

The logo for the Association for Public Service Excellence (APSE) features the word "apse" in a bold, lowercase, sans-serif font. The text is white and is set against a dark red, horizontally-oriented oval background.

The Association for Public Service Excellence

State of the Market Survey 2019

Local Authority Winter Maintenance Services

NEW MUNICIPALISM

Delivering for local people and local economies

Briefing 19 - 46
December 2019

State of the Market Survey 2019

Local Authority Winter Maintenance services

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About APSE

The Association for Public Service Excellence (APSE) is a not-for-profit local government body working with over 300 councils throughout the UK. Promoting excellence in public services, APSE is the foremost specialist in local authority frontline services and operates one of the UK's largest research programmes in local government policy and frontline service delivery matters.



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Results at a glance

% expecting the service to remain in-house over the next 12 months	86.96%
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% currently selling services to organisations external to the council	36.36%
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% with a snow warden scheme (or similar) in place	32.26%
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Budget

% of respondents whose budget has stayed the same from 2017-18 to 2018-19	77.33%
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% of respondents who had to overspend on their 2018-19 winter maintenance budget	33.79%
--	---------------

& of respondents who underspent on their 2018-19 winter maintenance budget	43.24%
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% whose dedicated training budget had stayed the same	100.00%
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Salting

% whose salt orders were met in full by suppliers over 2018-19	96.77%
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% reviewing gritting / salt routes after the severe weather over the recent years	64.41%
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% purchasing salt supplies jointly with other authorities	8.06%
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Footways

% salting footways as a precautionary measure following forecast	37.31%
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% not salting footways	23.88%
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% who had salted 75-100% of necessary footway salting	40.00%
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% who had not salted any of the necessary footway salting	10.91%
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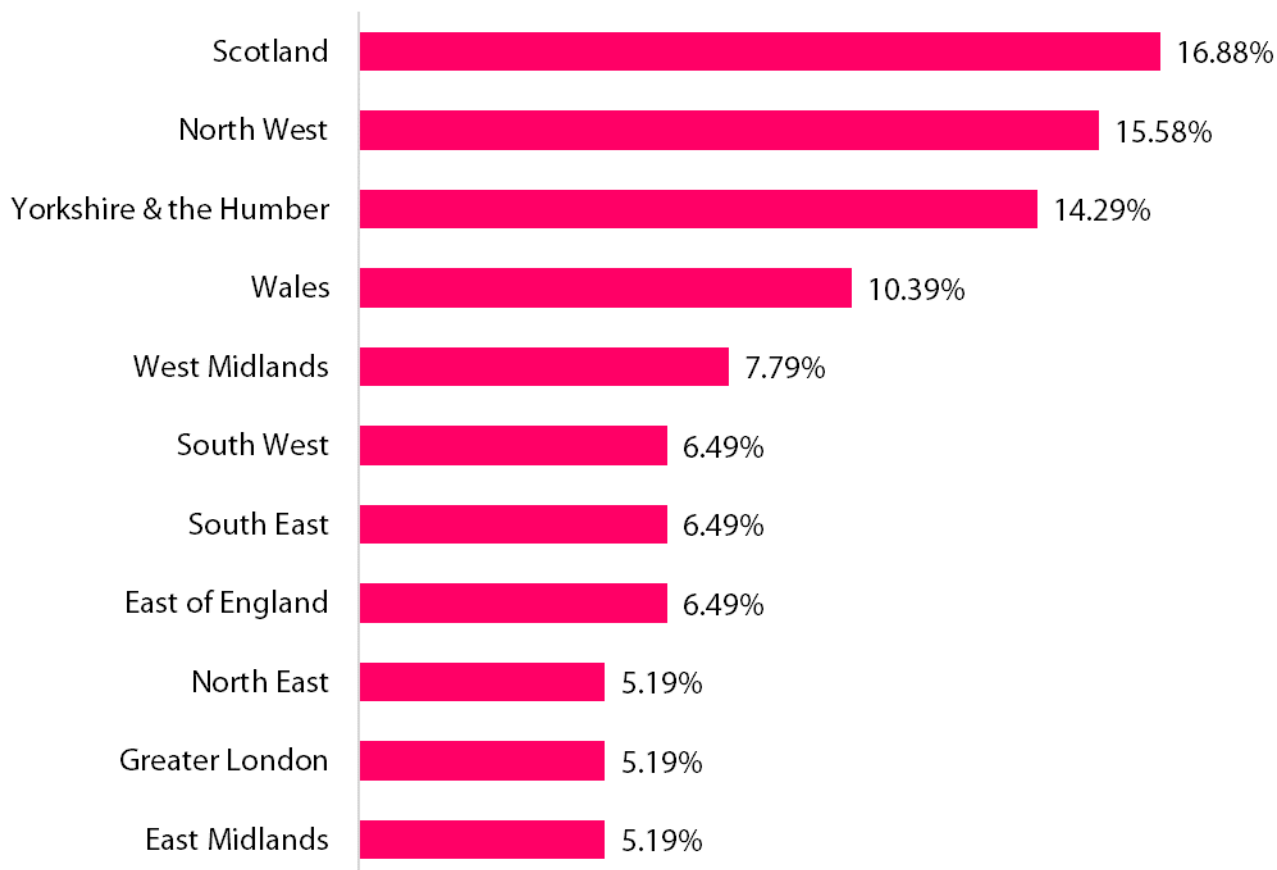
Introduction

APSE conducted an online survey during June 2019. A series of questions were asked covering a range of issues of interest to those officers, managers and councillors responsible for Winter Maintenance services.

State of the Market surveys are an attempt to understand perceptions of the market amongst people directly involved in delivering services.

There were 77 responses from local authorities to this survey. None of the questions were mandatory, so the total amount of responses differs from question to question. Individual details of respondents have been kept confidential. Results of the survey should be treated as a snapshot of current opinions of those working in winter maintenance services rather than a thorough analysis of change over time.

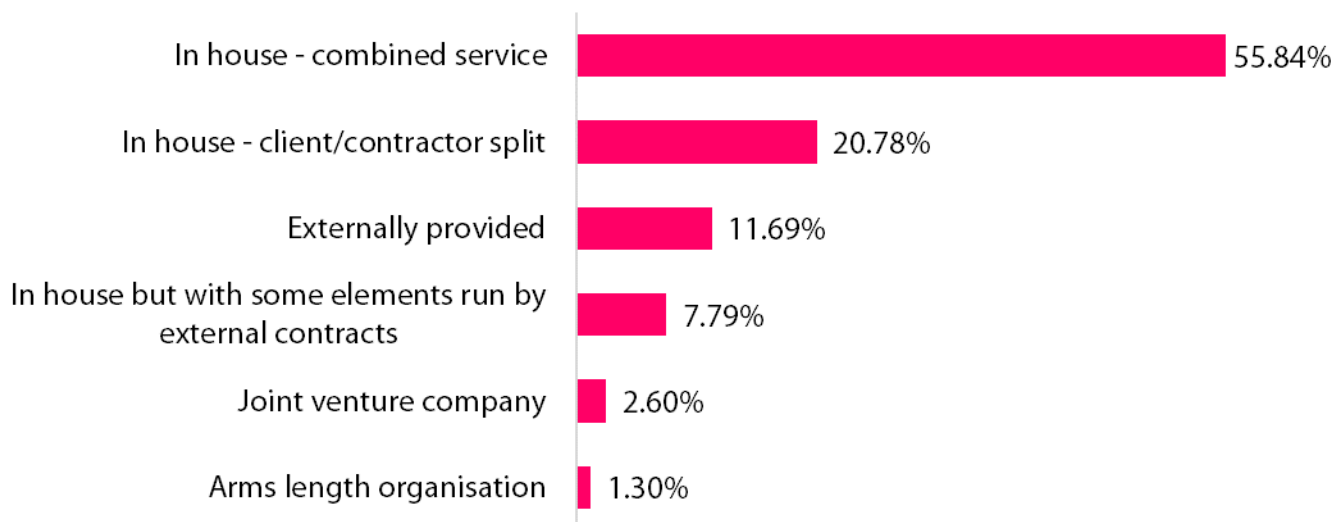
Where in the UK do you work?



The breakdown of responding councils is shown in the graph above.

Section 1 – The Service

How are your winter maintenance services currently delivered?



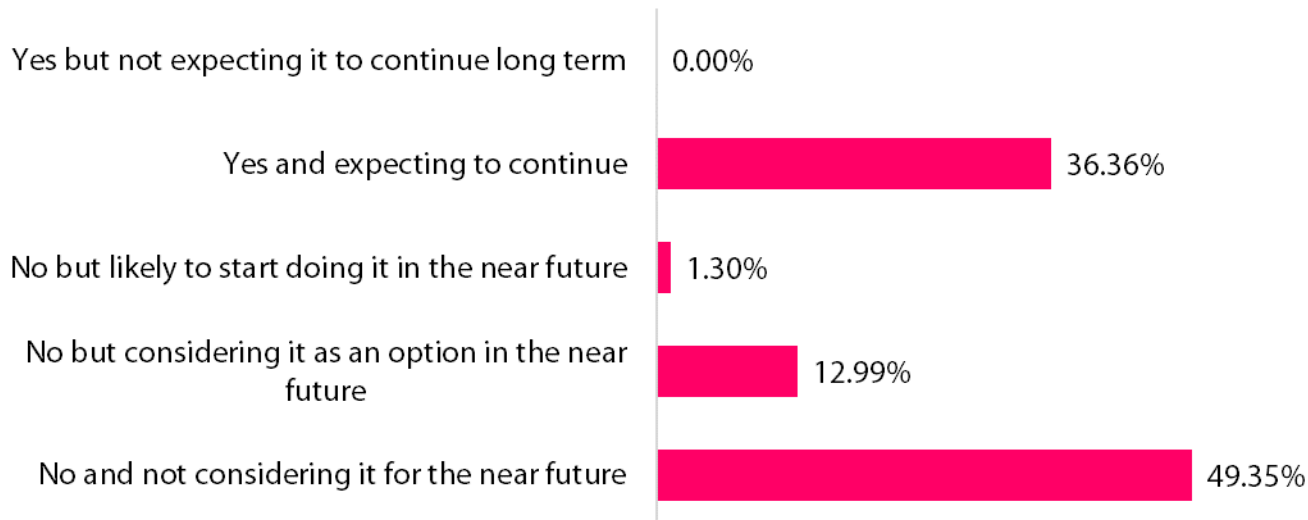
The majority of respondents have an in house combined service (55.84%) or an in house client/contractor split (20.78%). 7.79% have an in house service but with some elements run by external contracts. 11.69% have an externally provided services, 2.60% have a joint venture company and 1.3% have an arms length organisation.

If the service is currently provided in-house, do you expect the service to remain in-house over the next 12 months?



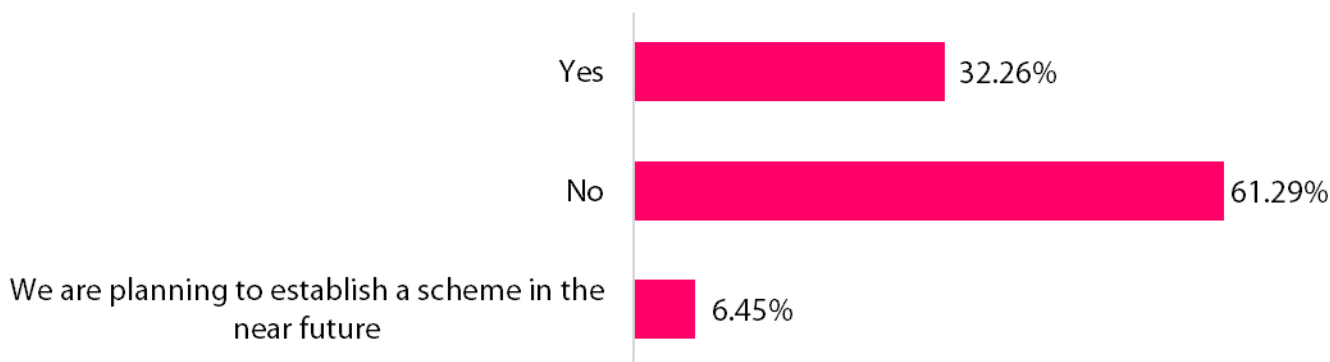
The majority of respondents expect the service to remain in-house over the next 12 months (86.96%).

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



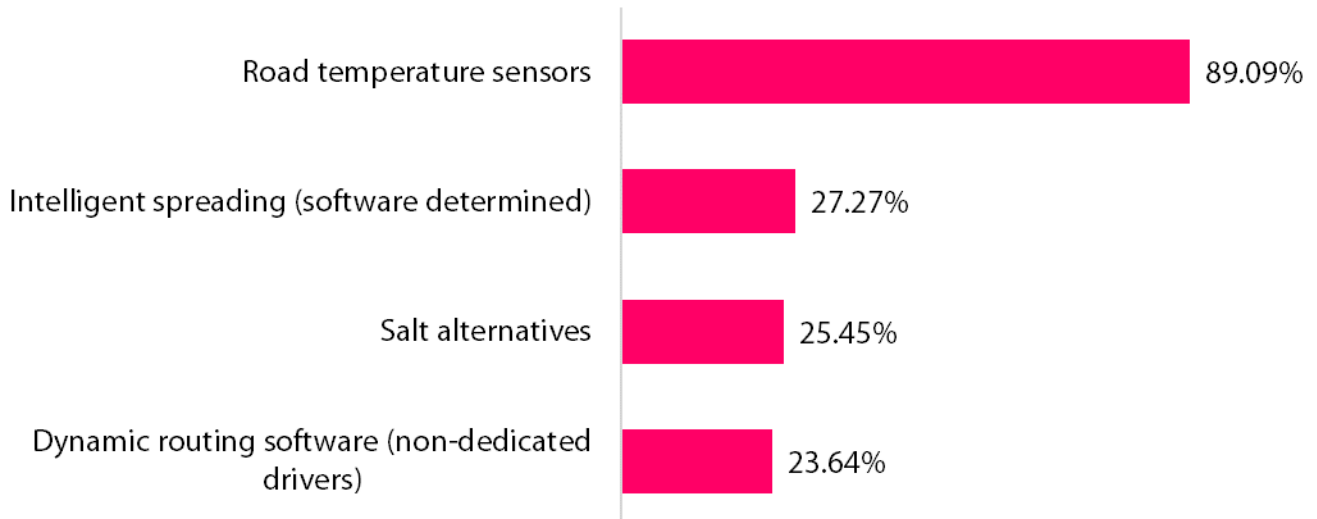
36.36% do currently sell their services to organisations external to the council and are expecting this to continue. 1.3% do not but are likely to start doing it in the near future, 12.99% are considering it as an option and 49.35% are not doing this and not considering it for the near future.

Do you have a snow warden (or similar) scheme in place?



32.26% have a snow warden or similar scheme in place, and 6.45% are planning to establish a scheme in the near future.

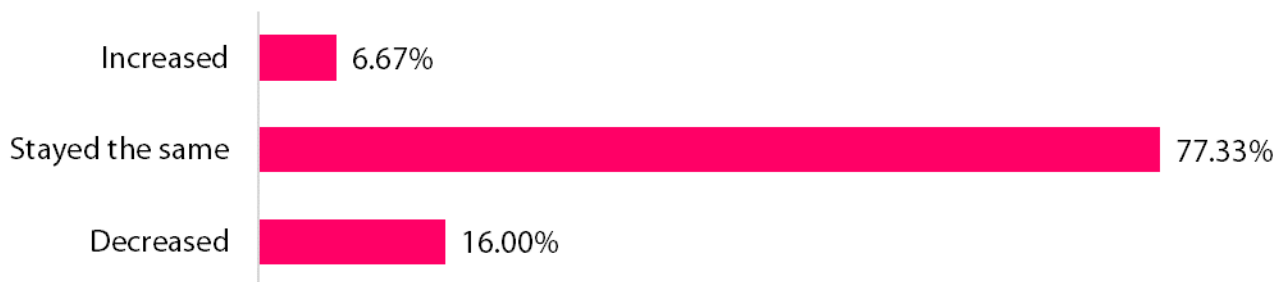
What technology do you use to assist the service? (please tick all that apply)



89.09% use road temperature sensors, 27.27% use intelligent spreading, 25.45% use salt alternatives and 23.64% use dynamic routing software to assist the service.

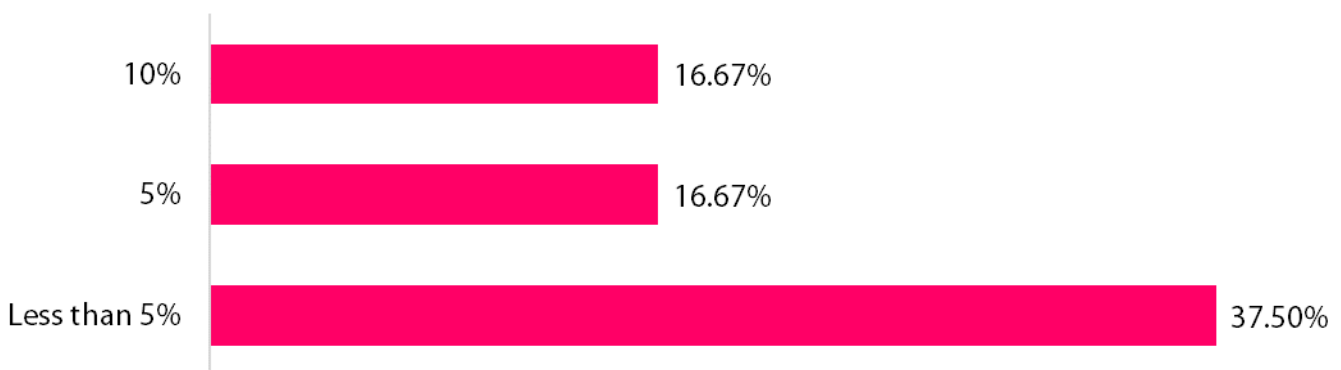
Section 2 – Budget

How has the budget for the winter maintenance service changed from 2017-18 to 2018-19?



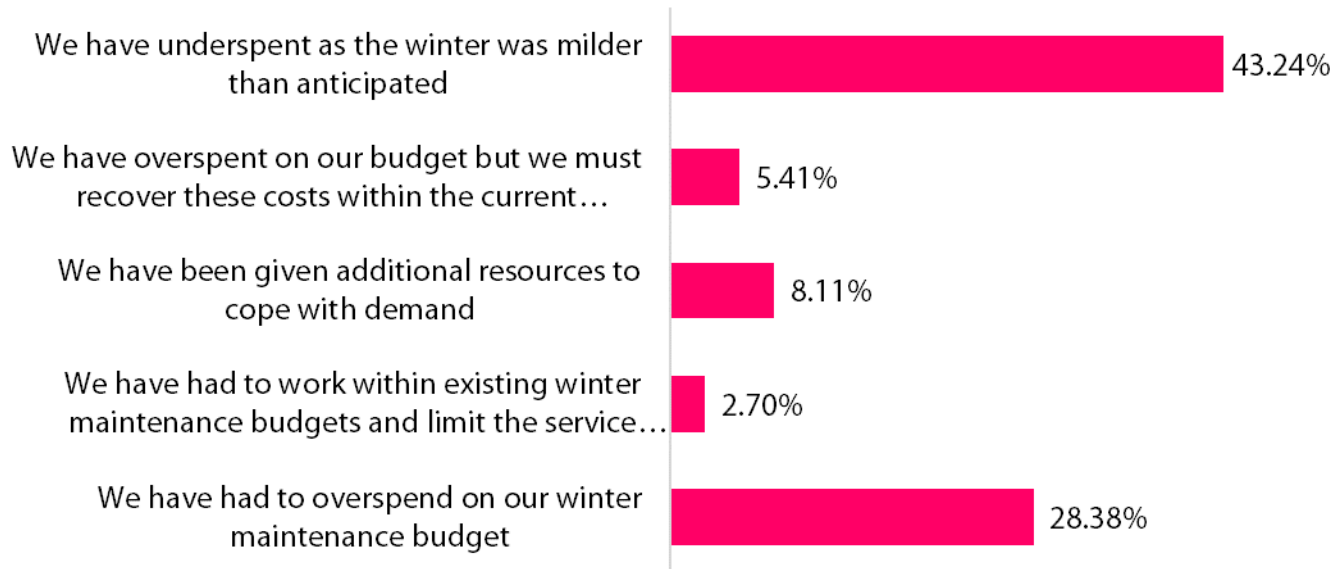
Most respondents indicated that their winter maintenance service budget has stayed the same from 2017-18 to 2018-19 (77.33%), 6.67% said it has increased and 16.00% said it has decreased.

If your budget has decreased compared to the last financial year, how much has it decreased by?



The majority of respondents' budgets have decreased by less than 5% (37.50%), with 16.67% experiencing a 5% decrease and a further 16.67% experiencing a 10% decrease.

With reference to the weather during the winter 2018-2019, what has been the impact on your winter maintenance budget?



Respondents are split between those who have underspent as the winter was milder than anticipated (43.24%) versus those who have had to overspend on their winter maintenance budget (28.38%); an additional 5.41% have to recover those costs within the current financial year. 8.11% were given additional resources to cope with demand whereas 2.7% have had to work within existing winter maintenance budgets and limit the service provided.

If you have a dedicated training budget for winter maintenance, what has happened to it over the past 12 months?



All respondents who have a dedicated training budget for winter maintenance stated that their budgets have stayed the same over the past 12 months.

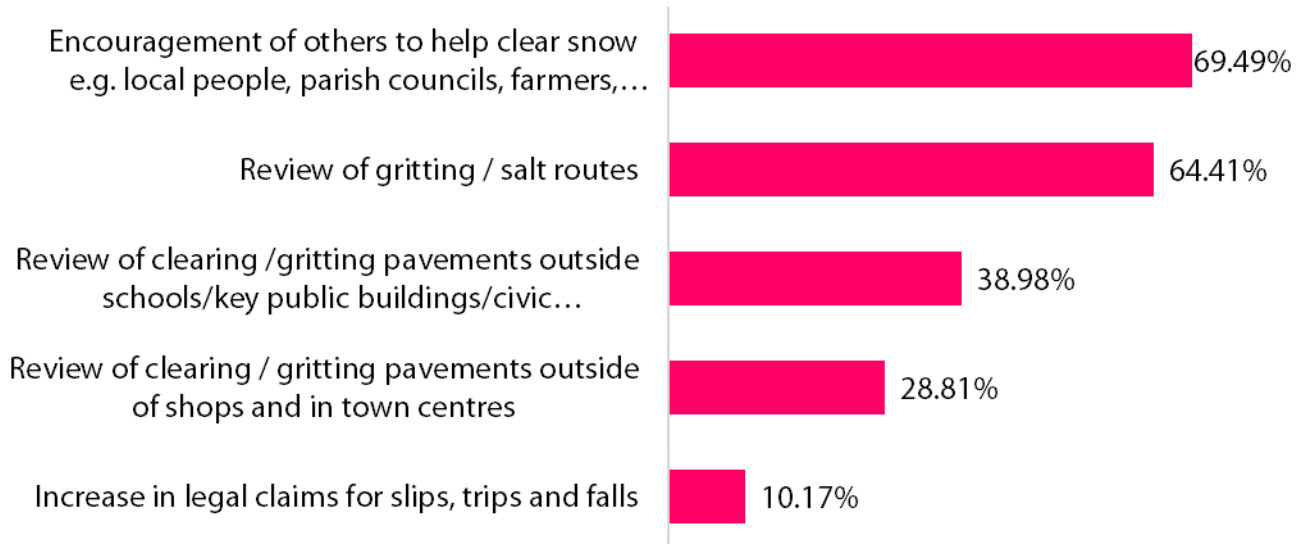
Section 3 – Severe Weather

What changes have you made to service agreements as a result of severe weather over recent years?

Many of the respondents stated that they had made no changes to their service agreements as a result of severe weather over recent years. Some of the changes made include:

- Reviewed severe weather procedures
- Snow clearance routes formulated
- Constant review of salt stock levels
- Increased salt stock levels over the winter
- New brine tanks for pre wetted salt
- Implemented nightshift
- Invested in our fleet and salt storage
- Increased resilience by training additional drivers
- Assessing the network / route optimisation
- Introduction of a backup driver rota
- Building an additional salt barn
- Increased hand salting
- Working with local communities to promote self-help
- Route based forecasting
- Thermal mapping
- Adoption of coated/treated salt
- Developing sensor technology for surface temperatures
- Additional weather station investment
- New strategy for clearing access to schools
- More customer focused
- Improved social media and communications
- Snow blower subcontract
- Emergency plan for rescuing stranded people where emergency services cannot access

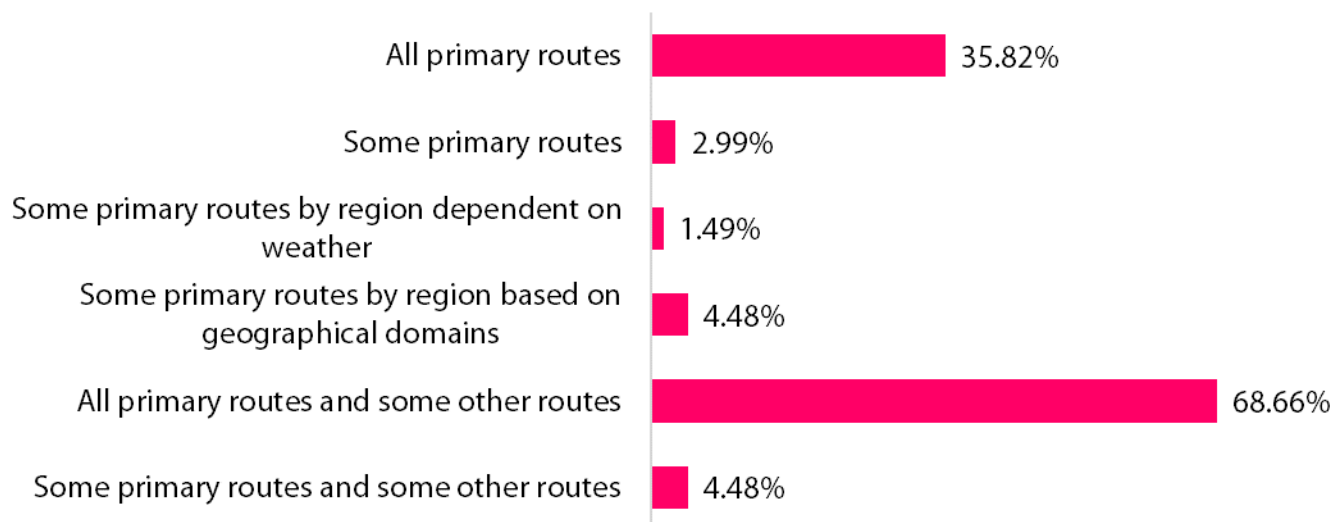
Has the severe weather over the recent years led to any of the following (you may choose more than one)?



The severe weather has led 69.49% of respondents to encourage others to help clear snow (e.g. local people, parish councils, farmers), 64.41% to review gritting / salt routes, 38.98% to review clearing/gritting pavements outside schools / key public buildings / civic centres / residential homes and 28.81% to review clearing / gritting pavements outside of shops and in town centres. 10.17% have also seen an increase in legal claims for slips, trips and falls.

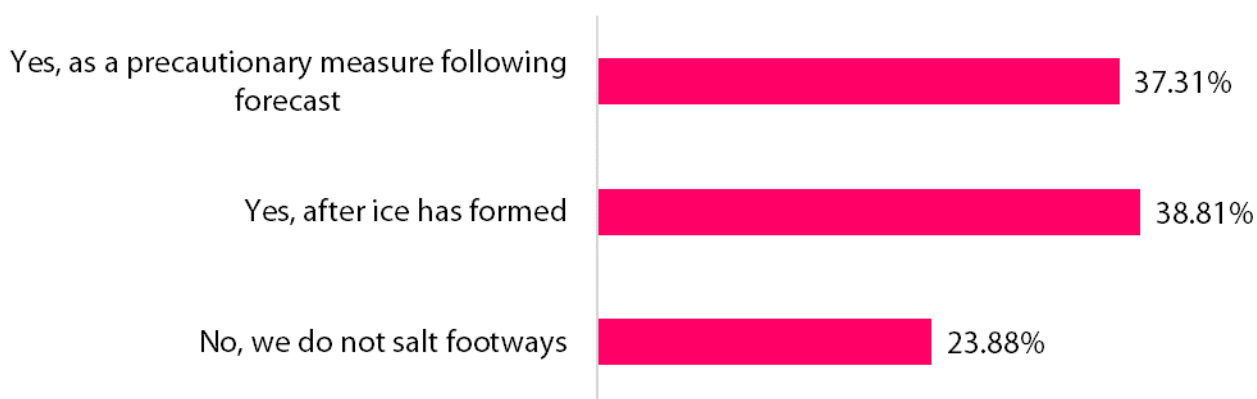
Section 4 – Salting

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



68.66% of respondents salt all primary routes and some other routes, and 35.82% salt only all primary routes. Other variations in approach are shown in the table above.

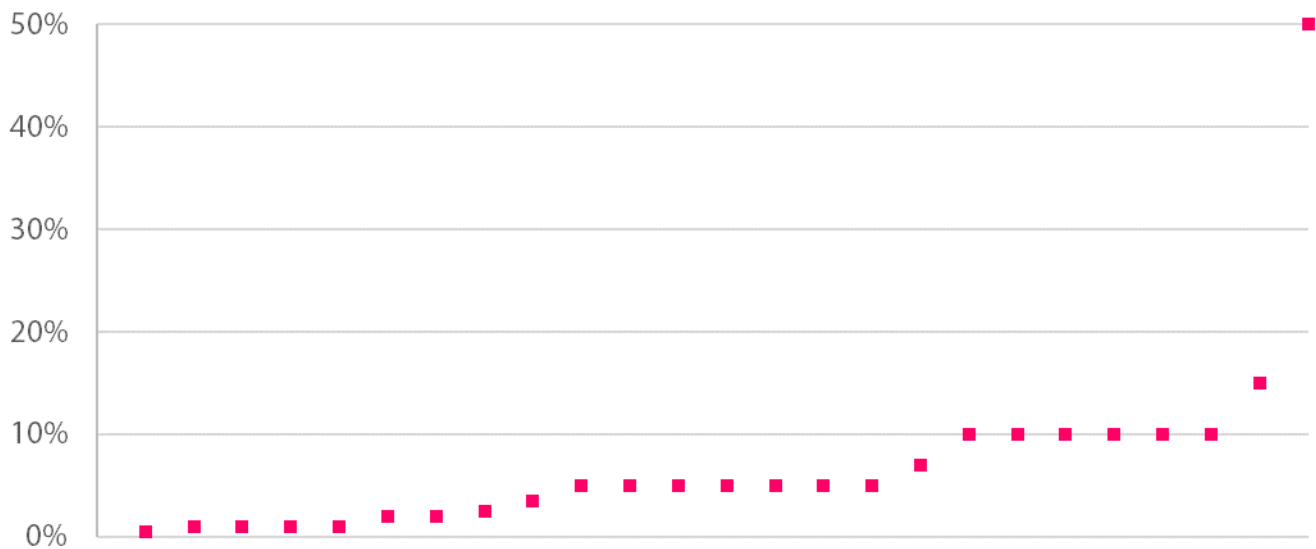
Do you salt footways?



38.

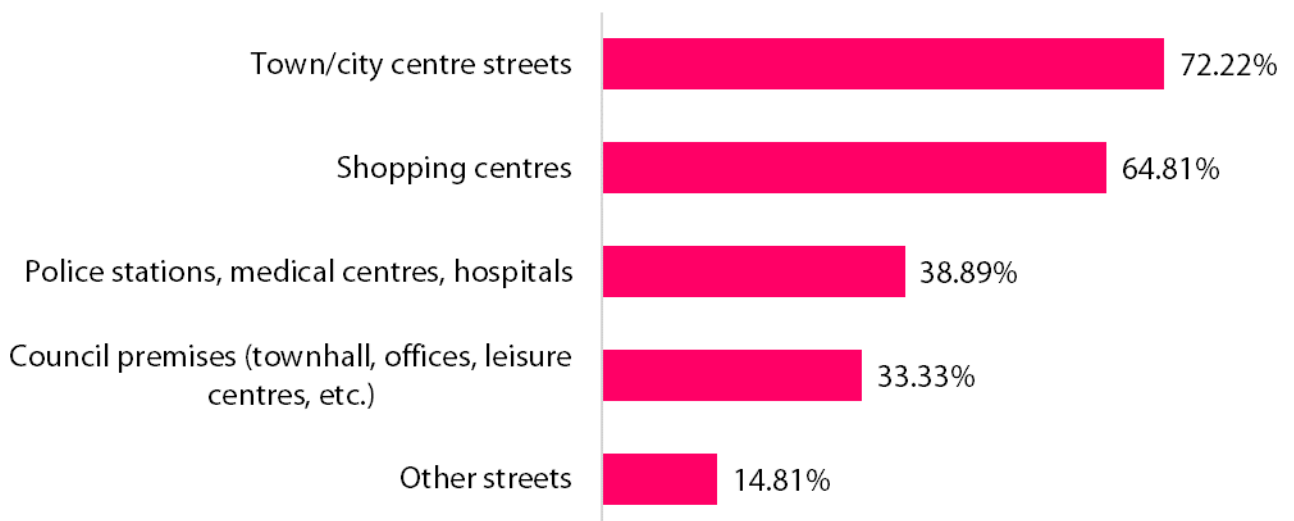
81% of respondents salt footways after ice has formed, and 37.31% do this as a precautionary measure following forecast. 23.88% do not salt footways.

If you do salt footways, approximately what percentage of the footway network do you salt?



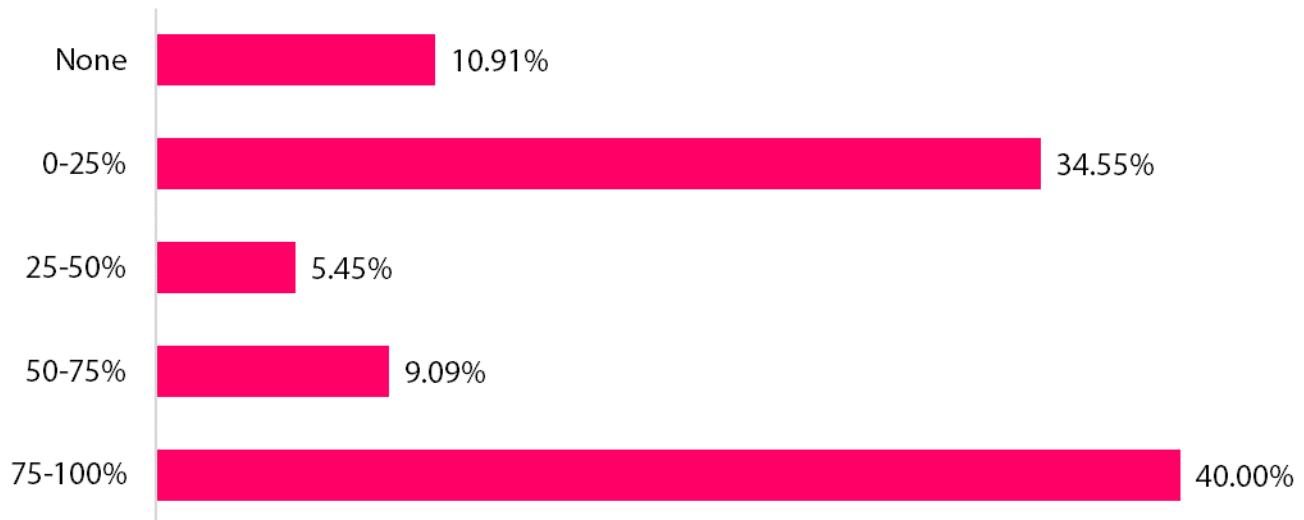
The percentage of footway network salted for most authorities was roughly 5% or under, although several salted around 10% of footways and one respondent reported that they salt 50% of their footways.

If you do salt footways, which of these do you salt?



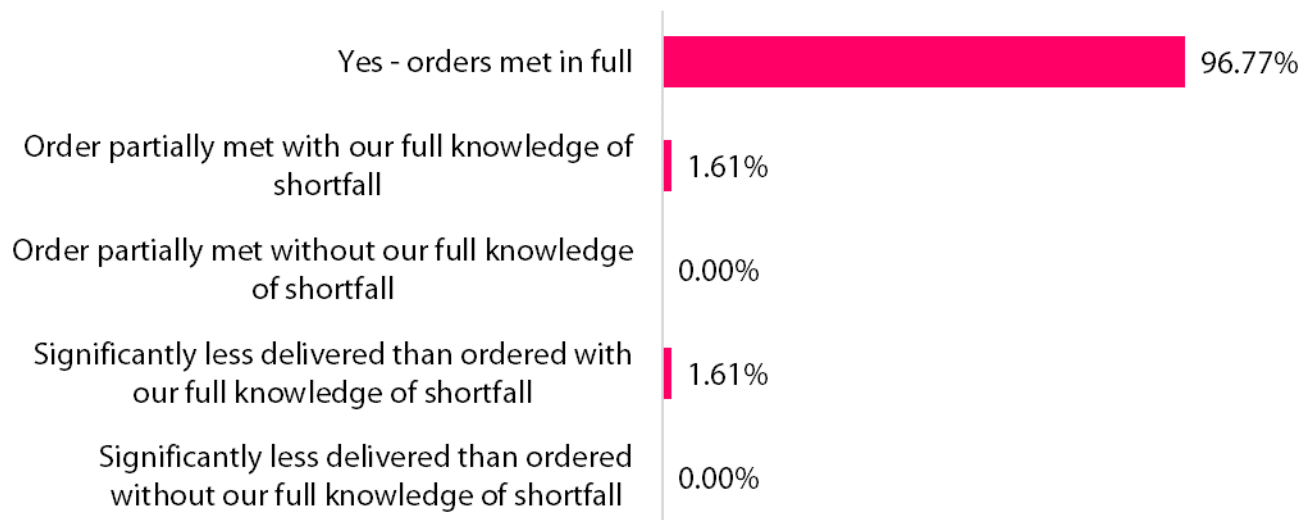
The majority of respondents salt the footways of town/city centre streets (72.22%) and shopping centres (64.81%). 38.89% salt police stations, medical centres and hospitals, 33.33% salt council premises (town hall, offices, leisure centres, etc), and 14.81% salt other streets.

What proportion of necessary footway salting do you consider was achieved?



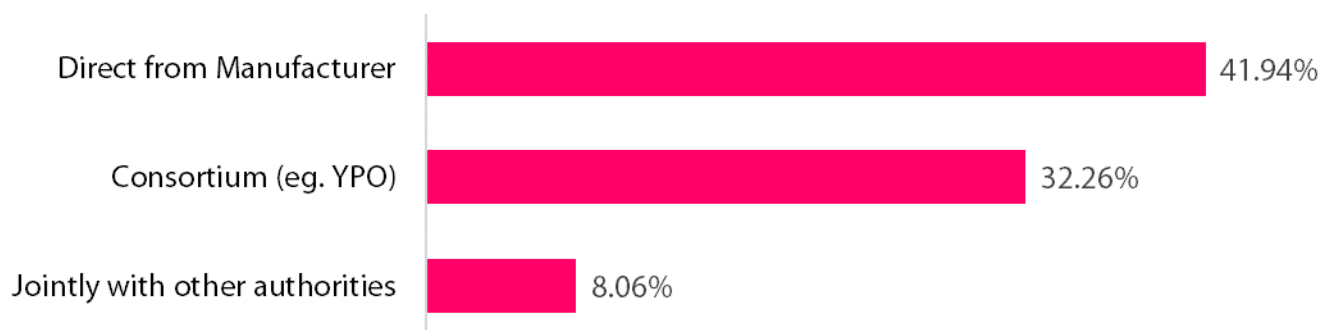
Most of the respondents managed to carry out between 75-100% of necessary footway salting (40.00%), with 9.09% carrying out 50-75%, 5.45% carrying out 25-50% and 34.55% carrying out 0-25%. 10.91% carried out none of the necessary footway salting.

Have the orders you placed for salt to cover winter maintenance over 2018-19 been met by your suppliers?



96.77% of survey respondents salt orders were met in full to cover winter maintenance over 2018-19. 1.61% reported that their order was partially met with their full knowledge of the shortfall, and another 1.61% said that significantly less salt was delivered than ordered with their full knowledge of the shortfall.

How do you purchase salt supplies?



41.94% purchase salt directly from the manufacturer, 32.26% purchase salt through a consortium and 8.06% purchase salt jointly with other authorities.

Which company supplies your salt?

- Compass (34)
- Cleveland Potash (6)
- Salt Union (5)
- ICL (5)
- Salt Sales Co (2)
- YPO (1)
- Irish Salt Mining & Exploration (1)

Most of the responding authorities were supplied by Compass, with other options including Cleveland Potash, Salt Union, ICL, Salt Sales Co, YPO and Irish Salt Mining & Exploration.

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

Suggestions provided by local authorities include:

- Share with nearby local authorities
- Use shared salt barns or storage facilities with neighbouring authorities and maintain a strategic salt stock
- Order salt early / at the start of the financial year
- Make use of salt stock reporting
- Utilise bigger domes
- Keep realistic contingency stocks
- Use dry storage
- Attend regional meetings and user groups
- Over order on your supplies
- Seek alternative backup suppliers
- Limit routes and maximise route efficiency
- Have minimum stock levels written into your contract

Section 5 – Opinions

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

There were several respondents who did not see any growth areas for the service over the next 12 months, with one respondent commenting that this was difficult with limited resources and staff reductions. Some of the growth areas identified by others include:

- Route based forecasting
- Route optimisation
- Community self-help
- External contracts
- More footway treatments
- Gritting private roads and car parks
- Gritting automation
- Increased use of technology
- Working with communities in providing local resilience
- Social media and live gritting updates
- Salt moisture testing
- Targeted precautionary gritting / treatments

- Calibration of salt spreading equipment
- Increased collaboration and cross-border working
- Changes in fleet
- Brine applications
- Treatment of cycle routes
- Snow wardens
- Promoting active travel through de-icing
- Adoption of roads

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

Many authorities commented that they do not see any areas where demand will be less. Commonly anticipated decreases are shown on the list below:

- Salt tonnage applied to the network
- Reduction in route treatments due to better forecasting
- Planned operations
- Treating lesser roads
- Treating footways
- Unnecessary salting
- Efficiency savings
- Manual decisions on gritters
- Planned operations
- Number of small grit bins

Local Authority Winter Maintenance Services

State of the Market 2019

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:-

- FM & Building Cleaning
- Catering (school meals)
- Cemeteries and Crematoria
- Environmental Health
- Highways and Street Lighting
- Housing Construction and Building Maintenance
- Local Authorities Commercialisation, Income and Trading Network
- Parks, Horticulture and Grounds Maintenance
- Climate Change and Renewable Energy Network
- Sports and Leisure Management
- Vehicle Maintenance and Transport
- Waste Management, Refuse Collection and Street Cleansing