apse membership resources

State of the Market Survey 2011

Highways, Street Lighting and Winter Maintenance

Briefing 11/20
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Highways, Street Lighting and Winter Maintenance

State of the Market 2011

Introduction

APSE conducted an on-line survey during February and March 2011. A series of questions were asked covering a range of issues of interest to those officers and councillors responsible for highways, street lighting, winter maintenance and related issues. 52 responses were received from local authorities throughout the UK. This report identifies the key findings of the survey.

This is the third year APSE has undertaken a state of the market survey so a comparison over time is available. This comparison will be highlighted where appropriate. It must be noted that the councils and individuals responding may not be the same from year to year. This is an attempt to understand perceptions of the market amongst people directly involved in delivering services rather than a survey of the same individuals from year to year.

Results from the survey

1) **How do you expect the budget for the highways, street lighting and winter maintenance service to change over the next 12 months?**

Answer Options	2011 **Highways** Number (%)	2010 **Highways** Number (%)	2009 **Highways** Number (%)	% change 2009-2011
Increase	5 (12.2%)	12 (16.4%)	16 (21.9%)	-9.7
Stay the same	11 (26.8%)	27 (37%)	36 (49.3%)	-22.5
Decrease	25 (61%)	34 (46.6%)	21 (28.8%)	+32.2
Total	41	73	73	

Answer Options	2011 **Street Lighting** Number (%)	2010 **Street Lighting** Number (%)	2009 **Street Lighting** Number (%)	% change 2009-2011
Increase	4 (8.3%)	4 (4.9%)	12 (16.7%)	-8.4
Stay the same	20 (41.6%)	37 (45.7%)	41 (56.9%)	-15.3
Decrease	24 (50%)	40 (49.4%)	19 (26.4%)	+23.6
Total	48	81	72	

Answer Options	2011 **Winter Maint.** Number (%)	2010 **Winter Maint.** Number (%)	2009 **Winter Maint.** Number (%)	% change 2009-20110
Increase	10 (24.4%)	10 (13.9%)	5 (7.6%)	+16.8
Stay the same	23 (56.1%)	58 (80.6%)	55 (83.3%)	-27.2
Decrease	8 (19.5%)	4 (5.6%)	6 (9.1%)	+10.4
Total	41	72	66	

Out of 130 individual responses this year across the 3 service areas, 44% thought budgets would decrease over the forthcoming year. This is a significant increase on the figure of 34% for the previous year. The changes over the 3 year period can be seen in the tables above and the disparity between highways and street lighting service areas (where expectations are for decreases in budgets) and winter maintenance (where more expect increases rather than decreases) is stark.

There are certainly fewer responses expecting budgets to remain the same for winter maintenance and the reasons for this are clear. The service has come under much closer scrutiny over the past 3 years after a relatively long period of stable demand. Clearly the level of demand in Scotland is higher than in England and Wales, but this too has remained stable. However last year snow events in Scotland focussed attention on this service as well as elsewhere in the UK and the call for better salt storage facilities within councils, increased costs and an increase in expectations from the public will most likely mean this service being one of the few where the budget remains the same or increases.

The resources needed to deal with the damage to the highway and footways as a result of snow and ice is not expected to materialise from within councils according to responses to this survey. Although there have been specific funds made available from the Department for Transport (£100m for English councils), Welsh Assembly Government (£7m) and Scottish Parliament (£2m) in addition to existing budgets for highways repairs, there remains a substantial shortfall in the resources needed to address this problem.

Although funds for winter maintenance are likely to found when required, highways and street lighting services budgets will be cut significantly.

2) The severe weather has had a dramatic impact on the condition of highways. To what extent will your 2011/12 budget for highways maintenance meet the need to fill potholes and resurface where necessary?

Answer Options	2011 Number (%)
Budget will cover 100% of maintenance needs	6 (15%)
Budget will cover 75% -100% of maintenance needs	11 (27.5%)
Budget will cover 50% - 75% of maintenance needs	14(35%)
Budget will cover 25% - 50% of maintenance needs	4 (10%)
Budget will cover 0% - 25% of maintenance needs	5 (12.5%)
Total	40

The responses to this question highlight the budget shortfall. Only 6 out of 40 councils responding thought that the budget they will receive will be adequate to fill the potholes they have and resurfacing where necessary. The majority thought that the budget they receive will meet more than 50% of their areas needs whilst 22% of responses thought it would be enough to meet less than 50% of the investment they needed to make.

3) How are your services currently delivered?

Answer Options	2011 **Highways** Number (%)	2011 **Street Lighting** Number (%)	2011 **Winter Maint.** Number (%)
In-house - combined service	32 (72.7%)	26 (53.1%)	34 (82.9%)
In –house – client/contractor split	6 (13.6%)	8 (16.3%)	3 (7.3%)
Externally provided	5 (11.4%)	12 (24.5%)	3 (7.3%)
Arms length organisation	0 (0%	3 (6.1%)	1 (2.4%)
Joint venture company	1 (2.3%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Total	44	49	41

The majority of responses were received from councils were the services under question are delivered in house with the great majority of these being combined services. Overall approximately 19% of these services are provide externally be arms length organisations or through JVCs.

4) Do you expect the service to remain in-house over the next 12 months?

Only 2 of the responses expected a service which is currently delivered in-house to be externalised over the coming 12 months and both of these refer to street lighting services. This backs up a pattern from previous years which reflects no expectation of a vastly different picture of service delivery arrangements developing in the short term.

5) Are you having trouble recruiting or retaining operatives or technical/managerial staff? (over the past 6 months)

Answer Options	2011 Total Number (%)	2010 Total Number (%)	2009 Total Number (%)	% change 2009-2011
Yes, trouble recruiting operatives	11(10.2%)	21(11.1%)	23(13.7%)	-3.5%
Yes, trouble recruiting technical/managerial staff	7 (6.5%)	33 (17.5%)	33 (19.6%)	-13.1%
Yes, trouble retaining operatives	7 (6.5%)	12 (6.3%)	7 (4.2%)	2.3%
Yes, trouble retaining technical/managerial staff	4 (3.7%)	10 (5.3%)	13 (7.7%)	-4%
Yes, trouble recruiting and retaining operatives	0 (0%)	12 (6.3%)	8 (4.8%)	-4.8%
Yes, trouble recruiting and retaining tech/managerial staff	2 (1.9%)	13 (6.9%)	22 (13.1%)	-11.2%
No	77 (71.3%)	88 (46.6%)	62 (36.9%)	+34.4%
Total	108	189	168	

The recruitment and retention of staff is dependent upon a range of factors not least being the availability of vacancies at a time of economic downturn due to recruitment freezes. There is a definite trend emerging which show that most councils are not experiencing problems in recruitment both because they have less vacancies and because the economic downturn has meant there are more qualified people for each vacancy.

6) Do you feel staff absence levels are acceptable?

Answer Options	**Highways** Number (%)	**Street Lighting** Number (%)	**Winter Maint.** Number (%)	Total Number (%)
Yes	29 (56.9%)	38 (67.9%)	36 (72%)	103 (65.6%)
No	22 (43.1%)	18 (32.1%)	14 (28%)	54 (34.4%)
Total	51	56	50	157

Of all responses 71% felt that absence levels were acceptable. A figure of 28.6% of respondents as unhappy with the level of absence

Clearly tackling absence is difficult but it would be expected that all those councils who are unhappy with the rates of absence would be taking significant action to address the issue. Doubtless there are a range of activities in place looking at this issue but the figure of 34.4% of respondees unhappy with the rate of absence shows no improvement on the figure from last year. The question makes no distinction between short term and long term absence and it is a well known fact that small numbers of long term absentees can have a significant impact on overall absence levels. It will be interesting to see how this issue develops over the next couple of years.

Textual responses to the survey show that there are approaches in place to address absence and that some are having an impact. The issue of long term sickness and its impact that a single case can have on overall figures remains a problem for some. One commented noted that stress is the new 'bad back' a fact which is no doubt linked to the threat of job cuts. Another noted that staff absence declines in the winter months when there is a greater opportunity to earn overtime payments. One would expect that those 29% of councils that are unhappy with their absence levels each have specific programmes to improve them.

Answer Options	**2011** Number (%)	**2010** Number (%)	**2090** Number (%)	% change 2009-2011
Yes	85 (71.4%)	103 (65.6%)	83(64.8%)	+6.6%
No	34 (28.6%)	54 (34.4%)	45 (35.2%)	-6.6%
Total	119	157	128	

In terms of trends the % of councils who are unhappy has reduced by over 6% in the 3 years this survey has been taken.

7) Do you run an apprenticeship scheme?

Apprenticeships schemes are only offered by 45% of councils. This is an increase from last year when the figure was one third.

The average number of apprentices is approximately 4.5 per council.

The inclusion of a requirement for an apprenticeship scheme in contracts, the issue of community benefits, the push for more apprenticeships from government and the desire to skill staff internally has raised the profile of apprenticeships. However councils with apprenticeship schemes are still in the minority and the budget cuts noted above are likely to have a disproportionate effect on apprenticeships leading to fewer opportunities.

8) What has happened to your training budget over the past 12 months?

Across all services, 60 % of training budgets have remained the same over the past year. Only 6% have increased with 34% decreasing. This cannot be considered surprising due to budget cuts as training is often one of the first casualties. However it might have been expected that there would be an increase in training needs for winter maintenance drivers. The costs of some training, especially for new hardware, software and mobile working will be incorporated into whole project costs, but there will remain a need to address items such as health and safety and cuts in training budgets must be seen as a short term mistake with possibly serious long term consequences.

In previous years this survey has identified some services which did not have a specified budget for training. Others noted that they get training as required, that they are allocated an element of the corporate training pot or that it is funded out of their trading account.

9) What is the average age of your operational staff?

The average age of operational staff for all service areas is approximately 45 years old from 59 responses. The lowest average age is 30 years with the oldest being 58 years.

Of course a number of factors could impact on the average age of staff in future such as the ability for councils to train and recruit staff, the state of the economy, how attractive councils are seen as employers and whether older staff are seen as a benefit or a drag on the workforce. Overall the average age of the population is increasing so this may be reflected in the age of the workforce.

As many councils offer redundancy packages, more older staff will leave taking with them many years of experience. The recruitment freezes which were also introduced following budget restrictions mean that many positions are not being filled and so younger members of staff are not being introduced to the workforce.

10) Do you currently sell your services to organisations external to the council?

Answer Options	2011 **Highways** Number (%)	2010 **Highways** Number (%)	2009 **Highways** Number (%)	% change 2009-2010
No and not considering it for the near future	9 (23.1%)	22 (44.9%)	22 (50%)	-26.9%
No but considering it as an option in the near future	7 (17.9%)	5 (10.2%)	8 (18.2%)	-0.3%
No but likely to start doing it in the near future	0 (0%)	0	1 (2.3%)	-2.3%
Yes and expecting to continue	21 (53.8%)	21 (42.9%)	12 (27.3%)	+26.5%
Yes but not expecting it to continue long term	2 (5.1%)	1 (2.0%)	1 (2.3%)	+2.8%
Total	39	49	44	

Answer Options	2011 **Street Lighting** Number (%	2010 **Street Lighting** Number (%)	2009 **Street Lighting** Number (%)	% change 2009-2010
No and not considering it for the near future	16 (40)	17 (31.5%)	13 (29.5%)	+10.5%
No but considering it as an option in the near future	2 (5%)	3 (5.6)	4 (9.1%)	-4.1%
No but likely to start doing it in the near future	1 (2.5%)	0	0	+2.5%
Yes and expecting to continue	20 (50%)	33 (61.1%)	26 (59.1%)	-9.1%
Yes but not expecting it to continue long term	1 (2.5%)	1 (1.9%)	1 (2.3%)	-0.2%
Total	40	54	44	

Answer Options	2011 **Winter Maint.** Number (%)	2010 **Winter Maint.** Number (%)	2009 **Winter Maint.** Number (%)	% change 2009-2010
No and not considering it for the near future	18 (52.9%)	33 (71.7%)	26 (65%)	-12.1%
No but considering it as an option in the near future	8 (23.5%)	1 (2.2%)	2 (5%)	-18.5%
No but likely to start doing it in the near future	0 (0%)	0	1 (2.5%)	-2.5%
Yes and expecting to continue	8 (23.5%)	11 (23.9%)	9 (22.5%)	+1.0%
Yes but not expecting it to continue long term	0 (0%)	1 (2.2%)	2 (5%)	-5%
Total	34	46	40	

Overall nearly 46% of councils are working with organisations outside of the council to generate income with a further 15.9% considering it for the near future. 38.1% of councils are not considering it as an option. The trend within this data shows that councils selling their services to external organisations and considering doing this far more than they were even 2 years ago.

A significant trend over the 3 years of this survey is the large increase in the proportion of highways services considering carrying out external work. With the current economic climate as it is and budgets in place for a number of years, councils should be prepared to take advantage of all potential income streams.

11) Where do you see growth areas for the service over the next 12 months?

Clearly there will be differing opinions in relation to this question and whilst a number of responses noted that there opportunities for growth others suggested there would be none. Areas of growth that were noted include the following

- Anti crime schemes
- Energy saving equipment installations
- Carbon reduction measures
- Energy management, dimming
- Highways and street lighting regeneration
- Street lighting in new housing developments
- street lighting - electrical service connection competition

- Traffic Management operations, Lining and signing
- Reactive maintenance
- Private construction
- Permanent carriageway patching
- Preventative maintenance
- Micro asphalt
- Working with NHS on footway salting
- Winter maintenance for other public bodies
- Civil parking enforcement
- Shared service opportunities
- More work for clients within the council
- Work emerging form growth in population in the area
- External work

12) Where do you see areas where work may decrease for the service over the next 12 months?

Again there was a mixture of responses to this question with some people claiming there would be no reduction in work whilst others thought all areas of work would experience cuts. The items noted will reflect circumstances in each area.

Some specific responses included

- Preventative, planned, responsive maintenance
- Capital projects, highway improvements
- Street lighting design
- Lighting column planned replacements
- Non legislative work
- RCCs and recoverable work
- Local Transport Plan
- Integrated transport
- Work for developers
- Resurfacing
- Gully maintenance
- Kerb and footway work

Street Lighting

13) Has your council undertaken any of the energy saving initiatives? (If so please provide details such as 20% dimming or switch off for 5% of lighting stock between 2am and 5am)

46% of respondents had switched lamps off whilst 67% had dimmed some lights in an attempt to reduce energy consumption. A number of councils have tried switch off and dimming schemes of relatively small numbers of lights on selected streets or villages. Most last from midnight until 5 am or 6 am. Others have not that such schemes are dependent upon the future installation of CMS or web based management systems. In other areas LEDs have been introduced whilst others have changed lanterns.

14) What is your council's approach to lamp replacement within your street lights (burn to extinction, planned replacement or other)?

19 out of 33 respondees noted that they operate a burn to extinction policy. 1 operates BTE but with a 2 year cycle on traffic sensitive and primary routes. Another operates BTE but with planned replacement on high speed and dual carriageways.

13 have planned or bulk replacement programmes, 2 of which are on a 4 year cycle and 1 uses low energy lighting. 1 council noted that its bulk replacements are being reduced due to budget reductions.

One council is moving from bulk replacement to BTE within the next 12 months.

15) Does your council scout for failures?

There were 42 responses to this question and 4 councils stated that they did not scout for failures. The frequency with which scouting takes varies with the most common being a fortnightly cycle with other responses including 3, 4 and 5 weekly cycles and 2 weekly in winter and 4 weekly in summer. Night scouting remains popular although a number of responses noted that night scouting has stopped recently or will stop imminently. Another noted that it has reduced scouting by 50% recently. 1council only scouts gritting routes, another said they try to scout and repair overnight where possible whilst another stated that scouting will be abandoned in 12 months when CMS is introduced.

16) How does your council track energy usage (by half hourly metering, estimated annual consumption or other)?

14 councils (of 34 respondents) use estimated annual consumption whilst 16 use half hourly metering. One council tracks usage through both methods and one uses estimates but plans to change to actual metering. One uses dynamic half hourly but is planning to switch back to passive because of CRC issues.

17) What is your council's target time for restoring street lights to working order (in days)?

The most popular target for restoring lights is 5 days with11 councils noting this as their target. 15 councils have targets below 5 days with the shortest being 2 days. 7 councils have target times of 7 days with the remaining council having a target of 10 days. The average for all responses is 4.8 days.

Clearly a range of circumstances will impact upon target times which are set such as the area and the number of lights to be covered by the service, the urban/rural split or the split between different types of roads. Target times are distinct from actual restoration times.

18) Which energy supplier do you use?

A variety of power providers are used by the 30 respondees. These are as follows

EDF – 9
Scottish Power – 8
NPower –4
Scottish and Southern Energy (Scottish Hydro and Southern) - 2
E.ON - 2
Yorkshire Energy Distribution – 2
Western Power Distribution - 1
UK Power Networks - 1
One council purchases from both Scottish Power and Scottish and Southern Electric

19) What is the length of your current energy contract?

Contracts last for a variety of time spans from 12 months to 5 years with more than half being for 1 year. Some have the option of 1 year extensions.

20) When does your current energy contract end?

As expected contracts end at various times and are being negotiated on a continuous basis

There is always further room for collaboration on purchasing and although geographical distance would make this more difficult it is not an insurmountable issue. There are many examples of councils working together and energy should be no different from other commodities. In terms of responses to the survey, 11 are due to end in April 2011 and a further 8 in April 2012. 2 are due to end in 2015.

Winter Maintenance

21) Have the orders you placed for salt to cover winter maintenance over 2009/10 been met by your suppliers?

Answer Options	2011 Number (%)	2010 Number (%)	2009 Number (%)	% Change
Orders met in full	11 (30.6%)	8 (19%)	15 (40.5%)	-9.9%
Order partially met with our full knowledge of shortfall	12 (33.3%)	7 (16.7%)	17 (45.9%)	-12.6%
Order partially met without our full knowledge of shortfall	2 (5.6%)	6 (14.3%)	1 (2.7%)	+2.9%
Significantly less delivered than ordered with our full knowledge of shortfall	5 (13.9%)	13 (31%)	3 (8.1%)	+5.8%
Significantly less delivered than ordered without our full knowledge of shortfall	6 (16.7%)	8 (19%)	1 (2.7%)	+14%
Total	36	42	37	

Last winter only 30% of respondents felt their salt orders were met in full (compared with 19% the previous year) with the remainder having either a partial or significant shortfall. The comparison with 2 years ago is even more stark when over 40% felt their orders were fully met.

Comments from the responses noted that some councils went abroad for salt as supplies were not available in this country, whilst others had stock diverted by government. More than 22% felt that they were not kept fully informed about stocks and that there orders would not be met.

The situation regarding the extreme weather conditions and the available levels of salt are well known especially the severe weather has hit for the last 3 years. In terms of trends the proportion and the actual numbers of councils receiving their full salt orders has diminished over the last 3 years of the survey as have the number of councils whose orders have been partially met. Those councils receiving significantly less went up compared with 2 years ago also.

22) What type of salt do you use (pre wet, dry or other)?

Out of 35 responses 27 councils use dry rock salt, 2 use Safecote, 2 use dry salt and Safecote,1 uses pre wet as well as dry salt, another uses dry salt and Ecothaw and 2 use salt treated with an additive.

23) What size of salt do you use (10mm or 6mm)?

16 councils use 6mm whilst 13 councils use 10mm and four use both.

24) With regard to your road network, which of the following are salted?

Out of 37 responses, 28 said they salted all primary routes and some extra other routes. 11 councils said they salted all primary routes only whilst only 2 claimed they did not salt some of their primary routes. Experience from the last few winters points to reductions in the amount of salt used per run and the number of runs, rather than reductions in the number of routes treated.

25) Do you salt footways?

12 out of 36 respondees noted that they do salt footways as a precautionary measure following forecast whilst a further19 salt after ice has formed. 5 councils do not salt footways at all.

26) If you do salt footways, approximately what percentage of the footway network do you salt? Which areas do you salt?

When asked what percentage of the footway is salted a range of responses were received. 9 councils said they salted less than 5% of footways. 8 councils salted between 5% and 25% of footways. Other answers included a council who salt town centres and high usage cycleways, another salting priority 1 footways in town centres across the county and in another the parish councils salt footways but not the county.

Shopping centres were salted by 24 out of the 28 respondees whilst 23 said they salted town and city centre streets. 11 councils treated council offices, leisure centres and town halls whilst a further 11 treated Police Stations, medical centres and hospitals. Some councils treat school routes and internal footways within school boundaries whilst others treat village centres

27) How do you purchase salt supplies (jointly with other authorities, via Highways Agency, independently, via consortium such as YPO or other)?

9 councils that responded purchase salt independently whilst another 18 purchase it jointly or through consortia. The consortia include Black Country Purchasing Consortia, Scotland Excel, Welsh Purchasing Consortia, Yorkshire Purchasing Organisation and Tayside Contracts. One council who traditionally purchased independently joined forces with a neighbouring council to buy extra supplies jointly last year. Another buys jointly but picked up marine salt independently. One council relies on the term highways contractor to purchase it.

Throughout the three years of this survey the proportions have remained similar with a relatively large number of authorities continuing to purchase salt independently despite a lot promotion around joint purchasing. It seems sensible to avoid relying on a single method of purchase and more councils appear to be purchasing from more than one source.

28) Which company supplies your salt?

Of the 31 responses, 9 were supplied by Cleveland Potash, 13 by Salt Union and 4 by Irish Salt Sales. 4 councils are supplied by more than one provider including Peacocks.

29) Would you be interested in being involved in a salt sharing brokerage with other local authorities in future?

18 out of 29 councils that responded would be interested in a salt sharing brokerage with other local authorities if the need arose again in future. A number are already working with neighbouring councils.

30) Do you have any suggestions for how councils or suppliers can act to avoid salt shortages in times of very bad weather in future?

The most common response was the obvious one which is that councils should simply store more salt prior to winter. There has been a gradual reduction in storage facilities over the years prior to the severe weather 3 years ago, both due to less severe weather and to perceived savings to be made by selling off premises and storing less salt. Investments are being made in storage barns and other facilities to keep salt dry following 3 bad winters.

The other popular suggestion was that councils simply stock more salt either locally or in regional / strategic stores. This presumes that there is more salt available to store but there is an argument from the main suppliers that they have been at full production capacity for the last 3 years and the further problems of storage capacity at the production site and distribution around the Salt Union site mean this is not as easy as it might first appear. Suppliers from abroad can be purchased but there is an added premium in terms of transport and these must be ordered in advance if they are to be available.

Other suggestions such as a closer focus on spread rates and routes gritted will have an impact as will analysis of historic data to inform stock levels. Mention was made of reserve stocks as an idea but when does a reserve stock become 'usable' stock. The idea is to purchase enough to meet demand. Purchasing a reserve stock simply ties up resources and can only really be justified if it is regional and covers a wide region where demand may be different in different parts of the region.

31) What changes did you make to service arrangements as a result of poor weather over the last 3 years?

The most common response to this question was to increase stock holdings prior to winter with increases of up to 60%. Other responses are detailed below.

Actions taken over last 3 years of bad weather	
Increase in salt stocks – up to 60% increase	Introduced alternate storage
Increased salt orders	Introduction of snow warden volunteers
Reviewed and reduced essential routes	Reviewed our winter maintenance plan
Reducing dead lengths of treatment routes	Parish Council bought a hand wheeled spreader
Reduced spread rate, early reduction of salt usage	Increased covered storage facilities and capacity, new salt barns

Actions taken over last 3 years of bad weather	
Organised strategic approach across all services	Backup use of industrial salt and sand mixture
Increased proportion of network treated	Increased use of sub-contractors to clear snow
Established strategic and resilience salt networks for use in emergencies.	Additional prioritisation of carriageways & footways
Documented and approved contingency arrangements	Closer liaison with contractor, street cleansing, across London and neighbouring boroughs.
Increased service levels, working more with the voluntary sector	Changed type of vehicles used in fleet reverting back to a number of fixed body gritters
Pooled staff arrangements, grounds maintenance and others support the operation	Contract register in place to ensure availability of external contractors when needed
Clearer process for starting salt conservation put in place	Arrangements in place to support waste collection
Implementation of reduced routes when salt supplies low.	Improved access to information on web site, tweet winter decisions
Review of service, consultation with councillors	More flexible workforce for potholes, aftermath
None, had already planned for severe weather	

The range of responses reflect the different circumstances each council finds itself in and the starting point for each service. Some councils are more used to dealing with heavy snow and so have made no changes to the services whilst others have made significant changes including work by Parish council and the introduction of snow wardens.

Most changes made will have a budget impact and although most expect budgets to stay the same (as noted in question 1) extra spending will have to be carefully considered at a time of limited budgets. Changes such as pooling staff to cope with snow clearance, potholes and the aftermath of heavy snow, working with the voluntary sector and ensuring availability of external contractors when needed are all changes which should have a significant impact on eth service without significant cost.

32) Has your authority experienced any of the following (you may answer more than one?)

Answer Options	Number (%)
Excessive 'freeze-thaw' damaging road surfaces	35 (85.4%)
Increase in demand for urgent highways repairs	32 (78.0%)
Increase in damage to street lighting columns	4 (9.8%)
Increase in damage to street furniture/signs/traffic lights	4 (9.8%)

There are a range of potential problems which occur following poor weather conditions and responses point to further damage especially to road surfaces. By dealing with the increased demand for urgent highway repairs there is a chance that deterioration has been halted but there will be areas where budgets have not been made available for repairs leading to expanding areas of deterioration. Damage to street lights, street furniture, signs and traffic lights has also been experienced by a number of councils.

33) Has the severe weather over the past 3 years led to any of the following (you may answer more than one?)

Answer Options	2011 Number (%)	2010 Number (%)
Increase in legal claims for slips, trips and falls	23 (67.6%)	35 (92.1%)
Review of gritting / salt routes	28 (82.4%)	29 (76.3%)
Review of clearing /gritting pavements outside schools/key public buildings/civic centres/residential homes	30 (88.2%)	27 (71.1%)
Review of clearing / gritting pavements outside of shops and in town centres	26 (76.5%)	28 (73.7%)
Encouragement of others to help clear snow e.g. local people, parish councils, farmers, others	27 (79.4%)	n/a

Responses to this question have seen majority agreement with all the above questions reflecting the need to review operations in the face of severe weather. One council has increased the number of salt bins. This is in contrast to some councils who have decided to stop filling salt bins because the salt in them is not used for the roads it is supposed to be for.
In terms of legal claims it may be that the expected number of claims has not materialised if the past 2 years figures are compared.

34) What has been the impact on your budget?

Answer Options	2011 Number (%)	2010 Number (%)
We have had to overspend on our budget	22 (61.1%)	27 (69.2%)
We have had to work within existing budgets and limit the service provided	5 (13.9%)	1 (2.6%)
We have been given additional resources to cope with demand	18 (50%)	10 (25.6%)
We have overspent on our budget but we must recover these costs within the current financial year	4 (11.1%)	7 (17.9%)
We have overspent on our budget but we must recover these costs within the next two to three years	0	3 (7.7%)

Over 60% of respondents had to overspend their existing budgets which will come as no surprise although this is a little less than last year whilst 5 more have had to work within their budget limits. This may be because changes have been made to the service so making it more able to cope with demand. 50% of councils were provided with additional resources which may be as a result of experience of the potential impact when action was not taken in previous years.

One comment noted that providing the service in-house meant flexibility to choose, and change, budget arrangements part way through the year which supports planning. Others noted funds were made available from the wider programme area whilst another noted access to additional manpower and plant. One council noted that they had looked carefully at how winter maintenance is costed and made changes to enable them to keep within budgets and that the service was not curtailed in any way.

35) What will be the likely additional costs of repairing pot holes which have come about as a result of the poor weather?

Answer Options	2011 Number (%)	2010 Number (%)
No expected additional costs	0	1 (2.6%)
Less than £50,000	0	1 (2.6%)
£50,000 - £100,000	2 (5.9%)	8 (21.1%)
£101,000- £250,000	6 (17.6%)	8 (21.1%)
£251,000- £500,000	8 (23.5%)	7 (18.4%)
£500,000 - £1,000,000	12 (35.3%)	8 (21.1%)
£1 million - £3 million	4 (11.8%)	5 (13.2%)
£3 million - £5 million	1(2.9%)	n/a
In excess of £5 million	1 (2.9%)	n/a
Total	100%	100%

Although it is difficult to estimate the financial cost of the damage to highways, the message from the table above are clear. In all councils that responded the cost of repairs will be significant and comments made show that these are likely to be conservative estimate because some potholes will require permanent repairs or full surface dressing rather than temporary repairs.

36) When do you expect road repairs due to damage from poor weather to be completed by?

25% of councils thought that damage will be repaired within 3 months with 47% repaired within 6 months and the remainder within 12 months. It is likely that temporary repairs will be made immediately with more permanent repairs held over until resurfacing schemes. The danger of further deterioration taking place is increased when repairs are not tackled immediately so the cost is likely to be higher. In the meantime the damage to cars will be greater over a longer period.

One comment noted that some damage will never be repaired.

37) During the big freeze did you:

Answer Options	Number (%)
Deploy resources from within your department (but from services areas that would not normally work on highways issues) to address the impacts of the snow/ice?	22 (57.9%)
Deploy resources from other departments / services to address the impacts of the snow/ice?	21(55.3%)
Resources were sufficient within the department / service area to avoid using extra resources	5 (13.2%)

In the main councils deployed resources from within their own departments and other departments to address the impacts of snow and ice, examples including street lighting staff, landscape, waste operatives and cleansing staff diverted to gritting and snow clearance. Two councils noted use of external resources.

38) Did your council have to ask other councils/organisations for help with salt supplies?

Out of 38 councils that responded, 26 (or 68.4%) did not have to ask others for help with salt supplies whilst the remaining 12 did. Although the number seeking support is significant it might be expected that this is a relatively small considering the amount of publicity around the issue and the amount of snow which fell.

39) Did the working time directive act as a barrier to operations? Which of the following best describes your views?

Answer Options	Number (%)
Yes it is a barrier but it is necessary to maintain sensible driver hours	10 (29.4%)
Yes it is a barrier and should be amended to accommodate emergency situations	12 (35.3%)
No - the working time directive had no direct impact on operations	12 (35.3%)
Total	34 (100%)

The working time directive did act as a barrier for some but it is by no means seen as a universal barrier. A number of councils noted that it had no direct impact on operations. One council has a 3 shift system was in place which means the directive was not relevant to them but this system will depend upon sufficient drivers being available.

40) Did your service experience an increase in complaints with regard to lack of gritting in general or on specific roads, salt bins, removal of snow/ice on footways, subsequent damage to roads/footways or other highways related issues?

Answer Options	2011 Number (%)	2010 Number (%)
No increase in complaints	5 (13.9%)	1 (2.6%)
Estimated increase of up to 25%	14 (38.9%)	13 (33.3%)
Estimated increase of up to 50%	9 (25.0%)	6 (15.4%)
Estimated increase of up to 100%	2 (5.6%)	6 (15.4%)
Estimated increase of greater than 100%	6 (16.7%)	13 (33.3%)
Total	100%	100%

Public expectations have risen with regard to council services and the same appears to be true of the support councils are expected to provide during severe weather. Clearly councils act to help their communities as much as they can but resources are limited and there are practical difficulties of access to smaller roads, commercial properties and domestic homes which mean their hands are tied in some respects. However it seems that the public were more tolerant this year after experiencing last year's severe weather. Councils didn't experience a big rise this year but that may be because the previous winter was harsh too. Compared to 3 years ago, complaints and requests are likely to be up over 100%. If there is a mild winter next year, complaints may well dry up and then increase significantly following severe weather.

One comment noted the praise they had received from radio and newspaper for an effective response and it is important to consider the plaudits that councils received over the winter period for supporting their communities and keeping vital services and roads open.

Conclusions

The survey covers a range of questions and provides a lot of information. Some issues emerge clearly such as the need for highways, street lighting and winter maintenance services to look outside their own department and organisation to trade and gain and the impact of financial restrictions on future budgets. The variety in outlook amongst those responding to the survey is obvious with some seeing a range of opportunities emerging from the technology sector in response to climate change and energy management issues whilst others see a constant reduction in work and a bleak future.

There is no doubt that innovation is alive and well in local government and there are examples within this survey to justify such a statement.

The Association for Public Service Excellence

APSE member authorities have access to a range of membership resources to assist in delivering council services. This includes our regular advisory groups, specifically designed to bring together elected members, directors, managers and heads of service, together with trade union representatives to discuss service specific issues, innovation and new ways of delivering continuous improvement. The advisory groups are an excellent forum for sharing ideas and discussing topical service issues with colleagues from other councils throughout the UK.

Advisory groups are a free service included as part of your authority's membership of APSE and all end with an informal lunch to facilitate networking with peers in other councils. If you do not currently receive details about APSE advisory group meetings and would like to be added to our list of contacts for your service area please email enquiries@apse.org.uk.

Our national advisory groups include:-

- Efficiencies, procurement and service transformation
- Building cleaning
- Citizen engagement
- Local authority, police and fire authority partnerships
- Community safety and security
- Housing, building maintenance and construction
- Parks, horticultural and ground maintenance
- Roads, highways and street lighting
- Social care
- Leisure management and community venues
- Vehicle maintenance and transport operations
- Waste management, refuse collection and street cleansing
- Workforce strategy and employee relations