

Report by Michael Hanley.

1 Highways Winter Review 2025.

P Thornton (PT, Highways Portfolio Holder, LD): WAFC was shortlisted for an award a week ago for its Winter Programme (a council in west London won the award). We are getting noticed. People nowadays have high expectations.

Phil Greenup (PG, Dir Sustainable Transport and Highways): It was great that we were shortlisted nationally for innovation. Last year 12 gritter lorries covered 64,000 miles of road. The policy is having a hierarchy of 3 types of road, priorities 1, 2 and 3. Separating out the legacy services (from 4 previous councils) has been difficult.

Weather monitoring is very important. WAFC has been divided up into new areas (Alston and Fellside is now in "North Pennines". Other areas are: North Eden, South Eden, South Lakes, Low Furness and Southern). Previously there were 16 weather stations, including Hartside. These are vital for monitoring and forecasting. It is the Vaisala (Finnish) weather station that is used. Each station gives weather information on a 10 mile radius. 3 new sites have been installed and 2 are under construction.

We use the Exactrak system for live tracking of resources (vehicles). We expected an increase of 10% in salt treatment last year but there was a reduction of 1.74% (due to mild winter and better planning of treatment). There is a plan to replace the fleet vehicles. Phase 2 of the plan will have an optimised winter service with reduced costs and reduced salt coverage (environmental benefit) and vehicle movements. Also this reduces the carbon footprint.

A Waite (AW, LD): How do we know whether this is a good service. Maybe days of road closure could be a measurement level. If we had these measurements then we could judge whether you are achieving these.

PG: The policy was a light touch review of the Cumbria County Council policy. There are statutory objectives. We could look at more performance measures. The winter budget is under pressure, but we have a good budget that enables us to keep most roads open during the winter.

PT: There is an environmental impact throwing salt everywhere. Sometimes a road closure is due to a carelessly driven car.

J Boak (JB, LD): Asked about providing a weather station at Cartmel (her ward).

WAFC Officer: Each weather station costs £50k and there are maintenance costs as well so we can't just put them up everywhere.

H Hodgson (HH, LD): This technology is already in agriculture. Its a question as to what the cost is.

Dan Chalmer (WAFC officer): Yes we can focus on certain portions of the road.

HH: An awful lot of salting goes on that is not necessary.

WAFC Officer (WO): In some areas the pattern and amount of spreading can be pre-programmed before the lorry sets out and the driver just drives.

AW: We need to look at value for money. It would be good to have more information on costs in the presentation.

WO: We do not treat the roads if they don't need it.

PG: Discussed claims. We only need one serious accident claim to wipe out the budget. If we have a mild winter we can come in under budget, if it is severe we overspend. We can now show we are good value for money due to increased efficiency. The priority is to make sure that the roads are as safe as possible.

E Hennessy (EH, Chair, LD): Asked about the boundaries with other authorities.

WO: There is an agreement with adjoining authorities. We can treat (the roads) from 10-100

metres into the other authority area depending on circumstances.

EH: Asked about Priority 3 Routes in rural areas for routes to GP surgeries and schools. Also asked about Snow Champions.

WO: We want to do more work on assessing Priority 3 roads. We don't supply salt to parish councils, but we could do.

2. Community Safety Partnership

J Derbyshire (JD, LD): We live in a fairly safe area. Discussed the harrasing of councillors.

Alison Goodfellow (AG, Safer Communities Manager): Discussed Community Safety Partnership (CSP). Five authorities are involved and the main aims are to prevent serious crime, Antisocial Behaviour (ASB) reviews, Safer Cumbria: combatting drug abuse, serious crime, domestic abuse related death reviews.

Key highlights in the last year were: domestic abuse strategy, regular councillor updates, improved communication between police, the council and communities, Public Space Protection Orders, Community Cohesion Workshops, Counter Extremism Training. Over 2000 young people in Barrow took part in Counter Extremism Training just before the Southport riots and it is possible that this reduced the violence in Barrow.

There is an ongoing Operation Enhance (hot spot policing) which is a county-wide crackdown on anti-social behaviour and serious violence focusing on crime hotspots (12 locations including parts of the centres of Barrow, Kendal, Penrith, Carlisle, Cleator Moor, Workington, Ulverston, Whitehaven, Maryport and Bowness-on-Windermere. There has been a significant drop in crime at these hot spots. Cumbria received an extra £1 million from the Government Hotspot Response Fund for this).

There is also the Clear Hold Build for the North which works to help communities to become less susceptible to the draw of organised crime groups. Serious criminals are arrested and taken out of the area. Also ASB Reviews (formerly known as Community Triggers). Knife crime training for young people in Barrow. Pub Watches in Eden. Tyre Safety banners, domestic abuse grab bags, domestic abuse training.

Performance data: All crime has reduced by 6.3%, ASB reduced by 4.4%, domestic abuse reduced slightly to 0.4/1000 population. However there has been an increase in hate crime to 0.1/1000 population. Advisory leaflets are being developed for people coming out of prison.

EH: Asked about ASBs: committed by local residents or tourists? Also why has there been an increase in re-offending rates. Also asked about funding community projects.

AG: I don't know the answer about ASB, probably a mixture of both. We can provide information on funding. We always ask for match-funding. We are in the process of evaluating last year's projects. We have a reducing re-offending group and some of the problems with this area is due to problems with probation.

M. Hanley (MH, L): What are Public Spaces Protection Orders (PSPOs) and are ASB Case Reviews what used to be called Community Triggers?

AG: PSPOs are orders made by certain WAFC officers for certain spaces usually to do with dogs (fouling) and camping (wild).

Tracey Ingham (TI, WAFC officer): Yes ASB Case Reviews used to be called Community Triggers. You can start an ASB Case review by contacting the council (WAFC).

J Boak (JB, LD): Talked about ASB in Cartmel. Does the parish council need to send information about this to the CSP?

TI: Yes, they can do that.

3. Cultural Framework Update

Paper: Develop Penrith Town into a creative and community hub, £3 million secured for this. Current apportioning of grants (for arts and culture): Barrow: £40k, Eden: £45.5k, South Lakeland: £230k. Plan to achieve equity according to population (30% Barrow, 24% Eden, 46% South Lakeland). That would give an additional £53.5k to Barrow, £29.8k to Eden and a reduction of £83.4 k to South Lakeland.

EH: How do we involve the 30% of residents who don't get involved with local art and cultural events?

A Waite (AW, LD): It looks like the funding of arts and culture is the same as it was under previous district councils.

Stephanie Cordon (SC, WAFC Officer): Areas that have historically had less, we are giving more money to. We have an increase of £200k in funding. In the past Eden has received less than South Lakes. We are trying to level-up Eden.

MH: Asked about a claim in the paper for this item that movement and dance reduced the number of cases of breast cancer by 387 per year. The officer did not know where the evidence for this claim came from apart from The National Centre for Creative Health (researching this claim later I found that it comes from a Sports England Active Lives Survey looking at 2018-19 data, so was an estimate of possible cases of breast cancer that were avoided as a result of increased physical activity)