





**Brighton & Hove
City Council**

Overview & Scrutiny

Title:	Environment & Community Safety Overview & Scrutiny Committee Ad Hoc Panel - Winter Service Plan Review
Date:	17 March 2010
Time:	10.00am
Venue	Committee Room 1, Hove Town Hall
Members:	Councillors: <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between;"> <div style="width: 45%;"> <p>Chairman Morgan</p> </div> <div style="width: 45%;"> <p>Janio Rufus Watkins</p> </div> </div>
Contact:	Tom Hook Head of Overview & Scrutiny 01273 291110

	The Town Hall has facilities for wheelchair users, including lifts and toilets
	An Induction loop operates to enhance sound for anyone wearing a hearing aid or using a transmitter and infra red hearing aids are available for use during the meeting. If you require any further information or assistance, please contact the receptionist on arrival.
	<p style="text-align: center;">FIRE / EMERGENCY EVACUATION PROCEDURE</p> <p>If the fire alarm sounds continuously, or if you are instructed to do so, you must leave the building by the nearest available exit. You will be directed to the nearest exit by council staff. It is vital that you follow their instructions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You should proceed calmly; do not run and do not use the lifts; • Do not stop to collect personal belongings; • Once you are outside, please do not wait immediately next to the building, but move some distance away and await further instructions; and • Do not re-enter the building until told that it is safe to do so.

- 1. Procedural Business** **1 - 2**

- 2. Chairman's Communications**

- 3. To Note Existing Information** **3 - 56**

To note reports and draft minutes of Environment & Community Safety Overview & Scrutiny Committee on 8 February 2010 including Scrutiny Panel terms of reference.

- 4. Evidence Gathering Session from Councillors** **57 - 58**

To hear evidence from:
 - Environment Cabinet Member, Councillor Geoffrey Theobald
 - Councillor Pete West
 - Additional Councillors

- 5. Evidence Gathering Session from Officers** **59 - 70**

To hear evidence from:
 - Thurstan Crockett, Head of Sustainability & Environmental Policy
 - Network Management officers.
 - Other council officers.

- 6. Evidence Gathering Session from Other Witnesses** **71 - 78**

To hear evidence from:
 - Mike Best, Operations Director, Brighton & Hove Bus and Coach Company Ltd.
 - Health Organisations
 - Lynne Henshaw, GMB Representative
 - Members of the Public

7. Other Information Received

79 - 98

To note other information provided by council officers, other witnesses and other local authorities, including:

- Brighton & Hove Councillors
- Robin Humphries, Civil Contingencies Manager
- Brighton & Hove City Council Legal Services
- Other council officers
- Brighton & Hove Economic Partnership
- Brighton & Hove Older People's Forum
- Community Voluntary Sector Forum
- East Sussex Fire Authority
- North Moulsecoomb Tenants and Resident's Association

8. Any Other Business

The City Council actively welcomes members of the public and the press to attend its meetings and holds as many of its meetings as possible in public. Provision is also made on the agendas for public questions to committees and details of how questions can be raised can be found on the website and/or on agendas for the meetings.

Agendas and minutes are published on the council's website www.brighton-hove.gov.uk. Agendas are available to view five working days prior to the meeting date.

Meeting papers can be provided, on request, in large print, in Braille, on audio tape or on disc, or translated into any other language as requested.

For further details and general enquiries about this meeting contact Harvey Winder, (01273 291066 email harvey.winder@brighton-hove.gov.uk) or email scrutiny@brighton-hove.gov.uk

11 March 2010

Agenda Item 1

PROCEDURAL BUSINESS

A. Declaration of Substitutes

Where a Member of the Commission is unable to attend a meeting for whatever reason, a substitute Member (who is not a Cabinet Member) may attend and speak and vote in their place for that meeting. Substitutes are not allowed on Scrutiny Select Committees or Scrutiny Panels.

The substitute Member shall be a Member of the Council drawn from the same political group as the Member who is unable to attend the meeting, and must not already be a Member of the Commission. The substitute Member must declare themselves as a substitute, and be minuted as such, at the beginning of the meeting or as soon as they arrive.

B. Declarations of Interest

- (1) To seek declarations of any personal or personal & prejudicial interests under Part 2 of the Code of Conduct for Members in relation to matters on the Agenda. Members who do declare such interests are required to clearly describe the nature of the interest.
- (2) A Member of the Overview and Scrutiny Commission, an Overview and Scrutiny Committee or a Select Committee has a prejudicial interest in any business at meeting of that Committee where –
 - (a) that business relates to a decision made (whether implemented or not) or action taken by the Executive or another of the Council's committees, sub-committees, joint committees or joint sub-committees; and
 - (b) at the time the decision was made or action was taken the Member was
 - (i) a Member of the Executive or that committee, sub-committee, joint committee or joint sub-committee and
 - (ii) was present when the decision was made or action taken.
- (3) If the interest is a prejudicial interest, the Code requires the Member concerned:-
 - (a) to leave the room or chamber where the meeting takes place while the item in respect of which the declaration is made is under consideration. [There are three exceptions to this rule which are set out at paragraph (4) below].
 - (b) not to exercise executive functions in relation to that business and
 - (c) not to seek improperly to influence a decision about that business.
- (4) The circumstances in which a Member who has declared a prejudicial interest is permitted to remain while the item in respect of which the interest has been declared is under consideration are:-

(a) for the purpose of making representations, answering questions or giving evidence relating to the item, provided that the public are also allowed to attend the meeting for the same purpose, whether under a statutory right or otherwise, BUT the Member must leave immediately after he/she has made the representations, answered the questions, or given the evidence,

(b) if the Member has obtained a dispensation from the Standards Committee, or

(c) if the Member is the Leader or a Cabinet Member and has been required to attend before an Overview and Scrutiny Committee or Sub-Committee to answer questions.

C. Declaration of party whip

To seek declarations of the existence and nature of any party whip in relation to any matter on the Agenda as set out at paragraph 8 of the Overview and Scrutiny Ways of Working.

D. Exclusion of press and public

To consider whether, in view of the nature of the business to be transacted, or the nature of the proceedings, the press and public should be excluded from the meeting when any of the following items are under consideration.

NOTE: Any item appearing in Part 2 of the Agenda states in its heading the category under which the information disclosed in the report is confidential and therefore not available to the public.

A list and description of the exempt categories is available for public inspection at Brighton and Hove Town Halls.

Winter Service Plan Scrutiny Panel

Agenda Item 3a

Subject: Brighton & Hove City Council Winter Service Plan, its operation and review 2009-2010

Date of Meeting: 8 February 2010 ESCOSC
17 March 2010 Winter Service Plan Panel Meeting

Report of: Director of Environment

Contact Officer: Name: Christina Liassides Tel: 29-2036
E-mail: christina.liassides@brighton-hove.gov.uk

FOR GENERAL RELEASE

1. SUMMARY AND POLICY CONTEXT:

- 1.1 This report summarises the events and key issues arising from the snowfall and extreme weather events relating to the Council's response and provision of services from 16 December 2009 to 21 December 2009, and subsequently the period from 6 January 2010.
- 1.2 The report also includes information regarding the Council's Winter Service Plan, budget provision, operational details and a summary of actions during this period.
- 1.3 Initial findings, changes and innovation and practical experiences from our 'enhanced' service since Christmas will also be highlighted throughout this report.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

Members of the Overview & Scrutiny Commission are requested to:

- 2.1 consider the Council's response and service in relation to the Winter Service Plan.
- 2.2 consider the impact and implications of the enhanced level of service provided.
- 2.3 discuss and make recommendations on suggestions at Section 7: Further Improvements.
- 2.4 to scope and establish a one day Scrutiny Panel on the Council's response to the extreme weather events.

3. RELEVANT BACKGROUND INFORMATION/CHRONOLOGY OF KEY EVENTS:

Introduction

- 3.1 Accumulations of up to 15cm of snow fell across the City throughout the evening of Thursday 17th December and early morning of Friday 18th December 2009. This was followed by an unusually longer period of day time temperatures consistently below freezing associated with a high pressure weather system over the UK. The resulting impacted frozen snow and ice led to very difficult driving and walking conditions throughout the City on treated and untreated roads alike, including footways. This in turn led to criticism that the Council didn't meet its service obligations in spite of 'gritting' and pavement clearance operations undertaken in accordance with normal 'Winter Service' procedures. This report sets out the chronology of events and also compares the response to the snow and ice for the period of the 16th to 21st December as well as from the period from the 6th January and implications of the changed practices.

Winter Service Plan

- 3.2 The Council's agreed Winter Service Plan details what the council will undertake in ice and snow conditions. It was prepared in accordance with LAAs Code of Good Practice for Highway Maintenance and Winter Maintenance Supplement and further Best Value Code of Practice. The requirement to prepare a Plan stems from legal obligations on the Highway Authority from the 1980 Highways Act, the Railways & Transport Act 2003 and Traffic Management Act 2004 that requires removal of snow and ice on the public highway as far as is reasonably practicable. This is to permit the safe movement of traffic on designated roads and to minimise accidents and delays brought about by adverse weather conditions. The Council treats 40% of its highway network exceeding the Audit Commission Target of 24 – 38%.
- 3.3 The current Winter Service Plan was reviewed after the snow event in February 2009, and more formally during the summer and autumn of 2009. The Plan was further tested during this event and then undertook additional consultation with Category 1 Responders (fire, police, NHS) and the bus service during its finalisation. Following the February snow event and difficulty in obtaining additional salt supplies the Plan was adapted to provide a more robust and responsive Salt Supply Contract to provide faster delivery times and contractual obligations for the provider.
- 3.4 Following briefings offered to all Parties and Lead Councillors, the Winter Service Plan was formally presented and approved at Environment Cabinet Member meeting on 5 November 2009. There were no objections raised.
- 3.5 The Winter Service is undertaken from November to March encompassing the predicted coldest temperatures and, through its Operational Plan, treats a priority network of approximately 250km of the Council's 630km of Public Highway with rock salt and grit using vehicle mounted spreaders or 'Gritters'.

- 3.6 The priority network of roads encompasses all 'A' and 'B', some 'C' roads, all bus routes as well as key strategic destinations such as Hospitals and premises related to Emergency Services.
- 3.7 Pavements are cleared and treated in exceptional circumstances such as severe and prolonged snowfall, and arrangements exist with highway subcontractors to undertake this in specified areas in the Winter Service Plan. There are also 350 grit bins located across the City.
- 3.8 The Council's fleet of 7 gritter vehicles and snow ploughs, are operated 24/7 throughout the Winter Service Period by 12 NVQ trained City Clean drivers. There is also a 24/7 rota of Winter Duty Officers interpreting a managed weather forecasting service and weather stations around the city to make decisions on deployment of gritting operations. All operatives were trained or retrained before the 2009/10 Winter Service Period.
- 3.9 Although we refer to "gritting" and "gritter" vehicles, in fact, the operation usually involves salt rather than any grit. Winter service treatments across the UK involve pre-salting the road network in advance of snow, ice, frost or freezing rain. How much salt is put down depends on the predicted severity of the weather event, and other factors such as moisture content and amount of salt already laid from previous treatments.
- 3.10 The salt is spread on the road and works by reducing the freezing point of water. The salt works best when it is in a solution and the process is aided by vehicles passing over the salt to help crush it into a good solution. However, salt starts to become less effective at minus 5°C and almost ineffective at lower temperatures. As a result, at these temperatures its use becomes practically, economically and environmentally difficult. A salt/grit mix is often more effective in snow conditions as this gives better traction for vehicles. Ploughing can be used if the depth of the snow allows this - by clearing the roads of the worst accumulations, this allows the salt/grit to treat the roads more efficiently.
- 3.11 Weather forecasts come from one of the major weather companies under contract to BHCC to deliver city-specific forecasts as well as monitoring data from the council's weather stations. There are 3 weather outstations in the city. The UK generally, and particularly the southern part of England with its milder climate, often gets what are called "marginal nights" where it can be very hard to predict accurately in advance whether the temperature will fall below zero. The amount of snowfall is also notoriously hard to predict – forecasters can tell that precipitation is on its way but often not how much will fall at any one time over a specific area.
- 3.12 The council's ability to hold highway stocks is limited by the storage space available at the only depot, based at Hollingdean and by the turn-around time for supplies to come in to Shoreham Harbour. This is one practical reason why the gritters need to keep to a pre-defined route and why the highways section cannot provide large quantities of stock or gritting to private organisations, private roads or even to other council sections. It is a civil contingency requirement that all council sections should have plans in place to deal with severe weather incidents.

Response for snowfall period 16th – 21st December

- 3.13 On Thursday 17th December the council's weather forecasters predicted intermittent snow showers persisting through the night into the Friday morning rush-hour with accumulations possibly reaching a maximum of up to 10cm locally. The forecasters could not state with certainty the timings or the exact amount across the network. It had rained heavily during the night of Wednesday 16 December which washed away most of the previous salt applications. The Winter Duty Officer therefore gave instructions for heavy applications of salt to be spread after the rain, on all priority routes by 6 gritters starting at 2 a.m. on Thursday morning before the expected snowfall. The gritter vehicles then started running their full routes at 4pm on Thursday afternoon and ran continuously throughout the night (4 times) the following day in accordance with the Winter Service Plan. Snow Ploughs were also used throughout this period. 230 tonnes of salt or salt/grit mix were laid in this initial 24 hour period.
- 3.14 Gritting/ploughing runs were undertaken on 17 December at:
- 2 a.m. (after the rain on Wednesday night)
 - 4 p.m. (just before the major snowfall)
 - 8.00 p.m. (during snowfall)
 - 11.30 p.m. (during snowfall) - included extra run to Woodvale Crematorium, Saddlescombe Road and Mill Road
- 3.15 Throughout the next day (Friday), over the weekend and next 5 days, gritter drivers were able to get to work and gritting operations on the roads continued 24/7 where possible.
- 3.16 Gritting/ploughing runs were undertaken on 18 December at the following times:
- 2.00 a.m. (during snowfall)
 - 4.30 p.m. (during snowfall)
 - 8.00 a.m. (responding to bus company and police requests)
 - 3.00 p.m. (afternoon shift)
- Gritter runs then continued throughout the cold period running full routes or concentrating on problematic outlying areas.
- 3.17 Some roads were even impassable by the non 4 x 4 gritters because the City's road network has a high proportion of hilly roads with steep gradients. As a result the existing three 4x4 gritter vehicles had to be constantly re-directed to treat these roads.
- 3.18 Salt treatment requires heavy vehicular traffic to help it become effective, and with several days of consistently cold temperatures as well as rain that froze on top of the snow, it was a struggle to keep open outlying bus routes. Nonetheless, Winter Duty Officers were in regular contact with the bus company and gritters were sent out during the day or night to any specific problem areas on our gritting routes identified by the bus company or by local residents.

- 3.19 Pavement clearance was begun on Friday in Western Road by highway sub contractors. Cityclean Street Cleansing service also began gritting on Friday. However, both the sub contractors and Cityclean experienced significant staff shortages because of the weather conditions. Pavement clearance took place after the snowfall in accordance with the Winter Service Plan and continued throughout the weekend. However, what had not been initially foreseen or predicted were the continuing freezing temperatures in the daytime for several days which meant that the snowfall did not melt.
- 3.20 There was also rain during Friday/Saturday night which fell onto freezing surfaces and added an icy layer to the snow. The forecast for Friday through to Saturday stated that there would be partly cloudy conditions in the daytime, which usually brings temperatures up above freezing, and that temperatures would drop below zero from early evening. However, the daytime temperatures did not rise above zero and the weather stations showed that road surface temperatures were often below minus 5 degrees. This meant that both roads and pavements were not clearing naturally during the daytime, and with intermittent snow and freezing rain, drivers and operatives had to constantly keep going over areas that had already been treated. It also meant that there were icy surfaces on top of existing snowfall with the salt treatment lying inert underneath this. Street Cleansing staff carried out clearance by chipping ice off pavements with shovels as well as using grit/salt treatment during this extremely cold spell.
- 3.21 The council does not have in place a stand by arrangement as part of its agreed Winter Service Plan and budget arrangements, to call in staff from refuse and recycling, street cleansing and the gardeners. Over the weekend, refuse and recycling staff do not work and the numbers of street sweepers are reduced to the city centre. With weekend staff numbers and weather conditions preventing those due to come to work getting in, there was a limited number of street sweepers able to grit pavements in the city centre. The focus was the city centre where the highest number of pedestrians would be particularly bearing in mind this was the last shopping weekend before Christmas.
- 3.22 By Monday morning, all non HGV vehicles, including tractors and trailers, across Cityclean and Cityparks were loaded with grit and all available staff took part in pavement clearance.
- 3.23 Throughout this period (18 Dec – 23 Dec) over 400 tonnes of salt or salt/grit mix were used, as well as continuing ploughing operations. Winter Duty Officers and Head of Network Management maintained a presence at the Hollingdean Depot including weekends to direct operations throughout the cold spell. Senior Officers from Sustainable Transport and City Clean sent out regular briefings to members to keep them up to date with operations.

Communications

- 3.24 The communications around this weather event began on Thursday 17 December. The strategy was to communicate up-to-date information on travel conditions, network availability and availability of services using a variety of media, including press, television, radio and the internet. Information for the public was to be clear, accurate, consistent and co-ordinated.
- 3.25 The media team provided broadcasters and the press information before the event, on Thursday (17 December), so that winter service arrangements, especially salting routes, were well understood by users and the community ahead of the first snowfall. The web operation began the same day with the web team contacting all schools to remind them to inform the corporate communications team first in the event of any school closures.
- 3.26 Schools began sending in emails to the web team at 7am on Friday (18 December) and the website was updated immediately and continually. That morning, the media team began issuing hourly bulletins for all media on council action in all service areas to mitigate against the weather. Mark Prior, AD Sustainable Transport, gave broadcast interviews giving key messages about the council's response, including how services would be affected. The Argus on Saturday ran an uncritical and factual article saying refuse and recycling services had been suspended.
- 3.27 The council's severe weather webpage was updated hourly throughout Friday and updated again on Saturday. However, due to a technical problem with the content management system it was not possible to update the website for a period of time on Sunday. On Sunday morning (20 December), the out-of-hours press officer began receiving calls from print, radio and television news rooms asking the council to respond to complaints about the gritting and that people were sustaining injuries from falls. Cllr Maria Caulfield gave an interview to the Argus reassuring social housing tenants that everything was being done to ensure their safety. The council issued a statement to all media explaining what gritting had been undertaken and explaining that it was diverting parks and refuse staff to gritting because the freeze was becoming severe. This ran on the local BBC news on Sunday evening and all day on the radio, as well as in national newspapers the following day.
- 3.28 The Argus on Monday (21 December) carried a front page story under the headline "COLD SNAP", alleging that the council had 'abandoned residents' in residential side-roads. Cllr Geoffrey Theobald gave an interview to BBC Sussex radio on Monday morning and for lunchtime and evening local news bulletins on BBC and ITV re-iterating that the council had cleared 40% of the network and thanking residents for their help.
- 3.29 Regular website and 'social media' updates about services resumed on Monday, including the publication of the exact location of the council's 350 grit bins and a revised refuse and recycling collections timetable. The council also

joined online chat forums to post a message acknowledging the frustrations of residents and to direct them to the hourly website updates.

- 3.30 On Tuesday (22 December), the Argus carried a front-page story under the headline “TOO LITTLE, TOO LATE”, focusing on residents’ comments that their roads were icy. Cllr Geoffrey Theobald was quoted saying the council had done all it could. The media team later issued a statement saying Cllr Mary Mears had visited the Hollingdean depot to discuss challenges with staff and, as a result of that, and residents’ concerns, she would review the gritting service and announce changes before the New Year. The story was carried in the Argus Wednesday (23 December) under the headline “Lessons learned after cold snap”. The Argus leader column said the development was ‘welcome’. The media team continued to issue hourly media bulletins and the media turned their attention specifically to the hilly Moulsecoomb and Patcham areas, where there had been a raft of minor traffic collisions.
- 3.31 By the five days leading up to Wednesday (23 December), the council’s severe weather webpage had received 32,206 views.
- 3.32 The communications team used four platforms to keep a steady flow of information and advice to council staff and Members: news updates on the Wave (intranet), the Chief Executive’s update (also accessed on the Wave), direct emails to all Members and direct emails to all directors and assistant directors to cascade to their teams. Throughout the period staff were able to see how the crisis was being covered in the traditional news media and social media by looking at daily news monitoring posts on the Wave. All media briefings were also made available to emergency services and health partners who, in turn, gave the council communications team advance notice of their own communications so that both were co-ordinated.

Summary

- 3.33 In summary, the Winter Service Plan was activated effectively in terms of its stated aims and priorities – to grit the main roads and bus routes, and to carry out pavement clearance starting with areas of highest footfall. However, it is also clear that what was very different was the duration of the poor weather. This highlighted several clear issues which the council has to address in order to give a higher level of service in such conditions. Public and partner expectations also need to be clearly understood so that we are all more prepared and better co-ordinated. The unprecedented number of public slips and falls on footways was extremely serious and senior officers were swift to review how this might be mitigated given future cold weather forecasts.

4. Response to prediction of snowfall for the 31st January

Operations

- 4.1 During this Christmas week, a risk of further snow fall and ice conditions were predicted for New Year’s Eve/New Year’s Day, although accumulations were

predicted to be only 1 – 2 cm. Officers acted swiftly to mobilize staff ahead of the predicted snowfall despite this being a major holiday period. All grit bins were replenished. The gritter drivers were deployed on Full Routes and all street sweepers on Thursday 31st across the city were deployed on pavement gritting. 80 tonnes of salt was used on that night in addition to the previous treatments of salt laid during preceding cold nights.

- 4.2 A dedicated person in charge of communications was appointed across the council and prepared timely press releases, constant website updates and email updates.
- 4.3 To mobilise such resources was a difficult decision, given that forecasters could not confidently predict timings or amount of snowfall even up to 12 hours before and that this enhanced service response had financial and practical implications (e.g. salt stock monitoring and supply). The predicted snowfall did not occur.

Communications

- 4.4 The communications strategy during the second bout of predicted snow was largely as before, centering on regular and relevant information directly to the residents, media, Members and council staff. Having fixed the technical problem with the website, it was updated regularly throughout the New Year holiday period when the council was closed. Two way communications were increased with residents through more regular engagement in social media. The result was – for the first time since the cold weather began – complimentary messages on social networking sites and the Argus website about the council’s gritting and its efforts to warn and inform residents. The tone of traditional media coverage was also far more sympathetic to the council by this stage.

5. Response to snowfall of the 6th - 13th January

Operations

- 5.1 Because of the cold nights and risk of ice during the early January period, the gritters had been laying applications of salt from 1 – 5 January, and as there was no rain, this also formed good preparation for the predicted snowfall. On Tuesday 5 January the weather forecast at midday stated that there was a risk of up to 2 – 5 cm of snow accumulation overnight into Wednesday morning with a further risk of 5 – 10 cm during Wednesday. Snow fell and 6 gritters with snow ploughs started full routes at 6.00 p.m., continuing at 9.30 p.m. on full routes with ploughs and then driving through the night .running full routes again at midnight and 3.00 a.m. Gritting operations continued into the next day with routes ploughed and gritted on a constant turn-around system.
- 5.2 Throughout the week the service worked 24/7. All non HGV vehicles from Cityclean and Cityparks were deployed where possible dumping piles of grit across the city in preparation for the week ahead.

- 5.3 On Wednesday all available staff across refuse and recycling, street cleansing and gardeners were transported to the grit piles to spread the grit. As the conditions were severe only four 4 x 4's could be used to transport staff across the city.
- 5.4 The use of all 12 gritter drivers on a day/night shift system continued constantly throughout the week and Cityclean and Cityparks staff carried on with hand clearance throughout the week.
- 5.5 For weekend of the 9th and 10th January staff were drafted in on overtime to help grit across the city. Approximately, 100 staff were deployed from Cityparks and Cityclean supplemented by staff from NSL, the council's parking contractors. This included:
- On call additional staff for weekend work
 - Increased numbers of 4 x 4 vehicles (including tractors) to access hard-to-reach areas
 - Agreement regarding grit "drop-off" points
 - Up to date information on the website and through other communication channels
- 5.6 In addition to continuous communication with the bus company, their Operations Manager was deployed at the Council's Bartholomew House Traffic Control Centre to monitor and direct city centre bus operations using CCTV.
- 5.7 Throughout the whole period Winter Duty Officers and Head of Network Management maintained a presence at the Hollingdean Depot seven days a week to direct operations throughout the cold spell, co-ordinating work with the Operations Managers from Cityclean to manage staff and vehicles for road and pavement gritting as required.

Communications

- 5.8 The communications strategy continued as before but this time with two key improvements. The first was the production of three YouTube videos viewable on the council's website, all about different aspects of the gritting operation. This was designed to give residents more detail in an easily-digestible format about the hard work being undertaken by staff, as well as to improve the morale of those staff. The second was the transformation of the previously-published grit bin list into a map showing the exact locations of each bin. This was published and widely publicised. A new objective was also fulfilled by the council's communications in the gathering of 12 volunteer 4x4 drivers to carry out adult social care transport duties. This was done via an appeal on the website, radio, Sky News, BBC News 24 and social networking websites. A list of volunteers was compiled by the media team and passed on to Adult Social Care. The appeal was later praised by the Communities Secretary John Denham in a press statement and was featured in the industry magazine PR Week as an example of best practice in using social media during a crisis.

5.9 By this stage visits to the council's website were more than double the figure for the two previous bouts of snow. In the five days covering 31 December to 4 Jan, there were 28,534 visits. By contrast, the five days covering 6 January to 10 January saw a rise to 67,631 visits. The growth in daily visitors on the previous week was testament to the website's growing reputation as a source for relevant information.

6. Innovation

6.1 Following the public criticism of the Council during the December snow and ice, the Winter Service Team, Director of Environment, and Assistant Directors for City Services and Sustainable Transport worked closely with the Leader of the Council to review the response and improve key areas.

6.2 Brighton & Hove is a small authority with resources and supplies sufficient for our usual winter climate. The unprecedented weather situation meant that we had to think innovatively about how best to use our available staff and resources. Examples of leading practice and innovation include:

- Using grit instead of salt on outlying routes. This was because during the snow event of last February, we learnt that grit was a much more useful treatment for layers of compacted snow, persistently cold temperatures and hilly routes where the salt becomes ineffective. The grit gives vehicles traction and starts to break down the compacted layers to reach the salt treatment beneath. National government advice on this came out much later.
- Using Parks 4 x 4 vehicles and tractors to take salt/grit out to outlying hard-to-reach communities.
- Using all available in-house 4 x 4 vehicles and calling on the public to help with 4 x 4 transport in order to reach vulnerable people.
- Giving out legal advice to householders about clearing pavements themselves – this was followed up by national government advice a week after we had posted information on our website.
- Carrying out a sustained system of pavement gritting, including working with CYPT to identify school routes on a priority basis.
- Using a JCB and tractor-trailer to remove large snow drifts around Falmer Road/Bexhill Road.
- Setting up a rota system with Street Cleansing staff acting as drivers' mates during ploughing operations, thus avoiding using trained drivers. This allowed us to utilize our complete drivers' rota to double-shift on day and night time duties.
- Using Parking Attendants to clear pavements.
- Dropping off piles of grit for residents to help clear their local areas.
- Continuing to refill grit bins as a priority throughout the cold period.
- Sharing intelligence and use of the Council's Traffic Control Centre with the bus company.
- Dedicated communication support coordinating all communications activity – website updates, using the press, radio and TV to get actively messages across and briefing members.
- Use of film to get across messages to place on website and Youtube

- Establishment of a “Transport Cell” to support snow and ice clearance in the wider community as well as deployment of 4x4 vehicles to vulnerable residents.
- Delivering salt/grit supplies to the hospital, bus company, crematorium, and schools to enable them to continue treating their own premises.
- Creating links between Highway contractors and the council’s Housing section to ensure they got supplies of grit to continue treating housing estates.

6.3 This advanced level of work delivered real improvements in January and Improved communications and in closer working with the public on what we could and couldn’t do led to some positive press coverage.

6.4 By 8th January, there were 0 recorded falls on ice compared to 49 in December. An appendix is attached with more information.

7 Further Improvements

7.1 There is a high expectation of the Winter ‘Gritting’ Service because much of the economy and well-being of the city relies on a good degree of movement and mobility. The Winter Service Plan delivered according to its aims but following the snow event in December, senior managers introduced an enhanced service in order to respond to public concerns and requirements. However, if the plans operated from the 6th January are to be adopted or further enhanced, the Winter Service will require significantly more resources in terms of revenue and capital for the use of additional staff and vehicles.

7.2 Decisions on whether to agree a greater level of service need to be made during the budget process for this financial year.

Proposal	Recommendation	Timescale
The public have a low awareness of the Winter Service including its limitations in extreme weather conditions. It is important to provide clear information to residents and business on Winter Service Plan, location of grit bins, and advice on public transport, driving in bad weather and gritting pavements.	An annual leaflet sent to all households and businesses, website and social media sites Newspaper advert in the winter months. Special edition of City News in October.	Spring/summer 2010/11

<p>The Council currently has three 4x4 Gritter vehicles out of its fleet of 7. During the prolonged snow and icy conditions many roads on the existing network of priority roads were inaccessible by normal two wheel drive vehicles. This hasn't been an issue before but highlights the need to replace this aged fleet with 4x4 vehicles to allow full coverage. The gritters are 10 years old and due for replacement</p>	<p>Replace gritter vehicles with 4x4 fleet, narrower chassis vehicles and more modern equipment that will be better able to access Brighton & Hove's urban steep roads</p>	<p>Winter 2010/11</p>
<p>The current salt storage capacity at Hollingdean Depot is limited to approximately 1,000 tonnes and is sufficient for the average Winter conditions without contingency. The council was fortunate it did not run out of supplies during the bad weather periods but it did have to seek mutual aid for supplies from other councils although due to careful use of stocks did not ultimately need to take this up</p>	<p>A covered salt barn, silo, pre-wetted salt / saline or other suitable alternative arrangements providing additional capacity would give further assurance to supplies and contingency.</p>	<p>Long term. The depot is in a poor condition and needs refurbishment works and development to make better use of the site and put in place substantial and proper storage capacity for grit and salt. It is essential work commences on this immediately and forms part of the refurbishment plans for the depot</p>
<p>Grit bins – the Winter Service team have received numerous requests for grit bins all over the city including in the warmest central and low lying areas. Many bins have been removed in the past at the request of various groups such as Local Action Team's to reduce street clutter and</p>	<p>Investigate possibility of using builders' bags to deposit grit where required rather than place additional grit bins all over the city.</p> <p>Additional budget will be required to be able to provide and fill all the additional bins/bags before, during and after</p>	<p>Winter 2010/11</p>

vandalism. Yellow plastic bins in prime conservation areas would also ruin the aesthetics of the street scene	each cold weather event	
Provision of additional hand gritting equipment to allow it to take place more speedily and easily	There are excellent examples of pavement clearance machines but require additional capital and revenue budget to purchase and operate	Winter 2010/11
Provision of more trained gritter drivers from Cityclean increasing the pool of staff available	There are additional costs associated with training extra drivers (approx £1,000 per driver)	Winter 2010/11
Provision of additional 4x4 vehicles for highway operations transporting grit and transportation of staff.	Older vehicles in Cityparks could be replaced with 4 x 4's and then called on in bad weather	As vehicles come to the end of their economic life

- 7.3 Officers can investigate the capital costs of replacing gritters and purchasing pavement gritting machines. It is likely that these costs will be in excess of £950k and there is no budget identified for this additional expenditure. This unsupported borrowing could be explored.

8 DAMAGE TO THE HIGHWAY

- 8.1 Severe cold weather followed by a thaw usually results in increased damage to the highway and to apparatus under the highway. This is because of the expansion and contraction caused by cold and ice penetration, often resulting in "frost heave" which is movement of the road surface and sub-surface.
- 8.2 For the Highway Authority, this means that large potholes can appear in the road, or some pavements may crack or move. For utilities, this results in burst mains requiring emergency repairs.
- 8.3 As the snow has thawed and potholes have appeared, the council's highways team have been responding to problems, calling in extra staff to make temporary and permanent repairs to road surfaces.
- 8.4 Last month a programme of repairs to potholes was carried out after the first batch of snow.

- 8.5 Following the severe weather, council Highway Inspectors are once again focusing on identifying and repairing new potholes as they are gradually exposed by the thawing snow and ice. This will continue to be a priority for the coming weeks, with more 'pothole gangs' being made available by the council's contractor to deal with problems.
- 8.6 Inspectors are already reporting a noticeable increase in potholes and other damage to the highways but the full extent will only be revealed over the next month or so – depending on whether more cold weather follows.
- 8.7 Roads where potholes have already been repaired include:
- London Road
 - Lewes Road
 - North Street
 - Western Road
 - Falmer Road
 - North Road
 - Trafalgar Street
 - Upper North Street
 - Lansdowne Road
 - Marine Parade
- 8.8 When potholes appear, the council carries out two different types of repair – for the lesser used side roads we use a temporary cold material and a permanent repair follows at a later date. For the busier main roads we use a more expensive semi-permanent material that sets with water and can be installed quickly using minimal traffic management, and reducing traffic congestion.
- 8.9 Last financial year, 08-09, the council spent just over £360k on repairs to carriageways. This year we have already spent £217k. The snow last February resulted in around £100,000 worth of damage.

9 CONSULTATION

- 9.1 Transport Cell –consultation with representatives from schools, Adult Social Care, PCT, public transport and Civil Contingencies.
- 9.2 The Winter Service Plan for 2009-10 was discussed with all emergency services, the Brighton & Hove Bus Company, Lead Members and relevant council sections before being presented to Environment Cabinet Member meeting for approval in November 2009.

10 FINANCIAL & OTHER IMPLICATIONS

Financial Implications:

- 10.1 The Council's annual budget for the Winter Service is £227,000. The budget has not changed in real terms over the past five years. This level of resources is based on the expected usual weather patterns and is estimated to provide 30 Standard treatments per year plus a snow event of 2 days duration.
- 10.2 Any underspend in the revenue budget is carried over into the Winter Maintenance Reserve, as contingency for periods of extreme weather. This fund has been used during financial years 2006-7 and 2008-9 for severe weather. A minimum of £250,000 is held in this reserve.
- 10.3 The budget is based on fixed costs for weather infrastructure and vehicles and variable costs including drivers, fuel, vehicle maintenance, salt supply and grit bin filling. The greatest proportion of the budget is for the lease hire of the gritter vehicles, standing at £106,000. The gritter vehicles were purchased from the lease company 3 years ago, thus enabling a saving of £80,000 per year which has been utilised to cover the other ongoing operational costs of the winter service.
- 10.4 As the timing of this report and the January snow event has overlapped, the costs of the enhanced Winter Service are yet to be determined. The additional costs will cover the treating of pavements, increased weekend working, additional materials (salt and grit supplies) and the increased cost associated with round the clock pre-treatment of roads during a prolonged period of cold weather with significant individual snow events. If we experienced continuous snowfall with significant accumulations then expenditure could easily amount to £200,000 per week to cover additional labour, salt, grit, loading, maintenance. and transportation costs.
- 10.5 There is a need to work up capital costs of replacing the gritters and purchasing more hand gritting machines. It is likely that these costs will be in excess of £925,000.

Finance Officer Consulted: Patrick Rice

Date: 13/01/10

Legal Implications:

- 10.6 The Council has a statutory responsibility to ensure as far as practicable safe passage on the highway and safe movement of all users pursuant to the Highways Act 1980, the Railway and Transport Act 2003 and the Traffic Management Act 2004. The implementation of the Winter Service Plan together with the other steps taken by the Council as outlined in this report has ensured that the above

obligations have been met in relation to the recent snow events. If proposals for improvement are agreed this will assist further to demonstrate that the Council continues to meet its statutory responsibilities by reviewing its Winter Service Plan and implementing changes where these can lead to improvements in the service.

Lawyer Consulted: Elizabeth Culbert

Date: 15/01/10

Equalities Implications:

- 10.7 The Winter Maintenance service covers main routes and all bus routes. It is not logistically or economically feasible to cover all roads in the city, so by treating bus routes we aim to provide all areas of the city with accessible options for vehicular travel. In order to assist pedestrian and other mobility, the Plan includes pavement and cycle route gritting during prolonged snow events, starting with areas of highest footfall in the city centre and around emergency services' premises, then moving on to local shopping areas and local concentrations of footfall and finally to additional local pavements.

Sustainability Implications:

- 10.8 Salt has an environmental impact to a greater or lesser degree. For example, it can harm vegetation such as grass verges and can leach through soil and soakaways into the water table. It may also contribute to the road surface damage following frost heave under cold temperatures. Therefore resources are carefully deployed in order to provide a balance between network usability and detriment to the local environment.

Crime & Disorder Implications:

- 10.9 The police have been consulted on the preparation of the plans and officers work closely with all emergency services both in preparation for and responding to severe weather. The Head of Network Management communicated regularly with the Sussex Police Road Policing Unit during both snow events.

Risk and Opportunity Management Implications:

- 10.10 The objective is to provide a winter service, which will permit, as far as is reasonably possible, the safe movement of traffic on designated roads throughout Brighton and Hove and to keep to a minimum delays and accidents brought about by adverse weather conditions. The roads around the two major hospitals, bus depots and all police, fire and ambulance premises are covered by the Winter Plan's gritting routes.

Corporate / Citywide Implications:

10.11 The winter service is an essential support service for the city's economy by helping to provide an accessible road network.

11 EVALUATION OF ANY ALTERNATIVE OPTION(S):

11.1 This report is for Scrutiny to consider the implications, actions and recommendations arising from the two recent severe weather events in the UK – there are no alternative options relevant at this time.

12 REASONS FOR REPORT RECOMMENDATIONS

12.1 The report ensures that the implications and recommendations arising from an enhanced winter service can be formally considered.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

Appendices:

1. Number and location of falls related to bad weather

Documents In Members' Rooms

None

Background Documents

Brighton & Hove City Council's Winter Service Plan 2009-10

Item 3a Appendix 1

Number and location of falls related to bad weather

	17th – 22nd December 2009	5th – 8th January 2010
Number of patients	1814 (6 days)	770 (3.6 days)
Total Falls	107	41
Average no. falls per day	16	11
'Falls on ice'	49	-
Injury	171	43
Discharged to fracture clinic	80	-
Hip – related injuries	22	-
Brighton location	Churchill Sq (x 4) Marine Parade (x2) Queens Park Road (x2) Lewes Road Preston Park Station Bexhill Road, Woodingdean Edward Street North Laine Preston Road Argyle Road Gloucester Road East Street, Brighton Spring Gardens/Church Street Ashton Rise Coombe Road Western Road, Brighton Eastern Road Duke Lane, Prestonville Road Selborne Road Wild park, Brighton Gloucester Road, Brighton	Churchill Sq (x 3) Ditchling Road (x 2) Lewes Road / John Street King's Road Brighton Junction of Carden Avenue/Graham Avenue Western Road Royal Albion Hotel Old Steine St Peters Church Compton Avenue Forge Close The Level

Hove location	Boundary Road Church Road, Landsdowne Place	Hove Park Holland Road 1206 Western Road Sackville Road, Blatchington Road
Other locations	'Public place' (4), 'fall on the ice' (9) and 'in town' (5). Saltdean Vale (1) Hayward's Heath (1), Newhaven (1) and Portslade (1)	Newhaven golf course (1) Saltdean Vale (1)



**BRIGHTON & HOVE CITY COUNCIL
WINTER SERVICE PLAN 2009/10**

APPENDIX

1. Introduction

This document aims to set out in one plan sufficient detail to inform anyone involved in the management of the Winter Service of current Procedures and requirements. The plan is known as the "White Book".

2. Preamble

The information contained in the White Book is generally in accordance with the Local Authorities Association's Code of Good Practice for Highway Maintenance (1989) and its 1991 Winter Maintenance Supplement. The Best Value Code of Practice launched in July 2001 has also been considered, as has the 2005 update. The new Code makes 12 recommendations regarding the Winter Service and a commentary on each is made in Appendix X, showing how Brighton & Hove City Council's Winter Service Plan accords with these recommendations.

X

3. Objective

The Railways & Transport Act 2003: Section 111 – Highways, Snow & Ice, has a duty, as far as is reasonably practicable, that the safe passage along a highway is not endangered by snow and ice.

The Traffic Management Act 2004 places a network management duty on the local authority to secure the expeditious movement of all users.

The objective is to provide a winter service, which will permit, as far as is reasonably possible, the safe movement of traffic on designated roads throughout Brighton and Hove and to keep to a minimum delays and accidents brought about by adverse weather conditions. Designated footways and cycleways are salted only in severe and prolonged snow conditions.

4. Definitions

4.1. Winter Service Period.

The winter period shall be from 1 November each year to mid March the following year. The period may be extended on a day-to-day basis by the Head of Network Management in

cases of severe cold weather continuing into April or starting in October.

4.2. Precautionary Salting

The application of salt to carriageways on priority routes usually in advance of frosty conditions (often referred to as spreading, gritting or pre-salting).

APPENDIX

4.2.1. Hilltops Routes

Two routes salted on marginal occasions where frost is liable to form on hilltops and in known frost hollows furthest from the influence of the sea. The routes usually take less approximately 1½ hours each to complete.

4.2.2. Standard Routes

The most frequently instructed routes but does not cover the warmest areas identified by thermal mapping. Six routes cover main road, bus routes, emergency service depots, main hospitals, important commuter routes, large schools and shopping centres. The routes usually take less approximately 2½ hours to complete.

4.2.3. Full Routes

An extension of each standard route to cover the warmest areas and is usually instructed when a wet road is liable to freeze or in advance of snow. The routes usually take up to 3½ hours to complete unless it is snowing.

4.2.4. The routes are defined as pace notes with plans and are kept in the Out of Hours office at Hollingdean Depot. These are summarised in Appendix B. Copies of the notes are also kept on the shared Highways Drive >Winter Service Plan 2009-10.

B

4.2.5. Where there is leakage of ground water from the roadside, it will be treated on a reactive basis.

4.3. Ploughing

The removal of snow by means of a plough blade attached to a spreader or such other vehicle as may be agreed by the Client.

4.4. Client

The Client is Network Management, Environment Directorate,

Brighton and Hove City Council.

4.5. Winter Service Contractor – WSC

The in-house service provider for waste management (Cityclean) provides the drivers and other operatives for the Winter Service. For the sole purpose of clarity, they are referred to as the Winter Service Contractor (WSC) in this plan. Details of Rota at Appendix F. The co-ordination of drivers at the Depot will be carried out by the Emergency Out of Hours' Officers, reporting to the Head of Network Management. For the purposes of this document, the Out of Hours Officers will also be referred to as the WSC, receiving and carrying out instructions from the Winter Service Duty Officers or the Head of Network Management (the Client).

F

APPENDIX

4.6. Winter Service Duty Officer - WSDO

The Duty Officer is employed by the client and the duties are shown in paragraph 5.2. Although the duties are rotated, whoever holds the winter maintenance mobile phone is on duty and is known as OSCAR 5. Details of the rota and contact numbers are in Appendix E.

E

5. The Client's Role

5.1. The Client will be responsible for: -

- instructing the contractor
 - providing salt
 - providing the spreaders and ploughs and their maintenance requirements.
 - providing route information and updates where necessary.
- The Client will operate a round the clock service for the Winter Service period.

5.2. WSDO

a) The functions of the WSDO will be: -

- to receive and record daily weather forecast including updates
- to decide what action is required and when
- to instruct the WSC in reasonable time to enable the action to be fulfilled
- to inform the Emergency Out of Hours' officer of every decision
- downloading the Data Loggers and storage of

H

information.

- responding to public queries and reports
- responding to and recording decision based on police information or requests. Records should be kept on the form detailed in Appendix S.
- ensure that decisions are also communicated to Cityclean relevant staff such as the Operations Managers (Refuse) and Contact Centre.

- b) The starting time will be determined by the Client and may need to be varied due to prevailing weather conditions. The starting time is the time the spreader leaves the depot. The finish time is the time the spreader returns to the depot.

6. The WSC (Winter Service Contractor)'s Role

6.1. Stand-by Rota

Throughout the Winter Service Period, the WSC shall organise and maintain a 24 hour stand-by rota for spreader drivers, fitters and other operatives who will be involved in the spreading operations and they shall be contactable by telephone.

The rota shall show the names and telephone number of personnel and shall be given to the WSDO before the season starts. See Appendix F.

F

APPENDIX

6.2. Response Time.

On receipt of an instruction from the Client the WSC personnel required to carry out spreading shall report to the depot in sufficient time to load the spreaders to enable them to leave at the time specified by the Client.

6.3. Spreaders and Loading Equipment.

- a) The WSC will be provided with seven spreaders - 6 for routes and one spare. 5 ploughs are provided for use in the event of major snow fall. See Appendix C.
- b) The WSC will provide the vehicle washing facilities. The loading equipment will be organised by the Client, but used and maintained by the WSC.
- c) The spreaders shall be driven at the speed recommended by the manufacturer to achieve the rate of spread of salt

C

specified by the Client.

- d) Dataloggers – WSC to ensure that drivers always use the datalogger in accordance with the instructions manual in Appendix V. Technical breakdowns must be reported to the Client officer immediately. V

6.4. Handwork in the Event of Snow

Cityclean Operations Managers will be asked if they can provide sufficient labour and plant for handspreading of salt/grit in the event of severe snowfall and as directed by the WSDO. Contractors may also be used at the agreed rates during a snow event. L

6.5. Personnel

- a) Drivers.
 - i) The WSC shall provide sufficient personnel to enable all the vehicles listed in Appendix C to be capable of simultaneous operation. All personnel will be adequately trained for winter duties. Training shall be to City & Guilds 6159 and will cover operation of the prime movers spreaders and ploughs. If necessary, for 24 hours continuous operation the WSC shall provide additional personnel required by the Client. C
A

Before the winter period, any spreader driver who is not familiar with the routes will be required to report to the Depot Co-ordinators for familiarisation with at least one standard route.

- ii) Also before the winter period the client shall employ sufficient WSC staff to test the spreaders and ploughs. The WSC shall report back all defects and problems so the Client can effect repairs before the Winter Service Period begins. This is called Operation Snowdrop. O
- iii) The WSC is responsible for the health, safety and welfare of the labour force.

APPENDIX

6.6. Spreader Driver's Mate

The WSC shall be asked to provide personnel to accompany spreader drivers during snow-ploughing operations. This may require doubling up from the drivers' rota or use of Cityclean's other operatives if agreed with the Head of Operations at Cityclean.

6.7. Driving Hours

The provision of drivers' hours is a matter for the Winter Service Contractor and it is also the Contractor's responsibility to ensure that the drivers comply with the appropriate laws governing driver hours etc. Where this has an impact on Cityclean operations, the Winter Service budget will pay any costs associated with relief agency cover.

6.8. Records

The WSC completes the Winter Service Action report for each instruction received and ensures that any necessary remarks are made by the drivers and that the driver signs and dates the report upon return to the depot. The WSC returns the Action Reports daily to the Head of Network Management. See Appendix H.

H

6.9. Breakdowns

In the event of a breakdown the WSC will contact the Spreader Maintenance fitter directly. See Appendix G.

G

6.10. The WSC is responsible for refuelling the spreaders. Refuelling will mainly be carried out at Hollingdean Depot but should fuelling need to take place at a garage, the WSC is responsible for passing the receipts to the Head of Network Management. Fuel cards are kept on each spreader keyring.

7. Operations

7.1. Pre-Salting.

7.1.1. All routes to be pre-salted shall accord with the Client's current objective.

7.1.2. Salting Procedures shall take the following into account: -

- i) Weather forecast
- ii) Timing
- iii) Rates of spread
- iv) Previous action

7.1.3. In general the spread rates will be 10gm/m² for pre-salting and up to 40gm/m² in advance of snow.

7.1.4. The council's waste management section, Cityclean, or other council sections may contact the WSDO for help with pre-salting or snow clearance on refuse routes that are not on the usual gritting routes. The WSDO will make the final decision on whether this work can be carried out, based on citywide needs, driver availability, future

forecasts and other priority factors that may need resources to be directed elsewhere.

APPENDIX

7.2. Snow Clearance - Carriageways

- 7.2.1. At the onset of snow, the Head of Network Management or the WSDO can instruct the area teams (Highway Inspectors, Streetworks and/or Highway Enforcement) to gather information about the overall situation in their areas. This information is to be fed back to WSDO by 1000 hrs on the first morning and a current situation report at the same time each day thereafter or more frequently if instructed by the WSDO.
- 7.2.2. Priority and effort is to be devoted to clearing the full routes. Once the routes are open and can be kept open attention may be turned to other public highways and is based on feedback from the area teams. The WSDO shall decide on that priority.
- 7.2.3. When heavy snow is forecast and at the direction of the WSDO, the ploughs will be fitted to 5 spreaders in readiness for use.
- 7.2.4. If precautionary salting has been carried out, ploughing will usually commence when the depth of snow exceeds 30 mm. A mix of salt and grit may be used in any salting operation during ploughing.
- 7.2.5. If precautionary salting has not been carried out, snow will be salted until the depth of snow exceeds 30 mm when ploughing will usually commence.
- 7.2.6. Section 67 of the road traffic regulation act 1984 gives police the power to close the road and put signs out in extraordinary circumstances. In the event of a road becoming blocked with snow or dangerous due to ice, the WSDO in association with Sussex Police may close that road temporarily to facilitate clearance.

For prolonged closure the Police may ask the Highway Authority to formally close that road with an Emergency Notice and then the Highway Authority will arrange appropriate signing.

7.3. Snow Clearance - Footways.

7.3.1. Snow clearance of footways will only be carried out during severe and prolonged snow events and at the decision of the WSDO/Head of Network Management. Town centre and main pedestrian routes are to be cleared first.

Private shopping precincts and private forecourts are not to be treated. Attention is then given to important linking footway and local shopping areas. In the last phase residential footways may be tackled but only with the prior consent of Director of Environment. Footway clearance is a lengthy labour-intensive task and therefore the WSDO must decide on priorities and when the snow may be likely to clear naturally due to improved weather conditions. See Appendix M.

M

7.4. Snow Clearance - Night-time working.

Night-time working is only permitted in highest priority areas e.g., main roads and town centre footways where deemed necessary by the WSDO.

APPENDIX

7.5. Snow Clearance - Provision of Labour and Payment Thereof.

7.5.1. Before winter the Client is to approach its contractors and local plant hire companies to it to see if they would be willing to help in snow clearance. This is to identify the number of men available, plant, unit rates, communication arrangements, hire procedures and ability/previous experience in working on the highway. An annual register of snow clearance organisations is to be compiled by Client. If required for snow clearance, organisations on the register are to be approached before contact is made with any other organisations. See Appendix L.

L

7.5.2. Only the WSDO can instruct snow clearance contractors. Uninstructed work will not be paid for.

8. Weather Forecasting

8.1. The forecast outstation are situated on:

- the A270 Old Shoreham Road at the junction with Hangleton Link Road
- Bexhill Road, Woodingdean
- The Fiveways junction

Q

The forecast outstations are equipped with sensors to monitor air and road surface temperatures, precipitation, humidity,

road surface conditions and residual salt on the road surface, wind speed and direction. Data from the Forecast Outstation is retrieved remotely by computer.

8.2. Thermal mapping was used to identify sections of road which are cooler or warmer than average due to topography, type of construction, traffic flows and other factors affecting road surface temperature. This information was utilised for the initial route planning.

8.3. A Weather Forecasting Centre provides daily forecasts via an Ice Prediction System during the months November - March inclusive. Forecasts will be available by 1400hrs each day. During October and April a general forecast is provided but the service can be extended by authorisation of the Head of Network Management to provide more detailed forecasts if required.

J

8.4. An outline of the current Ice Prediction System is given in Appendix J. Detailed information on access and use is contained in its User Manual.

8.5. The forecast will consist of the following elements;

- i) A 'General Forecast' for Brighton and Hove for the following 24 hours;
- ii) 'Site Specific' temperature forecast for the outstations together with a written text forecast.
- iii) Morning Updates issued at around 8am each day, giving a resume of the previous night's weather, and an indication of likely conditions for the coming night;
- iv) 2-5 day forecasts are also provided to show the expected trend in the weather.

8.6 The WSDO will print out a copy of the weather forecast at the time of making their decision and ensure that this copy is safely filed.

APPENDIX

8.7 Updates will be made as necessary by the Weather Forecasting Centre and the WSDO will be telephoned by the Centre if they deem it necessary. Should the WSDO need to change the decision, they will inform the WSC immediately.

8.8 Outside of the Winter Service season, severe weather warnings are received by the Emergency Planning Office and will be acted upon accordingly.

8.9 Details of condition indicator system for 'Road Danger Warnings' plus other weather information are given in Appendix I. I

8.10 If for any reason the weather forecast is unavailable, precautionary salting is to be carried out when falling air or road temperatures reach +2°, provided the prevailing humidity, residual salinity and cloud cover warrant that decision.

9. Communications

9.1. The communications available between the WSDO & WSC are e-mail, telephone and fax. Communication between the WSC and its spreader drivers are the WSC's responsibility and shall be maintained at all times. Mobile phones are provided to all drivers.

K

9.1.1. Telephones - Appendix K contains the mobile and home telephone numbers of persons who could be involved in the winter service.

9.1.2. Fax - also shown in Appendix K are fax numbers which may be useful during emergency situations. It is however possible that the fax machine may not be manned out of normal working hours and an immediate response may not necessarily be made.

9.1.3. During periods of adverse wintry weather, the WSDO may send an Environment colleague to the Police Control Room in John Street, Brighton to ensure the latest information on road conditions is co-ordinated between the two Authorities. The WSDO remains in control.

10 Co-ordination with Neighbouring Highway Authorities

10.1. Reciprocal salting arrangements ceased in 06-07 due to nationwide concerns regarding liability issues. BHCC will take responsibility for the notice of closure at Old Boat Corner if directed by ESCC WSDO.

10.2. In the event of snow then snow clearance will not follow the precautionary salting agreements but will be managed by each HA within its own boundaries, unless the duty officers of each authority agree on a day to day basis to assist each other. S

10.3. In the event of severe and prolonged snow or other business continuity issues, the Head of Network Management will liaise

with counterparts in East and West Sussex as required and with BHCC's Emergency Planning and Business Continuity Officers.

APPENDIX

11 Salt

11.1. Salt (Sodium Chloride) will melt ice and snow at temperatures as low as minus 21°C. However, salt starts to become less effective at minus 5°C and almost ineffective at lower temperatures. As a result, its use becomes practically, economically and environmentally difficult.

11.2. Available alternative de-icers are regularly reviewed, particularly with a view to their use on structures and special paved areas. However, such alternatives are currently prohibitively expensive and may also have their own environmental disadvantages. Therefore, as the temperature seldom falls below minus 5°C, salt is used almost exclusively as the means of melting ice or snow on the highways (including structures and special paved areas). For trouble spots or extreme gradients, grit may be spread to assist with traction.

C

11.3. The salt currently in use is Crystalline Rock Salt complying with BS3247: 1991 Table 1. It is 6mm nominal size (Fine Grade). See Appendix C for current maximum stock allowed and method of procurement.

11.4. In extremely low temperatures, or heavy snowfall, a mix of salt and grit may be used to aid traction.

12 Salt/Grit Containers

12.1. A mixture of salt/grit is stored in bins at various roadside sites throughout Brighton and Hove as a self help for residents.

12.2. The general principles for providing a bin are as follows: -

12.2.1. Bins would not normally be situated on spreader routes unless there was considered to be a special need.

12.2.2. Hills, steep junctions and places where water can seep across the carriageway, are general siting considerations.

12.3. Location of salt/grit containers are shown in Appendix N. Currently there are over 300 bins throughout the City.

N

12.4. Certain organisations such as police, fire, schools, may collect

small quantities of salt from Hollingdean Depot for use around their premises. Authorisation for this must come from the WSDO, and visitors must adhere to risk assessment procedures for collecting salt, shown in Appendix R.

R

13 Budget

13.1. The budget allows for precautionary salting of the Standard Routes 30 times per winter plus a two day snow event.

13.2. All costs incurred in Winter Service should be charged to the winter service budget which is administered centrally by the Client.

P

13.3. Appendix P indicates how any costs should be allocated.

APPENDIX

13.4. Any underspend of the Winter Service budget is added to the Corporate Contingency Fund and is carried forward to cover additional costs as a result of severe cold weather events and for any extraordinary requirements for the service such as technical/vehicular support. A major snow period lasting up to 5 days would utilise much of this contingency fund in covering the additional ongoing costs of operatives, fuel, vehicle maintenance and contractor work required to run such a major operation. During a serious snow event or an extraordinarily cold winter it has been necessary to draw down from this fund, and amounts have been drawn down in 2006-07 and 2008-09 for precisely this reason. If the fund falls below £250,000 it may be topped up by the environment budget at the year end should funds be available.

14 Health and Safety

14.1. It is particularly important that Health and Safety precautions are strictly observed by the Contractor during pre-salting and snow clearing operations. At these times road conditions are likely to be very poor with additionally poor visibility and weather.

14.2. If a spreader is overdue to return to the depot or contact is lost, the WSC shall be responsible for re-establishing contacts or instigating a search.

U

14.3. All gritters have a registered "Trakbak" locator system installed – contact details are listed in Appendix U.

15 Performance Monitoring

15.1. The Contractor is required to provide data relating to the execution of salting and salt used during winter maintenance to the WSDO to permit the monitoring of winter service operations.

15.2. The Association of County Councils' (ACC) document "Highway Maintenance – A Code of Good Practice – Winter Maintenance Supplement (1991)" and "Well Maintained Highways – A Code of Good Practice 2005" sets Standards and Performance Indicators for Winter Service activities. These are given in Appendix T. Suggested targets for these indicators have been set out by the Audit Commission and also appear in Appendix T.

T

16 Business Continuity/Emergency Events

16.1 The usual rota for gritter drivers are 6 on shift per week. There are 15 members of staff trained to operate gritters. In reduced staffing conditions drivers may be asked to be on shift for 2 weeks at a time.

16.2 Drivers' hours legislation must be observed unless there is a compelling emergency reason to override these. If necessary, the service will be reduced to emergency main routes only already identified and documented in partnership with the emergency services. In this case, press communication must be given out to the public to notify of potential reduced safety compared to normal gritting routes.

B

16.3 In a major snow event, a Winter Duty Officer will go as soon as practicable to the Depot and assist the Co-ordinators in overseeing the service operation. This will ensure that decisions can be made on the ground in real-time.

16.4 If it is not possible to treat the usual routes, either due to heavy snowfall, staff shortages or other major event, a priority network has been agreed with the emergency services and bus company. The priority emergency route list can be found at Appendix B (Spreader Route Information)

16.5 Communication to the public and other agencies will be co-ordinated via the Communications team and Emergency Planning/Business Continuity office.

17 White Book Updates

White Book Updates will be made as required and each update will be incorporated into the annual winter service plan. Any updates made during the winter season will be recorded on an update form (a copy of which is included in Appendix Y.)

Y

Salting routes will be reviewed before each winter period to take account of network and bus route changes.

18 Distribution List

- A list showing holders of the White Book is shown in Appendix Z. **Z**

19 Appendices

- A list of Appendices is shown at the commencement of the Appendix Section.

Winter Service Plan Scrutiny Panel

Agenda Item 3b

Brighton & Hove City Council

Subject: Scrutiny Panel on Winter Service Plan: Proposed Remit

Date of Meeting: 8 February 2010 ECSOSC
17 March 2010 Winter Service Plan Scrutiny Panel

Report of: Director of Strategy and Governance

Contact Officer: Name: **Brian Foley Standards and Complaints Manager** Tel: **29- 3109**
Tom Hook Head of Scrutiny **29- 1110**

E-mail: Tom.hook@brighton-hove.gov.uk

Wards Affected: All

FOR GENERAL RELEASE/ EXEMPTIONS

1. SUMMARY AND POLICY CONTEXT:

1.1 At the request of the Committee Chairman and Councillor Bill Randall in his letter to the Chief Executive, and following a number of complaints, comments and suggestions received from members of the public, a Scrutiny Panel is proposed (see previous item on this agenda). The Panel will investigate the delivery of the Council's Winter Service Plan and make recommendations on how it may be improved.

1.2 At **Appendix 1** the Standards and Complaints Manager gives details of the complaints and comments received between 16 December and 15 January about the Council's response to severe weather conditions.

The initial Standard Response (sent to complainants in December) and the revised Standard Response (January) appear as **Appendices A and B**.

1.3 This report sets out a suggested remit for the Scrutiny Panel at paragraphs 3.4 – 3.10 for agreement at this meeting.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 2.1 That the Committee:
- (1) Note the information in this report
 - (2) Agree the remit of the Winter Service Scrutiny Panel
 - (3) Agree to the composition and named membership of the Scrutiny Panel.

3. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 3.1 Details of the extreme weather events before and after Christmas and the Council's response in December 2009 and its enhanced service in January 2010 are detailed in the previous agenda item.
- 3.2 The formal complaints, comments and suggestions received from 16 December to 15 January are detailed in **Appendix 1** to this report.
- 3.3 Councillor Bill Randall wrote to the Chief Executive on 21 December 2009:

'There is huge discontent in my ward and others about the City Council's response to the extreme weather. I've been handling calls from older people and others who are under climatic house arrest. Although the situation is getting better now and street ate being dealt with, my group feels we will need a proper scrutiny of the council's response to the freezing weather once the snow has gone.

This is a formal request for a scrutiny by the Environment and Community Safety Overview and Scrutiny Committee as soon as possible after the New Year.'

Councillor Randall.

Membership and Aim of Scrutiny Panel

- 3.4 It is proposed that the Winter Service Plan Scrutiny Panel comprises four members, one from each political group, with the ECSOSC Chairman serving as Panel Chair.
- 3.5 This meeting is asked to appoint three other named Members to the Panel to enable the scrutiny to progress without undue delay.
- 3.6 The Panel will make recommendations on modifications and improvements to the Council's Winter Service Plan and the Council's response to severe winter weather in future.

Work Plan for the Scrutiny panel

- 3.7 The Panel will hold one public meeting in March and invite the Cabinet Member for Environment and officers to describe the Winter Service Plan and the actions taken in response to the severe weather.
- 3.8 The Panel will consider complaints and positive suggestions received. This being an issue of national concern, the Winter Service Plans and responses by other comparator authorities will be researched. The remit of the panel will be to consider:
- The Councils' Winter Service Plan
 - The predicted regularity of severe winter weather
 - The Council's response to the initial snowfall
 - Changes to the Council's response at the time of the second snowfall
 - Suggestions for alterations to service provision
 - Comparative information available from other local authorities
 - Financial implications of any service modifications
- 3.9 Witnesses will be invited to provide information to the Panel including:
- Members of council staff involved in the gritting programme
 - Members of the public with suggestions for service improvements
 - Council Members
 - Health organisations
 - Police
 - Unions
 - Others with particular expertise or knowledge
- 3.10 Draft findings and recommendations of the scrutiny review will be reported back to the April ECSOSC meeting.

4. CONSULTATION

- 4.1 There has been no specific consultation however the information above has been gained from members of the public.

5. FINANCIAL & OTHER IMPLICATIONS:

Financial Implications:

- 5.1 There are no financial implications arising directly from this report. In considering the Council's response to the severe weather event members need to take account of the financial implications of service changes. These are highlighted within the relevant reports.

Legal Implications:

- 5.2 There are no legal implications arising directly from this report. In considering the Council's response to the severe weather event members need to take account of the legal implications of service changes. These are highlighted within the relevant reports.

Equalities Implications:

- 5.3 Whilst having no direct equality implications the issues raised in the report do highlight that some residents suffer disproportionately when severe weather conditions occur.

Sustainability Implications:

- 5.4 The report illustrates the impact that the severe weather had on residents of the City. If severe weather events are to become more frequent the council will need to evaluate how it seeks to prepare and respond to them. The Scrutiny Panel on Climate Change Adaptation is looking at some elements of this.

Crime & Disorder Implications:

- 5.5 There are no direct crime and disorder implications arising from this report.

Risk and Opportunity Management Implications:

- 5.6 There are a number of risk implications associated with the severe weather. This report focuses on the number and type of complaint received by the council. The major risk associated with complaints of this volume relates to the Council's reputation and relationship with the City's residents.

Corporate / Citywide Implications:

- 5.7 The Council has received substantial criticism for its response to the snow. This needs to be considered at a corporate level as all Council services are affected.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

Appendices:

1. Report of Standards and Complaints manager

Documents In Members' Rooms:

None

Background Documents:

1. Brighton & Hove City Council's Winter Service Plan 2009 – 2010

Background Information from Standards and Complaints Manager Summarising:

- The number of initial contacts
- The number of secondary follow contacts
- Positive suggestions made by the public
- The key themes and issues being raised by members of the public
- The feelings expressed by the public

Number of comments received 16 December 2009 and 15 January 2010

1. The contact centre dealt with 3200 calls related to the severe weather conditions.
2. The council received in the region of seven hundred emailed comments from members of the public via its main email sites. In the main those emails were critical of the council's performance. However, later emails tended to be requests to have specific streets cleared of ice and snow and were less critical of the council's response overall. There was some recognition of the good work that was carried out by council staff.
3. Staff from the Winter Maintenance Team replied to the comments received in December with a standard template letter amended for specific issues raised. (Appendix 1)
4. With further snow falling in January staff from the Standards and Complaints Team assisted in providing responses using a revised standard response which referred the public to the information that was being constantly updated on our website. (Appendix 2)
5. Approximately 10% of people contacted the council for a second time stating they were dissatisfied with the response they had received. Where appropriate that group of people have been told they may make their representation to ECSOSC.
6. It was agreed with directors that none of the emails received would be dealt with through the corporate complaints procedure. However it was considered helpful to provide ECSOSC with an outline of the comments received.

Summary of the issues of complaint

7. The experience of Highways staff and Standards and Complaints was similar in that the December complaints contained a great deal of anger, were quite vitriolic and some could even be described as venomous. The overall impression gained was that people who contacted the council may have been looking for an opportunity to vent their annoyance with the council.
8. With regard to the initial complaints received the public reaction seemed disproportionate. There appeared to be little room for tolerance or understanding of the extent of the problem. It may be worth asking what it was that actually sparked such an intense reaction from some people.
9. January complaints differed from the initial complaints. It appears that people contacting us understood this was a national issue. They were probably seeing pictures from across the country and could see that it

wasn't just their council that had been 'caught out' or 'ill-prepared' (as suggested in the first round).

10. It is possible that our own communications with the public were improving and there was more information on the website. For example we were explaining how staff had been diverted from their current duties to assist. The press briefing at the end of December was very helpful. It was noticeable that comments focussed more on the needs of individuals, things like: why have you not gritted my road, I live at the top of a hill; I haven't been able to get to the shops.

Positive Suggestions made by members of the public

11. Members of the public have made suggestions about how they think the service provided during severe weather may be improved. Some of these are summarised below:

Regarding prioritisation

- Keep schools open as a priority.
- Make it a priority case to grit outside the local shops or put grit bins there. Many elderly people go to those shops, we live on the hills, but you concentrate on the centre of town, you should consider access down hills to local shops more during bad weather, for that's where people live, not in Churchill Square.
- Ensure bus routes are running.

Help from volunteers

- Find out / contact who can volunteer to help.
- Have a supply of hand tools that volunteers can use.
- Advise citizens to clean the path in front of their houses to facilitate the work of the cleaners (as it happens in other countries more organized in the event of snow like Germany). This council is very well organized and constantly open to new ideas so it would be brilliant to have a solution also to this problem.
- It is dangerous when residents are clearing snow from their property only to pile it on the pavements and roads. Please could people be advised to keep cleared snow on their front gardens

Communication

- Understand that not everyone has a computer and cannot get information from the web.
- Make sure people answering phones speak clearly.
- Give an indication when certain areas will receive some form of gritting to the roads/pavements.

Use of resources

- Prepare the street cleaners to use their resources (vans, trolleys) to clean the streets from snow or distribute salt on the ice to melt it, in the event of an emergency.
- The placement of the salt bins at the tops of roads would at least allow us to help ourselves.
- Consider placing grit bins on the roads that are not gritted. Much better would be for the council to realise that residential areas need to be gritted to allow us all to access services and it is short-sighted to force disabled people in desperation onto snowbound and icy roads and pavements, risking falls and fractures

Themes and Issues raised by the public

12. The following is a summary of the themes and issues raised that were causing particular concern as perceived by members of the public:

- Lack of preparation given that snow had been forecast.
- BHCC were too slow in reacting to the problems.
- Disagreement with prioritisation of streets being cleared of snow.
- Other cities / regions / countries deal with emergencies much better.
- Snowploughs or gritters were not being used.
- Failure to prioritise bus routes and keep them open.
- Effect on businesses.
- People were unable to get to their local shops, gritting outside local shops was not prioritised. People do not live in Churchill Square.
- No help offered in the side streets.
- On steep hills people felt really cut off.
- Large numbers of requests to grit specific streets.
- Refuse and recycling is not being collected.

The level of feeling generated

13. The following gives an indication of the feeling generated. The initial correspondence was really quite vitriolic. A great deal of anger was being expressed.

- Badly let down
- Video showing the gritting teams was insulting propaganda
- You really do not have a clue
- *There are 4 schools on the road and while a fantastic job has been done on gritting the pavements (thank you) the road is still very snowy and icy.*
- I'm a disabled bloke. I can't get out to supermarkets. Because you have decided NOT to make my pavements safe.
- I am disgusted with the councils lack of interest in and the surrounding roads.
- Its disgusting you need to grit there has been cars and vans stuck having to dig there ways out its utter chaos.
- Come on like... stop embarrassing yourselves.

- Why aren't you using tractors and hired plant to clear the roads. It looks like you just don't care.
- It's been almost a week and it's not acceptable. Considering how high the council tax is in this country it's amazing how little you get. ... This is ridiculous. I've never seen anything like this. You need to work way harder and no excuses are acceptable.
- *I do appreciate how hard your staff have been working to keep roads and pavements clear in this awful weather.* However, you do seem to have largely forgotten that Patcham exists.
- What it is to be old forgotten and ignored.
- *Many thanks for your hard work.*

1. Initial Standard Response (December)

Dear

Thank you for your message regarding the winter gritting operations of Brighton and Hove City Council.

I can confirm that we do not routinely treat side roads or lower used footways within the City this being due to the need to ensure main routes are kept passable and the resources available to the council as a whole.

We have a fleet of 6 lorries that are used for the gritting operations and they were fully committed to the main / bus routes throughout the City over the last few days and nights and could not be spared for side roads. Currently the drivers (there are 2 full sets of drivers) are being rested as we have further cold weather forecasts and therefore we can not afford to use all their driving hours up and then be unable to grit the main roads over night again.

Footways require a huge resource to clear them and we always endeavour to work in a priority basis when snow clearance is required. This being main shopping areas, hospitals etc. first. This process will take us several days to complete depending on the prevailing weather conditions and the current weather patterns have caused us to have to go back to areas already cleared and work on them again.

This means side roads and the majority of the cities footways will not be treated but there are a large number of side streets within Brighton and Hove in a similar position and we as an Authority have to prioritise our resources to the most used roads in these circumstances.

We also place grit bins on certain side roads that can be utilised by residents to help grit their own roads but these are generally only placed on junctions which have some incline etc. as these areas are of the highest risk. The grit bin request form can be found on the Brighton and Hove web site if you feel your road needs this addition. Any requests received will be considered and a needs list will be created from these requests.

We have issued instructions for all grit bins currently in use within Brighton and Hove to be checked and refilled as necessary also.

I am sorry I cannot give you a more positive response but do assure you we endeavour to utilise the resources available to us in the most effective manner and to help the most residents possible.

Yours sincerely,

On behalf of the Winter Maintenance Team

2. Revised Standard Response (January)

Dear,

We understand the frustrations of residents who have been faced with treacherous conditions during this particularly severe freeze. Because of the impact the snow and ice is having and the exceptionally high volume of correspondence we are receiving it is not possible to respond to individual requests and comments, but I hope the following information is helpful. I suggest you also look at our website, which contains forecasts, travel information and details of areas that are being gritted. <http://www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/index.cfm?request=b1157184#Subtitle1>.

We are working with the bus company to keep the bus routes open where possible, with the bus company updating their website every 15 minutes on <http://buses.co.uk/news/weather.aspx>. Some bus routes, which have been gritted, can not be used by the buses because at extremely low ground temperatures even gritted surfaces remain icy and treacherous unless the grit is ground in by traffic.

Unfortunately we only have a finite supply of materials and staff to carry out the work so it is simply not possible to keep all 3,000 of the city's roads free from ice and snow in the hours immediately following a severe freeze. During the heavy snow our fleet of six lorries that are used for the gritting operations are fully committed to the main routes and main bus routes throughout the city. As you may be aware, prolonged ice and snow conditions require repeated treatments to keep these routes open and therefore in accordance with our Winter Service Plan, we direct our available resources to these and are not able to extend this to side streets.

Pavement clearance is very labour intensive and takes a long time to cover relatively small distances. Therefore the pavements in the most heavily used areas and those near shops and hospitals are treated first to keep them as safe and clear as possible. We are using 4x4 vehicles to take Refuse, Parks and Street Cleansing staff out to grit piles dropped around the city so they can treat pavements in more locations.

Grit bins were refilled as quickly as possible, both on request from members of the public and with staff checking those on our list. As with pavements, it can take some time get round to all 350 bins in the city but it was and continues to be a priority for our teams. A grit bin request form can be found on the Brighton and Hove City Council web site if you feel your road needs this addition. For a grit bin refill or request for a new grit bin please use the generic inbox gritbinrequest@brighton-hove.gov.uk

or use our online form at <http://www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/index.cfm?request=c1148945>. We will however need to carry out a site visit to assess if it is possible to provide a new grit bin.

We endeavour to use the resources available to us in the most effective manner and to help the most residents possible. We will continue to review and learn from these events and are introducing extra measures, including diverting staff from other services to help with hand-gritting and increasing the number of grit-bins in the city.

Yours sincerely

**EXTRACT FROM ENVIRONMENT & COMMUNITY SAFETY OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY
COMMITTEE 8 FEBRUARY 2010**

DRAFT MINUTES

Present: Councillors Morgan (Chairman); Davey, Davis, Drake, Rufus, Smart, Wells and Barnett

Also present: Councillor Duncan, Representative of Sussex Police Authority

PART ONE

40. PROCEDURAL BUSINESS

40a Declarations of Substitutes

Councillor Dawn Barnett was substituting for Councillor Tony Janio.

40b Declarations of Interests

There were none

40c Declaration of Party Whip

There were none.

40d Exclusion of Press and Public

In accordance with section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, it was considered whether the press and public should be excluded from the meeting during the consideration of any items contained in the agenda, having regard to the nature of the business to be transacted and the nature of the proceedings and the likelihood as to whether, if members of the press and public were present, there would be disclosure to them of confidential or exempt information as defined in section 100I (1) of the said Act.

RESOLVED: That the press and public be not excluded from the meeting.

**43. PUBLIC QUESTIONS/LETTERS FROM COUNCILLORS/NOTICES OF MOTION
REFERRED FROM COUNCIL**

43.1 A public question from Dr Cant was tabled at the meeting as follows:

“My question relates to the relations between the Council and the local PCT in relation to falls occurring, particularly among the elderly, on un-gritted pavements during the recent period of snowy weather. Given the additional pressure that is placed on local health services as a result of snow-related falls and given that prevention of falls among the elderly is a key target in the NHS, this would seem to be an area for joint working between the council and the PCT. What plans does the council have for joint working with the PCT to prevent falls on the part of the elderly in the event of any future snowy weather?”

43.2 The question was referred on to the Scrutiny Panel to be established under item 46 later on this agenda

45. BRIGHTON & HOVE CITY COUNCIL WINTER SERVICE PLAN; OPERATION AND REVIEW 2009-2010

45.1 The Chairman Councillor Warren Morgan noted that he, Councillor Bill Randall and the Leader of the Council had all called for a review of the council’s response to the 19 December 2009 snowfall. Furthermore this was called for by the public.

45.2 Some Councillors claimed that a panel held in March would be premature but the Chairman pointed out that an early report back to the Environment & Community Safety Overview & Scrutiny Committee would allow for recommendations to be actioned before the coming winter.

45.3 Councillor Geoffrey Theobald agreed that an ad hoc panel would provide a good opportunity to discuss the experience of this winter’s severe weather and to look again at the council’s Winter Service Plan (WSP). He pointed out that the WSP was reviewed annually and that the current plan agreed at 5 November Environment CMM and took the February 2009 bad weather experience into account.

45.4 Councillor Theobald said it would be unrealistic and impractical to try to grit every road but the 40% gritting coverage of the road network exceeds the 24% target set by the Audit Commission target. He explained the WSP priorities within the city and how additional staff were called in to aid in carrying them out.

Councillor Theobald was in contact with officers throughout the Christmas period and was aware of the considerable amount of work they were doing around the clock. He reminded the committee that such weather had been unprecedented and the sub zero day time temperatures and low level of traffic on the roads had affected the effectiveness of the gritting process.

He thanked all staff involved and emphasised the importance of close working between the Council and emergency services partners.

45.5 The Committee Chairman formally thanked all staff from the wide range of service areas involved who had worked well beyond the call of duty and also provided a detailed report on its operation in December and January. Councillor Morgan said he wanted the Scrutiny Panel to take in constructive criticism including for example helping tackle local access difficulties such as steep hills and narrow streets.

45.6 It was noted that this was a countrywide challenge for all Councils although the ice before Christmas was more of a local problem which therefore generated more public disquiet than in January.

45.7 The Director of Environment said that the agreed WSP actions were carried out. There had been a high level of public concern and some of it had been hostile before Christmas but this reduced during the second spell of snow and ice. The early reaction may have been partly an issue of public expectation and communication, especially regarding the role of residents in helping to clear snow and ice, and what and how councils need to prioritise snow clearance. This communication had been improved for the post Christmas snow and the service had also been enhanced, particularly around pavement clearance.

45.8 The Head of Network Management confirmed the agreed Winter Service Plan had been put into action as planned. She gave background information to the WSP (Item 45; paragraphs 3.2 – 3.33) and told the Committee that unlike many other councils, Brighton & Hove City Council grits bus routes as well as major road networks, giving good coverage across the City.

45.9 Gritting routes for the 7 Council-owned gritting vehicles have to be time-limited to be viable and effective and this can limit the amount of the road network they can cover.

45.10 Pre-treating roads before snowfall always takes place but was noted as being less effective after an accumulation of snow at particularly low temperatures, as the salt tends to lie inert beneath the snow. Operations then resort to ploughing if the depth of snow permits this but this has the drawback of tending to open up a narrower carriageway. Ploughing plus a salt and grit mix or a pure grit mix on top of snow is the most effective post-treatment in giving traction and breaking down the snow to allow the pre-treatment salt to work. However, all spreading treatments also rely on substantial traffic to help them work. This means that busy city centre roads will respond better and more quickly to treatment than smaller, less-used roads. Gritters did not manage to open all the outlying bus routes despite continuing to treat these constantly throughout the snow periods. Roads with a lower volume of traffic, higher altitude and colder climate require more attention.

45.11 The Head of Network Management said pre-treating pavements is time consuming and labour intensive and the mixture can be quickly washed away after rainfall. It can also use a substantial amount of materials; however the Hollingdean Depot has a limited capacity to store salt. Like most councils, Brighton & Hove City Council's WSP states that we will only post-treat pavements after heavy and prolonged snow and ice conditions.

45.12 During the December snowfall, the council used the post-treatment method of spreading a salt and grit mix on pavements. The council donated some salt to the Primary Care Trust.

45.13 The WSP was activated in the week leading up to the snowfall on Thursday 17 December. Road gritting took place using salting pre-treatment in the evenings leading up to the predicted snowfall. Pavement clearance began on Friday 18 December 2009. However there was additional snowfall and freezing rain overnight which, combined with reduced traffic to help 'activate' or spread the salt, led to even more icy conditions on the roads and pavements. This was indeed an example of 'the different types of snow.'

45.14 Between December 2009 and January 2010 officers planned for further severe snowfall, for instance preparing additional resources and developing communications on the website and with residents.

45.15 More was done particularly with regard to pavement treatment and communications in response to the January snowfall compared with the December snowfall; and this was in excess of the provisions in the Winter Service Plan. Less icy conditions also helped operations in January.

45.16 Road gritting was repeated in the same way in January, with pre-treatments of salt being laid down every evening for several days before the snowfalls, followed by ploughing and salt/grit treatment after and during the snowfalls.

45.17 On behalf of the Committee the Chairman thanked all those involved in providing services in the severe conditions.

45.18 Questions and suggestions from Members were as follows with replies from the Director and Head of Network Operations in italics.

1) Would like more grit bins, and advice for residents on how to use grit or ashes

2) Will grit be removed, to help clear gullies?

There were over 400 requests for grit bins this winter. To keep 'clutter' to a minimum a more flexible arrangement such as dropping off sacks of grit at appropriate points in residential areas might be preferable.

3) Could there be seasonal grit bins to help reduce vandalism? When would additional grit bins be provided?

More work was needed before any roll-out of more bins. The current criteria agreed in the WSP for provision of grit bins are for areas on steep hills, especially near junctions, and not usually on a road-gritting route.

4) The hourly updates were useful for keeping residents informed.

5) The grit bin request form on the website was helpful

6) Can the gritting machines have chains attached to their tyres to break up the ice and get up the steeper hills?

Chains on vehicles tend to be costly, unreliable and can cause damage to highways.

7) What are the Council's plans to buy additional 4x4 vehicles and grit machines including machines for dealing with pavements. Are there adaptations available for use by smaller vehicles where necessary?

Almost certainly more 4x4 vehicles and smaller vehicles will be needed. Hand gritting machines are available and work well, but all of them would have a budgetary impact.

Financial implications are detailed at paragraph 10.

8) Could additional gritting machine driver training be provided and what are the costs of drafting in additional operational staff over weekends/nights?

Driver training would not be an issue as CityClean, City Parks, Sustainable Transport and City Enforcement Officers, in conjunction with the GMB, coordinate and work together well.

Assistance for Highway Winter Duty Officers during severe weather is being looked at due to the long working hours they experienced in December and January.

9) What proportion of narrow streets in the city and how many could be kept open.

Because there were repeated and often heavy snowfalls at various times over a period of a week in January, resources, including vehicles, drivers and supplies of grit had to be used to maintain the main routes and bus routes as agreed in the WSP. Consequently it would have been ineffective to divert stocks to side streets if it meant main routes became blocked. It would also have raised the issue of liability if only certain side streets were gritted and not others.

10) How can the council improve communication with residents to help them help themselves? How can the Council empower residents and encourage a community approach, more noticeable in January, to severe weather? Communities could be given advice on how to become more self-sufficient, for instance in keeping extra food in store.

More information was available in time for the second snowfall on how to clear pathways.

To help manage residents' expectations in future, the council could consider being clearer in advance about what can realistically be done by the local authority

11) For shops outside the city centre, how are the pavements prioritised for post-treatment?

Out of town shopping areas are prioritised, but only those with higher footfall, in order to make best use of limited resources. For best effectiveness the treatment needs to be spread by activity. The council responded to individual business' requests for gritting where possible.

12) Councillor Ben Duncan, representative of the Sussex Police Authority asked what were the council's statutory obligations to the police and other authorities in the event of severe weather, and emergency services' obligations to the council (e.g. lending 4x4s). At what stage could an emergency be declared by the Council and its partners, and could national resources be called on?

In line with existing protocols, there was a Major Incident meeting during the Christmas period between the health, police, fire and the local authority. It was agreed that transport was the key issue during the severe weather, and that the best response was to disseminate public information rather than declare an emergency. It was also agreed that the authorities would lease extra vehicles and share 4x4s.

A call to staff and residents for use of their 4x4s was made and the details of the volunteers were kept. Insurance cover is provided by the Council. A Transport Cell of four authorities also called each other to share 4x4s.

Council officers work closely with the Police and NHS, informing them of any road closures and gritting all highway roads around hospitals and fire stations and their forecourts. The Council aims to grit all its own premises and will try to help the bus company and other public authorities who have their own contingency plans in place.

The Council donated supplies to some of the other authorities.

45.19 Further comments from Members included: the response to unusual weather needs to be proportionate; the Council should not buy expensive equipment that might not be needed again for many years; and if the council acted in excess of the Audit Commission Target for road network gritting, could some of the effort be diverted to pavements?

45.20 The Chairman referred to schools' policies on closure due to bad weather and the criteria for closures; teachers might be generally less able than pupils to make the journey to their school but might be able to undertake an emergency support role local to their homes.

45.21 Suggestions for proposed action and question about legal liability from Councillor Bill Randall were tabled at the meeting and these would be taken into account by the Panel.

45.22 The Head of Media Relations told the committee that further information could be put out earlier in future. Replying to a question he said messages on gritting around Churchill Square and other areas for which the council was not directly responsible, were passed on via the Business Forum and other organisations.

45.23 The Director said that after the January snowfall, to try to identify areas that may be especially problematic, people arriving at A&E with fall-related injuries were asked where they fell as well as their home address. This 'soft' data is included at Appendix 1 and could be collected and analysed more rigorously in future.

45.24 RESOLVED that having considered the report, that a one-day Scrutiny Panel be scoped in the following item on this agenda, item 46.

46. WINTER SERVICE PLAN; PROPOSED PANEL REMIT

46.1 The Standards and Complaints Manager summarised the report on the proposed scope of the Scrutiny Panel on the Winter Service Plan and detailed the public reaction; comments complaints and suggestions; to the council's response to the snowfall. He encouraged people to make complaints about the Council via the Standards and Complaints Team and explained how to do this.

46.2 Members agreed that Councillor Morgan would Chair the Panel. He said the Panel cannot respond to individual complaints, this is the role of the Environment Cabinet Member. Complaints made about the council would be addressed in the usual way. The number of

speakers would need to be limited; only those with constructive ideas or particular expertise would be invited to speak in person to the Panel and this was agreed.

46.3 Councillor Duncan suggested the scope of the panel (reference paragraph 3.8 and 3.9) should also consider the joint working with other public authorities. It was agreed that the emergency services would be invited to give their information to the Panel.

46.4 Because so much useful information had been brought forward at this meeting it was suggested that the Panel Members be drawn from this committee. However the Groups would be asked to nominate one Member to serve on the Panel.

46.5 **RESOLVED** 1) That the Committee note the information in the report and agree, subject to the addition of other emergency services to the list of witnesses at 3.9, the remit of the Winter Service Plan Scrutiny panel,

(2) That Councillor Morgan Chair the Panel and other nominations be requested from the Groups to be forwarded to the scrutiny team

Scrutiny into Winter Service Plan

I understand that a one-off scrutiny panel hearing is taking place into how well prepared the council was, and how well it responded to the recent severe weather. I have a number of observations, comments and suggestions that I would appreciate considered in your deliberations.

First of all I would like to thank all council staff, services and members of the public who worked so very hard in difficult conditions and showed great fortitude. What was achieved by all was done in good heart, and I am sure everyone in the City is grateful for that.

We could though collectively have done so much better and I am sure so many of those that suffered injury and the misery of disruption could have been spared their troubles if we had been better prepared and organised.

I can't imagine the personal cost for residents and the cost to the local economy but it must be very great indeed. It is therefore vital that the council develops the logistics and resources to more efficiently and effectively tackle similar events in the future.

There are many points I could make, but I think chiefly the point I will make is that there was too little fore thought, and subsequent resource, targeted at maintaining sustainable travel modes.

As both a councillor representing a city centre ward and a resident living on a hill in the suburbs I saw both ends of the extremes of experience – but there is a common thread.

The experience in the suburbs was one of abandonment and total isolation. Bus routes were not maintained for their full reach; bus stops were not gritted, nor were pavements even on key pedestrian routes until the very last days of the prolonged thaw. The snow was much deeper and lasted much longer in the higher areas, but there seemed little appreciation of this in the allocation of the resources. Despite a willingness by members of the public to do their bit, grit bins were too few and even after lorries were able to get through were not replenished for several days at a time. Those with cars were often able to travel much sooner than those without. Anyone with a buggy or mobility impairment was cut off for weeks.

In the city centre while North Street and Western Road were quickly cleared with disproportionate attention, important local shopping areas of London Road and Lewes Road were stricken, especially during the pre Christmas ice. Key pedestrian routes leading off of West Hill to Brighton Station like Guildford Road were lethal. Many injuries occurred for people only needing to travel short distances by foot to get a train or bus. Again, not enough grit bins that people might help themselves and too little gritting of key pavements by the council.

My suggestions:

- In these sort of extremes no one should expect to be able to carry on as normal; it simply isn't possible. The priority then must be to help the greatest number of people to go about their essential business and to access food, medicines and vital services. Not everyone has access to a private vehicle, but everyone has access to the pavement and public transport. We must therefore heavily

prioritise access to public sustainable modes of travel over private vehicles on these occasions.

- A network of pedestrian routes primarily based on major bus routes but supplemented by connecting routes needs to be identified. Keeping these foot and bus routes open will enable people to travel across the city on foot and by bus. Only a single path alongside each bus route may be needed in places, but bus stops do need to be made safe throughout. Important destinations like local shops, pharmacies, medical centres and surgeries and transport hubs, etc need to be connected to this pedestrian network. Hilly areas and heavily trafficked pedestrian routes need to be connected too. The network needs to be established and widely advertised so that the public understand that they might use it to get around safely.
- Clearly the Council will struggle even with its human resources to open and maintain such an extensive network, so it is vital that residents are asked to help with this. Residents and businesses also need to be asked to open and maintain the paths in front of their properties. To facilitate this will need a large increase in the number of grit bins, strategically positioned, along with the logistics to keep them filled. In areas where residents don't have gardens and therefore may not possess a spade, shovels for public use need to be stored at community buildings. A great deal of public awareness and co-ordination is required.
- Opening road routes other than bus routes cannot be seen as a priority if a pedestrian/ bus/ train network is to be operated successfully. Many motorists venture out and get stuck causing obstructions and drawing in resources to help free them. It needs to be made very clear that motor travel that is not absolutely vital will only be adding to the risk of congestion and hampering efforts to get everyone else moving.
- While the efforts of the Council, other service providers and members of the public to help vulnerable people was truly admirable, I know there were many 'not on the books' that went for a long time without help. We must ensure that identifying likely vulnerable people is a responsibility shared more greatly with neighbours, and how to gain service provider assistance is made more apparent.
- A booklet sent to every household 'What to do when it snows' would seem a very good way of informing and gaining buy-in from the public. During the cold war the government felt it worthwhile to issue a pamphlet to households called Protect and Survive which was about what to do in case of nuclear war. Protect and Survive was very well read, though I suspect 'What to do when it snows' would be somewhat more useful.

Yours sincerely,

Pete West

Cllr Pete West

Green City Councillor for St Peter's & North Laine Ward

Winter Service Scrutiny: Road Gritting

Brighton & Hove City Council provides up to 40% coverage of its highway road network. This is above the current Audit Commission target, and similar to adjacent local authorities.

The gritting routes cover all main roads (A, B and C) and any bus routes. So residential roads (“unclassified roads”) only receive treatment if they are part of the bus network. The aim of this is to provide comprehensive coverage across the city with options for people to travel, as most roads and dwellings are not far from a bus stop/bus route.

The majority of the winter service operates as “pre-treatment” i.e. spreading of salt in advance of snow, ice and frost. Pre-treatment gritting runs are carried out several times during the winter usually in the evenings after rush hour but prior to freezing temperatures which tend to mainly occur at night here in the South East. The service is rarely noticed except in more extreme weather conditions.

In prolonged ice or snow, post-treatment is also carried out, which is the spreading of salt, salt/grit or pure grit on roads and the use of ploughs if the depth of snow allows this.

The coverage only includes public highway not private land or other owned-council land as the service is run from the Highways budget.

For clarity of communication, best use of resources and liability reasons, the gritters are rarely directed to go off route. During severe snow events, all resources are required to keep the identified routes open.

As explained in the original Scrutiny document, gritting the roads does not always mean they will be free from frost, snow or ice as there are a number of factors that determine how effectively the treatment will work.

Routes:

The routes were carefully designed and mapped some years ago at unitary status, using thermal mapping information and weather station data as well as road and bus network information. The routes are not currently electronically mapped although this is being worked on.

Minor changes are made to the routes (such as a change in a particular bus route) annually before each winter season.

However to make any major changes to the routes would require considerable time and resources. This is because:

1. Gritter routes have to be efficient – not too much time should be spent going back over roads already gritted or travelling without gritting
2. Gritter routes have to be completed within reasonable timescales – no more than approximately 3 hours in normal conditions otherwise it

becomes difficult to complete coverage in advance of the predicted freezing conditions.

3. Gritter routes have to be coherent and follow a defined plan in order to be clear to the public what to expect of the service.
4. Gritter routes have to be achievable within the relevant resources e.g. 6 routes requires 6 gritters. Increasing the amount of roads covered will increase the amount of gritters, personnel, fuel and materials required. Careful calculation is needed to analyse the impact of any increase in routes.
5. To work out new routes would require electronic route mapping, route optimisation and personnel to carry this out.

Currently the routes do not as a matter of course cover schools, nurseries, business areas, health centres, etc.

The routes do cover all emergency services' premises including the hospital A&E ramp/forecourt and Hove Fire Station forecourt.

Any major changes to the routes would require consultant input as there is not the time, staff or IT expertise within Highways to undertake this.

Winter Service Scrutiny: Pavement clearance

In common with most local authorities, Brighton & Hove rarely carries out pavement treatment except in severe and prolonged snowfall as our first priority is the road network. A salt/grit mix is usually used for pavements rather than pure salt.

Some pavements on gritter routes will receive a degree of treatment due to the spread width of the gritting operation although the amount of parked cars on the roadside will affect how much salt will reach the pavement.

Coverage of pavements, especially by hand spreading, is operationally and practically difficult as the work requires a high level of resources, including personnel, vehicles and materials. With road gritting, the vehicle is HGV size and can be loaded with enough salt to complete a lot of roads. With pavement gritting, smaller vehicles are used which need regular refills, as do the hand-operated “prams” for salt/grit spreading. This would be the case even if mechanical pavement gritting machines are purchased.

During the majority of winters, snowfall on pavements has tended to melt quite rapidly of its own accord. It has only been more recently and particularly in December 2009 and January 2010, that snow and ice have remained in situ for several days.

From the Winter Service Plan:

6.4. Handwork in the Event of Snow

Cityclean Operations Managers will be asked if they can provide sufficient labour and plant for handspreading of salt/grit in the event of severe snowfall and as directed by the WSDO. Contractors may also be used at the agreed rates during a snow event.

7.1. Snow Clearance - Footways.

7.3.1. Snow clearance of footways will only be carried out during severe and prolonged snow events and at the decision of the WSDO/Head of Network Management. Town centre and main pedestrian routes are to be cleared first.

Private shopping precincts and private forecourts are not to be treated. Attention is then given to important linking footway and local shopping areas. In the last phase residential footways may be tackled but only with the prior consent of Director of Environment. Footway clearance is a lengthy labour-intensive task and therefore the WSDO must decide on priorities and when the snow may be likely to clear naturally due to improved weather conditions. See Appendix M (*attached for information*).

Pre-treatment of pavements:

Very few local authorities carry out any pre-treatment of pavements. This is where salt/grit mix is laid down in advance of ice or snow.

There are logistical reasons for not carrying out pre-treatment:

1. Personnel would have to be diverted from normal duties such as refuse collection, street cleansing and highway repairs in order to carry out pre-treatment. This would have a big impact on those services even before any snowfall disrupts such services.
2. Weather forecasting is rarely absolutely exact especially more than 12 hours in advance. Because pavement clearance is so labour-intensive, personnel need at least 1-2 days to cover our main thoroughfares. There is a risk that a lot of work and service disruption would take place, only for the forecast to change and no major snow or ice to fall. This happened between Christmas & New Year when snow was forecast but did not actually occur in Brighton & Hove at all during that period.
3. Any pre-treatment can be washed off by rain. With road gritting, the routes can be completed within 3 hours maximum so there is a better window of opportunity to obtain network coverage after rainfall. With pavement gritting, because it takes so long, it is a waste to do it in advance of rain but there may not be much time to carry it out after rain. It depends very much on the circumstances for each individual weather event and would rely on an informed decision at the time. The snowfall in December was preceded by heavy rain the night before.
4. As with road gritting, pavement gritting requires a high level of traffic for it to work successfully as a pre-treatment. So streets with lots of footfall will respond better once the snow or ice has formed simply because the pre-treatment is getting tracked in and can start to work on the snow or ice. Where there is little footfall, including around local shopping parades, the pre-treatment will be quite ineffective.
5. As with road gritting, pavement gritting requires a degree of warmth to be effective. In very cold temperatures or with deep snowfall it will simply remain inert under heavy snow or ice. This tends to more problematic in outlying areas with less footfall, more exposure to the elements and less warmth generated by the proximity of buildings.

Treatment of pavements in advance of cold weather therefore requires considerable time and resources, which divert staff from other duties and also runs the risk a less effective use of time and materials depending on the actual weather conditions when they arrive.

Post-treatment of pavements:

Local authorities in the UK differ in whether and how much treatment of pavements is carried out after major snow or ice has formed.

Brighton & Hove has agreed rates with its Highway Contractors for carrying out snow clearance upon authorisation from the Winter Duty

Officer. At the agreement of the Heads of Operations, City Services staff will also be called upon to help, with staffing levels determined by availability and requirements for their normal duties.

Post-treatment also uses a salt/grit mix. In very cold temperatures or where there are heavy layers of snow and ice, pure grit is used to provide traction irrespective of the layers underneath.

The council has a priority list of pavements, which starts with the most heavily used and then, depending on time and resources, continues out from the main city centre to include local shopping centres and other pavements with reasonable footfall. This is because we aim to keep as many people as safe as possible and as with road gritting, there are simply not enough resources to do all of the city's 3,000 roads quickly.

As with road gritting, the Environment Directorate will only carry out clearance on the public highway not private land or other council-owned land. This is because the Highway budget cannot provide for all land across the city and because staffing and material resources need to be directed for the greatest general public benefit.

Statistics from the A&E department during December's ice and snow reveal that the greatest number of slips occurred in main shopping areas (including on private land).

During the December & January snow event, Highways and City Services carried out a huge operational clearance of many pavements within the city. Because December's snowfall was icy, pavement clearance was very resistant to treatment and it was slow work having to chip the ice away. In January, more resources were made available and much more grit was laid around the city including on routes to schools.

Use of materials:

To provide salt and grit for pavement clearance is an additional cost over and above road gritting. There is also an environmental impact, with salt and grit eventually washing away into the drainage system. Grit has the potential to cause blockages in the drains, and also remains on street for much longer than salt, which will dissolve more easily. However, salt can have a negative impact on trees and other vegetation if it enters the watercourse.

During the most recent snow events in the UK, national supplies of salt have run low, and the government formed Salt Cells to direct distribution to areas of greatest need. This means that Brighton & Hove may not be given enough salt supplies to support pavement clearance as the Salt Cell concentrates on the essential road gritting capabilities of each authority. Grit (sharp sand) is not usually a problem as there are vast quantities at Shoreham Harbour. However, it does have more of an obvious environmental impact.

Winter Service Scrutiny: Grit Bin Information

The Highways team currently supply just over 350 grit bins on the public highway across the city. These have been sited in response to residents' or local business' requests. The majority of locations are in wards to the north, east and north-west of the city, where the cold temperatures are traditionally the most severe. Housing may also site grit bins on their own land in response to tenants' requests – these are not serviced by the Highways team.

Traditionally grit bins have been requested – and sited – for self-help with road treatment. Until the most recent snowfalls, pavement clearance has not been such an issue as we have tended to have light snowfalls that melt during the day.

From the Winter Service Plan:

Salt/Grit Containers

12.1. A mixture of salt/grit is stored in bins at various roadside sites throughout Brighton and Hove as a self help for motorists.

12.2. The general principles for providing a bin are as follows: -

12.2.1. Bins would not normally be situated on spreader routes unless there was considered to be a special need.

12.2.2. Hills, steep junctions and places where water can seep across the carriageway, are general siting considerations.

12.3. Location of salt/grit containers are shown in Appendix N. Currently there are over 350 bins throughout the City.

12.4. Certain organisations such as police, fire, schools, may collect small quantities of salt from Hollingdean Depot for use around their premises. Authorisation for this must come from the WSDO, and visitors must adhere to risk assessment procedures for collecting salt, shown in Appendix R.

From the Website:

What are salt/grit bins for?

Salt bins are provided at over 300 locations in the city, often on steep road junctions or hills. They are not usually placed on major salting routes. They are there for anyone to make use of in icy weather.

Can I have a salt/grit bin?

Please complete [an online application for a salt/grit bin to be installed or removed](#) (generally, hills and steep junctions are given preference) or email gritbinrequest@brighton-hove.gov.uk

New requests:

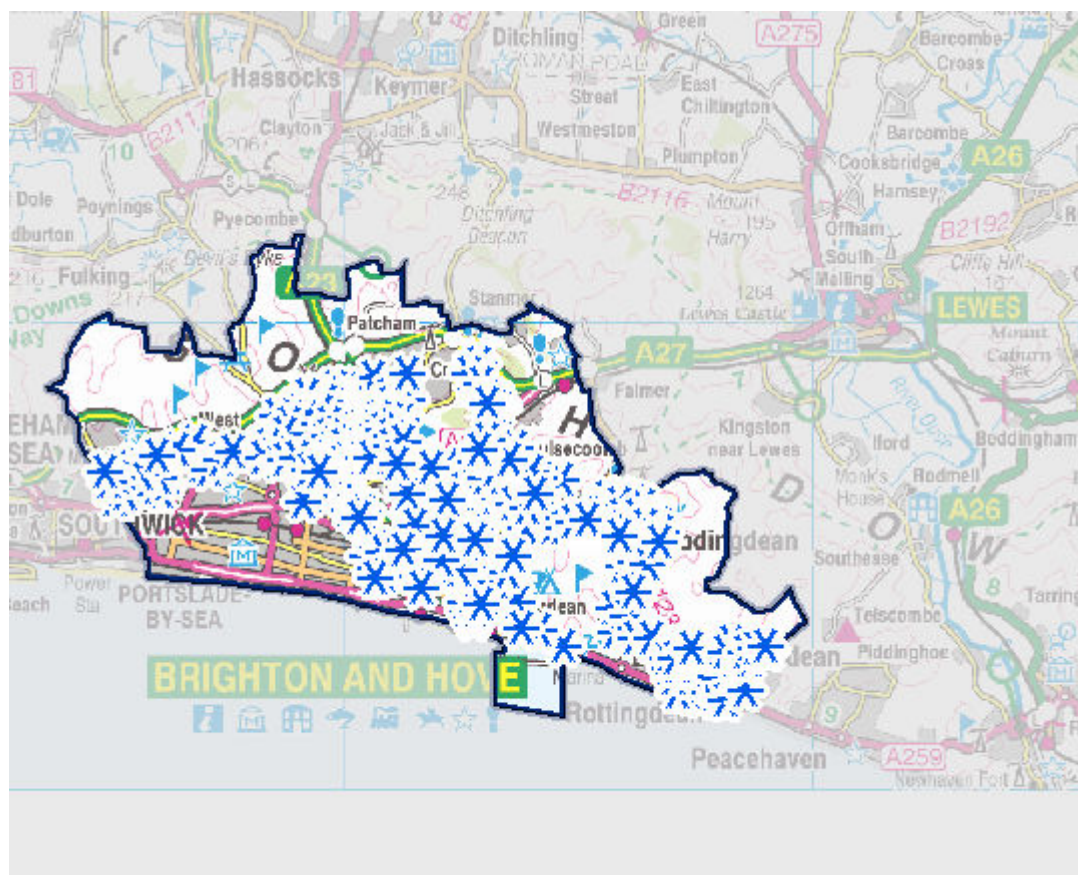
The council has received 457 requests for additional grit bins. We have not yet had the opportunity to check these for duplication or to plot on a map.

Cost

The cost of one refill for the current allocation of 350 grit bins is £37,000 This includes contractor time and cost of materials.

The cost of each grit bin is: £150 for the bin itself but also need to add installation costs (via our Highway contractor).

Grit Bin Map on council website



Winter Service Scrutiny: Queries about costs

Cost per gritting/ploughing machines

Costs for a road gritter vary from approximately £85,000 for a basic model similar to our current vehicles, which are old Mercedes lorry chassis or current equivalent. Prices can be up to £135,000 for a more sophisticated chassis that is adapted to run different services (e.g. gritting, cleansing, and mowing).

The critical factor in purchasing any new vehicles is that they have to be able to deal not just with the routine pre-treatment when roads are clear but also with deep snow and treacherous ice on Brighton & Hove's steep, narrow and uneven hills. The more expensive models tend to be more resilient and better suited to extreme conditions.

Pavement gritters cost approximately £40,000 – products vary but there are now some very efficient slim-line vehicles on the market which could also be useful for off-road cycleways such as The Level and the Drive.

Cost of salt/grit per tonne

The cost paid by Brighton & Hove City Council is commercially sensitive information because there are only 2 suppliers in the UK and a very limited amount of suppliers globally. However, as an estimate, anything up to £35 per tonne is paid for 6mm rock salt. This includes haulage and delivery to the Depot.

Brighton & Hove City Council's salt supplier is Cleveland Potash.

Grit (sharp sand) costs approximately £22 per tonne, including haulage costs. The sharp sand comes from Shoreham Harbour, where it is deposited after being dredged from the sea, and therefore has a slight salt content.

Both salt and grit arrive in the Depot loose in 20 tonne lorries. It is then deposited onto the relevant pile, and is kept as loose stock loaded into the gritters as required by shovel loader.

There are therefore huge logistical issues about supplying residents directly with salt and/or grit as we use coarse rock salt delivered as loose tonnage. It would require a considerable amount of staff resources to deliver this to residents in a contained format e.g. kilo bags.

To purchase bags (e.g. by kilo) is much more expensive, with current rates at approximately £130 per bag. During national salt supply issues, this rate is likely to rise as well as companies find it difficult to provide to all customers.

For health & safety reasons, we cannot allow residents and businesses to arrive unannounced at or to manoeuvre around the Depot unescorted for the collection of salt and grit. For supply calculation reasons, we cannot allow residents and businesses to take unallocated amounts of salt or grit.

It may be possible to explore the option of filling builders' bags with salt/grit and depositing on street but this would still require purchase of bags, staff and haulage resources (e.g. a hiab lorry) to organise.

Cost of a grit bin

The cost is £150 per bin but also need to factor in costs of installation via our Highway Contractor.

Currently the council provides 350 bins on the public highway for highway use.

To fill these once costs £37,000. This cost includes contractor time and salt/grit materials.

In an average winter season, the bins are usually filled at least twice, at a total cost of £74,000.

Cost of spades

Unknown – for Gillian Marston/Mike Moon

Cost of training staff to use machines

It costs just under £1,000 per person to train an HGV driver in the City & Guilds Winter Service qualification. This enables them to operate road gritters.

To train staff for an HGV licence could cost up to £3,000 per person.

Currently Brighton & Hove City Council has 15 trained gritter drivers, and 6 gritting routes. There are 12 gritter drivers on the Winter Service rota, with 6 on weekly standby at a time throughout winter. One of the Out of Hours Officers is a trained gritter driver so can pitch in to help when needed. The remaining 2 drivers were trained as additional resource to call on during extreme events or due to staff sickness if required.

Although training more personnel could help with resilience during major snow events, it has to be borne in mind that there are only a limited number of vehicles.

During the January snow event, being able to utilise Street Cleansing staff as ploughing mates freed up the drivers to run 2 shifts – 6 on night-time and 6 on day-time so there was no major issue with driver availability.

Costs to train staff on pavement gritting machines are unknown but likely to be negligible.

Context

Our winter pressures and business continuity planning anticipate increased pressures over the winter months.

This preparation ensures that we are prepared to respond to the sort of exceptional demands presented by episodes of severe weather.

This winter we experienced significant exceptional demands as the demands of the swine flu pandemic combined with normal winter pressures and with 2 periods of severe weather (pre Christmas and post Christmas snow).

Priorities

To ensure that Adult Social Care Services continue to operate and assure the safety of vulnerable adults in the community and in residential and nursing homes.

To support the continued safe operation of our acute hospitals

Actions taken

Implemented our business continuity plans that ensured the safety and continuity of service to our most vulnerable service users in the community.

Redeployed staff to the areas of service experiencing the greatest demand.

Redirected staff who could not attend their normal place of work to work centres/tasks that ensured the continued safety of our users.

Provided specialised transport for staff to get into work and to ensure their continued ability to visit vulnerable users in their own homes.

Supported colleagues in the independent care sector (to ensure that they were able to maintain a safe level of service).

Recruited volunteers from across the council to make 'safety visits' to vulnerable adults.

Used the local media to recruit volunteers with 4X4 vehicles to transport staff to work and home visits.

Secured specialist transport and drivers from the Seafront Office and Parks Department (this is just one example of the extraordinary support we received from colleagues across the council).

Identified dedicated staff resources to co-ordinate staff transport within Adult Social Care and across the local health and social care economy.

Identified staff volunteers to provide both an Access Service in the community and a Social Care Assessment Service in the hospital over the weekend of 9th & 10th January with the support of Customer Services.

Established a special conference call facility and schedule of conference calls (24/7) for senior officers in ASC to ensure regular communication for the duration of the severe weather incident. This complimented a similar initiative involving senior managers, across the health and social care economy.

Established direct communication links with colleagues in City Clean to inform priorities re gritting to maintain access to social and health care facilities.

Note: None of the above would have been possible without the extraordinary dedication of our social care staff many of whom worked extended hours, contributed their weekends to ensure the safety of our users, members of home care and residential staff stayed overnight at their work base to ensure their availability for work and staff across the board demonstrated a willingness to work flexibly in the interest of the service.

Lessons Learned

The positive experience of being part of a truly corporate response to exceptional circumstances.

The ability of organisations to work together effectively across the health and social care economy, sharing resources, aligning priorities and solving problems together.

Our business continuity plans ensured that we knew what we had to do and how we should do it. If there was a gap it was in not having the systems in place (or readily in hand) to underpin the action we knew we had to take. These were simple but critical things e.g. quick access to buildings out of hours, being able to change automated IT and telephone systems quickly out of hours, systems for recording and distributing info re volunteers, ready access to up to date volunteer/staffing information.

1. Positive Points

- 1.1. We appreciate the very difficult circumstances that were faced and are generally supportive of the efforts made by the City Council to deal with the problems of snow and ice.
- 1.2. There was a general commitment to keeping bus routes clear, along with emergency vehicle routes, and we appreciate that commitment.
- 1.3. The daily emails received from the Brighton & Hove Winter Service (findlay@ednet.co.uk) were very useful.
- 1.4. Our ability to contact the gritting teams direct by mobile phone was much appreciated. There were regular staff on duty that our Controllers got to know and the liaison at this level enabled specific local problems to be addressed.
- 1.5. Our Operations Director, Mike Best, was in frequent contact with Mark Prior, including out of hours, and this ensured our input at a more strategic level.
- 1.6. A member of Bus Company staff was able to work in the City Council's CCTV room to enable much greater coverage in checking of bus routes. Training was provided and this facility was welcomed.
- 1.7. We have been involved in meetings with Christina Liassides and her team in the past concerning preparations for snow and ice and this involvement is appreciated.

2. Negative Points

- 2.1. Certain key roads became impassable at times making whole bus routes unsuitable, the major example being North Street. When this road was impassable buses coming from the Hove direction along Church Road and Western Road had nowhere to turn, thus could not operate along Church Road and Western Road even when these roads were passable.
- 2.2. The other major example was Terminus Road, which effectively cut off service 7 (George Street-Marina via Cromwell Road) and the possibility of operating buses along Dyke Road.
- 2.3. A similar situation in Elm Grove meant that we could not reach anywhere within walking distance for residents of Woodingdean.
- 2.4. Eastern Road was impassable for longer than would have been desirable, with buses having to use the sea front instead. Eastern Road is a major bus route and serves the County Hospital. The

walking routes for passengers between the sea front at the County Hospital were treacherous.

- 2.5. Several estates were inaccessible for several days, for example Woodingdean and Bevendean.
- 2.6. There was a particular problem with private vehicles abandoned in some roads away from the kerb, in particular Carden Avenue, Elm Grove and certain roads in the Queen's Park area. This meant that even when the snow started to thaw and roads would otherwise have been passable we were still unable to access these areas. In a similar situation to 2.1 above, a problem in one road meant that whole sections of route could not be operated as buses need places to turn round if operating to a point short of an official terminal point, and such places can be difficult to find.
- 2.7. On occasions all the gritters returned to the depot together to re-stock. This occurred towards the start of the snowfall period. The problem was that this occurred as snow was falling and without the gritters conditions along key roads quickly became treacherous.
- 2.8. In some estates snow plough fitted vehicles covered bus route roads but not in the actual order that buses travel, so banks of snow were created as the ploughs turned corners, blocking bus routes. A particular example of this was in Hangleton.
- 2.9. Many pavement bus stop waiting areas were treacherous causing difficulty for passengers.
- 2.10. Whilst we were happy with the ability to communicate with the gritting teams and tell them what problems we were facing, we tended not receive information from them about specific problem locations (other than by the emails referred to in point 1.3 above) which might have been useful in advance planning our operations and advising the public when certain routes might be resumed.

Mike Best
Operations Director
Brighton & Hove Bus & Coach Company Ltd.
4.3.10

While the costs of all the falls and broken bones doesn't fall directly on the council, (the bill is picked up by the NHS and employers/individuals) making it possible for people to get out their neighbourhoods onto the main streets is essential if services are to be maintained during severe weather.

Neighbourhood pavements could be gritted by agency labourers brought in at short notice. Relying on salaried council staff in these exceptional conditions means there just aren't enough bodies on the ground to spread the rock salt! There was enough notice a) of the weather coming, and b) the snow staying and freezing for plans to manage the gritting processes especially on hilly streets and pavements.

While it is good to keep main streets open by gritting lorry it is much more enabling for the people who chose not to drive to be able to walk on gritted pavements.

It would be good if local hills were identified and salt/grit bins were sited on the places where they are either currently lacking or had been removed. For instance Hamilton Road, Brigden Street, York Villas, Howard Place and Terrace (there is one here but it emptied quickly).

Gritting Lorries equipped with grab cranes could be used to deliver those large bags of grit to sites rather than just tipping onto the roadside. That way there is better distribution and able bodied locals can take some responsibility for gritting the pavements.

We were shocked at the number of days the schools were closed locally and how staff just didn't attempt to make their way to school.

New SMS messaging was used well though (Blatchington Mill).

Staff need remote access to their websites as it was clear that they were only updated on opening if the staff managed to get in.

Thanks for the opportunity to comment.

Ross Haffenden

Dear Brighton & Hove Council,

I am a city resident who was affected by the severe weather, and I would like to contribute constructively to this review. To summarise my case and comments:

- At the beginning of the frosty week before December's snow, I was cycling to work along my usual route. On the sloping junction of Sussex St. & John St., I suddenly skidded on invisible ice, falling heavily on a hip & causing it to fracture.
- It is too early to know if the NHS's major operation (involving screwing the broken bone together) will be largely successful in terms of me regaining most of my previous mobility; the bone may die away, requiring a further major hip replacement operation.
- Whilst awaiting an ambulance, several of the many passers-by reported other people falling on nearby roads & pavements, which whilst busy as usual with many pedestrian commuters (e.g. to American Express) & schoolgoers (e.g. Carlton Hill Schools & Tarnerland Nursery), had not been part of the previous night's "standard" gritting routes (e.g. on my home street, Southover).
- Your scrutiny group has been convened because the following weekend (18-21 Dec) "all hell broke loose" in terms of residents falling & breaking bones on icy pavements & roads. I add my voice to those many who feel the Council at that time experienced a severe management failure in terms of assessing how great the risks clearly were, and in not deploying sufficient resources or staff from other sections. The costs to the NHS (& employers/ the economy in terms of working days lost) must have been many times greater than that required to increase gritting to a publicly & politically acceptable level.
- My main point however is that you say you grit 40% of the roads in the city, but the general policy of just gritting major roads & bus routes misses out many such as the location of my accident which are busy (& sometimes steep/ sloping) due to being commuter routes, near schools, shopping areas, etc. If you really do grit such a %age of roads, then in future resources need to be available to make more of these busy local roads safe within a reasonable timescale, on those rare occasions when ice & snow remain for longer than a few hours.
- Finally I want to stress the overwhelming priority of gritting resources in the review of the winter service plan. If the Council appears to minimise this issue by emphasising "snow heroes", 4x4 vehicles, residents clearing their own snow, etc., you will only be attracting further mass criticism & complaints.

Public Suggestions

Item 6

Please let me know if I can attend in person @ Hove Town Hall on the morning of Wed.17th.March.

Thanks & yours sincerely,

Dick Page

I have a few cheap ideas of how the council could have assisted residents over the recent Christmas period.

1. Drop of piles or bags of salt/grit at the bottom or top of every residential street that is not on the Bus/priority routes, this would allow the residents to administer it themselves, in my street we cleared the pavements/road using spades only for it to refreeze due to no salt/grit being available.
2. Actually take calls requesting assistance as everybody in my street who phoned the council help line on the first occasion received an automated message that made it obvious the person who left it had run out of the door at 5pm on the Friday, the second time no one even bothered to phone due to the wasted time on the first occasion.
3. Make sure all bus routes are open, make sure all schools have enough grit/salt to enable them to open; this made it extremely problematic for those parents without understanding employers willing to pay the wages for days missed.
4. Contact local government in Canada/Eastern Europe to have them email the guidelines they follow (no need for a fact finding trip); they manage in far worse situations with limited budgets.
5. Listen to residents, in my street and many others we were forgotten, we had a pavement and road which was like an ice rink the grit bin 2 streets away was empty before the first bad weather, this bad weather was known to be coming and no one checked the bins!! , it almost felt like the bad weather fell on a bad time (the weekend) and as such the council was closed apart from a few gritters.

There's no point moaning about what's happened but next time listen, a few bags of salt dropped off in every street would have cost very little.

Phil

I would like to suggest that at the beginning of each winter e.g. 1st December, each household is given a bag of grit and is responsible for gritting the piece of road outside their house and the pavement too. The problem this winter was that so many of the side roads were not gritted and therefore it was almost impossible to get to the main roads, which were well gritted. This hopefully would mean better conditions for everyone

Thank you

Sue Thomas

Sirs,

I am the Secretary to the Goldstone Valley Residents Association, Hove, and a recently retired Civil, Municipal and Highway Engineer with many years Winter Service experience.

At a recent meeting our Committee discussed the Council's response to the recent snowfall events. It was agreed that the response failed to achieve the Council's objectives as published on its website.

In response, our local Member, Councillor Brown, has made our Committee aware of the Scrutiny Panel meeting and has suggested that I write to you and register our interest in attending the Panel. I, in view of my knowledge and experience, have been asked to attend and represent the GVRA.

Yours faithfully,

Richard Forrest, Secretary, Goldstone Valley Residents Association, Hove.

I formally submit these ideas for consideration by the Environment and Community Safety Overview and Scrutiny Committee's Panel on the Winter Service Plan.

- 'Community spades' (with white painted handles) to be kept at community centres and to be available to residents (suggested by Hanover residents who have neither gardens or shovels).
- Local registers of volunteers (kept by community organisations) ready to clear pavements.
- Local register of volunteers (kept by community organisations) ready to work with social services, Age Concern, Neighbourhood Care Scheme and other organisations to contact and help older and other vulnerable residents. The council could redeploy teachers from closed schools and other staff with CRB checks unable to get to work to help on this front.
- The council should pay community organisations for their support with this work
- More salt and grit bins across the city
- Publicise volunteer schemes and call for volunteers through community groups, in City News, local newsletters, the Argus and other local media.
- Make sure all agencies are enlisted to help, like the TA and other armed services

Furthermore, it would be useful if the panel could give a clear picture of the legal liability of people who clear the snow away from pavements in front of their homes. Concerns have been expressed about this. It would also be worth looking at the legal position in Germany and US, where I believe householders are liable, if they *don't* clear away the snow in front of their homes.

Best wishes
Bill Randall

Overview and Scrutiny	
Subject:	Civil Contingency Planning for Severe Weather
Date of Meeting:	17 March 2010
Report of:	Director of Environment
Contact Officer:	Name: Robin Humphries Tel: 29-1313
	Civil Contingencies Manager
	E-mail: Robin.humphries@brighton-hove.gov.uk

1. Background

- 1.1 In preparing this report I have read the previous reports and minutes of the meeting held on 8 February. I do not intend to repeat the contents of those reports, but to focus on suggestions to enhance the city's response to severe weather events.
- 1.2 In the past few weeks I have taken part in a series of formal and informal debrief sessions, bringing together partner organisations and others, both within the city and the wider Sussex community.
- 1.3 The focus of these sessions was to ensure that those with responsibility for developing Emergency and Business Continuity plans are more aware of the interdependencies from other organisations and areas.

2. The role of the Civil Contingencies Team

- 2.1 The Civil Contingencies Act 2004 places a statutory duty on Category 1 responders (Police, Fire, Ambulance, Coastguard, Primary Care Trusts, Environment Agency and Local Authorities) to have in place plans to respond to any incident that may affect their area.
- 2.2 Set up under this act the Sussex Resilience Forum (SRF) chaired by Sussex Police produces and reviews a Community Risk Register, which conducts a risk assessment on all the civil threats the area may face.
- 2.3 Severe weather is assessed as a 'high risk', not only for snow and ice, but also rainfall, flooding, extremes of heat and cold, drought, dense fog and high winds.

- 2.4 The council is represented on the SRF by the Chief Executive; and on the working groups for Community Risk Register and Severe Weather by members of the Civil Contingencies Team.
- 2.5 The Civil Contingencies Team maintain liaison with the Environment Agency and the Met Office, and are signed up to their 'Hazard Warning' system which gives advance notice of severe weather and flood risks.
- 2.6 This information is available 24/7 to the councils' on-call Civil Contingencies Duty Officer, whether by telephone contact, SMS, email or internet. The Duty Officer assesses the threat and can take whatever action deemed appropriate to alert other sections of the council or partners.
- 2.7 At times of 'high risk' other council officers are given access to the early warning system.
- 2.8 During a severe weather event the team maintain liaison with the SRF, GOSE and partners to act as a single point of contact, and to co-ordinate the councils' response through our Major Incident Support Team. The Chief Executive, Directors and Heads of Service are consulted as appropriate.

3. Warning and Informing

- 3.1 There will always be a period of build up before a severe weather event. There is no such thing as 'spontaneous severe weather', which does allow time for appropriate preparatory measures to be taken.
- 3.2 Severe weather (excluding long term climate change proposals) cannot be prevented, what can be done will mitigate the effects or shorten the duration of disruption.
- 3.3 Weather forecasting is not an exact science, and the warnings and severity of those warnings will vary in the build up to the event. This is particularly evident in the tracking of storm paths, and the close temperature variance that results in snow, sleet or rain.
- 3.4 Our communications should be to alert, not alarm, and be proportionate. We must also remember that the city will not experience the same weather pattern, the low lying city centre and coastal areas will vary from the downs and the dene's.

4. Duration and severity

- 4.1 When planning and preparing for severe weather the duration and severity must be taken into account.
- 4.2 A heavy fall of snow that melts within 24 hours may not warrant large scale resources being deployed to grit and salt, it may be considered a more suitable alternative to live with the short term disruption and let nature take its course.
- 4.3 Conversely, long periods of ice and cold, as recently experienced, will require changes in working practices for best value.

5. Civil Contingencies development plans for severe weather

- 5.1 Following the debrief sessions we have attended and consultations with fellow officers, the Civil Contingencies team would seek to develop the councils Emergency and Business Continuity plans with the following actions:
 - To enhance our internal warning system for severe weather by including more Operational Managers in the Met Office and Environment Agency warning process.
 - To review our existing severe weather plans to ensure they are robust.
 - To bring into the severe weather response some of those plans not previously associated with severe weather (mass fatality plan, additional hospital discharge plan, etc)
 - To ensure the Chief Executive, Directors and Members are alerted at an early stage to threats of severe weather to allow escalation processes to take place.
 - To ensure Operational Managers are briefed well in advance
 - To ensure internal and external communications are established and prepared, and that additional resources are available if required to support the communications.

- To work with City Services to ensure that capacity of the Environment Directorate contact centre at Hollingdean Depot can be increased if required and the opening hours extended, to meet any sudden increase in demand.
- To work with Adult Social Care to ensure that the capacity of the Adult Social Care contact centre at Bartholomew House can be increased if required and the opening hours extended to meet any sudden increase in demand.
- To develop plans to make better use of existing facilities and equipment in areas likely to be cut off by snow or ice.

(n.b. We have identified those areas where access was difficult, the proposal is to establish a 'bridgehead' on the edge of each of those areas, using an existing Community Centre, Church, Sheltered Housing Unit or similar, where relevant staff can be based, supported by 4 wheel drive vehicles, and local volunteers, they would locally deliver the key services within the cut off area.

These 'bridgeheads' would be located on gritting routes and/or bus routes to allow access.

This merely outlines the proposal rather than giving great detail)

- To assist in the review of equipment currently available to the council to respond to severe weather (subject of previous reports to the committee)
- To work with partners and local businesses to ensure their plans include a response to severe weather incidents which include gritting or salting their own property or access routes

Robin Humphries
Civil Contingencies Manager
11 March 2010

The council's key liability with respect to keeping the highway clear of snow and ice is as follows.

Under section 41(1A) of the Highways Act 1980 the council is obliged to ensure that safe passage along a highway is not endangered by snow or ice, but only **so far as is reasonably practicable** [my emphasis].

What "reasonably practicable" amounts to will vary according to the circumstances, but during periods of extreme weather and with a finite supply of gritters, grit and personnel, it may only be reasonably practicable to treat the main routes and those deemed a priority - as in fact we did in December and January. In other locations during these conditions, it was only reasonably practicable to fill grit bins, at least enabling local residents to apply grit themselves.

During the period of extreme weather we also issued advice, via the council's website, to residents and businesses about their potential personal or corporate liability arising from measures to clear their own pavements

Advice for residents/businesses clearing pavements

While we cannot give categorical legal advice for residents wishing to clear the pavements in their streets, we can say that it is unlikely to give rise to legal liability. Following any accidents, the claimant would need to show that:

1. the way the householder tried to clear the ice created or made the situation worse
2. the injury sustained is the result of the actions of the householder and not just snow/ice
3. the actions of the householder were not what one would expect a reasonable householder to have done
4. it was reasonably foreseeable that their action would cause damage or injury to passers by

It is therefore unlikely that any such claims would succeed.

Oliver Dixon

Lawyer

Corporate Law Team

1. We understand it the Council do not have a statutory duty to grit pavements. However after a lot of complaints they eventually did grit them in the city centre. But this doesn't help people get to work. When the buses stop running there must be a lot of people who would have walked to work but they couldn't because the pavements were worse than the roads.

If the pavements had been gritted as a priority then we wouldn't have had as many injuries and we wouldn't have experienced such a loss of productivity.

If the Council doesn't have the resources I am sure that every road would have its army of volunteers if they would provide the grit, delivered in tidy piles the day before the bad weather hits.

2. Closer contact with the Health Authorities would be of value. In the same way that the PCT and NHS Trusts are involved in smoking prevention, there is a case to collaborate in the prevention of so many fractures. The cost of gritting the pavements and roads is far less than the cost of repairing complex fractures. We would want to see some clear research into the worst spots for fractures in the city and understanding how to prevent them in the future, budget collaboration on preventative measures, and an investment to support citizen action to clear the snow and ice. This would help people get to work and sustain productivity - very worth doing in difficult economic times

We hope this helps.

Simon Fanshawe
Chair
Brighton & Hove Economic Partnership

WINTER 2009-10: Life in Brighton & Hove during the recent severe winter weather**Some comments and suggestions from Brighton & Hove Older People's Council****1 GENERAL COMMENTS**

- 1.1 **Overall the response by the Council** to some quite extreme weather conditions was reasonable, given that the snow and ice persisted for a long time. The response could have been better, but the severity of the conditions probably surprised everyone. The impression of the way the Council responded is that there were some mistakes and some poor judgement, coupled with what seemed like hasty improvisation with limited resources
- 1.2 **The normal pattern of English winters** is such that only occasionally do we experience severe weather, and it is entirely reasonable that the Council should anticipate that normal preparations would generally be adequate. Naturally enough, with the experience of what actually happened this winter, and with the benefit of hindsight, we can all now look back and think that things could (and probably should) have been done differently
- 1.3 As it turned out the sequence of **heavy snowfalls, and sustained periods of freezing temperatures** made for the very difficult conditions which everyone had to cope with, especially considering the geography of the area with many steep gradients. As a result there have been many accidents (e.g. older people slipping on ice, with frequent fractures, bumps and bruises) which could probably have been avoided, and a lot of people's lives were colder, more lonely and isolated than they need have been
- 1.4 **We submit some specific comments under two broad headings** relating to **Central** and **Local** actions: they apply to all people in the City, but especially to older people, who frequently have health and mobility problems which mean that bad weather can bring severe and occasionally life threatening difficulties for them

2 PREPARATIONS**2.1 CENTRAL ACTIONS**

We should all be better prepared next time (and it will happen again sometime). The City Council should prepare a better response, and everyone should be recognise that better responses will cost more money

The City must prepare to keep major services running by providing a coherent and properly coordinated strategy. Roads need to be clear, so that transport and business activities can function as well as possible, and pavements must be safe to walk on. Major routes in and around the City need to be kept open for the **supply of essential services** (delivery of food and other supplies to key locations), and for the emergency services. This winter road salting and gritting did ensure that most major roads were by and large passable with great care, so some bus services in central areas were available for much of the time. **Unfortunately side roads were generally untreated, and pavements by bus stops were not always cleared,** so bus users encountered treacherous surfaces when they tried get to those buses that were running, and also when they attempted to enter or leave a bus

If bad weather persists for any length of time and it becomes difficult for many people to get out, **there is a danger that older people, the disabled and some families will run short of essential food and heating supplies.** Much of this problem could be minimised by people maintaining a **modest store of non-perishable supplies** (tinned and frozen food, dried milk powder, candles, matches, emergency heating, etc), but a key action for **the Council and neighbourhood groups would be to alert everyone in autumn to the need to stock up with some basic emergency supplies,** perhaps via leaflets or bulletins in City News and Neighbourhood newsletters, etc

2.2 LOCAL NEEDS AND ACTIONS

Key Local Routes to be kept clear: In severe conditions, many people are advised to stay at home, but **some journeys soon become essential: for basic food supplies and for medicines.** To this end we would expect that efforts should be concentrated on ensuring that at least **key routes are kept open** to enable easier access to local shops or the pharmacy, etc. Similarly, if public transport is restricted to a few routes, the **clearance of footpaths should be prioritised** to ensure access to and from the points that can be served by that transport

Safe Pavements: A simple way to enable people to get around in snow and icy conditions, and to reduce accidents, is to encourage the practice that many older people grew up with, namely that **you clear snow from the pavement outside your house.** This is common practice in countries where heavy snow is the winter norm. It should be equally the case in this country. Can the City Council pass a bye law requiring this of its citizens? And it should be perfectly possible for

communities to **encourage a neighbourly interest in helping those who live nearby** and who may be unable to clear snow from their house fronts because of age, infirmity or illness

Essential supplies when needed: Maintain local supplies of emergency materials (grit bins, shovels etc). Further to the idea of stocking emergency supplies of foodstuffs etc, **there is always a need to be able to contact vulnerable people**, and part of this difficulty is knowing who may be in need of help. An **early neighbourhood audit/leafleting exercise** to identify such people would enable community and voluntary groups to compile a list and would save time and effort in a period of severe weather

2.3 INFORMATION:

Radio, TV, Internet, the City Council website, Community Websites, Commercial websites (e.g. the local bus and train services): these all proved **useful and important sources of advice and information** during the bad weather

More could perhaps be done on a regular basis by providing **in advance** information and advice about preparing for difficult conditions: everything from having adequate supplies of basic foodstuffs, looking out for vulnerable neighbours, advising about sensible driving habits in difficult conditions, emergency help contact details (not just the official emergency services but local shop and pharmacy opening hours, local charities and community organisations, local help-lines and phone numbers, etc)

As a development of this idea, it is equally important for the Council to consider setting up a **Severe Weather Service and Helpline**, to serve as a central source of information in times of crisis. For this to succeed, it would be essential for the service to be **properly publicised**, for it to acquire **a reputation as a known and reliable source for relevant information** in the eyes of those using the service, and for there to be an effective way of **coordinating and relaying emergency information to parts of the City where it was most needed** (Local Action Teams and voluntary neighbourhood organisations come to mind in this respect)

2.4 FUNDING AND RESOURCES: anticipate the rainy day that will happen sometime, and ensure that contingency money and the other physical resources (such as vehicles, salt and grit,) are available so that responses to bad weather can be swift and effective

- 3 CONCLUSION:** The new Chief Executive has talked recently of developing a Council the City deserves. If the Council can be seen to respond effectively to challenges such as have been posed by the recent hard winter, it will have moved significantly towards that broader goal, but this is not to suggest that the sole responsibility for providing that response to severe weather lies with the Council. The community can play a part and there have been many examples of local groups responding well in the recent difficult conditions. With **positive leadership** from the Council, local people and community organisations can be vital **partners** in providing the necessary help and support.

John Barry as Secretary of, and on behalf of, the Brighton & Hove Older People's Council
8 March 2010

CVSF members were asked for their views. 8 responded and the feedback is summarised below. It is understood that Bevendean LAT has also made a formal submission.

A) Strengths

The Council did a good job:

1. Countering the prevailing suggestions that clearing snow in front of ones property could leave you liable for prosecution
2. Harnessing 4x4 drivers to deliver meals on wheels
3. With the second bout of snow – i.e. the response was much better
4. Diverting City Clean staff to help grit.

B) Weaknesses

The Council did less well, with regard to:

1. Gritting!
 - Grit stores where they do exist were not refilled
 - “Whilst it is reasonable that it takes time to get around the streets, we live on a steep hill and never saw any gritters, and though the pavements got cleared by groups of neighbours and some parts of the roads, it was unreasonable to assume that a few enthusiasts with spades, could have the same impact as a small gritter or plough. Once the roads are deemed to be impassable then nothing moves whereas one visit by a gritter would have then enabled the people who did need to get out to do so.”
 - Outlying areas (particularly Mile Oak, the top end if Queens Park and Bevendean) were not get gritted and did not move for days
 - The Trust for Developing Communities requested and subsequently promoted information on the location of grit bins and BHCC’s emergency responses. Although this information was apparently on the BHCC website it was not readily accessible (central page for ‘snow’ would have been helpful) and needed to better publicised in the Argus and on the radio.
2. Overly focusing on roads and neglecting pavements:
 - “Most of the Council’s effort went into clearing roads. Pavements were forgotten. This was especially noticeable on main bus routes such as Eastern road, (Brighton College area) where traffic was flowing, but pavements so treacherous it made getting to the bus stop impossible for many, and dangerous for those of us that risked it. The fast moving traffic made it dangerous to walk in the road as an alternative. The many broken limbs resulting from the snow are most likely to be suffered by pedestrians. Gritting major pavements saves money!”
3. Protecting cyclists:
 - “The clearing of cycle lanes was not done from what I could tell which pushed the braver riders into the roads (for some time after the snow had fallen).
 - Quite a number of cyclists have complained about grit causing punctures – is it the case that a different type of sharper grit was used when the gritting salt was in short supply? A lot of grit remains on the roads, particularly at the edges where cyclists ride.

4. Opening schools

- “Many of the schools shut too readily and stayed closed for too long – causing a lot of problems for working parents. There were no contingency plans and teachers did not seem to be expected to either make their way to their nearest school to help out or to think about actually use other means of transport if their car was snowed in.”

Other comments about other service providers

“There was concern (and a lot of rallying round) by communities about older people, particularly in relation to their prescriptions. I think health did not respond as well as BHCC.

C) Proposed Solutions

There needs to be more encouragement for communities to do things for themselves and work things out together.

1. “A longer term more sustainable and realistic approach would look at how we (third sector / statutory sector / communities) can work towards encouraging / motivating communities to become more resilient; where we come together when there is a challenge and help each other.”
2. “How we sort these things out together would look at communication and possibly getting the tools resources we need to enable us to do this, salt and grit”
3. “Whilst householders could have been reasonably expected to keep the pavements in the neighbourhoods clear, this emphasis did need to be promoted a bit more strongly so that community leadership could have been exercised. Also thought was needed for the pavements and alleyways which are not really seen to be the responsibility of any one group of houses. In areas where people had gone to the trouble of clearing their frontages, the whole thing was lost if 'common land' was uncleared.”
4. “The Trust for Developing Communities are discussing with community forums setting up emergency teams in communities that are prepared to help, have 4 by 4's etc. Portslade and Woodingdean have expressed interest in this”

These comments lend support to the ideas proposed by Cllr Bill Randall, around equipping local community groups to take a leadership role in snow clearance and in facilitating community engagement in relation to local needs and appropriate responses.

Sally Polanski
CEO, CVSF

In regards to the Winter Service Plan, I have now looked at the plan and have no issues with it.

I can confirm that as per 3.17 the council did supply grit to the fire stations in the city and our own crews used this for the main routes in and out of the premises.

I can also confirm that as per 4.1 we were invited to appropriate meetings and were kept informed at all times.

We are able to fit snow chains to our fire appliances and therefore we had virtually unrestricted access to all parts of the city. We did restrict the movement of the fire appliances and generally they only went out for emergency incidents. Normally they would have been undertaking a whole range of other activities so did have some spare capacity. There is a possibility that the appliances could be used for other purposes to assist the other emergency services or council departments with regard to moving resources around the city. Appliances would have to remain available for emergency calls but I am confident that further discussion could be had to explore this further.

We also had four wheel drive capability available for moving staff around and for providing assistance at emergency incidents. Similarly more use could have been made of this resource as above.

We are very experienced at co-ordinating a large amount of resources at operational incidents and we could use this skill to assist with co-ordination of any city resource. For example if you are looking at community engagement and self help we could assist with this type of co-ordination.

Our fire alliance drivers are trained to a very high standard and although the city uses its waste disposal vehicle drivers for gritting Lorries etc there could be an opportunity to utilise our staff for such purposes. I must re-iterate this is not suggested as an alternative to your current drivers but I understand that during the last bad weather there was a great drain on your resources. If we had a really prolonged spell of such weather this is a possibility that may be worth exploring further?

At any one time we do have approximately 25 firefighters on duty. There is the possibility of utilising these staff if there is an urgent need for a quick response to clear an area of snow etc for any reason, or for any such task as deemed appropriate.

These are just a few of my early thoughts, they will need further investigation but, in the current and forthcoming climate, we do have to look at how we can make better use of our pooled resources.

Area Manager Keith Ring

We are North Moulsecoomb Tenants and Residents Association and would like to make the following suggestions.

- posters about helping elderly, disabled etc
- we have no grit bins or grit on the estate
- are there voluntary groups to join or call for help?
- information sheets for residents groups to display on noticeboards and shop windows i.e. you will not get sued if you clear your pavement, never use hot water to clear snow and ice
- tell people what they can do
- hilly pavements/roads clear
- keep buses running
- emphasise the need for people to help too
- local shops clear

We heard lots of complaints from residents and to be honest some were founded and others were lazy and expected others to do it all for them unlike years ago when everyone pitched in.

Best wishes
Lesley Bryant (Secretary)

