

# APPENDIX R

## WAVERLEY BOROUGH COUNCIL

### JOINT MEETING OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEES 24 MARCH 2010

#### EXECUTIVE – 13 APRIL 2010

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**Title:****REVIEW OF IMPACTS OF SNOW IN JANUARY 2010 AND DRAFT WAVERLEY  
ADVERSE WEATHER POLICY**

**[Portfolio Holder: Cllr Richard Gates]**

**[Wards Affected: All]**

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**Summary and purpose:**

Heavy snow fell across Surrey including Waverley in December 2009 and on 6 and 13 January 2010. The January snowfall was the heaviest experienced in the Borough for 30 years. The purpose of this report is to describe the impacts of this adverse weather on Borough residents and services and the steps taken by Waverley BC to address these. It also summarises the main successes and lessons to be learnt for the future.

To co-ordinate Waverley's response to other adverse weather occurrences in the future, a draft Adverse Weather Policy has been drafted and is attached for comment.

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**How this report relates to the Council's Corporate Priorities:**

Both the report and the draft policy demonstrate how the Council aims to maintain services during adverse weather to deliver all its Corporate Priorities.

**Equality and Diversity Implications:**

One of the biggest priorities during the snow period was ensuring that the Borough's vulnerable residents were safe.

**Resource/Value for Money implications:**

The report covers the financial impact of coping with the snow and the proposed policy demonstrates how Waverley will redirect its services during periods of adverse weather to priority frontline services.

**Legal Implications:**

During severe weather emergencies, Waverley will have legal obligations under the Civil Contingencies Act 2004. In addition, one of the major barriers to active self-help within the community is the perception of legal liability if the clearance efforts of

a householder or business cause an accident. This issue needs to be either clarified or may prompt a lobby for a change in the legislation.

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## **Introduction**

1. Heavy snow fell across Waverley in December 2009 and on 6 and 13 January 2010. The January snowfall was the heaviest experienced in the Borough for 30 years.
2. The bad weather severely limited Waverley's ability to deliver its services and made 'business as usual' in most frontline services difficult. All but the strategic road network was either difficult to drive along or impassable for much of the period. Public transport was badly affected. Supporting people during the snow and safely delivering general universal services as far as possible during this time meant redeploying staff and adapting the day-to-day work of the Council.

## **Business continuity and coping with emergencies in Waverley**

3. The Council has a Business Continuity and Recovery Plan to help it respond to abnormal circumstances. Prepared in the context of the Civil Contingencies Act and approved in April 2008, its 3 main purposes are:
  - i. To minimise the effect of any incident on the Council's ability to provide services and carry out its statutory functions
  - ii. To enable the Council to achieve a planned and constructive response in such circumstances
  - iii. To minimise the risk to people and property.
4. The Structure of the Plan recognises different levels of action. These are:
  - i. Core procedures for corporate management responsibility and action in the event of an emergency.
  - ii. Responsibilities and procedures for central support teams in such circumstances.
  - iii.  Summaries of the impact relating to each of the Council's Services in the event of major disruption for the first three days, and for a period from day four for a number of weeks, prior to full service recovery.
  - iv. Local Recovery Plans for each of these Services in the event of disruption.
5. The individual service plans range across all our activities. Examples would range from handling a major problem with our ICT systems, loss of the Council Offices, through to maintaining critical services to housing tenants. The Plan recognizes the importance of preventative actions [e.g. regular maintenance] and other actions which would assist with coping with an emergency. A relevant example was the decision to roll-out Citrix capability

across staff teams to aid home working and remote access to central ICT systems.

6. The Plan identifies key staff responsibilities and prioritises the services for recovery. Whilst each emergency or event is inevitably going to be different and difficult to predict, the Plan provides a good base for an informed, equipped and flexible response.
7. Other elements of our emergency preparedness are the Surrey Local Resilience Forum [SLRF], Waverley's Community Leadership role and the Council's Emergency Committee. The SLRF provides our operational link with the 'blue light' services and other emergency responders. Working structures are put in place and tested at regular intervals by a variety of exercises. Whilst Waverley has a specific role in civil emergencies [eg providing rest centres and dealing with dangerous structures], the SLRF also provides mutual aid and access to information and decision-making.
8. The Council's Emergency Committee exists to provide guidance and decisions in the event of a major emergency. It currently comprises the Leader, Deputy Leader, Councillor Mrs Frost and Councillor Mr Duckett. The decision to call the Committee is a matter of judgement, based on the specific circumstances. With regards to the January 2010 Snow event, the Committee was not called because:
  - i. No immediate need to endorse major budgetary decisions.
  - ii. The regular updating and communication between the Chief Executive and the Council Leadership and between Heads of Service and their Portfolio Holders
  - iii. Confidence in the provisions of the Business Continuity Plan
  - iv. Difficulties in local travel

### **January 2010 Snow event**

#### **Forecasts and events**

9. As well as the formal arrangements described above, the Council subscribes to specialist weather forecast services, particularly during the higher risk winter period. On Monday 4<sup>th</sup> January 2010 a Met Office warning was received about the possibility of snow on Tuesday evening [5<sup>th</sup> January]. This forecast 2-5cm of snow would fall with the possibility of 10cm on higher ground. Using this information, contingency arrangements were made. Examples of this were:
  - i. Heads of Service were asked to make plans within their teams. Staff who were likely to have difficulties getting into work were asked to prepare for working from home.
  - ii. Veolia street cleaning team were tasked by the Car Park Service to use the newly acquired tow-along gritter in as many car parks as possible.
10. In the event, the snow on Tuesday night / Wednesday morning was much greater than anticipated. Local roads were blocked and impassable. Bus services were not able to operate. Train services made a start early on the

morning, but ongoing problems through the day meant that even the emergency timetable soon became inoperable.

### **Management approach**

11. On the morning of Wednesday 6 January, approximately 40 staff arrived at the offices. The Chief Executive and other senior staff present met in 'emergency mode' [as per the Business Continuity Plan] and began to assess the current position. Heads of Service who were not present were able to contribute to the exercise through Citrix and telephones. Contractors and other service partners were contacted for status reports. Their information confirmed that normal services were unlikely to be operational because of travel difficulties for their staff and their inability to mobilise their vehicles and plant.
12. Using the principles previously established in Corporate and Service Recovery Plans, the main decisions taken were to:
  - i. Suspend services where the transport situation made their delivery difficult or impossible, such as waste and recycling collections, housing repairs, grounds maintenance – and to communicate this to partners and through our website.
  - ii. Respond to community requests for assistance and in particular the power failure in Godalming
  - iii. Establish a staff team to begin telephoning those residents on our Careline list to check on their well-being
  - iv. Prioritise emergency housing repairs
  - v. Task contractors and staff with path clearance – especially around sheltered housing and other areas where we knew they may be vulnerable people
  - vi. Contribute to the wider SLRF [teleconference] discussions
  - vii. Plan ahead for recovery
  - viii. Communicate with staff who were working from home
13. During the snow, daily situation reports were collected on all services. This informed a daily review of immediate priorities. The Chief Executive kept in communication with the Council Leadership to inform them about the situation. Similarly, Heads of Service kept in touch with their Portfolio Holders. Regular briefings were e-mailed to Councillors and partners to assist with the information flow.

### **Interaction with partners including the LRF**

14. The SRLF held a [twice] daily teleconference – 'attended' by Aaron Carter [Emergency Planning Adviser]. This provided a Surrey-wide assessment of the situation and was where all the authorities contributed to a discussion on issues and priorities. Coming out of this were matters such as the need for 4x4 vehicles and requests for priority gritting.

15. Waverley asked for gritting in the vicinity of the Veolia depot at the Shepherd and Flock roundabout in Farnham – to allow Veolia vehicles and staff to go out and assist with path clearance. Whilst some limited assistance was received, Surrey CC generally maintained a strict adherence to their priority gritting network.

### **Summary of events**

16. Annexe 1 to this report provides a summary timeline of events. Annexe 2 provides information on Waverley services and how they coped during the period.
17. For Waverley's services the disruption really began just before Christmas when preparations were being made for the Christmas calendar of refuse and recycling collections. Snow on the 15 and 16 of December meant that delays became inevitable in the Christmas arrangements for collection. Normal services only began to resume again on Monday 18 January.
18. The heavy snowfall on the night of Tuesday 5<sup>th</sup> January had a major impact on the roads and public transport systems. The extreme low temperatures for the next week prevented a thaw. So when further snow fell on the night of Tuesday 12 this prolonged disruption to travel and services until the end of that week when the weather began to improve on the 16 and 17 January.
19. On Wednesday 6<sup>th</sup> January the roads were difficult to use and the trains were running on a reduced timetable. At this time much of the public attention was on the gritting and clearing of roads, which is carried out by our colleagues at Surrey County Council. Their resources are limited and consequently for much of the next two weeks the Council received many enquiries as to when roads, villages and estates could be opened up again to allow them to function normally. By Friday the 8 January the Council was able to relay information from the County Council about their gritting programme via the website and other channels.
20. Travel difficulties meant a reduced staff presence on site in both weeks. Each day a team was established from available staff to telephone older people and vulnerable people who are on the Care Line register to check they were warm, safe, well and had enough food. In total over 2000 calls were made. Housing staff supported an emergency food centre in Godalming where the local electricity supply failed for 48 hours.
21. With regard to Waste and recycling collections, vehicles were not physically able to leave their depot in Farnham for two days. Then, whilst the priority road network had been treated by then, the residential roads and footpaths were still very difficult for vehicles and staff in many places across the Borough. This lasted until the week commencing Monday 18<sup>th</sup> January. In the previous snowfall in February and December 2009 the Council had tried to provide some form of service on the roads and paths where it was possible. However the underlying principle of 'we will do what we can, when we can, so please leave your rubbish out and we'll get to it as soon as possible' did not prove successful. With many roads impassable, many customers were left unhappy, and there was a general perception amongst callers that, in taking this approach we were 'over-promising and under-delivering'. It is also difficult

from an operational perspective to manage the 'piecemeal' catch-up operation required after such an approach.

22. So, the learning from February and December 2009 was that in severe weather, it is preferable to suspend services altogether, thus providing a consistent (if sometimes unwelcome) message to the customer, and enabling a more straightforward and easily managed catch-up. This decision was reinforced by the experience of neighbouring boroughs and districts who in attempting a "we will do our best" approach, had very limited success, and left their customers confused as to what they should expect.
23. Countryside Rangers used their 4 x 4 vehicles to help the WRVS Meals on Wheels Service to deliver to local vulnerable people and to help clear fallen trees.
24. In accordance with their contracts, Veolia and Glendale were re-tasked to clearing paths at elderly peoples units, leisure centres, car parks and town centres. Glendale provided a disappointing level of service in the first three days of the snow. This improved from Monday 11<sup>th</sup> but officers have taken subsequent contractual action in recognition of their slow start.
25. Those staff who were unable to get into their normal place of work were able to use the investment in Citrix - ICT technology which allows people to access their work IT systems and email from home. Prompted by the experiences in February 2009, this investment meant some normal services could be maintained and helped with vital communications.

### **Post event assessment**

26. Following the return to normal on Monday January 18<sup>th</sup>, Waverley and other partners were committed to reviewing what had happened and look to improve the Council's future response. The Chief Executive instigated an internal review, which has included staff, contractors and others involved in the delivery of our services.
27. Surrey County Council have carried out both local and corporate reviews of their response to the impact of the weather on the highway network. The Local County Councillors met in January to consider the highway gritting and clearance issues. The Leader was in attendance and was able to contribute a Borough perspective. Some of their initial conclusions were that:
  - Resource limits will dictate a prioritised network for gritting and clearance, but felt that some detailed revisions would be necessary.
  - As well as treating relatively minor roads between rural communities, the heavily populated semi-urban areas should not be overlooked (which in Waverley tend to be hilly), especially where there are concentrations of vulnerable residents. .
  - A distinction was drawn between firstly, salting roads as a means of preventing accidents caused by surface ice and secondly, snow-ploughing after heavy falls of snow. It was felt that the emphasis on the former in recent years had reduced capacity in the latter.

- Salt bins: the current list of locations is inaccurate and incomplete and there are increasing pressures for the installation and maintenance of additional bins in vulnerable locations. .
- There is a need to recruit more farmers and plant operators whose vehicles have been checked in advance and are in a position to be mobilised rapidly to help with clearance of snow, etc.
- Residents could take more responsibility for clearance in their communities, provided that reassurance on the legal position is provided, and in monitoring the use of salt bins.
- The assistance of Waverley Borough Council in undertaking treatment of paths, etc. has been valued and its Leader's offer to commit whatever is necessary on a collaborative basis was welcomed.
- Accuracy of information and advice to the public is important.

28. At a meeting of the SCC Transport Select Committee on 10<sup>th</sup> March, County Councillors considered a report that covered the whole County. It proposed draft recommendations for the future which reflected similar views to the Local Committee Councillors. These included:

- “Fully utilise capacity in the salt barns and purchase all salt supplies during the summer months when the product is cheaper. This will bring the start of season stock level up to 13,500t but is clearly dependent on agreement to transfer costs to the balance sheet
- Contract review – clarification of roles and responsibilities to improve the decision making process
- Further review of isolated communities in towns as well as in the countryside as part of the preparation of a reduced network
- Further consideration of limited bus route management
- Contractually engage more farmers during the summer months
- Consider alternative resource availability to crew up to nine 7.5t vehicles with snow ploughs to service smaller, isolated areas of the network, possibly through collaboration with the Districts and Boroughs
- Daily countywide information bulletins to be circulated with all Districts/Boroughs to be included
- Operations staff to proactively engage in network scouting and feeding back information on network conditions and availability
- Engage further with Districts/Borough on the treatment of footways/footpaths
- Surrey to give “permission” and encouragement to the public to develop self-help by clearing their own frontages with shopkeepers doing the same

- Parish and Town Council's are also important potential partners and discussions, as part of the contract strategy development, are required to establish what can be achieved with them and their residents
  - Determine a sustainable salt bin asset and future maintenance strategy prior to the 10/11 Winter season. An inventory has been taken and updated since last summer of approximately 1500 salt bins but not all are ours to replace and maintain. In some cases whole bins were being lifted and removed (32 known) and inappropriate off-highway use of the contents is widespread.
  - With the current extensive asset (1500 bins) each round of restocking is resource hungry and costs approximately £130-170k per season (for 1,500 salt bins x 2 refills together with replacement programme) “
29. Detailed discussions have also been held between SCC and Waverley officers – the conclusions of which are set out below.
- i. Accept that clearing the strategic highway network comes first and clearing the local network will follow as a secondary priority.
  - ii. At the local level, SCC Local Highway Manager [John Hilder] will be co-ordinating local highway and transport actions. WBC can support him in this role during an emergency event by:-
    - WBC identifying an operational liaison officer (and deputy)
    - Daily, early contact between JH/SCC and WBC to allow WBC resources to be tasked.
    - In the meantime, WBC will provide JH with inventory of resources (vehicles and skills)
    - WBC to provide support for assisting SCC with clearing footpaths
    - JH to pursue proposal to stock grit at Farnham depot
  - iii. Explore joint working with Parish and Town Councils – and potential for encouraging community self-help
30. The Surrey Local Resilience Forum has carried out a formal review of events and learning points to build into their operations. The principal recommendation related to ensuring there is a robust process for identifying vulnerable people. A Surrey wide exercise is to be held in late March to test local arrangements.
31. Other recommendations were made on:
- improving communication links within the LRF
  - Surrey to investigate the more formalised use of volunteer drivers and their 4 x 4 vehicles
  - Improving self-help messages to the public – especially for snow and flooding
  - the LRF to develop specific briefing procedures for Councillors



32. The Town and Parish Councils considered the issue at their meeting with Waverley on Monday 1 March, where they received presentations from Waverley and Surrey officers. Prompted by a formal question from Farnham Town Council, the principal conclusions were:
- To recognise the potentially important role that Town and Parish Councils could play in all events of adverse weather – through their assets, networks and local knowledge.
  - Town and Parish Councils would be individually contacted to establish whether they wished to participate in the formal emergency planning process.

33. At the meeting of the Executive in February, the Leader made an introductory statement. His concluding remarks were:

“From my observations the Council and its staff worked extremely hard to rise to the challenge. Not all of our efforts were successful though and there remains a critical and understandable questioning by our residents of how local and central government coped with this period. The Chief Executive has already instigated a comprehensive review of all of the events and our response, to identify what went well, what went less well and what improvements could we make for the future. This is not just limited to Waverley, but the discussions are taking place with our colleagues at the County Council, our contractors and others who help us provide our community services.

I have committed to asking our Overview and Scrutiny Committees to contribute and comment on this critical review. Local Government Services are essential and highly important for the quality of life in our community and are particularly necessary to support the more vulnerable groups. We always need to be doing the best we can and striving to ensure we not only cope with these events but recover from them as soon as possible.

But we are neither magicians or robots. Our staff and our contractors’ staff had to cope with the same conditions as everyone else. Snow and freezing conditions present the same hazards, even more so when heavy lorries and manual work are involved. There are some things that were impossible to do, and other things too dangerous. If we were not perfect it is because we are humans.”

### **A policy approach**

34. Looking to the future, certain general principles can be identified, which can form the basis of Waverley’s future policy approach. Listed, these include:

### **For Waverley:**

- i. The existing Business Continuity Plan and Emergency Planning frameworks stood the authority in good stead in actively managing its corporate response to the event.
- ii. The advance weather forecast allowed the authority to make advance preparations.
- iii. There are other adverse weather events besides snow, which could have a major impact on the community
- iv. To review and extend the list of potential emergency contractors
- v. At the service level there were many successful interventions and responses – but further improvements will be made.
- vi. Whilst business continuity provisions are currently included in the major service contracts, these should be reviewed at the time of contract re-specification – especially with regard to the need for flexible, multi-purpose plant and machinery.
- vii. The need to continue to improve our awareness of the location and needs of vulnerable people and groups in the Borough
- viii. The importance of ICT technology in service delivery and maintaining communication links

### **For Waverley working with its partners:**

- i. The Surrey Local Resilience Forum (SLRF) is the cornerstone of emergency planning in the County. It is reviewing its procedures and the joint actions required in adverse weather events
- ii. Road links are particularly important to community life in Waverley. Operational liaison needs to improve with SCC Highways to ensure that recovery from an event such as this is made as soon as possible.
- iii. To implement the potential for mutual aid. Central to this objective is a greater awareness of each other's assets and a willingness to facilitate their more flexible redeployment [eg the use of SCC staff who live in the Borough].

### **For Waverley working with the community:**

- i. To facilitate and re-energise self-help within the community – to speed up the recovery phase.
- ii. Town and Parish Councils and other voluntary sector partners could have a critical role in mobilising local action
- iii. Lobbying for legislative change to remove the widely perceived 'litigation' barriers to self-help [e.g. clearing pavements and access paths] by residents, local businesses and High Street retailers.

35. An Adverse Weather Policy is proposed at Annexe 3 as a supplement to the existing Business Continuity Plan. This is not only intended to guide Waverley's actions in responding to adverse weather events, but will assist in setting expectations with partners and service users and allow them to make their own plans accordingly.
36. A number of direct actions flow from the work so far. The principal actions are set out in the recommendation. Further meetings with our partners are still scheduled to explore deliverable projects and arrangements. The Waverley Business Continuity team and the SLRF will continue to provide the principal focus for this work.
37. The policy and its related actions will need to be reviewed and updated as circumstances change and as it gets tested in future events.

### **Observations from the Environment and Leisure Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

38. A meeting of the Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee took place on 24<sup>th</sup> March 2010. The observations from the meeting are noted below.

The Committee RESOLVED that the following observations on the recommendations outlined in the agenda report and the draft Adverse Policy be forwarded for consideration by the Executive:

1. The Committee was concerned about maintaining communication with residents if, for example, telephone lines were brought down and they could not access the website or use telephones. Members were particularly concerned about the Councils communication with elderly and vulnerable people. Members also felt that there should be an action to update the website in real time to ensure residents were kept informed with the latest information.
2. The Committee was concerned about the possibility of energy blackouts around the Borough and the Councils response if this occurred.
3. The Committee asked for Members to be kept informed of any issues facing the Council during periods of adverse weather and used as a link for help in their local communities.
4. In addition to those actions detailed in the report, the Committee agreed that the Council should take a lead on lobbying the Government to clarify legislation on the legal issues for members of the public in clearing paths and driveways.
5. The Committee felt that there should be improved liaison and communication with Town and Parishes to ensure they were consulted in partnership with other organisations. Members also felt that the Council should use Town and Parishes, schools and local community groups more effectively to help deal with the affects of adverse weather but recognising that they needed to be supported in this process.
6. The Committee did not feel that the Council should wait until near the end of contracts to renegotiate terms for work from contractors during adverse weather but, where possible, this should be done as soon as possible.

7. The Committee was not completely satisfied with the information provided by Surrey County Council about road clearing in rural areas and asked that this be made clearer and more precise.
  8. The Committee felt that the Council should act more quickly to put measures in place when there was confident advice from the met office that severe weather was imminent, particularly with contractors to ensure they were prepared and ready to take action.
  9. The Committee wanted officers to ensure that there was adequate communication with the emergency services about accessible roads around the Borough.
  10. The Committee felt that the Adverse Weather Policy should include action and contingency plans to deal with the implications of adverse weather.
  11. The Committee also felt that in addition to the other priorities listed in the Adverse Weather Policy The Council should also aim to support Surrey County Council in keeping the transport system operational.
  12. Despite concerns, the Committee wanted to thank staff, particularly those who supported vulnerable people around the Borough, for their hard work in maintaining services during this difficult period.
39. In addition to the above observations, the Committee RESOLVED that the following recommendations arising from discussions at the meeting be considered by the Executive:
1. The Committee felt that there was a lot to learn from the implications of the adverse weather conditions in some service areas. Members noted that a Business Continuity Group had been set up to look into this, but Members felt that there should be some further councillor involvement in the process. Therefore, the Committee strongly agreed that the Executive should consider establishing a Special Interest Group, to meet alongside the officer group, to discuss the Council's response to adverse weather conditions in more detail.
  2. The Committee agreed that it should hold its next meeting in September rather than November to receive a report back on progress.

## **Conclusion**

40. The Special Overview and Scrutiny Committee provided a very helpful forum to gain Councillors' perspectives on the January snow period and their suggestions for future preparedness. Most of the comments can be incorporated into the officer action planning work that will be undertaken over the next few months with the aim of reporting back in the September cycle.
41. The suggestion for a SIG or similar forum to advise and guide the action planning work enjoyed much support at the meeting. The Executive Committee's guidance is requested on this issue.
42. Guidance would also be helpful on the suggestion [point 11] that the Borough Council should take a more active role in helping to keep the highway system open. This would be a departure from current policy, where we assist primarily with just footways and pavements.

43. Finally, officers will develop the suggestion that a case should be made for clarifying or changing the legislation with regard to the perceived liability that householders and businesses risk when they are clearing the public footpaths adjoining their property. A further report will be brought to a future meeting.

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### **Recommendation**

It is recommended that:

1. the Special Overview and Scrutiny Committee be thanked for their valuable comments and suggestions on dealing with the impact of adverse weather on the Council's services and community recovery activities;
2. a report containing a detailed action plan to improve winter preparedness, including the issue of assisting Surrey County Council in highway clearance and incorporating the comments made by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, be presented to the September cycle of meetings;
3. the Executive should respond to the suggestion that a SIG be established to advise and guide the officer work on the action plan by agreeing that the appropriate Portfolio Holder consult all members when necessary; and
4. officers press the Local Government Association to lead a lobby on the liability issue.

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### **Background Papers**

There are no background papers (as defined by Section 100D(5) of the Local Government Act 1972) relating to this report.

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## Experience with Services

1. Housing and Services for Vulnerable People (including Careline)
2. Waste and Recycling
3. Car Parks
4. Grounds maintenance
5. Customer and Office Services
6. Planning

### 1 - Housing & Services for Vulnerable People

#### What happened?

- Most Housing staff managed to get into work (except for those in very rural areas). Many of those working in Sheltered Housing walked to the units, though access to houses and housing complexes was very difficult due to the icy conditions.
- Each day a small team of available staff were established to call the 2000 Careline customers to check they were safe, warm and had enough food (EDF power supplies around the outskirts of Godalming had led to power cuts to around 800 homes, and there were further supply issues throughout the Borough).
- Access to houses and housing complexes was made very difficult, due to the ice and the necessary prioritisation of main road gritting by Surrey County Council.
- The Housing Service moved to target emergency and urgent repairs only, with particular focus on homes without heating and vulnerable groups (pensioners, the disabled and houses with children under 5).
- Contractors worked extended hours, evenings and weekends to keep up-to-date with reactive breakdowns. In the first two weeks of January, CHS responded to 88 emergencies (compared with 86 in the whole of December 2009 and 61 throughout November). EPS also worked extended hours and responded to a high volume of call-outs.
- There was a slow start to footpath clearance around sheltered housing and bungalow schemes.
- Staff supported a residents' initiative at Aarons Hill and Ockford Ridge providing food for the emergency shelter and for older people. Waverley's day centres were also involved where possible. Farncombe, for example, put on extra hot meals.
- Arrangements were already in place with a private 4x4 club to assist with Meals on Wheels and essential medical deliveries in severe weather and Countryside Rangers also helped out.
- **Costs:** With regard to Housing, the repairs budget has been affected, as has the HRA Tenants Miscellaneous Expenses Budget where emergency temporary accommodation had to be provided (e.g. for a wheelchair-bound tenant whose pipes burst, resulting in a total cost of £1000).

## **Snow successes**

- Feedback from the Careline call customers was very positive, and around 30 were referred to Surrey County Council's Social Services Department for additional support.
- The 4x4 deliveries to Meals on Wheels customers ensured that everyone registered for the service either received their meals or had a neighbour or friend supply them with hot food.
- Although Waverley's Housing Service prioritised the most vulnerable people during the snow. Outstanding day-to-day housing repairs were completed by 5<sup>th</sup> February, and all no-heating/hot water situations were quickly addressed. This was mainly achieved by the contractors working overtime to clear the backlog of cases.

## **Snow learning points**

- There were various community organisations that needed help and support during the snow, but were unaware where to get it e.g. the Haslewey Community Centre. This suggests that communication links could be improved with these organisations for future severe weather events.
- Roads prioritised for gritting in Waverley are concentrated around the four main towns (16 in Cranleigh, 55 in Farnham, 64 in Godalming, 18 in Haslemere and a few in the smaller villages). This left some of the more remote areas, such as Rowledge, almost totally isolated.

## **Actions:**

- Develop stronger links with the local community, both in terms of communication between them and the Council and in order to support and encourage self-help schemes in more isolated areas. This could be approached via residents' associations and/or include Surrey Community Action's Good Neighbour Scheme, which currently has a presence in Milford, Witley, Shamley Green, Ewhurst, Ellen's Green and Farnham.

## **Careline:**

During the snow situation routine follow up visits were cancelled and rearranged. Customers were reminded to do a 'self test ' and follow up visits were rescheduled as soon as practicable after the end of the snow emergency. The power cuts in some parts of the Borough caused fault alarms although back-up batteries meant that the units continued to operate correctly for several days.

Fortunately, there were no calls that could not be dealt with during the snow crisis. One call for a lost pendant was responded to on foot, and normal emergency processes were followed for any customers who pressed their alarms for assistance.

In future, in conditions of heavy snow or widespread icy roads that have not been treated, there could be the need for specialist vehicles to support staff on visits to less accessible locations. The nature of the Borough and nature of the service means that spare equipment would need to be taken on roads that were not prioritised for treatment on the last emergency. Each situation would be reviewed and requests for assistance channelled through the appropriate routes.

## 2 - Waste & Recycling

### What happened?

- When the December snow fell, attempts were made to maintain business as usual by providing a skeleton waste collection service. Veolia then had to catch up with the backlog, while delivering the revised Christmas collection calendar.
- In January, on the grounds of safety, it was necessary to suspend all collections, though a new temporary collection point service was established in the four population centres on 12,14,15,16 & 23 January in shopping centre car parks. As a result, about 19 tonnes of refuse were collected – this was equivalent to 1,200 households.
- Additionally, a reactive “sweep” service took place on 15 January, which collected rubbish from the high street.
- During the two week period affected by the snow, 2,682 calls relating to the waste service were handled at the central offices and at the locality offices. Almost all of these were queries about collection arrangements. 20 formal complaints were received, relating to the service, during the snow.
- **Costs:** Veolia absorbed much of the overheads from the snow period. However, they will be charging Waverley around £7,500.

### Snow successes:

- The relationship and communication links between Waverley and Veolia worked very well and provided a good service.
- The decision to provide a temporary collection point service was very effective in that it provided a self-help option to complement the SCC Community Recycling Centres [i.e. ‘local tips’].
- Veolia caught up with the waste and refuse backlog by the beginning of February; partially through deploying extra vehicles and partially through providing a catch-up service (on Sat 23 & 30 January).

### Snow learning points:

- It seems to have worked better to suspend collections altogether (as in January 2010) rather than to operate a piecemeal approach to collection (as in December 2009).
- Partnership working with Surrey CC worked better over time, but was initially slightly difficult and there were flexibility issues. This extended not just to gritting and clearing, but also to the Slyfield Transfer Station (on Tues 19 January, almost 20 man-hours were lost as a result of delays and the tip refused to take a consignment of paper on the grounds that it was too wet).

### Actions:

- Conduct a review of salt volumes (Glendale and Veolia).
- Ensure arrangements are in place to initiate the temporary collection points in future snow situations.
- Work to be done with Surrey Waste Management to improve the situation at Slyfield transfer station.
- Establish improved communications links between Waverley and the local community (including using locality offices and community group contacts) or Twitter/RSS.



### 3 - Car Parks

#### What happened?

- The volume of snowfall made snow clearance, rather than gritting, an initial priority. Veolia's street cleaners enacted an existing agreement to divert to clearing in town centres, along pavements, in car parks and along sheltered housing routes, followed by grit spreading in icy areas.
- Car parks were toured on Monday 11 January. At this point it became clear that heavy machinery needed to be contracted in to get rid of the snow. On 12<sup>th</sup>, contractors arrived to clear snow in Farnham, Haslemere and Cranleigh. On 13<sup>th</sup>, they went to Godalming. Priority 1 for clearance was supermarket car parks (to help people get their food and other provisions). Priority 2 was major town car parks to keep the local economy going (to support local business – retail and catering industries were hit particularly hard according to the local media). Clearing efforts then moved to perimeter and long-stay car parks.
- The grit that was available was then spread by the new tow gritter (with a 12 bag capacity), purchased at the end of 2009.
- In common with the rest of the UK, Waverley ran out of grit. Although Veolia had topped up grit supplies in the summer, meaning grit bins were full and there was a stock of road salt bags at Farnham depot, the cold weather in December had used much of the supply. Waverley had placed an order for more grit before Christmas and was expecting delivery week commencing 4 Jan 2010. However, this was not delivered before the snow and was then diverted by the Government's Salt Cell.
- **Costs:** The car park clearance efforts cost around £20,000. Loss of income from the car parks is estimated at around £50,000.

#### Snow successes:

- Procurement decisions to purchase a spread-gritter and snow clearance equipment (by Veolia and the Countryside Team in December 2009) were prompted by the February 2009 experience. This assisted with the clearances and gritting.

#### Snow learning points:

- Car park clearances could have been organised more quickly. However the road networks leading to some car parks were not fully cleared for some days. Also potential car park users were finding it difficult to drive out of their residential areas. This was suppressing potential demand. This highlights the need for better local co-ordination with SCC as highway authority.
- Heavy machinery to clear the car parks was sourced in an ad-hoc and reactive manner - but in the event was done quickly and effectively.
- Grit was held centrally at Farnham, which was affected more seriously than other parts of the Borough by the snow. This created distribution issues. The Countryside Rangers experienced similar problems in keeping their 4x4s at their bases – they couldn't get to the various parks and open spaces to access them without using another 4x4.

**Actions:**

- A plan to be produced for grit storage at locations throughout the Borough.
- Formal arrangements/ agreements to be made for provision of heavy machinery when severe weather makes it necessary (with builders, contractors and local farmers), to include setting up a contact database.
- Repair work will be necessary to address problems caused by the snow and ice.

## **4 - Grounds Maintenance**

### **What happened?**

- With the exception of a very limited service in the Witley area on Friday 8<sup>th</sup> January, Glendale failed to provide a service during the first three days of the snow. Officers have subsequently followed this up with contractual action.
- They provided a full redeployment service in the second week.

### **Snow successes**

- At the first snow in December 2009, Glendale were effective in assisting to clear snow - due to the availability of salt and grit - which they did not have in January.

### **Snow learning points**

- Glendale have recognised that staff who live in the Borough should have been given snow clearance tools, contact numbers and site locations so they could easily carry out snow clearance in their locales.
- Glendale maintains that there was insufficient grit for them to carry out their works. More grit was needed across Waverley in general.

### **Points for Action**

- Waverley will look again at the contract specification – especially with regards to equipment and vehicles - so that deployment can be better resourced in future.
- Glendale have committed to improving their business continuity systems with immediate effect.

## 5 - Customer & Office Services

### What happened?

- Citrix allowed most officers who could not get into work to log on to Waverley's systems from home.
- Reception was fully staffed over the snow days, as were the Post and Scanning rooms. However, demand for these services was low – there were no postal deliveries into the offices for the first two days, little scanning work required and minimal visits to the offices from Waverley residents.
- There were high volumes of calls while it was snowing. In the three weeks from 04 January to 18<sup>th</sup>, 3815 calls came into Waverley offices, a 66% increase in call traffic from the 3 weeks prior to that (1312 calls). After two days, calls were redirected to home lines (around 70% of Waverley's calls come in on direct lines, rather than through the switchboard). Farnham and Cranleigh locality offices became outposts, operating an additional service for the high volume of enquiries regarding waste and refuse.
- The website also received a high volume of 'hits'. From 8<sup>th</sup> to 14<sup>th</sup> January, there were 15,250 visits. (This can be compared with the week of 27<sup>th</sup> November to 4<sup>th</sup> December 2009, when there were 479). The site advertised whether and Waverley's offices and services were operating and the opening and closing times. The main office closed early due to the difficult travelling conditions.

### Snow successes

- Availability of Citrix meant that most officers were connected to Waverley systems and could work remotely.
- Staff flexibility meant that people could be diverted to provide information on key services.
- Many residents were obviously aware of where they could receive further information (see website and phone hits).

### Snow learning points

- Getting the locality offices open (particularly Haslemere) was problematic, as most staff are not local.
- Some staff still do not have Citrix access (30 at the time of the snow), but this is currently being addressed.

### Actions

- Develop a database of local officers who are likely to be able to access The Burys and locality offices during severe weather events.
- Ensure there are enough people to answer phone calls during severe weather events by planning for scripted responses. This could be based on the Environmental Services model during the snow, which had staff answering phones with a script so that a consistent message could be relayed regarding waste and recycling collections.
- Ensure all appropriate staff have Citrix access as soon as possible (may involve loaning out laptops to those without computers when severe weather is expected) to support remote working for those who cannot get to Waverley's offices.

## 6. Planning Services

### What happened?

- **Development Control** - A full reception service was provided during the adverse weather. Planning surgeries continued uninterrupted.
- 3 week backlog in registration of Planning applications. Registration team worked some planned overtime and administration support from Policy team addressed this and backlog was removed a week after end of adverse weather.
- Planning application progress was interrupted with approximately 60 site visits cancelled.
- Eastern Planning Committee was cancelled twice.
- The main consequence was delays in sending out consultations on planning applications and a dipping of development control performance in February – the latter primarily due to the cancellation of Eastern Planning Committee.
- **Enforcement** - Site visits were generally not possible. Approximately 29 visits were cancelled. Backlog of site visits was met in 2 weeks. However all new cases were booked in and telephone and email queries answered.
- **Planning Policy** - the snow delayed the start of the LDF Housing Options consultation by a week and there were some minor delays in lesser priority Policy work.
- **Tree applications** - there was a noticeable increase in phone calls from tree owners asking advice about how to deal with trees damaged by snow. There was also an increase in applications to fell or lop trees in January and February compared to the previous year as a direct result of the snowfall.

### Snow successes

- Continued staffing of planning reception and telephones. Only short term dip in Development Control performance.
- Availability of Citrix meant that most Officers could work remotely.
- Staff flexibility meant that backlogs in registration were addressed quickly.

### Snow learning points

- Database of Officers who live in Godalming to get clearer idea of who could access The Burys.
- Consider access to 4x4 for emergency enforcement and tree inspections.

Adverse Weather Policy DRAFT**Introduction & Background**

This adverse weather policy covers all forms of severe weather, including snow.

**Defining Severe Weather**

The Met Office have identified the most likely types of severe weather in the UK (and therefore Waverley) as heavy snow or rain, thunderstorms & lightning, severe gales or hurricanes and severe heat and sun.

Severe weather type	Definition	Likely results in Waverley
Heavy snow	Snow falling at a rate of 2cm/hr for at least 2 hours	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>★ Public health risk re: freezing temperatures</li> <li>★ Possible food shortages</li> <li>★ Power lines affected</li> <li>★ Transport networks brought down</li> <li>★ Damage to trees</li> </ul>
Heavy rain	Rain expected to continue for at least 3 hours, giving accumulation of 15mm within that timeframe, or 25mm per day following previous heavy rain events.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>★ Flood damage to buildings</li> <li>★ Transport networks brought down</li> </ul>
Thunderstorms & lightning		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>★ Power lines affected</li> </ul>
Severe gales	Inland gusts of 70mph or more	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>★ Structural damage to buildings</li> <li>★ Damage to trees</li> <li>★ Transport networks brought down</li> <li>★ Power lines brought down</li> </ul>
Severe heat & sun	Temperature conditions significantly above average for the time of year	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>★ Public health risk: sunstroke, dehydration.</li> <li>★ Possible water shortages</li> <li>★ Transport networks affected by melting tarmac.</li> <li>★ Possible Heath fires</li> </ul>

The Surrey Climate Change Partnership has commissioned a 'Surrey Local Climate Impacts Profile'. The draft report identifies that severe weather events such as those listed above are occurring with increasing frequency

## Waverley's Priorities during a Severe Weather Event

The Council's priorities during any period of adverse weather are as follows:

- ★ Delivering universal services, where appropriate and where possible
- ★ Supporting people, particularly vulnerable groups.
- ★ Maintaining/ ensuring safety of the community, staff and contractors

The ultimate aim of the Council is to move back towards providing a normal service as soon as possible – working towards this objective is termed “the road to recovery”:



The work of Waverley Borough Council spans four general service areas when providing a normal service, with an approximately equal distribution of resources within each area.

When a severe weather event occurs, resources should move from the Corporate and Regulatory Services towards the General Universal and Supporting People Services, expanding these Service areas and shrinking Corporate and Regulatory resources, as below:

General Universal Services	Supporting People Services
Corporate Services	Regulatory Services

Prioritisation should be given to the following specific areas during a severe weather incident:

General Universal Services (Operations Management): Making areas safe by clearing debris and dangerous material and making roads and structures secure and usable; while maintaining services such as waste and recycling collections as far as reasonably possible.

Supporting People Services (Welfare Management): Ensuring vulnerable people have food, water, shelter and are warm/cool enough and well. During a severe weather event the Council may assist other partners or deliver other services that do not usually fall to Waverley to ensure the safety of its most vulnerable residents, e.g. social or health services.

Corporate (Information./Logistics Management): Ensuring the Council gets key messages out to the community concerning general universal services and supporting people services  
To achieve this, the incident needs to be centrally managed and coordinated.

**Coordinating a Severe Weather Incident**

Responses to a severe weather incident should have reference to:

- ★ Waverley’s Emergency Plan (Emergency Management System) – currently being updated. The Emergency Management System would automatically prioritise the areas mentioned above, and is organised in such a way that it can respond flexibly to unexpected events.
- ★ The Business Continuity Plan and Local Service Recovery Plans - which can assist with ongoing efforts to move along the road to recovery.

Severe weather incidents will be managed from a centralised hub - a tactical control room in the Burys (or alternative appropriate accommodation), with Emergency Management representation and communication links to Heads of Service/Team Leaders as appropriate. Communication will also be maintained with partners, and help given where possible (on the basis of Mutual Aid Agreements).

Links with community organisations (parish and town councils and residents associations) will be fully utilised to pass key messages to those who may not have Internet or telephone access.