

**REVIEW OF ARRANGEMENTS WITH DCC -  
WINTER MAINTENANCE ARRANGEMENT**

**AGENDA ITEM NO. 20**

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**MEETING: ANNUAL COUNCIL MEETING**

**DATE: 13<sup>th</sup> MAY 2026**

**REPORTED BY: TOWN CLERK**

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**1.0 Purpose of the Report**

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to undertake an annual review of any arrangements (including legal agreements) with other local authorities, as required by the Council's Constitution and best practice requirements.
- 1.2 This report deals with the licence in place covering the Winter Maintenance Service Level Agreement (SLA) between the Town Council and Durham County Council.

**2.0 Background Information**

- 2.1 The Town Council, along with all other parish and town councils, was asked by Durham County Council (DCC) in 2005 to consider assisting with snow clearance to footpaths and to fill salt bins within their parish.
- 2.2 This request was made to free up County Council resources to be able to respond to emergency requests in such locations as doctor's surgeries, care homes etc.
- 2.3 As part of the agreement, equipment such as snow ploughs and salt spreaders were supplied to the Town Council via a grant so that operatives could complete the work in a safe and efficient manner.
- 2.4 Some of the equipment reached the end of its useful life in 2021. Following discussions at meetings of the Environment Committee, as to the Town Council's ability to fulfil the requirements of the SLA due to lack of equipment, and outlining the equipment required by the Council, it was agreed that officers should contact DCC to discuss the provision of suitable equipment for snow clearance.
- 2.5 Following lengthy discussions with DCC officers, it was advised that they would fund the purchase of the required equipment.
- 2.6 A plough and salt spreader were purchased for use with both of the Council's road going Kubota RTV's, so that the Council's existing machinery could be utilised to undertake the winter maintenance work as set out in the agreement.
- 2.7 Town and parish council winter maintenance service level agreements were subject to a review by DCC in 2024 which resulted in some changes being made to the agreement largely around the removal of the obligation for DCC to provide and replace equipment due to budget constraints.
- 2.8 Members can view the report to the Council in October 2024 on this issue on the Meeting Section of the Council's website.

2.9 It was resolved at this meeting that:

- i) *That the original purpose of the Service Level Agreement entered into, be noted.*
- ii) *That the Council continue the Winter Maintenance Agreement with Durham County Council and that officers sign the updated Service Level Agreement.*
- iii) *That if additional expenditure on winter maintenance equipment is required in the future, a report be brought to the relevant committee for members' consideration.*

2.10 A copy of the current Service Level Agreement is attached to the report as Appendix 1.

### **3.0 Current Situation**

3.1 The agreement covers the main paths through the town, including Pease Way, Stephenson Way, Burn Lane, Central Avenue and St Cuthbert's Way and totals almost seven miles of paths requiring snow clearance.

3.2 Recent winters have been mostly mild and wet, with equipment only being required on a limited number of days for minimal winter clearance works.

3.3 Moving forward, as highlighted above, the Council has agreed that *'if additional expenditure on winter maintenance equipment is required in the future, a report be brought to the relevant committee for members' consideration'*.

3.4 The Council's winter maintenance equipment remains fit for purpose with no current requirement to replace or upgrade any equipment.

3.5 As reported last year, Council officers held discussions with DCC officers regarding the future of certain historical reciprocal arrangements undertaken by DCC on behalf of the Town Council, including the emptying of all dog bins in Great Aycliffe, which were at risk due to County Council budget cuts. However, it can be confirmed that these reciprocal arrangements have continued to take place.

3.6 The Council may also wish to take into account the recent withdrawal of the Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme Grant by DCC in considering the future of joint working arrangements with DCC, particularly those that are undertaken free of charge by the Town Council such as this one.

3.7 However, any decision would need to be balanced against the benefits to the Town Council and community arising from this arrangement.

### **4.0 Impact on Great Aycliffe Town Council**

4.1 Following the replacement of the aging equipment in 2021, the Town Council is continuing to assist DCC with snow clearance on major thoroughfares within the town, as well as filling salt bins for the benefit of its residents, as per the SLA.

### **5.0 Policy Implications**

5.1 This report complies with the Council's Strategic Aim No. 6:-

*"To help and encourage partnership working to improve the services and facilities for the residents of Great Aycliffe".*

## **6.0 Staffing Implications**

6.1 Council Works Department staff undertake the winter maintenance work covered by the Winter Maintenance Agreement between the Town Council and Durham County Council, as well as on Town Council land and facilities.

## **7.0 Financial Implications**

7.1 There are no capital budget implications following Durham County Council's purchase of the required replacement equipment in 2021/22.

7.2 There are revenue costs associated with the undertaking of the winter maintenance work covered by the SLA in relation to staff time and the use of fuel.

7.3 These costs are incorporated within the approved Works Department Revenue Budget.

7.4 No payment is received for the works on DCC land as identified in the licence.

## **8.0 Crime and Disorder Implications**

8.1 None.

## **9.0 Equal Opportunity Implications**

9.1 None

## **10.0 Environment, Biodiversity and Climate Change Implications**

10.1 There are no environment or climate change implications specifically associated with the consideration of the continuation of the SLA.

10.2 However, there are environmental considerations regarding the continuing use of salt which are periodically reviewed.

## **11.0 Risk Assessment**

11.1 It is not considered that the matter contained in this report poses a risk to health and safety of staff or to the financial or public standing of the Council to a degree that a risk assessment should be appended to this report.

## **12.0 General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR)**

12.1 Is any personal or sensitive data required for this proposal which may have any implications for GDPR?      NO

## **13.0 Recommendations**

13.1 It is recommended that Members:

- i) Consider the report and note the original purpose of the licence entered into.
- ii) Consider the future of the licence in the context of actions taken by Durham County Council in relation to the withdrawal of the Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme Grant, balanced against the clear benefits to the Council and community of this joint working initiative.
- ii) Consider whether to continue with the licence with Durham County Council in relation to winter maintenance and confirm that the Council wish to continue with the Service Level Agreement.