to the safety of road users is less.

However in times of prolonged severe weather failure to treat these routes will compromise accessibility and heighten the risk of isolation, particularly in rural communities.

Approximately 293 miles (472 km or 16% of all roads) have been identified as secondary routes, these routes are deployed to deal with prolonged dangerous ice and snow roads.

Treatment of these routes will only be carried out if after completion of the primary routes there is adequate time and resources to cover them and that the freezing conditions will continue. Recognising that such constraints on the level of service may exist in the future also, we have prioritised the rural routes using the following criteria

- * sections removed from the primary route list during 2012 winter
- * remaining school bus routes with vehicles over 16 seats
- * timber transport routes
- * remaining 'A' and 'B' roads

The urban routes have been established in

consultations with Communities and Local Members and have been included within the roads and streets as defined as the urban secondary salting network. To finalise the actual secondary route to be adopted, consideration was given to:

- * main distributor routes
- * links to industrial zones
- * large housing estates

2.5 All other routes (roads and car parks)

The remaining roads, i.e. those which are neither primary nor secondary routes but are on the list of public roads will be classified as the 'Tertiary network' The 'Tertiary network' will only be treated when extended weather conditions persist, all primary routes have been treated, resources have been committed to treat secondary routes, and resources have become available.

2.6 Primary network (footways)

We are responsible for the maintenance of 780 miles (1255 Km) of footways throughout the region.

We have identified the following classifications of footways and cycleways to receive treatment and this is undertaken through the current 20 primary routes in our larger towns and villages:

- * town centre & shopping areas
- * footways leading to town centres
- * footways serving – public buildings, schools, hospitals, medical centres

The experience gained through the 2012/13 winter review indicated a clear need to consider the needs of pedestrians and cyclists separately to the needs of motorists and other road users. The risk to public safety posed by untreated footways heightens as freezing conditions become very severe or prolonged.

As such footways will not automatically be treated each time we treat our primary routes, but in line with the criteria set out below under Post Treatment (footways).

2.7 All other routes (footways)

If severe conditions persist, then treatment of other footway locations not covered by the primary network may be carried out as needed, subject to the availability of resources. We shall consider the ad-hoc treatment of any location in support of a particular emergency or medical access

need as identified through our partner agencies. We will work with the Community Councils and others to identify all reasonably practicable opportunities for self-help.

2.8 Precautionary Treatment

When forecast that road surface temperatures will fall below freezing - **Readiness Colour: Red** - the primary routes (roads) will be treated at the discretion of the Winter Service Duty Managers.

The timing of any treatment will be between 06.00 and 8.30 hours in the morning and at a time in the evening which allows the route to be treated prior to the predicted forecast time that road surface temperatures will fall below freezing. Salt spread rates will be applied in accordance with Treatment Matrix A. Only in exceptional circumstances, i.e. where roads have remained dry for long periods and there is a high degree of confidence in the level of residual salt, will consideration be given to the non-treatment of first priority routes. Weather and information from sensors located in the road surface are monitored to enable plans to be adjusted accordingly.

During the above conditions, footways are not treated at Precautionary Treatment level but are treated in the morning at Post Treatment level.

When forecast that road surface temperatures are to be below +2°C and there is uncertainty regarding surface hazards - **Readiness Colour: Amber** - the primary routes (roads) may be treated at the discretion of the Winter Service Duty Manager.

The use of patrols may also be used at the discretion of the Winter Service Duty Manager, with the extent being varied according to the conditions. If the patrol crews find areas of icy conditions they will inform their duty foreman who may initiate further action. Weather and information from sensors located in the road surface are monitored to enable plans to be adjusted accordingly.

2.9 Post treatment (roads and footways)

Post treatment salting to carriageways will be carried out when the conditions are:

- * extreme and severe and predicted to last for a prolonged period.
- * icy with formations on surfaces expected to remain after 09:00 hours
- * where snow has been cleared and where conditions are extreme and severe and predicted to last for a prolonged period.

When forecast that surface temperatures will fall below freezing - **Readiness Colour: Red** - the primary routes (footways) will be treated at the discretion of the Winter Service Duty Manager. The timing of any treatment will be between 06.00 and 9.00 hours in the morning.

When forecast that road surface temperatures are to be below +2°C and there is uncertainty regarding surface hazards - **Readiness Colour: Amber** - the primary routes (footways) may be treated at the discretion of the Winter Services Duty Manager or Duty Foreman. The timing of any treatment under these conditions may vary depending upon the timing of the decision and available resources.

2.10 School transport routes

Unfortunately, it is impracticable to extend our winter service treatments to include all school transport routes. In severe and prolonged winter conditions our treatment coverage will extend to include the access to all schools in the region.

We will continue to work with bus operators where appropriate to ensure buses reach essential routes, the majority of these routes will be catered for as our resources can reasonably allow.

Through our proposals for self-help in the community and with better communications with the education service we may be able to facilitate the treatment of identified problem sites in times when accessibility and isolation become a significant risk.

All treatment will be subject to the availability of resources and the prevailing conditions.

2.11 Provision of grit bins

Grit bins can be provided and maintained with stocks of salt where they improve road safety and benefit the community.

Grit bins will generally be provided when determined through a risk based assessment.

Maintaining salt/grit stock in the grit bins will be dependent on the available resources and the prevailing conditions. In severe and prolonged winter weather we may not be able to carry out any restocking, as our resources will have to be directed towards treating our roads and footways in line with the priorities set out in this plan.

We will, as part of our asset inventory, maintain details of all our grit bin locations.

Grit bins will **not** usually be provided:

- * on roads that form part of a primary route.
- * where they attract anti-social behaviour or cause nuisance to nearby residents.
- * where their provision would create a further proliferation of street furniture to the detriment of disabled or visually impaired people and/or the community.
- * on unadopted roads whether subject to future adoption or not.

The salt/grit provided in these bins is for spreading on public roads only, and unauthorised use of this salt to treat other premises will be considered as an act of theft.

We aim to have all our grit bins full in advance of winter and seek to maintain these stocks throughout the winter season. Where usage is high and it is confirmed that the salt/grit is being used on the road, we may supplement the existing grit bin provision following assessment.

2.12 Diversion routes

Diversion routes shall be treated to at least the standard required for the diverted route. When selecting diversion routes during the winter season consideration shall

be paid to the extent of the priority routes and for the potential need for a proposed diversion route to be inspected to ascertain its suitability for gritting prior to being used.

2.13 The trunk roads in the Scottish Borders

Transport Scotland is the authority responsible for the management of the Trunk Roads in the Scottish Borders. The A1, A68, A6091, A7 south of Galashiels and A702 fall within their South East Unit area and the services for this area are delivered through their agents AMEY.

Through existing sub contract arrangements SBC Neighbourhood Services currently provide support to AMEY in winter service provision on trunk roads within the Scottish Borders area.

AMEY 0800 042 0188

2.14 Contingency planning – Route rationalisation

Recent winters have seen the nation experience difficulties with the supply of road salt. Where there is a requirement to constrain gritting operations to less than primary routes then the decision to rationalise the extent of treatment in this way may be taken by the Chief Executive in consultation with Police Scotland.

This option shall only be actioned if all other contingency options such as the use of alternative salt supplies and reduced or variable spread rates have been exhausted.

If taken, the communication of this decision to all road users will be critical to the management of the consequential risk.

2.15 Community self help

Whilst the legal obligations of the Council as a road authority focus on the safe passage of traffic we recognise that prolonged and severe winter conditions do lead to isolation being experienced in both rural and urban situations. The issue of isolation can be most acute in our rural communities where the distance to a treated road may prevent access and egress for significant periods.

Scottish Borders Council has developed the existing Resilient Communities scheme to enable a winter service capability in those communities that:

- * are at risk of isolation
- * where that risk cannot be realistically managed through the provision of grit bins and
- * the community have the capacity to respond to that risk through self-help in the community.

2.16 Winter file

The Winter File will be maintained centrally by Neighbourhood Services at the Reiver Complex, Council Headquarters, Newtown St. Boswells. It will consist of the following:

- * Daily Decision Records
- * Operational Log
- * Plant and equipment records
- * Hard copy of this plan, including all appendices
- * Other relevant documentation



3. ORGANISATION - STAFF RESOURCES

3.1 Overall responsibility

As the Roads Authority, Scottish Borders Council has the overall responsibility to provide an effective Winter Service in accordance with its duties. The responsibility for the efficient and effective delivery of winter service operations sits within Neighbourhood Services.

Neighbourhood Services also play a key role for the Council in any emergency response to the severe weather to prepare, respond and recover from the impact of any severe weather event, including the effects of freezing temperatures, ice and snow. The Council's overall response in such circumstances is coordinated through its Emergency Planning team.

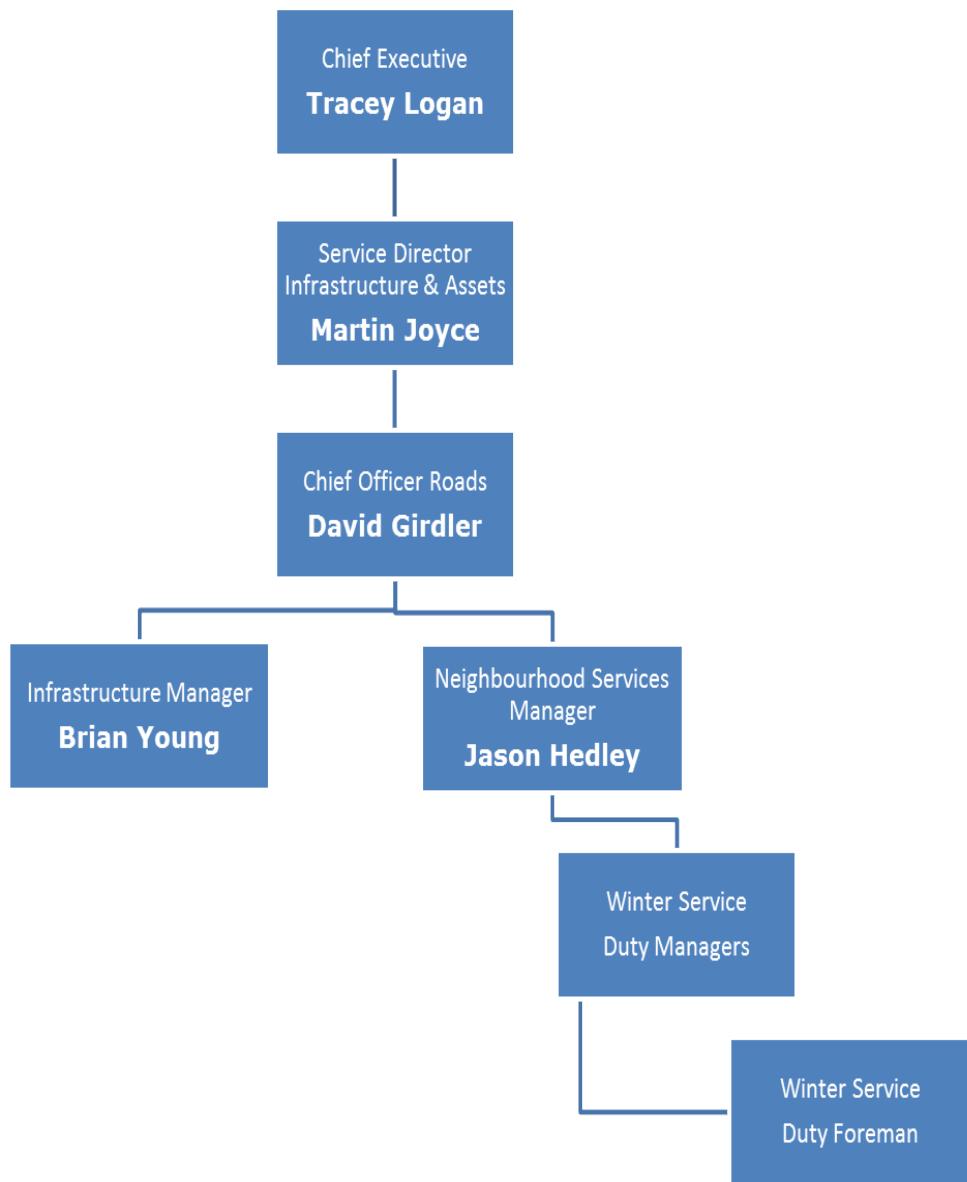
3.2 Prevention

The Council keeps the road network operating safely though precautionary treatment – by pre-salting roads to reduce the effect of frost and frozen conditions, taken forward on a routine, planned basis. The road network is currently split into Primary, Secondary and Tertiary Networks. Planned “pre-salting” is only undertaken on the Primary Network.

The remaining road network will then come under the “post-treatment” of secondary and Tertiary networks. The Secondary network is treated after the primary routes, where there is time and resources to cover them, and it is believed that the freezing conditions will continue. The Tertiary network will only be treated when extended weather conditions persist, all primary routes have been treated, resources have been committed to treat secondary routes, and resources have become available.

3.3 Intervention

The Council’s Chief Executive has responsibility for Emergency Planning, and will oversee the winter at a strategic level. During large scale snow clearance following extreme winter conditions, the winter service will be taken forward on a more ad hoc basis, involving emergency actions and community resilience.



3.4 Liaison arrangements with other authorities

The following Road Authorities adjoin Scottish Borders:

- * Northumberland
- * Cumbria
- * Dumfries & Galloway
- * South Lanarkshire
- * West Lothian
- * Midlothian
- * East Lothian

Transport Scotland, through their agents AMEY are responsible for treatment of Trunk Roads within the region.

At times of severe winter weather, the availability of other resources may need to be considered.

Any other cross boundary allocation of resources, other than those in existing agreements, should be authorised by the Executive Director.

Where there is a cross border working arrangement with each county, we shall seek to confirm the commitment to treat each others' routes in formal agreements.



4. RESOURCES - PLANT, MATERIALS & FINANCES

4.1 Vehicles and equipment - Gritting vehicles

The Council's salting fleet consists of both dedicated gritter vehicles as well as other lorries that have quick change bodies to convert them to gritters.

The majority of Council lorries are fitted with GPS technology with accompanying software to allow real-time tracking and updates on salt spreading.

To ensure correct salt spreading takes place winter equipment and machinery is calibrated and certified to 6mm salting standards.

Snow blowers, propelled spreaders and footpath tractors are also available during inclement weather.

4.2 Depots and salt barns

There are a number of depots and salt barns strategically located across the region. We are also taking forward our arrangements for self-help in the community by building upon our Community Resilience planning scheme.

Through these arrangements there may be additional salt stored throughout the region, which will improve our overall resilience levels during times of severe or prolonged winter weather

4.3 Salt

Salt usage is recorded at each depot by Neighbourhood Services staff and the levels of salt available are monitored. By carefully managing salt levels accurate reports can be transmitted to Transport Scotland.

A national 'Salt Cell' was activated for the winter of 2009/10, run by Transport Scotland. Scottish Borders Council participated fully in these arrangements and through doing so has assisted in the appropriate distribution of salt stocks on a regional and national basis.

4.4 Additional resources

During periods of prolonged snowfall a network of registered local contractors and the Borders Machinery Ring are used to supplement our own resources. These clearance contractors are coordinated by Neighbourhood Services.

Scottish Borders has proven to be resilient as a community when dealing with winter issues and we hope to harness this community support and where possible enable communities to help themselves through times when isolation becomes a real issue alongside our core road safety duties. Self-help is an important factor in overcoming severe winter conditions.



5. DECISION MAKING

5.1 Operational decision making

Operational decisions will normally be made by the designated Winter Service Duty Manager, except when weather conditions have changed unexpectedly. If instructions have changed due to such circumstances, the Duty Foreman should inform the Winter Service Duty Manager of the change and

the reasons for it at the earliest possible opportunity.

The decision for ordering treatment may be based on a combination of weather forecasts, consultation and previous treatments.

5.2 Decision process

The decision will usually be based on interpretation of the weather forecast by the Duty Manager. This will normally be undertaken between 11:00 and 12:00, if the available forecast information allows, and will result in one of the following:

1. Standby.
2. Treatment at specified times.
3. No Action.

The Duty Manager will be responsible for:

- * Organising action based on the forecast received, liaising with others as necessary.
- * Informing the duty supervisors of the decision.
- * Update the 'Decision Making' form after a change of circumstances.

5.3 Action required

Operational staff will be informed that action is required by text, email or phone call. The following day, or as soon as possible, paperwork will be filed with the actual time that each gritter left the depot and the time each route was completed, and returned to Neighbourhood Services administration.

5.4 Major snow storms

During severe and prolonged snowstorms, when resources can no longer keep main traffic routes open, clearance will be attempted on the basis of the Police Snow Emergency Scheme including snow gate operation.

In this event, the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Police will decide that conditions are abnormal and will ensure that resources are deployed appropriately throughout this period. Consideration will be given to locating a Police Officer within the Winter Operations Team and they will liaise over operational matters together with a direct link to the local radio station.

A register will be maintained of all road condition reports received. It is essential that this Winter Operations Team is supplied with up-to-date information from area offices so that the Chief Executive and the police can be kept properly informed.

Outwith office hours the Duty Managers will ensure that operations are properly controlled. Foremen will normally be on duty during the day and early evening. As far as possible, they will not be disturbed at night. Night staff will contact the Duty Managers or standby foremen for instruction when required.

Snow Gates are located on the A68 at Soutra and the A7 Falahill to facilitate safe road closures and a system of variable message signs have been developed for the diversion of traffic.

The police control overall strategic traffic routeing making use of both trunk and council roads. Snow clearance operations can be seriously hampered by the presence of abandoned vehicles and to prevent this situation as far as possible snowplough drivers are reminded of the need to pass information quickly to their area offices and Winter Operations Team.

5.5 Salt spread rates

Salt spread rates have been revised following new guidance provided by the UK Road Liaison Group and in consultation with Edinburgh, Lothians, Borders and Fife Councils (ELBF).

This revision followed research undertaken by TRL on behalf of the Transport Scotland and the National Winter Research Group into the possibility of reducing spread rates; taking into account the new guidance whilst utilizing best practice gained from local knowledge and experience of past winters. Rates of spread will be 10 g/m² unless conditions dictate otherwise.

ELBF Councils agreed a common matrix for salt spread rates that relate to:

- * surface conditions
- * road temperatures
- * salt condition

This agreed matrix has been developed from the **Code of Practice for Well Maintained Highways** (2011 revision) Appendix H and takes account of recommendations by the SCOTS Winter Group following a review of the Code of Practice and consultation with the National Winter Service research Group (NWSRG).

Frost or forecast frost Road Surface Temperature and Road Surface Wetness	C Poor Cover (salt stored uncovered) Medium Traffic Normal Loss	K Good Cover (salt stored under cover) Medium Traffic Normal Loss	Comments
RST at or above -2 deg and dry or damp road conditions	10	10	
RST at or above -2 deg and wet road conditions	15	10	
RST below -2 deg and above -5 deg and dry or damp road conditions	(15 or 20), (1 x 20 & monitor & treat as required)	(10 or 15), 20	Spread rate dependent on residual salt on road surface
RST below -2 deg and above -5 deg and wet road conditions	(1 x 20 & monitor & treat as required), (1 x 20 & monitor & treat as required)	20	Spread rate dependent on residual salt on road surface
RST at or below -5 deg and above -10 deg and dry or damp road conditions	(1 x 20 & monitor & treat as required)	(1 x 20 & monitor & treat as required)	
RST at or below -5 deg and above -10 deg and wet road conditions	(1 x 20 & monitor & treat as required)	(1 x 20 & monitor & treat as required)	
Precautionary treatment before snow / freezing rain			
Light snow forecast (light snow is defined as <10mm)	20 to 40	Dependent on capability to complete route within reasonable time and monitor for further action.	
Moderate / Heavy Snow forecast (defined as ≥10mm)	20 to 40	Dependent on capability to complete route within reasonable time and monitor for further action	
Freezing Rain forecast	2 x 20	Spreading salt before freezing rain can have a limited benefit and follow up treatments will be delivered on any ice that has formed	
Treatment when ice formed			
Ice formed up to 1mm RST higher than -5 deg C Medium / Light traffic	20	Winter Officer to monitor for further treatment	
Ice formed up to 1mm RST lower than -5 deg C Medium / Light traffic	20	Winter Officer to consider and seek approval for 1:1 mixture and further assess spread rate	
Treatment during snowfall			
Continuous snow falling	20	Winter Officer to monitor for further treatment	
Snow forecast for during the night	Patrol	Winter Officer to monitor for further treatment	
Treatment for slush when freezing conditions are forecast			
Plough to remove as much slush as possible before treating	2 x 20	Winter Officer to monitor for further treatment	
Treatment for thicker layers of compacted snow and ice			
Medium layer 1 to 5 mm initial treatment	20 to 40	Dependent on capability to complete route within reasonable time and monitor for further action. Winter Officer to consider and seek approval for 1:1 mixture	
High Layer Thickness greater than 5mm Initial treatment	20 to 40	Dependent on capability to complete route within reasonable time and monitor for further action. Winter Officer to consider and seek approval for 1:1 mixture For successive treatments spread abrasives only After traffic has started breaking up the layer spread at 20g/m ² of salt / abrasive mixture	



6. PERFORMANCE & BENCHMARKING

6.1 Performance & benchmarking

We benchmark the performance of the service and seek to identify areas for further improvement in our efficiency and effectiveness through our active participation in the APSE and SCOTS Benchmarking and Performance group. Monitoring and reporting of local indicators through the ELBF group is also undertaken together with a review of customer response to the Household Survey and the National Highways & Transport (NHT) Network public subcontractor survey. This will inform the development of the future service. In addition to this, as for all road services we welcome comments, requests for service or inquiry through our CRM line.

Performance is measured using the following KPI's agreed with APSE/SCOTS:

- * actual number of planned actions
- * total cost of winter maintenance
- * cost per km treated (planned routes)



7. CONTACT INFORMATION

The main point of information and contact is via Scottish Borders Council's website www.scotborders.gov.uk

During periods of severe weather the Council will also use Facebook and Twitter to provide frequent updates to the public.

We work closely with local radio stations to inform listeners of road conditions throughout the region.

During office hours (08:45 to 17:00) queries should be directed via the Council website or through the helpline:

* 0300 100 1800.

In the case of an **emergency** out of normal office hours we have an agreement with Bordercare who can be contacted on:

* 01896 752 111

AMEY, the trunk road manager can be contacted on:

* 0800 042 0188

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