

# APPENDIX I

## WAVERLEY BOROUGH COUNCIL

### ENVIRONMENT AND LEISURE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

14 SEPTEMBER 2010

EXECUTIVE – 5 OCTOBER 2010

---

**Title:**

**SEVERE WEATHER PREPARATIONS**

[Portfolio Holder: Cllr Robert Knowles]

[Wards Affected: All]

---

**Summary and purpose:**

The purpose of this report is to describe progress made in improving preparedness for the winter season ahead. Preparations for other forms of adverse weather event, including heat wave and flooding are included.

Heavy snow fell across Waverley in December 2009 and January 2010 causing widespread disruption to services and the transport system. Residents of Waverley, businesses and the Council's own services were adversely impacted. Some of the vulnerable members of our community were at risk during the worst conditions experienced for 30 years. On 13<sup>th</sup> April the Executive considered a detailed report of lessons learned from the events of last winter, which itself followed a joint meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committees on 24<sup>th</sup> March. The Executive requested a report containing a detailed action plan to improve winter preparedness.

The Environment and Leisure Overview and Scrutiny Committee considered this report at its meeting on 14<sup>th</sup> September 2010 and observations arising from this are incorporated into this report.

---

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

This report and the annexes demonstrate how the Council aims to maintain services during adverse weather to deliver its Corporate Priorities.

**Equality and Diversity Implications:**

A key priority during adverse weather is ensuring that the Borough's vulnerable residents are safe.

**Resource/Value for Money implications:**

This report demonstrates how Waverley will redirect its services during periods of adverse weather to priority frontline services.

## **Legal Implications:**

During severe weather emergencies, Waverley has 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 clarified and has prompted a lobby for a change in the legislation. The Leader has written to both local Members of Parliament asking for Government Action on this matter.

Under the Highways Act 1980 the County Council as Highway Authority has a statutory duty to ensure, as far as is reasonably practicable, that safe passage along a highway is not endangered by snow or ice. Pavements are a part of the highway if they are maintainable at public expense.

---

## **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 over 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.
3. Against this background, plans and preparations for adverse weather have been reviewed and are included in this report.

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

4. 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:
  - a. To minimise the effect of any incident on the Council's ability to provide services and carry out its statutory functions
  - b. To enable the Council to achieve a planned and constructive response in such circumstances
  - c. To minimise the risk to people and property.
5. The Structure of the Plan recognises different levels of action. These are:
  - a. Core procedures for corporate management responsibility and action in the event of an emergency.
  - b. Responsibilities and procedures for central support teams in such circumstances.

- c. 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.
  - d. Local Recovery Plans for each of these Services in the event of disruption.
- 6. 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 and other actions that would assist with coping with an emergency.
- 7. 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.
- 8. 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, the SLRF also provides mutual aid and access to information and decision-making.
- 9. The Council's Emergency Advisory Group exists to provide guidance and decisions in the event of a major emergency. It currently comprises the Leader, Deputy Leader, Councillor Mrs King and Councillor Mr Duckett. The decision to call the Committee is a matter of judgement, based on the specific circumstances.

### **Corporate Severe Weather Plan**

- 10. A Waverley Severe Weather Plan has been developed and covers all forms of severe weather, including snow. The Plan is attached at Annexe 1 to this report. The objectives of the Plan are:
  - a. To ensure activation at the appropriate level within the Council at the initial stages of severe weather incidents.
  - b. To implement the Council's strategy for dealing with a severe weather incident.
  - c. To ensure co-ordinated management of any severe weather incident.
  - d. To ensure a co-ordinated approach with partners, where required, during a severe weather incident.
  - e. To provide a framework for the activation, allocation and deployment of Council resources in the event of severe weather.

## **Defining Severe Weather**

11. The Met Office has 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 as follows:

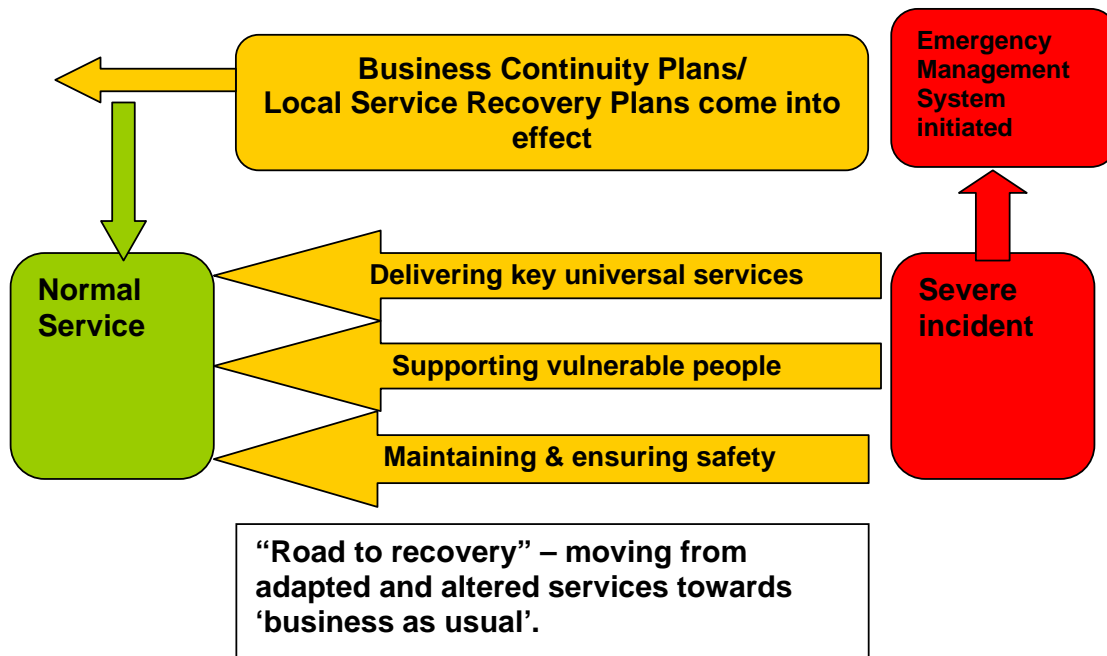
Severe weather type	Definition	Likely results in Waverley
Heavy snow	Snow falling at a rate of 2cm/hr for at least 2 hours	Public health risk re: freezing temperatures Possible food shortages Power lines affected Transport networks brought down Damage to trees
Heavy rain	Rain expected to continue for at least 3 hours, giving accumulation of 15mm within that timeframe, or 25mm per day following previous heavy rain events.	Flood damage to buildings Transport networks brought down
Thunderstorms & lightning		Power lines affected
Severe gales	Inland gusts of 70mph or more	Structural damage to buildings Damage to trees Transport networks brought down Power lines brought down
Severe heat & sun – heat wave.	Temperature conditions significantly above average for the time of year	Public health risk: sunstroke, dehydration. Possible water shortages Transport networks affected by melting tarmac. Possible Heath fires

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

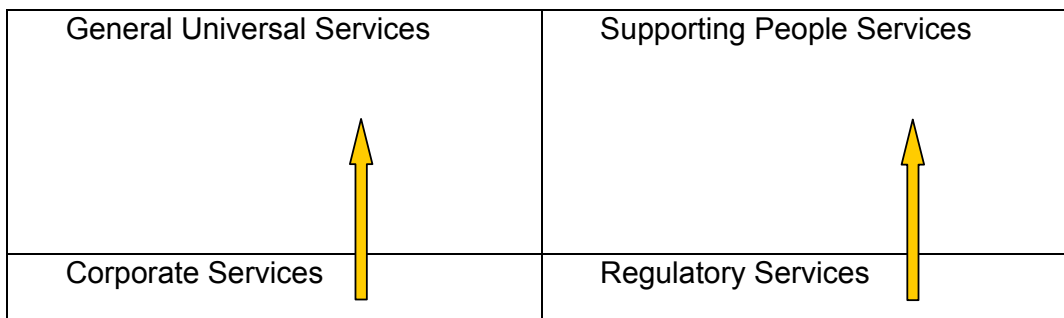
## **Waverley’s Priorities during a Severe Weather Event**

13. The Council’s priorities during any period of adverse weather, not in order, are as follows:
- a. Delivering universal services, where appropriate and where possible
  - b. Supporting people, particularly vulnerable groups.
  - c. Maintaining / ensuring safety of the community, staff and contractors.

- d. 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”:



14. 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.
15. 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:



16. Prioritisation should be given to the following specific areas during a severe weather incident:
- I. 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.

- II. 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.
- III. 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.

### **Vulnerable People**

17. During this year's snow and ice event most Housing staff were able to get to work, including many of those working in Sheltered Housing, who were able to walk to the units. The Housing Service also targeted emergency and urgent repairs only, with particular focus on homes without heating and vulnerable groups. 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.
18. In addition to this, each day a small team of available staff were established to call the 2,000 Careline customers to check they were safe warm and had enough food. Around 30 customers were referred to Surrey County Council's Social Services Department for additional support.
19. The Surrey Local Resilience Forum has now developed an 'Identifying Vulnerable People during a Major Emergency Plan'. This forms **part one** of a plan that describes inter-agency arrangements. In addition to this, each individual agency including Waverley has outlined their own arrangements, and this forms **part two** of the plan. This describes the arrangements Waverley Borough Council has in place for identifying vulnerable people during an emergency. In April 2010, the Surrey Local Resilience Forum held an exercise to test the multi-agency response to the need to identify vulnerable people in an emergency.
20. Part of Waverley's Identifying Vulnerable People During a Major Emergency Plan is attached as Annexe 2 to this report. Detailed information about the database and access to it are not included.

### **Keeping the Community Moving**

21. During the severe winter weather the critical importance of the transport and road network was evident. Clearing the Highway is the responsibility of Surrey County Council, which has itself been reviewing its processes and procedures. Surrey's Transportation Select Committee established a Winter Performance Task Group, which is due to report to the Select Committee on 28<sup>th</sup> September, about revisions to the Winter Service Plan.
22. It appears that this review is likely to recommend concentrating on clearing priority traffic routes, but with no attention to footways. The Waverley Leadership have concerns over such a one size fits all policy, which in

January did not recognise 15 inches of snow and serious disruption this caused in Waverley, as opposed to very little in other parts of Surrey.

23. A meeting has been arranged in October for Waverley representatives to meet with SCC Highways. The purpose of this meeting is to finalise arrangements ahead of the winter. It is hoped that information will be made available about a promised review of salting priorities and how this will be made available publicly.
24. Waverley's own priorities in relation to movements around the Borough will be to take prompt action to clear Waverley's town centre car parks. Arrangements have been made with local contractors with suitable (earth moving) equipment to clear snow from car parks.
25. A further point of concern has been a willingness by local owners of suitable plant and machinery to clear snow, but a lack of clarity about how to seek permission and coordinate activity with SCC Highways. Following communication and discussion with County Officers, they have agreed to communicate with Towns and Parishes to advise that if they have knowledge of any volunteers with plough equipment, then they should contact a named contact via email so that arrangements can be made will then add them to the list of volunteer equipment that will be checked for use on the roads.
26. It is clear that any snow clearing from roads will need to be properly coordinated by SCC as concern has been expressed that if there is not likely to be any gritting to follow the clearing, this could lead to dangerous ice conditions. This is an important operational matter that Surrey Highways have been asked to consider and resolve.

### **Snow Clearance and the Local Community**

27. Obstacles to the local community taking their own action to clear snow became evident and Waverley has been working and lobbying to change these. One of these was the widely held belief, that if any resident or local business cleared their own frontage there was an unacceptable risk of being sued in the event of an accident. Many potentially willing and able members of the community therefore felt deterred from taking action.
28. The LGA has recently published a report; "Weathering the Storm II", in which there is a specific recommendation to Government:  
  
"The Government should issue unequivocal advice to individuals and organistaions that they will not be at risk of litigation should they clear footways themselves. If, as we saw last winter, Government lawyers feel unable to advise Ministers to give such guidance, the Government should bring forward legislation to clarify the position."
29. As well as Officers seeking clarification of this matter The Leader wrote to local MPs' on 6<sup>th</sup> August to seek their support, especially in the event that new legislation becomes a possibility. Copies of the replies from the Local MPs are attached as Annexe 3 to this report.

## **Improving Liaison and Joint Working with Towns and Parishes**

30. Work has been carried out to improve liaison and communication with Town and Parishes in preparation for, and in the event of an emergency.
31. On the 18 May 2010, representatives of Towns and Parishes were invited to attend a meeting with Waverley Officers and a representative of SCC Emergency Planning Unit to discuss adverse weather and emergency planning. One of the agreed ways to develop this work was to hold an Emergency Planning Workshop.
32. A one-day Workshop was held on 16<sup>th</sup> July with the following aims and objectives:

### **Aim**

To further develop the role of Town and Parish Councils within the multi-agency response to a major incident

### **Objectives**

- a. Understanding of Emergency Planning in Surrey
- b. Understanding of how Town and Parish Councils can assist emergency planning response
- c. Understanding of the emergency plan template
- d. Opportunity to practice Town / Parish emergency planning response using a table top exercise
- e. Opportunity to discuss emergency planning issues
- f. Surrey County Council Emergency Management Team, Surrey Police and a number of Waverley Officers supported the workshop.

A brief report of the workshop is attached as Annexe 4 to this report.

## **Improving Liaison and Joint Working with Surrey County Council and Key Partners**

33. A cornerstone of emergency planning in the County is the Surrey Local Resilience Forum (SLRF). All 'Category 1' partners, as defined in the Civil Contingencies Act 2004 are members of SLRF, including Waverley, SCC and representatives of each of the emergency services and the NHS. An example of the work to improve planning and cooperation between partners is the plan for 'Contacting Vulnerable People in a Major Emergency.'
34. During the winter severe weather the SRLF held a twice-daily teleconference 'attended' by Waverley's 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.



## **Communication**

35. The Information cell within the Waverley Emergency Management Team structure, as set out in Annexe 1 to this report, coordinates information to residents during an emergency. The communications and committee services teams make up the Information cell and will ensure that information is sent out in a timely manner. The most up to date information will be given out through the website and via radio broadcasts.
36. If all telephone, electricity, website communications are brought down, then there are no more practicable ways to communicate with residents. This situation then relies on individual and community resilience. It is hoped that, with the increasing number of Towns and Parishes writing emergency plans, local effort and local spirit will be coordinated to help those most at risk.

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

37. ELOS considered this report on 14<sup>th</sup> September and resolved that the following observations be forwarded to the Executive:
  - The Committee was disappointed that the report had only gone to ELOS and not all three O&S committees for comment and observations as per the March tri-scrutiny meeting.
  - The Committee recommended that Surrey County Council be invited to come to a future meeting to speak with a wider audience about issues arising from the Council's preparedness for maintaining services during severe weather.
  - Whilst the Committee was advised that there are separate plans already established dealing with issues such as severe flooding, Members noted that this should be indicated within the document.
  - The Committee was concerned by the suggestion of parking on roads in severe weather as, in some areas such as Hindhead, this made things more difficult.
  - The Committee asked for the emergency plan to incorporate dealing with mass casualties such as in the event there was a severe incident in the Hindhead tunnel. Officers assured the Committee that this was already being undertaken.
  - Officers also assured the Committee that the Council carried out a number of desktop training exercises throughout the year to prepare for emergencies. However, Members asked if this could be incorporated more specifically into the emergency plan.
  - The Committee noted the benefit of working closely with Towns and Parishes and that this should continue.

## **Conclusions**

38. The heavy snow of last winter disrupted services and the local economy and put vulnerable members of the community at risk. This report indicates the preparations made so far to learn from the experience and to improve preparedness for the winter to come.

39. Severe weather may take forms other than snow and ice. Although this report has concentrated on snow and ice, other forms of severe weather have been referred to in this report and the annexes where appropriate.

---

### **Recommendation**

It is recommended that

1. the comments of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee be noted; and
2. the Waverley Corporate Severe Weather Plan and the plan for identifying vulnerable people during a major emergency attached as Annexes 1 and 2 be endorsed.

---

### **Background Papers**

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

---

### **CONTACT OFFICERS:**

**Name:** Martin Shorten

**Telephone:** 01483 523434

**E-mail:** [martin.shorten@waverley.gov.uk](mailto:martin.shorten@waverley.gov.uk)

**Name:** Robert Anderton

**Telephone:** 01483 523411

**E-mail:** [robert.anderton@waverley.gov.uk](mailto:robert.anderton@waverley.gov.uk)