

AGENDA

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Date: **Friday 21 May 2010**

Time: **10.00 am**

Place: **The Council Chamber, Brockington, 35 Hafod Road,
Hereford**

Notes: Please note the **time, date** and **venue** of the meeting.

For any further information please contact:

Tim Brown, Committee Manager (Scrutiny)

Tel: 01432 260239

Email: tbrown@herefordshire.gov.uk

If you would like help to understand this document, or would like it in another format or language, please call Tim Brown, Committee Manager (Scrutiny) on 01432 260239 or e-mail tbrown@herefordshire.gov.uk in advance of the meeting.

Agenda for the Meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Membership

Chairman	Councillor PJ Edwards
Vice-Chairman	Councillor WLS Bowen
	Councillor PA Andrews
	Councillor ME Cooper
	Councillor AE Gray
	Councillor KG Grumbley
	Councillor TM James
	Councillor RI Matthews
	Councillor PM Morgan
	Councillor AT Oliver
	Councillor PJ Watts

GUIDANCE ON DECLARING PERSONAL AND PREJUDICIAL INTERESTS AT MEETINGS

The Council's Members' Code of Conduct requires Councillors to declare against an Agenda item(s) the nature of an interest and whether the interest is personal or prejudicial. Councillors have to decide first whether or not they have a personal interest in the matter under discussion. They will then have to decide whether that personal interest is also prejudicial.

A personal interest is an interest that affects the Councillor more than most other people in the area. People in the area include those who live, work or have property in the area of the Council. Councillors will also have a personal interest if their partner, relative or a close friend, or an organisation that they or the member works for, is affected more than other people in the area. If they do have a personal interest, they must declare it but can stay and take part and vote in the meeting.

Whether an interest is prejudicial is a matter of judgement for each Councillor. What Councillors have to do is ask themselves whether a member of the public – if he or she knew all the facts – would think that the Councillor's interest was so important that their decision would be affected by it. If a Councillor has a prejudicial interest then they must declare what that interest is. A Councillor who has declared a prejudicial interest at a meeting may nevertheless be able to address that meeting, but only in circumstances where an ordinary member of the public would be also allowed to speak. In such circumstances, the Councillor concerned will have the same opportunity to address the meeting and on the same terms. However, a Councillor exercising their ability to speak in these circumstances must leave the meeting immediately after they have spoken.

AGENDA

	Pages
1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE To receive apologies for absence.	
2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST To receive any declarations of interest by Members in respect of items on the Agenda.	
3. MINUTES To approve and sign the Minutes of the meeting held on 15 March 2010.	1 - 8
4. SUGGESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC ON ISSUES FOR FUTURE SCRUTINY To consider suggestions from members of the public on issues the Committee could scrutinise in the future.	
5. SCRUTINY REVIEW OF THE IMPACT OF THE WINTER WEATHER AND THE RESPONSE TO IT To consider the impact of the winter weather in 2009/10, the response by the Council, Partners and others to the problems it posed and identify matters that should form the basis of a report to Cabinet in sufficient time to build any recommendations into future winter planning.	9 - 76

PUBLIC INFORMATION

HEREFORDSHIRE COUNCIL'S SCRUTINY COMMITTEES

The Council has established Scrutiny Committees for Adult Social Care and Strategic Housing, Childrens' Services, Community Services, Environment, and Health. A Strategic Monitoring Committee scrutinises corporate matters and co-ordinates the work of these Committees.

The purpose of the Committees is to ensure the accountability and transparency of the Council's decision making process.

The principal roles of Scrutiny Committees are to

- Help in developing Council policy
- Probe, investigate, test the options and ask the difficult questions before and after decisions are taken
- Look in more detail at areas of concern which may have been raised by the Cabinet itself, by other Councillors or by members of the public
- "call in" decisions - this is a statutory power which gives Scrutiny Committees the right to place a decision on hold pending further scrutiny.
- Review performance of the Council
- Conduct Best Value reviews
- Undertake external scrutiny work engaging partners and the public

Formal meetings of the Committees are held in public and information on your rights to attend meetings and access to information are set out overleaf

PUBLIC INFORMATION

Public Involvement at Scrutiny Committee Meetings

You can contact Councillors and Officers at any time about Scrutiny Committee matters and issues which you would like the Scrutiny Committees to investigate.

There are also two other ways in which you can directly contribute at Herefordshire Council's Scrutiny Committee meetings.

1. Identifying Areas for Scrutiny

At the meeting the Chairman will ask the members of the public present if they have any issues which they would like the Scrutiny Committee to investigate, however, there will be no discussion of the issue at the time when the matter is raised. Councillors will research the issue and consider whether it should form part of the Committee's work programme when compared with other competing priorities.

Please note that the Committees can only scrutinise items which fall within their specific remit (see below). If a matter is raised which falls within the remit of another Scrutiny Committee then it will be noted and passed on to the relevant Chairman for their consideration.

2. Questions from Members of the Public for Consideration at Scrutiny Committee Meetings and Participation at Meetings

You can submit a question for consideration at a Scrutiny Committee meeting so long as the question you are asking is directly related to an item listed on the agenda. If you have a question you would like to ask then please submit it **no later than two working days before the meeting** to the Committee Officer. This will help to ensure that an answer can be provided at the meeting. Contact details for the Committee Officer can be found on the front page of this agenda.

Generally, members of the public will also be able to contribute to the discussion at the meeting. This will be at the Chairman's discretion.

(Please note that the Scrutiny Committees are not able to discuss questions relating to personal or confidential issues.)

Remits of Herefordshire Council's Scrutiny Committees

Adult Social Care and Strategic Housing

Statutory functions for adult social services including:

Learning Disabilities

Strategic Housing

Supporting People

Public Health

Children's Services

Provision of services relating to the well-being of children including education, health and social care.

Community Services Scrutiny Committee

Libraries

Cultural Services including heritage and tourism

Leisure Services

Parks and Countryside

Community Safety

Economic Development

Youth Services

Health

Planning, provision and operation of health services affecting the area

Health Improvement

Services provided by the NHS

Environment

Environmental Issues

Highways and Transportation

Strategic Monitoring Committee

Corporate Strategy and Finance

Resources

Corporate and Customer Services

Human Resources

The Public's Rights to Information and Attendance at Meetings

YOU HAVE A RIGHT TO: -

- Attend all Council, Cabinet, Committee and Sub-Committee meetings unless the business to be transacted would disclose 'confidential' or 'exempt' information.
- Inspect agenda and public reports at least five clear days before the date of the meeting.
- Inspect minutes of the Council and all Committees and Sub-Committees and written statements of decisions taken by the Cabinet or individual Cabinet Members for up to six years following a meeting.
- Inspect background papers used in the preparation of public reports for a period of up to four years from the date of the meeting. (A list of the background papers to a report is given at the end of each report). A background paper is a document on which the officer has relied in writing the report and which otherwise is not available to the public.
- Access to a public Register stating the names, addresses and wards of all Councillors with details of the membership of Cabinet and of all Committees and Sub-Committees.
- Have a reasonable number of copies of agenda and reports (relating to items to be considered in public) made available to the public attending meetings of the Council, Cabinet, Committees and Sub-Committees.
- Have access to a list specifying those powers on which the Council have delegated decision making to their officers identifying the officers concerned by title.
- Copy any of the documents mentioned above to which you have a right of access, subject to a reasonable charge (20p per sheet subject to a maximum of £5.00 per agenda plus a nominal fee of £1.50 for postage).
- Access to this summary of your rights as members of the public to attend meetings of the Council, Cabinet, Committees and Sub-Committees and to inspect and copy documents.

Please Note:

Agenda and individual reports can be made available in large print. Please contact the officer named on the front cover of this agenda **in advance** of the meeting who will be pleased to deal with your request.

The Council Chamber where the meeting will be held is accessible for visitors in wheelchairs, for whom toilets are also available.

A public telephone is available in the reception area.

Public Transport Links

- Public transport access can be gained to Brockington via the service runs approximately every half hour from the 'Hopper' bus station at the Tesco store in Bewell Street (next to the roundabout junction of Blueschool Street / Victoria Street / Edgar Street).
- The nearest bus stop to Brockington is located in Old Eign Hill near to its junction with Hafod Road. The return journey can be made from the same bus stop.

If you have any questions about this agenda, how the Council works or would like more information or wish to exercise your rights to access the information described above, you may do so either by telephoning the officer named on the front cover of this agenda or by visiting in person during office hours (8.45 a.m. - 5.00 p.m. Monday - Thursday and 8.45 a.m. - 4.45 p.m. Friday) at the Council Offices, Brockington, 35 Hafod Road, Hereford.



Where possible this agenda is printed on paper made from 100% Post-Consumer waste. De-inked without bleaching and free from optical brightening agents (OBA). Awarded the Nordic Swan for low emissions during production and the Blue Angel environmental label.

HEREFORDSHIRE COUNCIL

BROCKINGTON, 35 HAFOD ROAD, HEREFORD.

FIRE AND EMERGENCY EVACUATION PROCEDURE

In the event of a fire or emergency the alarm bell will ring continuously.

You should vacate the building in an orderly manner through the nearest available fire exit.

You should then proceed to Assembly Point J which is located at the southern entrance to the car park. A check will be undertaken to ensure that those recorded as present have vacated the building following which further instructions will be given.

Please do not allow any items of clothing, etc. to obstruct any of the exits.

Do not delay your vacation of the building by stopping or returning to collect coats or other personal belongings.

HEREFORDSHIRE COUNCIL

MINUTES of the meeting of Overview and Scrutiny Committee held at The Council Chamber, Brockington, 35 Hafod Road, Hereford on Monday 15 March 2010 at 9.30 am

Present: Councillor PJ Edwards (Chairman)
Councillor WLS Bowen (Vice Chairman)

Councillors: PA Andrews, ME Cooper, KG Grumbley, TM James, RI Matthews, PM Morgan and AT Oliver

In attendance: Councillor PD Price (Cabinet Member – ICT, Education and Achievement)

15. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillors AE Gray and PJ Watts. Apologies were also received from Councillor JP French (Cabinet Member – Corporate and Customer Services) and RJ Phillips - (Leader of the Council.)

16. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were none.

17. MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the meeting held on 8 February 2010 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

18. SUGGESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC ON ISSUES FOR FUTURE SCRUTINY

A member of the public suggested that following the introduction of the new Council Constitution it would be helpful if a guide could be produced setting out key changes from the old constitution.

It was agreed to request the Constitutional Review Working Group to give consideration to the publication of simple guide to the Constitution and a list of frequently asked questions and answers.

19. INFORMATION COMMUNICATION AND TECHNOLOGY SERVICES UPDATE

The Committee considered a progress report on Information Communication and Technology (ICT) service issues, requested following the scrutiny review of ICT and subsequent updates.

The Joint Director of ICT presented the report in accordance with the Committee's request in September 2009 for a six monthly update. He highlighted the following points:

- The Data Centre Refurbishment at Thorn office centre had been completed. The estimated cost was within budget.

- The contract for the community network had been re-let on a three year contract and would generate at least £720k savings over that period. This sum would be available for investment into improved services within the context of the Council's overall finances.
- The encryption project had encrypted 92% of the originally identified ICT devices. It was planned to complete the encryption programme by the end of the financial year.
- The technical measures to connect the Council and NHS Herefordshire networks had been completed. The development of an overall information sharing protocol between the Council and NHS Herefordshire and detailed information sharing agreements for individual services was ongoing.
- A number of ICT systems had been decommissioned reducing duplication and costs. The Joint Director of ICT would circulate a chart to the Committee showing progress in decommissioning.
- A summit was planned for later in the month to take forward the improvement of the broadband service in the County.

In discussion the following principal points were made:

- The Joint Director of ICT was asked for assurance that the requirement that ICT equipment be procured centrally was being adhered to. He commented that procurement was being managed by the central procurement team and an improved relationship between ICT services and directorates was also helping to ensure that equipment was procured centrally.
- Asked about progress in implementing the interface between the Social Care Frameworki system with the Council's finance system to enable commitment accounting, the Joint Director said that work was ongoing but it was taking longer than had been expected to implement the project and, as yet, a confirmed date for completing this work could not be provided. In response to a question on the ability for staff to access systems remotely and whilst mobile, he commented on trials of technology that were taking place, the relatively poor mobile coverage and steps being taken to increase the number of locations where staff were able to access systems.
- Concern was expressed that the Civica system which would allow Planning Services to scan plans had not yet been implemented. The Joint Director replied that he had recently given this work greater priority but could not at this point provide an implementation date.
- Questioned about take up by schools of ICT services, the Joint Director reported that he considered relationships with those schools currently contracting to use Council ICT services had improved, with new services being provided to them. Meetings with Headteachers using Council ICT Services were being scheduled every two months rather than quarterly.
- It was stated that Members continued to have difficulty accessing the Council intranet. It was proposed a member of the Committee be nominated to discuss this practical issue in further depth to identify and resolve the apparent problems.
- In relation to the Herefordshire Connects Programme the Director of Resources commented that this was now subsumed within the Shared Services project.

However, the accounts for the project were still held separately and an outturn report would be made at the end of the financial year.

- The Joint Director confirmed that a programme for encryption of ICT devices was being undertaken by NHS Herefordshire in parallel with the programme for encryption of Council devices and would be completed by the end of the financial year.

RESOLVED:

That (a) the progress report be welcomed:

(b) a further progress report be made in 6 months time, noting in particular ongoing work on the interface between the Social Care Framework system with the Council's finance system and Civica software packages; and

(c) Councillor WLS Bowen be deputed to discuss access to the intranet for Members to identify and seek to resolve the apparent problems.

20. INTEGRATED CORPORATE PERFORMANCE REPORT

The Committee considered performance for the period April-December 2009-10 against the Council's key indicators and associated projects and programmes in its Annual Operating Statement 2009-10.

The report to Cabinet on 18 February 2010 was appended.

The Corporate Policy and Research Manager (CPRM) presented the report, focusing on the highlights as set out at paragraphs 7-8 of the report. He highlighted the following additional information:

- Whilst performance in relation to target NI117, 16-18 year olds not in education, employment or training (NEET) was behind target it should be noted that, despite the recession, performance had slightly improved compared with the previous year and was better than both regionally and nationally.
- That it appeared that performance against target NI132 (timeliness for social care assessments) may well now be achieved, However target NI133 (timeliness of social care packages) would not be met, staff resources having had to be diverted to the safeguarding of vulnerable people in some residential homes.
- In relation to both Children's Services and Adult Social Care it should be noted that progress was being achieved at the same time as measures were having to be taken to control expenditure to reduce projected overspending.
- It was now appeared likely that the target for NI156 (Households in temporary accommodation) would be achieved.
- Despite an increase in the use of the county's libraries, performance against the wider measure NI9, which included a wider range of library services was significantly behind target.
- Performance against the Local Area Agreement (LAA) indicators was improving overall and action plans were now in place and being implemented for all indicators.

In the course of discussion the following principal points were made:

- A concern was reiterated that, further to the Committee's consideration of the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) in February 2010 the pages in the report listed a number of significant projects, for example the relocation of Hereford Library and the extension of the refurbishment of the City Centre, but stated no funding was identified. If there was no funding it seemed misleading to list the projects as commitments in the way that they were.

The Director of Resources commented that the approach being followed was consistent with that of other local authorities. It provided an indication of where the Council would allocate resources if they were to become available.

- In response to a query about the thoroughness of assessments undertaken in relation to NI 59 (initial assessments for children's social care carried out within seven working days of referral), the CPRM reported that this area had received the closest attention by Children's Services and was rigorously and regularly scrutinised by OFSTED, which had commented favourably on the arrangements in its latest annual assessment.
- Members reiterated concern as to whether enough was being done to improve future performance in respect of the measures of educational achievement, particularly as regards the proportion of pupils achieving 5 good GCSE passes, including English and Maths, set out at page 26 of the agenda. It was noted that the Strategic Monitoring Committee had referred the issue to the Children's Services Scrutiny Committee in December 2009 and it was requested that the Children's Services Scrutiny Committee's response be reported back to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.
- In response to a suggestion that it could be difficult for members of the public to understand from the report the difference between direction of travel, which was assessed against performance at the same point of the previous year, and changes since the previous quarter's report, the CPRM drew attention to the key to the judgements in the report in Appendix 1. He said he would consider how best to make the reports clearer in this respect.
- It was suggested that the judgement that performance in relation to reducing carbon emissions was on track presented a more favourable assessment than that which would be reported to the Environment Scrutiny Committee on 22 March. The CPRM said that, pending the reporting of data on levels of carbon emissions, the judgement in the integrated corporate performance report was based on performance against the action plan intended to secure reductions. The new performance management system, which would operate from April, was designed to provide a more accurate means of tracking progress, including highlighting where information or commentary had not been updated.
- In response to a concern that a number of the targets were measuring processes and the development of policies rather than the achievement of what mattered to the public, the CPRM said that most targets in the corporate plan were – and would continue to be – in terms of improvements that would benefit people and communities.
- It was observed that the commentary on performance against the target for the number of vacant posts as a proportion of the approved establishment indicated that work was ongoing to confirm the establishment. The CPRM acknowledged the

importance of establishing this baseline and said that he was aware efforts were being made to bring the necessary validating work to a conclusion.

- It was noted that the Customer Insight Unit had been established and would begin producing analyses and reports from April 2010.

RESOLVED

That (a) the report and points raised by the Committee be noted;

(b) the Children's Services Scrutiny Committee's consideration of performance against a range of education attainment targets should be reported back to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

21. BUDGET MONITORING REPORT 2009/10

The Committee considered December's budget monitoring information, an indication of estimated outturn for both revenue and capital to 31 March 2010 and treasury management activities in the first nine months of 2009/10.

The Head of Financial Services presented the report.

She highlighted that the projected overspend on the revenue budget at the end of December 2009 had been £847k. It was currently envisaged that the implementation of recovery plans and maximisation of grant income would deliver a balanced budget at the year end. However, a lot of work remained to be done to achieve this position.

She noted the position on earmarked reserves shown on page 67 of the agenda papers had changed following use of the winter maintenance reserve and the social care contingency and now stood at £14.6 million.

In relation to the Treasury Management Statement she highlighted ongoing work to reschedule debt.

In discussion the following principal points were made:

- Paragraph 17 of the report stated that invoices from Mencap totalling £150k, relating to domiciliary care for 2008/09, had unexpectedly been received in December 2009. Paragraph 25 referred to a one-off cost of £110k relating to unexpected invoices for the Homecare block contract for domiciliary care. Clarification was sought.

The Head of Financial Services commented that there had been an error in communication between service areas and an issue in relation to contract negotiation. It was not considered to be a systemic failure and work was underway to mitigate the risk of such a situation occurring again.

- The Chairman of the Adult Social Care and Strategic Housing Scrutiny Committee commented that she did not agree with the statement in the report that the measures in the recovery plan for the Integrated Commissioning Directorate were realistically achievable.
- A Member drew attention to the reference in the report to an absence of budget provision for personal budgets for nursing and residential care packages in 2009/10 and asked what provision had been made for 2010/11. The Head of Financial services said that the gap remained to be addressed in finalising the service budgets.

- Clarification was requested on the overspend of £375k on the managing agent contract with Amey Wye Valley; the background to and administration of the Leader Vital grant; and capital expenditure on City Centre enhancements and details of the works
- The institution of a more robust panel procedure for reviewing the level of void placements in residential homes and day care facilities was discussed. It was requested that a report be made to the Adult Social Care and Strategic Housing Scrutiny Committee on the operation of the Panel and its effectiveness in reducing voids. The Head of Financial Services noted that the current level of voids was 12%. It would be reasonable to expect a figure of 5-6%.
- It was asked whether the forecast capital expenditure for 2009/10 would be realised, given the level of actual expenditure incurred. The Head of Financial Services said that it was usual for a larger spend to occur towards the end of the year, and a number of contracts would have stage payments calculated and made just before the end of the financial year.
- Concern was registered about the pressure on Mandatory Disabled Facilities Grant and the reported backlog of approximately £1m.

RESOLVED:

- That**
- (a) the report and its approach to delivering a balanced outturn position at the year end be noted;**
 - (b) briefing notes be circulated to Members of the Committee on the overspend on the managing agent contract with Amey Wye Valley; the background to and administration of the Leader Vital grant; capital expenditure on City Centre enhancements and details of the works;**
 - (c) a report be made to the Adult Social Care and Strategic Housing Scrutiny Committee on the operation of the Panel reviewing the level of void placements in residential homes and day care facilities and its effectiveness in reducing voids.**

22. WORK PROGRAMME

The Committee considered its work programme.

It was noted that a further update on ICT Services needed to be added.

RESOLVED: That the work programme as amended be approved as a basis for further development.

23. DEPARTURE OF DEPUTY CHIEF EXECUTIVE AND CORPORATE POLICY AND RESEARCH MANAGER

The Chairman thanked Steve Martin, Corporate Policy and Research Manager, who was leaving the Council, for his contribution to shaping the work of the Committee and the Council.

Mr Martin replied that he had enjoyed his time at the Council and had welcomed the constructive challenge the Committee had provided.

The Chairman also thanked Annie Faulder, interim Deputy Chief Executive, who was also leaving the Council, for her work in introducing the new performance management framework and developing the Council's partnership arrangements.

Annie Faulder replied that she too had enjoyed her time in Herefordshire.

The Committee endorsed the Chairman's remarks.

The meeting ended at 11.55 am

CHAIRMAN

MEETING:	OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
DATE:	21 MAY 2010
TITLE OF REPORT:	SCRUTINY REVIEW OF THE IMPACT OF THE WINTER WEATHER AND THE RESPONSE TO IT
REPORT BY:	COMMITTEE MANAGER (SCRUTINY)

Purpose

To consider the impact of the winter weather in 2009/10, the response by the Council, Partners and others to the problems it posed and identify matters that should form the basis of a report to Cabinet in sufficient time to build any recommendations into future winter planning.

Recommendation(s)

THAT:

(a) the findings arising from the meeting be used to inform the Committee's report and recommendations to Cabinet; and

(b) the Chairman and Vice-Chairman be authorised to seek such clarification and further information as they consider necessary.

Introduction and Background

1. On 8 February the Committee agreed to a request from the Executive to undertake a review of the impact of the severe winter weather. It was requested that the review be completed and the report submitted to Cabinet before the end of July 2010 in order to give sufficient time to build any recommendations into future winter planning.
2. The terms of reference are:
 - To review the impact of the recent severe winter weather on communities in the County and across the public services including partners in Health, Schools, Police and the Voluntary Sector.
 - To establish what lessons can be learnt, what was done right and what can be improved.
 - To identify whether there are any bureaucratic barriers which should be removed at times of communities under stress?
 - To consider recommendations for partners locally and nationally.
3. The Committee has sought evidence from Herefordshire Council Councillors, Town and Parish Councils and a range of Partners and others.
4. Members of the Committee have been presented with all the evidence received to date.

Further information on the subject of this report is available from
Tim Brown Committee Manager Scrutiny on 01432 260239

Reports received from service areas that are to be the focus of scrutiny at this meeting are appended together with a summary of key issues that have been raised by consultees.

5. A number of aspects have already been answered by the written responses received and these will not need to be discussed in detail at the meeting.
6. Following the meeting a report will be drafted with recommendations to Cabinet. This will encompass issues discussed at the meeting and those on which sufficient information has already been received. That report will be submitted to the Committee for approval in July.
7. It is proposed that the Chairman and Vice-Chairman be authorised to seek such clarification and further information as they consider necessary to inform the final report.

Community Impact

8. The winter weather had an impact on the Community as a whole with a bearing on a number of the priority themes within the Council and NHS Herefordshire's Joint Corporate Plan including Economic Development and Enterprise, Healthier Communities and Older People, Children and Young People, Safer Communities and organisational improvement and greater efficiency. This will be reflected in presenting the Committee's final report and recommendations.

Financial/Legal/Risk Management Implications

9. These depend on the findings to be included in the final report and will be reflected in presenting that report and its recommendations.

Consultees

10. Comments have been invited from the following by correspondence: Herefordshire Council Councillors, Town and Parish Councils, Emergency Services, all Council Directorates, Bus Companies, Hereford NHS Hospitals Trust, National Farmers Union, schools via representative bodies, the Voluntary Sector and from the public via Herefordshire Matters.

Appendices

Appendix 1 - Summary of issues raised by Herefordshire Councillors, Parish Councils, and the public.

Appendix 2 – Submission by Children's and Young People's Directorate

Appendix 3 – Submission by Adult Social Care, and Primary Care Trust Provider Services and Primary Care Trust Commissioning

Appendix 4 – Submission by the Council's Highways Service

Appendix 5 – Submission by ICT Services

Appendix 6 – Submission by Communications Unit

Appendix 7 – Submission by the Joint Emergency Planning Unit

Background Papers

None identified.

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
21 MAY 2010
SCRUTINY REVIEW OF THE IMPACT OF THE WINTER WEATHER AND THE RESPONSE TO IT

SUMMARY OF ISSUES RAISED IN RESPONSES BY HEREFORDSHIRE COUNCIL COUNCILLORS, TOWN AND PARISH COUNCILS AND THE PUBLIC

(Note:

- (1) This is a summary of the main issues raised. A full list of respondents and a summary of their responses have been made available to Members of the Committee).*
- (2) Some respondents referred to problems at specific locations. These will be reflected in an appendix to the Committee's final report.*

Gritting - Roads

Gritting of main roads was good.

Modern tractors would allow for a snow plough on the front and a spreader of grit on the back. Request this be considered.

Bus Services did not run on the housing estates. Gritting could have been co-ordinated with bus services.

Questioned whether gritting was always done at right time and was effective eg – gritting in the rain.

People and Parish Council do not know what the Council aims or intends to do. Website does not make the situation or prioritisation of gritting clear beyond primary routes.

One route gritted at start of severe weather but not gritted again for remainder of period.

Adherence to gritting routes queried.

Scope for gritting school routes

Scope for self- help gritting in particular by Parish Councils – development of the lengthsman scheme. Clarification of liability issues.

Contact with Amey over holiday periods.

Absence of gritting of side roads/unclassified roads.

Grit Bins

Replenishment of Grit boxes.

Unclear as to whether all grit boxes had been replenished prior to this winter.

Some respondents say grit bins were kept full others say bins were not refilled promptly.

Concern about unauthorised removal of grit to other locations.

Suggestion that the grit bins should be locked, with a number of people living near the bin (or other key people) having keys.

Responsibility should be placed on Parish Councils to review the position and fill status of their bins each Autumn.

Concern about the condition of some grit bins.

More grit bins needed for which parish councils should be invited to submit prioritised bids.

Grit bins should be provided where there are steep inclines.

Inconsistency in level provision of grit bins across the County.

Frustration over arrangements for grit distribution.

Adverts placed by a Parish Council on local notice boards and in local newsletter reminding residents that the salt is only there for use on the public highways.

Snowploughing

Snowploughing of Minor Roads. Several farmers clear the roads with their own equipment. Snow ploughs in some cases make things worse as their blades are wider than the JCB used by these farmers. A trawl across all parishes would establish all such roads so that Amey could strike them from their snow-plough plan.

Snowploughing caused entrances to some houses to be blocked.

Advantages of use of local contractors.

Snowploughing not followed by gritting.

Gritting – Pavements

Consideration of gritting of pavements in areas where there is a high concentration of elderly people

People confined to houses because pavements not gritted.

The issue of icy pavements at the sheltered housing development in Burton Gardens. Housing Association not allowed to grit the pavements for insurance reasons.

Real benefits in treating footpath network within half mile of city centre.

Draw on advice from Ward Councillors on what routes are well-used.

Clearance of pavements in the City where most walk to school would have kept routes open.

Consideration of benefits for Council and Primary Care Trust as partners of the cost benefits of gritting pavements compared with the costs of accidents

Scope for using specialist pavement gritting machinery.

Clearance of car parks also queried.

Care Provision

Homecare delivery hampered

Emergency planning could arrange for local people to look after the vulnerable.

Clearance of snow by individuals

The issue of liability for clearing snow from outside properties.

That if council employees are unable to attend place of work, that they could do some voluntary work in our own locality such as clearing the snow from the paths of the elderly.

Council's fear of litigation over footpath clearance questioned and suggests council could have a disclaimer.

Potholes/Road Maintenance

Tackle drainage problems.

Highways maintenance issues – evidence of previous inadequate and ineffective patching.

Level of Highway Maintenance Budget

School Closures

Number of schools closed and duration of closures and associated impact on working parents and employers.

School Closures – should the Council have been more proactive/made blanket closure decisions. Central/local decision

If Teachers unable to reach distant schools they could be deployed at local schools.

Scope to improve communication of closures.

School Buses

During the school term, we would also like to see an improvement in communication from the school bus companies. Families would benefit if they could find out which stops would be in operation during snow/ice conditions.

Waste Collection

Some questioned why waste collections did not take place when other services were running. There was inconsistency.

Scope for local people to collect waste and take it to a central point where it could be collected by the Waste collection service. Suggested role for the proposed emergency coordinator.

Communciation of collection arrangements.

Response by Children and Young People’s Directorate

Impact

1. Schools and School Transport

All 103 schools were affected by the severe weather, to a greater or lesser degree, over a total of 8 days in January 2010:

Date	No. of schools closed	No. of pupil days lost
5 th January	79	17,973
6 th January	102.5 (one half day closure)	22,664
7 th January	103	22,696
8 th January	56	15,355
11 th January	20	7,015
12 th January	2	936
14 th January	10	1,465
20 th January	11	1,433
	Total	89,537

A total of 89,537 pupil days were lost through school closures, which equates to 2.1% of the total number of pupils days in the school year. Some schools were able to open to enable exams to be taken, some part opening solely for those pupils needing to sit exams.

Schools, as is usual in circumstances where days are lost to bad weather, have taken steps to ensure that pupils’ learning targets are not compromised by the lost school days.

What went well

- There is an established ‘Emergency School Closure’ procedure (attached)
- This procedure was re-communicated to schools immediately in advance of the severe weather, to act as a reminder to Headteachers and to ensure ease of reference
- When all schools were closed, the local authority took a decision to deviate from the Emergency School Closure procedure. Schools were instructed to communicate when they would reopen (rather than if they were to remain closed) This was widely welcomed and praised by many Head teachers as an act of good leadership by the authority.
- Good feedback from Head teachers on the daily contact made with them by the Admissions & Transport Team, while their schools were closed, to share information and offer guidance. This was the first time that we had provided this service and it did rely on staff getting in early and sharing the workload
- Radio stations’ willingness to convey this change.
- Actions of Admissions and Transport staff and Blackfriars custodians to ensure Blackfriars was open and school closure/transport information coming in by telephone/email was being processed by 6.00 am to update Council web page and radio stations.

- Good communication links with transport providers to assess what transport could take place on which routes. This was then regularly communicated to schools.
- Participation in the daily Silver Group meetings to coordinate the public services response

What did not go well

- Reporting of school closures and openings was not consistent across all local radio stations
- BBC Radio Hereford & Worcester were reluctant to broadcast details specific to individual schools, such as reduced opening times, closure to certain year groups, need to bring packed lunches etc. This is understandable, given the volume of school closures that were taking place
- One radio station breached security procedures by accepting telephone calls from Head teachers without verification of password and 'pin'. The radio station corrected this as soon as they were notified
- In error, one radio station broadcast a school as closed, when no such communication had been made
- One City High school, having decided to open, then made decision to close at 9.00 am as the severe weather set in. Complaints that some parents, having gone to work believing school to be open, would not be aware (despite best efforts of school to alert all parents)
- Time-lag between information appearing on Herefordshire Council web site and radio stations' web sites varied

Improvements to be made

Children & Young People's Directorate is working with a company to develop an automated, web based, system that will allow secure access for school Head teachers (or their nominated substitutes) to inform by email the local authority, school transport contractors and radio stations of their school's closure and reopening in one action, by using the web, telephone or text. The action will also update Herefordshire Council's web site automatically, with the page being refreshed every 5 minutes. It is planned to have this system tested and in place for the new school year in September 2010.

A further development will be investigated to see whether a link could be created to enable this automated system to inform a schools' text messaging system for parents.

Relevant policies in place

Until the automated system is in place, the existing 'Emergency School Closure' procedure will continue to operate.

2. Services

Most of the services provided by the Children and Young People's Directorate were affected by the snow in terms of staff being able to get to work. Cover arrangements were put in place for services based on the staff available which worked well.

The most important area was our Safeguarding and Vulnerable Children services. We operated a functional service through the whole period, with a fully operational

referral and assessment response service and statutory service provision throughout the period. Whilst many had to go the extra mile to cover colleagues work this was done positively and effectively, for example although we were low on numbers of workers people volunteered to do others visits to ensure children were seen and kept safe. Staff lists of workers available were collected and circulated on a daily basis to ensure the service could deploy staff effectively.

What went well

- High level of commitment from Social Work teams
- Staff made themselves available for duty and for scheduled visits
- Those with crypto cards could continue with their duties from their home base
- Management cover was available throughout

What did not go well

- We had to cancel a Children in Care Council
- Some statutory (long-term cases) visits were cancelled and rearranged, following appropriate risk assessments
- One visit to a child was delayed by a day where we urgently wished to do so
- Those without crypto cards could not catch up on computer work if they were not able to come into work and therefore our performance and timescales suffered

Improvements to be made

More mobile working opportunities for social workers which would have assisted in our meeting statutory timescales and not losing valuable working hours, and/or more local access points for workers to work closer to home where it may have been possible to walk to such facilities. This is being looked into by the service, along with the potential of social workers to use the locality hubs being developed around the county.

Reflections – additional points to note

The directorate has put in place senior staff contact lists across the directorate to enable a quick response to any future situations and our on call rotas have been updated. The preparations for swine flu had helped in many ways to prepare the directorate to respond to the adverse weather.

There was a high level of commitment and resilience shown by staff across the directorate and a number of staff worked long hours to ensure service cover. Staff were thanked for their efforts by the Lead Member and Director of Children's Services.

Chris Baird

Assistant Director, Children – Planning and Development
Children and Young People's Directorate

January 2010

Enforced Closure of Schools and Children's Centres

Guidance for Headteachers and Centre Managers

In the majority of circumstances the Headteacher/Centre Manager will be the person best placed to judge whether a school should close or not depending on, for example, the severity of weather or any other significant impact on the school.

While it is expected that staff should make all reasonable efforts to get to work, without jeopardising their own safety, schools and children's centres should plan to have a range of learning and family activities for use when the normal timetable has to be disrupted.

Schools and children's centres are expected to stay open if at all possible – closure should take place only if health and safety is compromised, for example where staffing levels fall below a level to manage pupils or children's centre services effectively.

A school or children's centre can remain open even where the majority of children, customers and staff are unable to attend at all or cannot arrive at the usual time.

The fact that some or all of the school buses are cancelled is not in itself a reason for closure.

Where the Local Authority has information to suggest that the circumstances are so severe that it is unreasonable to remain open then the Local Authority may make a decision to close a group of schools/centres, or all schools/centres. This would be communicated to schools/centres by email and telephone.

Recommended Procedure

1. If considering closure part way through the school/centre day, consult nearby Headteachers/Children's Centre Managers in an attempt to ensure consistency and co-ordination of action, particularly with regard to transport.
2. In the case of schools, the Headteacher should consult the Chair of Governors or Vice Chair and seek approval of their recommendation to close.
3. Schools must inform the Local Authority of your decision, by e-mail via XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX as soon as the decision to close is made. If you cannot send an e-mail please telephone XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX. If your call is out of hours it will be diverted to the duty officer's mobile telephone. If your diverted call cannot be answered immediately, you will be able to leave a voice message.

Children's centres must contact the XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX.

4. If considering closure part way through the school/centre day, it is essential that you take appropriate action to ensure that information is circulated so that a parent/carer or a responsible person is available to receive the child(ren) at home. If you cannot contact any parent/carer it is vital that arrangements are made to care for the child at the school/centre.
5. Use all the means possible to communicate the closure of the school/centre and, when known, the date/time that the school/centre will reopen. Use of local radio stations is particularly effective, as well as use of the school's website, e-mail, or text alert system.

Radio stations will broadcast closures and re-openings on air regularly and update their own websites with information.

Your Confidential 'PIN' and Password

A degree of security is necessary to ensure that radio stations only accept and broadcast details of closures/opening from an authorised source. To ensure this, the Headteacher/Centre Manager (or their approved substitute) must provide the radio station with:

- a four digit 'PIN', which is XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX.
- In addition, schools and children's centres will need to give a password. The current password is: XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX.

Needless to say, knowledge of these security details must be kept confidential to the Headteacher/Centre Manager and as few other staff as is absolutely necessary.

The contact details for the radio stations are:

Radio Wyvern	xxxxxxxxxxxxx	96.7/97.6/102.8 FM
Radio Hereford & Worcester	xxxxxxxxxxxxx	94.7/104/104.4/104.6 FM 738/1584 AM
Sunshine Radio	xxxxxxxxxxxxx	106.2/107/107.8 FM

6. Schools should contact the school meals service on XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX to inform them of the decision and contact them again when a date for reopening is known.
7. As soon as a date for reopening is known, this must be e-mailed to XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX. If you cannot send an e-mail please telephone XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX.
8. As soon as is practicable, complete the Enforced School Closure Form and send it to the address on the form.

Serious Incident out of normal hours

If an emergency or a serious incident occurs out of office hours and you require access to an on-call duty officer, then please telephone XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX. Your call will be diverted to an operator who will have access to all senior managers' out of hours contact details.

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

21 MAY 2010

SCRUTINY REVIEW OF THE IMPACT OF THE WINTER WEATHER AND THE RESPONSE TO IT**Response by Adult Social Care Provider Services****1. Background**

The ASC Provider services deliver social work support and advice to all vulnerable and disabled adults including Older People, Adults with learning disabilities, Mental health Issues, physical disabilities and sensory impairment. ASC also delivers welfare and benefit advice, Community equipment, Day Services, employment training and support, and transport. ASC providers work closely with Integrated Commissioning to develop and deliver care packages through contracts with independent, voluntary and private care providers delivering support through a range of services including residential, nursing and domiciliary care.

2. What Went Well?

Partnership and multi-agency working, through the Silver Command, was very effective. ASC were able to report issues and concerns that required support and also offer support to issues raised by other members. Examples that were of real assistance include roads being prioritised for gritting, police vehicles helping to get supplies to vulnerable older people, and the communication team doing press releases for people to look in on elderly neighbours .

Integration and co-location with PCT provider services ensured that joined up planning happened thus ensuring quicker and safer discharges from hospital were supported by all, at a time when demand was exceptional.

The volunteer 4X4 service was fantastic. We owe much to this service both assisting staff to attend their work places and help with the delivery of essential supplies to those in rural locations made inaccessible by the weather

Remote working worked well, with staff using both formal and informal networks to communicate information to ensure that critical services continued to be delivered in line with business continuity plans. Hot desking, redeployment of staff from non critical services and extensive staff commitment ensured essential services were maintained.

Some care providers did more than was contractually expected of them and in some cases some providers offered to cover others without charge.

The response of our local communities should be noted, as without this support many more people would have needed our support and services would have been further stretched.

3. What did not go well?

Some staff were under utilised as we were unable to transport them to area's requiring assistance.

Some domiciliary care providers did not provide staff and did not inform us of this.

There was duplication and excessive e-mails at times as services did not have joined up business continuity plans. As there was no nominated service co-ordinators for different service areas, all e-mails went to all managers.

Although remote working was achieved the Council's smart phones do not match those of the PCT as batteries do not hold their charge for long enough and phone directories and e-mails are difficult to access at speed.

4. What improvements could be made?

Co-ordinated business continuity plans and nominated service leads would prevent some duplication and increase effective working.

Situation Reports from Integrated Commissioning to social work teams detailing contract compliance from care providers and available capacity would be helpful for future pressure times.

It would be helpful if Council staff could access the same equipment as PCT staff i.e. blackberry smart phones.

5. What relevant policies are in place?

There are HR policies covering bad weather and staff redeployment.

Remote access working is already covered in ICT policies.

Business continuity plans already exist as does the major incident response plan

6. Whether any reviews have already been undertaken at service level of policies or service delivery arrangements or are proposed and whether any action plans have already been put in place to generate improvement?

ASC providers and Integrated Commissioning held a debrief session in the ASC monthly meeting. This also reviewed what worked well and what could be improved.

A debrief was also held at the PCT provider services directorate managers meeting.

Business continuity plans are continually reviewed and will be adjusted to show learning from the severe weather experienced.

Response by Primary Care Trust – Commissioning

In response to request to provide information as to how the Health Community responded to the severe weather conditions in 2009, the following is meant as an overview to assist the Committee in its discussion on the 21st May.

What went well

- Emergency planning in the County, with agencies co-operating in twice daily telephone conference calls to update all on operational problems and particular challenges, with joint work where necessary to resolve. It was also connected with the Health Service providing updates to NHS West Midlands to gather intelligence about the wider West Midlands picture of winter pressures.
- NHS staff commitment to maintain services with increased co-operation and planning to assist the cover arrangements.
- Volunteer Land rover / 4x4 arrangements, that enabled access for hard to reach clients in the Community.
- Bed management arrangements in the County, to transfer patients between from the Acute Hospital to Community Hospital sites to “free up” much needed acute bed provision.
- From the 17th December, NHS Herefordshire commissioned an additional walk in facility at the Asda Centre to help/assist the level of primary care provision within Hereford City. From small weekly attendances at the beginning, the service has now expanded to treat approximately 470 residents per week.
- From October to March NHS Herefordshire commissioned additional medical support for the Hereford County A&E department with a GP in A&E. GPs were, therefore, recruited to supplement and support the A&E department in their busiest periods during the week (Friday through to Sunday pm) with the intent of discharging the majority of patients with Primary Care conditions or minor ailments, plus reducing the level of non elective admissions wherever feasible. This GP support was in addition to the existing medical staff in Hereford County Hospital.

What did not go well

- Demand for acute care, in excess of normal winter pressures/expectations and the consequence, (e.g. impact upon elective care / cancelled operations. Similar experiences in other Health Communities though and increasing number of minor accidents requiring treatment.

What improvements you think could be made.

- Wider public information on alternative services/provision during the winter period to offset some of the undoubted pressure experienced from acute care

(e.g. diversions from A&E to alternative provision inc. pharmacists and GP surgeries).

What relevant policies are in place

- Continuity of service plans within NHS Herefordshire and GP/Out of hours services.
- Bed escalation procedures – on call senior staff to assist on the planning of care outside of normal office hours including bank holidays and weekends.

Whether any reviews had already been undertaken – review of Command and Control arrangements in Health and feedback to staff thanking for their continued cooperation and support at a time of severe pressure.

Any other observations you consider the needs to take into account. The emergency planning function across both NHS Herefordshire and Herefordshire Council operated effectively to coordinate action and ensure all agencies were proactively engaged (silver command) to oversee the Herefordshire services at a time of severe pressure and adverse weather conditions.

13th May 2010

Response by Primary Care Trust – Commissioning

In response to request to provide information as to how the Health Community responded to the severe weather conditions in 2009, the following is meant as an overview to assist the Committee in its discussion on the 21st May.

What went well

- Emergency planning in the County, with agencies co-operating in twice daily telephone conference calls to update all on operational problems and particular challenges, with joint work where necessary to resolve. It was also connected with the Health Service providing updates to NHS West Midlands to gather intelligence about the wider West Midlands picture of winter pressures.
- NHS staff commitment to maintain services with increased co-operation and planning to assist the cover arrangements.
- Volunteer Land rover / 4x4 arrangements, that enabled access for hard to reach clients in the Community.
- Bed management arrangements in the County, to transfer patients between from the Acute Hospital to Community Hospital sites to “free up” much needed acute bed provision.
- From the 17th December, NHS Herefordshire commissioned an additional walk in facility at the Asda Centre to help/assist the level of primary care provision within Hereford City. From small weekly attendances at the beginning, the service has now expanded to treat approximately 470 residents per week.
- From October to March NHS Herefordshire commissioned additional medical support for the Hereford County A&E department with a GP in A&E. GPs were, therefore, recruited to supplement and support the A&E department in their busiest periods during the week (Friday through to Sunday pm) with the intent of discharging the majority of patients with Primary Care conditions or minor ailments, plus reducing the level of non elective admissions wherever feasible. This GP support was in addition to the existing medical staff in Hereford County Hospital.

What did not go well

- Demand for acute care, in excess of normal winter pressures/expectations and the consequence, (e.g. impact upon elective care / cancelled operations. Similar experiences in other Health Communities though and increasing number of minor accidents requiring treatment.

What improvements you think could be made.

- Wider public information on alternative services/provision during the winter period to offset some of the undoubted pressure experienced from acute care

(e.g. diversions from A&E to alternative provision inc. pharmacists and GP surgeries).

What relevant policies are in place

- Continuity of service plans within NHS Herefordshire and GP/Out of hours services.
- Bed escalation procedures – on call senior staff to assist on the planning of care outside of normal office hours including bank holidays and weekends.

Whether any reviews had already been undertaken – review of Command and Control arrangements in Health and feedback to staff thanking for their continued cooperation and support at a time of severe pressure.

Any other observations you consider the needs to take into account. The emergency planning function across both NHS Herefordshire and Herefordshire Council operated effectively to coordinate action and ensure all agencies were proactively engaged (silver command) to oversee the Herefordshire services at a time of severe pressure and adverse weather conditions.

13th May 2010

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

21 MAY 2010

SCRUTINY REVIEW OF THE IMPACT OF THE WINTER WEATHER AND THE RESPONSE TO IT

Response by Council's Highways Service

This report provides a detailed summary of the impact of the recent severe winter weather on communities in the County and across public services and the response of the Council's Highway Service to the situation.

A detailed summary of the impact of the recent severe winter weather from the perspective of the Highway service is provided in Appendix A to this report. The likely financial implications of each issue are also summarised in Appendix A.

Legal Implications

Section 150 of the Highways Act 1980 imposes a duty upon a highway authority to, inter alia, remove any obstruction resulting from accumulations of snow.

Section 41 of the Highways Act 1980 (as amended) imposes a duty to maintain highways maintainable at the public expense and we are under a duty, so far as is reasonably practicable, that safe passage along a highway is not endangered by snow or ice. In this regard, this involves not only the highways authority showing it has appropriate systems in place for safety (e.g. a gritting regime policy for dealing with snow and ice) but also, the application and discharge of that system.

In addition, section 58 of the Highways Act 1980 sets out a special defence in an action against a highway authority for damage resulting in their failure to maintain a public highway. This states that it is a defence if the authority can prove that it had taken such care as was reasonably required to secure that the part of the highway to which the action relates was not dangerous for traffic. In this regard, a court would have regard to such factors as:

the character of the highway, and the traffic which was reasonably to be expected to use it;

the standard of maintenance appropriate for a highway of that character and used by such traffic;

the state of repair in which a reasonable person would have expected to find the highway;

Therefore, as long as the highway authority can show that it had taken reasonable steps to ensure that the highway was not dangerous, then it is unlikely that such a claim against it will succeed.

Risk Management

Initial comment in regard to risk is provided as part of Appendix A. It is proposed that a full risk assessment in accordance with the Herefordshire Public Services and Partnership Risk Management and Assurance Guidance would be undertaken as the first step in taking forward any of the improvement actions suggested here.

Consultees

Operations Manager, Amey Herefordshire.

Asset Maintenance Manager, Amey Herefordshire.

Representatives from Much Cowarne Parish Council and Putley Parish Council.

Appendices

- 10 Appendix A – Detailed Summary of the Impact of Winter 2009/10 on the Highway Service.

Relevant Plans

The Winter Service Plan (Version Number 1.3 – September 2009)

The Major Emergency Plan

The Highway Maintenance Plan

The Waste Collection Contract

The Council's ISO 14001:2004 accredited Environmental management System 'Good Environmental Management' (GEM).

Appendix A – Detailed Summary of the Impact of Winter 2009/10 on the Highway Service

KEY

Under possible financial implication the following symbols are used to indicate the possible level of investment associated with the improvement measures suggested here. - indicates a potential saving + indicates a potential investment need

££= probably between £5K and £50K to implement	£££=£50K to £500K	£= probably less than £5000 to implement	££££= £500K to £1M
--	-------------------	--	--------------------

£££££= probably more than £1million to implement.

The ranges chosen here reflect the parameters established in the Herefordshire Public Services and Partnership Risk Management and Assurance Guidance.

What Went Well

Ref	Subject	Summary of Issue	Community Impact	Relevant Policy	Scope Improvement for	Possible Financial Implications	Comment on Risk
W1	Pre-Winter Planning	The Winter Service Plan is reviewed each summer and lessons learnt are incorporated into the highway service's operational response. The experience of February 2009 (when severe weather was coupled with a national shortage of road salt) tested our operations and whilst we generally found our response to be resilient, we did identify some key learning points, which were reinforced in our plan for the 2009/10 season. This put us in good stead during	Sound preparation and planning meant that core highways winter services were operated as 'business as usual' throughout the winter.	The Winter Service Plan.	The review has normally taken place during the summer months, this can leave little time to implement and exercise significant changes to operational practices prior to the winter season, if such change has been identified as required. Completing the review of the Winter service Plan by the end of May each year would offer greater opportunity for any changes to be embedded.	Carrying out the review early will have limited direct financial implications. +£	The risks associated with the Winter Service Plan have generally been well managed, resulting in an effective delivery of the service, all to plan. Adopting the improvement action suggested here will only improve the service's ability to adapt to change and thereby reduce the risk associated with any changes to the winter service regimes.

Ref	Subject	Summary of Issue	Community Impact	Relevant Policy	Scope Improvement for	Possible Financial Implications	Comment on Risk
		this winter.					
W2	Pre-season salt storage volumes	At the start of the winter season we had 6500 tonnes of road salt in stock. This is the capacity of our slat barns at Thorn, Kingsland and Bromyard. We have maintained this as our 'starting level' despite electing to use a salt product (see below) which is spread at a lower rate (and hence utilises less salt to achieve the same level of treatment). Our calculations indicate that this has enhanced the effective treatment capacity of our stocks by approximately one third. This has been key to our resilience during this winter, as it was during	This enhanced resilience has contributed towards our ability to maintain the core winter service throughout the winter.	The Winter Service Plan	Resilience can be further enhanced through storing more salt locally; this matter is discussed further under 'Other Observations', O2, O3 and O4.	The provision of additional environmentally sound salt storage represents a significant capital investment. The precise amount will be dependant on available sites and the size of the facility. +£££	Clearly the resilience of the service will be enhanced if further salt storage can be made available. However consideration of this matter is a risk based decision at heart. In light winters only (approx) on third to a half of the volumes stored will actually be used. In recent years the volumes used have rarely exceeded the volumes stored, that is except in 2008/9 and 2009/10 when volumes in excess of 10,000 and 12,000 tonnes respectively have been utilised in the treatment of our roads.

Ref	Subject	Summary of Issue	Community Impact	Relevant Policy	Scope Improvement for	Possible Financial Implications	Comment on Risk
		February 2009.					
W3	Selection of salt products	We have used a product called safecote for the gritting operations throughout the county for the last two seasons, having trailed it from our Bromyard depot for a number of years. This is a coated salt, and as a result of the coating it can achieve a similar treatment effect at lower spread rates than traditional road salt. In extreme conditions, treatment rates do have to be increased and the 'saving' in salt is probably reduced, however, in normal precautionary salting runs we are using less salt to achieve the same outcome and this has	This enhanced resilience has contributed towards our ability to maintain the core winter service throughout the winter.	The Winter Service Plan	Due to the problems experienced with the supply of road salt nationally, we have had to utilise a variety of salt products to treat our roads throughout the winter. Resilience in regard to this matter is discussed further under 'Other Observations' O2, O3 and O4.	Safecote is more expensive per tonne, however this should be offset by 1) the resilience it provides 2) lower spread rates and 3) reduced corrosion (due to the coating) leading to the ability to extend the life of the winter fleet, resulting in a reduced whole life cost (gritters cost in the order of £75K each to buy). -££	Our resilience has been enhanced through the use of safecote salt. There is a risk that we will not be able to achieve the whole life cost benefit potential if we do not revise or approach to the management of the winter fleet. Revised Fleet management arrangements in regard to the winter fleet are being investigated, with a view to implementation taking place this year, all in time to secure the necessary changes to the gritter fleet in time for the 2010/11 winter season.

Ref	Subject	Summary of Issue	Community Impact	Relevant Policy	Scope Improvement for	Possible Financial Implications	Comment on Risk
		enhanced our overall resilience (see above).					
W4	Strategic Contingency Planning	The core winter service operations working as 'business as usual' throughout meant that we had sufficient capacity to 'scan the horizon' for threats to service continuity and put into place contingency plans. In some cases this led to us 'dusting off' arrangements previously tried (such as in February 2009) or in others the development of new approaches.	This pro-active response to a changing circumstance meant that core highway winter services continued to be operated as 'business as usual' throughout the winter.	The Winter Service Plan	To ensure that all contingency arrangements used are documented as part of the 2010 review of the winter service plan, enabling their re-use/adaptation as appropriate to the circumstances presented by any future winter.	A possible saving in time and money in future winters. -££	Adopting the improvement action suggested here will improve the resilience of the service to changing circumstances, such as experienced during this last winter. This will reduce the service's dependency on key individuals, again improving its resilience.
W5	Herefordshire Council and Amey Herefordshire, working as one team.	All involved in the delivery of winter service, whether in the employ of Amey Herefordshire or Herefordshire Council worked as	The efforts of many individuals, coming together as part of a team have ensured that core highway winter services		Clear recognition for a job well done in often challenging circumstances.	A possible saving in time and hence money in future winters.	The ability to work as a team is essential for the successful delivery of service in difficult circumstances such as experienced during this winter. The clear and

Ref	Subject	Summary of Issue	Community Impact	Relevant Policy	Scope Improvement for	Possible Financial Implications	Comment on Risk
		one team to deliver a successful winter service operation. This has regularly involved significant effort, imagination and commitment. Many individuals have worked long and anti-social hours as part of the team in order to provide an excellent service.	continued to be operated as 'business as usual' throughout the winter.			-££	appropriate allocation of risk between parties to any contract can support the development of a true team approach across contractual boundaries. The response to this winter's conditions suggests that the allocation of risk is appropriate and is understood by 'client' and 'provider' alike.
W6	Delivery to Plan.	The Winter Service Plan sets a clear set of priorities for the treatment of the County's roads. With prolonged severe weather comes a high demand on the service to regularly extend the scope of its operations. These demands come from a variety of sources and if all were met we would not be able to deliver our core commitments	The roads identified as priority routes were treated as the weather conditions dictated throughout the winter period. These routes have the highest usage and/or traffic speeds and as such present the highest risk to the travelling public and Herefordshire's communities as a	The Winter service Plan	It is important that services are delivered to priorities established in the council's policies and plans, and that those priorities are well founded and are subject to reasonable challenge as part of any review. The Winter service Plan is subject to Annual review and is approved prior to	Failure to deliver to planned priorities will lead to significant overspend in the winter service budget. The budget is traditionally set at a level to cater for a light winter, with contingency arrangements in place to	If we had not delivered to our planned priorities then it is highly likely that we would have been unable to deliver the winter service throughout the winter season, this particularly as salt was in short supply nationally.

Ref	Subject	Summary of Issue	Community Impact	Relevant Policy	Scope for Improvement	Possible Financial Implications	Comment on Risk
		throughout the winter. This circumstance was exacerbated by the constraints on the supply of road salt nationally.	whole. However, a clear focus on these identified priorities has meant that we have not been able to action requests for service from many other areas (see What Did Not Go Well, N3, N4, N5, N6, N7 and N8).		each Winter season (the second week in October to the second week in April) by the Cabinet Member for Highways and Transportation.	enable a response to severe weather. The core response to this last winter has resulted in an approximate £1 Million overspend on winter service. This would be far greater if we had not delivered to plan. -£££	
W7	Communication / Media	A pro-active approach to communication; pre-season; during the severe weather and in regard to post-winter damage has meant that many will have understood the extent of our gritting	A higher proportion of the community will have an appreciation of what it is we are doing in response to the severe weather and the reasons for the extent of that	The Winter Service Plan. The Major Emergency	Communication is an area that can always see improvement; undoubtedly messages did not reach all recipients in as timely a manner as would be liked. Similarly,	A lot might be achieved here through comparatively minor investment. +££	Communication is an essential part of service delivery, without effective communication we risk the effectiveness of the services delivered, however well, being constrained / misunderstood.

Ref	Subject	Summary of Issue	Community Impact	Relevant Policy	Scope for Improvement	Possible Financial Implications	Comment on Risk
		<p>operations, the constraints within which it operates (i.e. salt) and what we are doing to address any issues.</p> <p>This has lead to regular local, regional and even national media coverage (press, radio and television), most of which has portrayed Herefordshire in a positive light.</p> <p>During the severe weather communication was coordinated between all Herefordshire agencies well, resulting in generally clear, timely, consistent and comprehensive messages being issued to the media.</p>	<p>response.</p> <p>Many use local radio as the tool to understanding the impact of the severe weather on the County and hence to inform their own decisions regarding travel, work, school etc.</p>	Plan	<p>some will have received messages 'second hand'.</p> <p>The current work by the Emergency Planning team establishing emergency plans with Parish Councils could assist here, giving us a good channel for effective communication between the community and the service.</p>		<p>The is always a risk that some will dislike/disagree with the decisions made and the information communicated to them. It is better to manage this through pro-active, as opposed to reactive communication.</p>

Ref	Subject	Summary of Issue	Community Impact	Relevant Policy	Scope for Improvement	Possible Financial Implications	Comment on Risk
W8	Working with The Regional Resilience Team at Government Office West Midlands and through them the national 'salt cell'.	<p>The regional resilience team provided the effective communication channel between the West Midlands highway authorities and the national salt cell. They also had a role to play in brokering any mutual aid arrangements. This was managed through regular regional teleconferences and e-mail updates.</p> <p>We developed a highly effective working relationship with this team.</p>	We have been able to inform and work effectively with the national salt cell arrangements that have informed the distribution of salt supplies. We secured adequate supplies through these arrangements, along with our own alternative supply arrangements to deliver the core winter maintenance service throughout the winter season.	The Winter Service Plan	Enhance the resilience of our participation from the outset by ensuring that more than one person represents Herefordshire at initial meetings.	+£	The effectiveness of our participation in these arrangements was over-dependant on the availability of certain key individuals.
W9	Herefordshire's Multi Agency Response	The various agencies who participated at 'silver control' to coordinate Herefordshire's response to the severe weather worked well as a	A well coordinated response ultimately means a more effective response.	The Major Emergency Plan	Continue to build on current good practice.	-££	A shared understanding and approach does lead to better management of the overall risk presented to the community by severe weather events.

Ref	Subject	Summary of Issue	Community Impact	Relevant Policy	Scope Improvement for	Possible Financial Implications	Comment on Risk
		team (see also W7).					
W10	Alternative salt products/supply	Alternative salt supply options as established through Amey Herefordshire (other contracts) and by Herefordshire Council (building on the experience of February 2009) were utilised to ensure that we had sufficient product to continue to treat all priority routes throughout the winter season.	This has contributed towards our ability to maintain the core winter service throughout the winter.	The Winter Service Plan	The resilience of road salt supply on a national, regional and local level is discussed under 'Other Observations' below.	The cost of sourcing alternative products during periods of severe weather is significantly higher than the usual supply chain. +££	With the usual supply chain unable to deliver it was important that service continued so the use of alternative supply was essential.
W11	Treatment at the County Hospital and key Emergency Service premises.	We treat the access to the County Hospital as part of our priority gritting routes. We extended our treatments, through a request made at silver control to include the footways at the Hospital entrances and to the frontages of all key emergency	Those gaining access to the County Hospital on foot were faced with a less hazardous journey. Similarly, the emergency services will have had better accessibility to and from their premises, enabling	The Winter Service Plan	To include these areas as a matter of course in our priority routes as defined in the Winter Service Plan.	Extending the priority routes will result in an increase in the cost of treatment. +££	Clearly it makes sense to treat these sites, particularly in times of prolonged severe weather. Small increases in the scope of treatment can be 'absorbed' into the normal treatment regimes quite readily, however there are thresholds beyond which such incremental growth cannot be accommodated without significant

Ref	Subject	Summary of Issue	Community Impact	Relevant Policy	Scope Improvement for	Possible Financial Implications	Comment on Risk
		service premises, such as fire and ambulance stations.	a better response.				investment in labour, plant and materials. It is at these thresholds where the limits of each authority's/agency/organisation/individuals responsibilities need to be clearly understood and appropriate decisions over investment made. (see N4 and N5 also)
W1 2	The immediate response to the damage caused to our roads	The prolonged severe weather lead to extensive damage to the highway network. Amey Herefordshire, the Council's Highway Service Provider's response to this has been rapid.	The impact of winter on the condition of the highway network and our response to this issue has been the subject of a report to the Environment Scrutiny Committee. This report was presented to that committee on the 22 nd March 2010. To see the publicly available information, follow the link:	The Highway Maintenance Plan	As the highway authority, the council has a duty to maintain the public highway. This duty is met by delivering to the levels of service established in the council's highway maintenance plan, which sets out the 'reasonable system' of inspection and repair.		The response to any damage to the highway asset needs to be timely and appropriate if the potential for accident and injury and/or damage to property is not to escalate. As such it was a necessity that we respond to this safety issue, utilising all resources at our immediate disposal, and this is what has happened. +£££
W1 3	The longer term response to the damage caused to	The longer term impact on road condition has been assessed and an programme of highway works			The longer term view on highway maintenance standards is the subject of an update report to the Environment Scrutiny Committee at their meeting on the 19 th April 2010.		+£££££

Ref	Subject	Summary of Issue	Community Impact	Relevant Policy	Scope Improvement for	Possible Financial Implications	Comment on Risk
	our roads	developed to achieve a targeted condition for our roads.	http://councillors.herefordshire.gov.uk/ieAgenda.aspx?A=2975				
W1 4	The treatment of high profile shopping areas	The high profile shopping areas in the county such as High Town, Hereford were cleared of snow and treated to prevent the formation of ice on a regular basis.	Locations such as High Town with a high footfall clearly merit treatment for snow and ice. The issue is how far such treatment should extend to other town/city centre streets. (see comment under What Did Not Go So Well, N4)	The Winter Service Plan	Improving the timeliness and extent of this treatment, particularly in regard to the market towns can be considered as part of the annual review of the Winter Service Plan.	Extending the scope/extent of treatment will result in an increase in the cost of treatment. +£££	The risk of slips and falls at these popular retail centres is reduced.
W1 5	The network of snow clearance contractors	Snow was cleared from many minor roads providing important access to rural communities using a established network of snow clearance contractors, who are 'activated' following significant snowfall in their locality and are	These contractors provide an invaluable service linking many remote communities with the priority gritting routes enabling a degree of access during times of severe winter	The Winter Service Plan	The scope of these activities is currently limited to snow clearance. Compacted snow and ice does still present a significant hazard and can still limit access, particularly to the more remote/elevated	Currently these contractors are paid when used and the scale of the response is in line with the equipment available to them, such as agricultural tractors,	Service provision can vary across the county and some areas are less well covered. The highway authority is still ultimately responsible for meeting its duties towards the public highway, this cannot be contracted out. These contractors are usually available to provide

Ref	Subject	Summary of Issue	Community Impact	Relevant Policy	Scope Improvement for	Possible Financial Implications	Comment on Risk
		paid for their work at tendered rates.	weather.		areas of the County.	excavators etc. Extending the scope/nature of the service they deliver may mean having to pay retention monies and/or invest in equipment such as tractor mounted salt spreaders. See comments under Other Observations O4. +£££	this service in times of severe weather, as many are farmers/small civil engineering contractors and other work cannot be accessed (due to the weather) in these events. However, individuals may not be 'on site' or available on all occasions for a variety of legitimate reasons. Neighbouring contractors can often provide cover, but this ultimately impacts on the timeliness of response.

What Did Not Go Well

Ref	Subject	Summary of Issue	Community Impact	Relevant Policy	Scope for Improvement	Possible Financial Implications	Comment on Risk
N1	Cross boundary arrangements	<p>Mid season difficulties were experienced with the cross boundary gritting arrangements with Shropshire, resulting in the failure to treat some of Herefordshire's roads.</p> <p>Concern has been raised from our delivery teams over differences in the frequency of treatment cross boundaries, in particular our boundary with Worcestershire.</p>	<p>This lack of treatment did result in damage to property. Measures were actioned to ensure the treatment of all Herefordshire's priority routes prior to the severe weather in January 2010.</p> <p>It is inevitable that treatment types times and possibly intensities vary across county boundaries. Arrangements whereby one authority treats another's roads and visa-versa enhance efficiency, as roads and boundaries may not occur at convenient</p>	The Winter Service Plan	<p>Review cross boundary arrangements as part of the annual review of the winter service plan.</p> <p>Seeking to 1) re-establish sensible cross boundary arrangements with Shropshire council and 2) satisfy ourselves that appropriate standards are being applied to our roads, when treated by our neighbours.</p> <p>Note: the salt supply issue will have influenced the treatment rates and frequencies being utilised by all</p>	<p>Self treating all gritting routes that straddle the county boundary will lead to a higher direct cost for treatment.</p> <p>+££</p>	<p>Herefordshire Council is ultimately responsible for all public highways maintainable at the public expense (with the exception of Trunk Roads and Motorways) in Herefordshire.</p> <p>Neighbouring authorities have the same duty towards their own roads.</p> <p>Self treatment of all gritting routes will lead to some roads that straddle the county boundary being only part treated or, treated to a variable standard along its length, or have gaps in treatment. All of these can present a hazard to the travelling public. Similarly a road may have two gritters follow each other along it, each treating a different section of road, this would be seen by any reasonable</p>

Ref	Subject	Summary of Issue	Community Impact	Relevant Policy	Scope Improvement for	Possible Financial Implications	Comment on Risk
			operational locations.		highway authorities.		observer as a nonsense.
N2	Resilience of 'normal' Salt supply arrangements	This winter our road salt is procured through Amey Herefordshire and is sourced from Salt Union, who are one of three UK based sources of road salt and operators of the only UK mainland based salt mine (Cheshire). Demand for salt products during the winter placed this supply chain under severe pressure and supply was constrained. National concern over the resilience of the supply chain led to a 'Salt Cell' being set up by Government to understand demand and advise suppliers on the distribution of	The availability and projected availability of road salt to the County became one of the greatest influences on decision making in regard to the Winter gritting services. This meant that we restricted operations to priority routes, were unable to replenish grit bins as frequently as we would have liked, and we introduced variable spread rates. We also sought and obtained alternative supply (see What Went Well W10 above). All aimed at ensuring the		Improved resilience of salt supply arrangement nationally, regionally, locally and in the community (see Other Observations O1, O2 and O3 below).	See Other Observations, O1, O2 and O3 below for comment on the possible financial implications of improvement options. Sourcing salt products from alternative supplies in the midst of a period of severe weather is inevitably more expensive. The options used by ourselves increased the typical cost per tonne by half as much again to around £60 per	Failure to secure supplies either through the salt cell arrangements or through alternative sources, and/or; Failure to control usage would have led to the failure to provide the core winter gritting service throughout the winter season. These risks were successfully managed (see What Went Well W10 above).

Ref	Subject	Summary of Issue	Community Impact	Relevant Policy	Scope Improvement for	Possible Financial Implications	Comment on Risk
		road salt. See also Over observations O1 below.	continuity of the core service throughout the winter season.			tonne. +£££	
N3	Ability to extend treatment to secondary routes and beyond.	Due to constraints on salt supply, as discussed in N2 above, we were unable to extend treatment to our defined secondary routes and into other areas, in response to the severe conditions, on the frequency that we would have liked.	Secondary routes that had received treatment earlier in the winter season, as the conditions and resources allowed did not receive treatment throughout the winter season at a frequency that the conditions demanded.	The Winter Service Plan	The arrangements for secondary routes will be reviewed as part of the annual review of the Winter service Plan. Realistically the extent of treatment will depend on resources, not least the resilience of salt supply arrangements.	The extent and frequency of the treatment of secondary routes does have significant financial implications. Secondary routes currently extend to some 684km (425 miles) and are treated using the resources deployed on the 963km (598 miles) of Priority routes. +£££	
N4	Treatment of footways outside of	The vast majority of footways in the county remained	The Health services experienced a	The Winter Service	Review the extent of footway treatment that can be	Depending on the option taken the financial	Limited footway treatment does increase the likelihood of slips and falls

Ref	Subject	Summary of Issue	Community Impact	Relevant Policy	Scope for Improvement	Possible Financial Implications	Comment on Risk
	key shopping areas	untreated throughout the period. Some areas were treated through self help grit bins and we did treat footways on some of the main thoroughfares, either as a 'by-product' of having treated the carriageway or through the use of toed spreaders and Amey Herefordshire's maintenance gangs.	significant increase in broken limbs as a result of slips and falls on untreated surfaces. Many vulnerable members of the community may have felt 'trapped in their own homes' despite the roads having been treated, as the footways were still hazardous.	Plan	delivered as part of the annual review of the Winter Service Plan. During the winter representatives of the PCT were asked (through Silver meetings, see What Went Well, W9) to identify any particular 'hot spots' for slips. This was attempted and identified that the problem was a general one, as opposed to a site specific problem that we could have then treated.	implications could be very significant. We would like to investigate the potential for the redirection of funding from the treatment of injuries incurred towards the prevention of slips and falls. +£££	resulting in a high demand on health services. Similarly the risk of isolation in the community, particularly amongst the elderly and more vulnerable is increased.
N5	Treatment of Car Parks and 'transport interchanges' such as the Country Bus	The maintenance of car parks and the country bus station are not the responsibility of the highway service. The Winter service Plan recognises their	Whilst maintenance gangs were directed towards the treatment of car parks and the Country Bus Station during the	The Winter Service Plan	Consider council owned car parks and transport interchanges such as the Country Bus Station as transport assets. Bring their maintenance into	The appropriate maintenance budgets would have to transfer to the highway service. Also see N4	Limited treatment of surfaces in car parks and other transport interchanges does increase the likelihood of slips and falls resulting in a high demand on health

Ref	Subject	Summary of Issue	Community Impact	Relevant Policy	Scope for Improvement	Possible Financial Implications	Comment on Risk
	Station	status as transport assets and as such those car parks that can be accessed by a gritter are treated whenever secondary routes are treated.	severe weather, their treatment was not administered in a preventative way. This meant that drivers / passengers who had completed their journey on treated roads were (on many occasions) then faced with untreated surfaces once they alighted. Also see N4 above.		the control of the highway service and incorporate there treatment fully into the winter service plan as part of the priority routes, so they do receive preventative treatment throughout the winter season. Also see N4 above.	above. +££	services. Similarly, any failure to adequately treat the surfaces at travellers destination, having treated many of the key routes to that point will and has resulted in the quality of overall service being brought into question.
N6	The isolation of remote communities	We treat 29% of our roads as priority routes based on clear criteria set down in the Winter Service Plan. In a rural county such as ours, this does mean that some of our more remote communities have been isolated by the	Many rural communities have isolated to some degree and have not been able to go about their normal daily life, or receive provisions and/or access services.	The Winter Service Plan The Major Emergency Plan	Consider what can be done to enhance/provide gritting operations targeted at providing routes to link isolated communities during times of severe and prolonged winter conditions. This might be based on	Depending on scope, this could have very significant financial implications, both in terms of the investment required to establish an enhanced service and to	The onus of responsibility does not only sit with the local authority, but with individuals/the communities themselves. The choice to live in remote locations comes with some real consequences that need to be recognised by all when planning for winter.

Ref	Subject	Summary of Issue	Community Impact	Relevant Policy	Scope for Improvement	Possible Financial Implications	Comment on Risk
		prolonged and severe winter conditions. Our network of snow clearance contractors can and do clear many routes of snow, but ice remains and this alone can make steep routes impassable.			self help operations supported by Herefordshire Council and possibly delivered either through expanding the scope of the Parish Council Lengthsman scheme and/or through expanding the capabilities of the network of snow clearance contractors. This can be considered as part of the annual review of the Winter Service Plan. See Other Observations O4 also.	deliver that service. +£££	
N7	The treatment of urban estate roads.	Our priority (and even secondary) routes do not extend into many of our urban estate roads, where a high percentage of the	Many experience difficulties in the first part of their journey (be that by car, public transport or on foot) from their	The Winter Service Plan	Consider the extension of priority and secondary routes to better penetrate urban estates as part of the review of the	Depending on scope, this could have very significant financial implications, both in terms of	See N4 Also any extension of service and hence reduction in risk here needs to be balanced against the risk presented

Ref	Subject	Summary of Issue	Community Impact	Relevant Policy	Scope for Improvement	Possible Financial Implications	Comment on Risk
		county's population reside.	front door to the main road. See N4 above also.		Winter Service Plan. Improved self help (grit bins) facilities can also be considered along with the deployment of other partner resources during periods of prolonged or severe winter conditions. See N10.	the investment required to establish an enhanced service (a larger gritter fleet, more salt and drivers etc. may be required) and to deliver that service. +£££	in other areas, such as in isolated rural communities, see N6 above.
N8	The re-stocking of grit bins in the community	We were not able to restock grit bins at the frequency that we would have liked, due to constraints on salt supply. See N2	See N2	The Winter Service Plan	See N6 Also continuing to work with Town and Parish Councils to identify sites where grit bins will be beneficial and will be used. Consider the replenishment of grit bins from community based salt stores as part of enhanced	See Other Observations. And N6/N7 above. +£££	We are seeking to provide grit bins at key locations identified with Town and Parish Councils. In recent years we have moved away from providing salt piles due to the environmental damage that can be done. Whilst salt bins can enable self help in the community there contents are often used on private property and at times of greatest need they are often running low. This is the

Ref	Subject	Summary of Issue	Community Impact	Relevant Policy	Scope Improvement for	Possible Financial Implications	Comment on Risk
					self help operations.		very time that our resources are fully occupied in the delivery of winter service/access to salt bins is at its most difficult.
N9	School transport routes and waste collection routes	Our school transport and waste collection routes extend across the whole county and well beyond the 29% of roads that are treated as priority routes. Many school transport and waste collection services were curtailed as the roads on which they operate could not be treated.	As a result many pupils could not get to school (even if open) using normal services. Also household waste remained uncollected in many rural communities. See N6 also	The Winter Service Plan	See N6 also; service providers may need to review the contingency that is in place to cater for extended periods of severe winter conditions. Consider extending priority and/or secondary routes to cater for key problem areas.	Extending priority and/or secondary routes to cater for all routes will be prohibitively expensive. There may be very significant cost in extending routes to cater for possible problem areas, both in the 'capital' needed to set up / extend new routes and the ongoing operational costs.	The treatment of problem spots is an inherently high risk operation (genuine preventative operations are less risky) the likelihood of injury or damage to gritter drivers and/or equipment with the consequent loss of service increases when treating more minor/steep roads. Any extension of our operations to manage this risk will need to be well coordinated with the management of school closures and proposals for revised waste collection arrangements, see Other Observations O6 below.

Ref	Subject	Summary of Issue	Community Impact	Relevant Policy	Scope for Improvement	Possible Financial Implications	Comment on Risk
						<p>As with N4 we would like to investigate the potential for the redirection of funding from other areas to prevent rather than react to this issue when it occurs.</p> <p>+£££ to +££££ depending on the approach taken.</p>	
N10	Redeployment of waste collection resources	The current waste collection contract makes provision for resources to be re-deployed to support other council operations when waste collection cannot go ahead. The mechanisms by which this could be done effectively were not established in time for this last	Further snow clearance, for example on footways in Hereford and the Market Towns could have happened if this resource could have been deployed.	The Waste Collection Contract The Winter Service Plan	Establish clear arrangements in the relevant operational plans to enable the effective deployment of these resources on deliverable and valuable operations, such as footway clearance.	These should be limited. +£	This redeployment should not be at the expense of the core services, or any substitute for them.

Ref	Subject	Summary of Issue	Community Impact	Relevant Policy	Scope Improvement for	Possible Financial Implications	Comment on Risk
		winter and as a consequence the potential of this arrangement was not realised.					

Other Observations

Ref	Subject	Summary of Issue	Community Impact	Relevant Policy	Scope for Improvement	Possible Financial Implications	Comment on Risk
O1	The resilience of road salt supply arrangements nationally	As indicated above, during this winter, as for the 2008/09 winter the provision that is in place nationally for the planning, production, deployment and distribution of road salt in the UK came under severe pressure with demand outstripping supply.	Government intervened and set up a national 'salt cell' to understand need across all highway authorities and advise suppliers on distribution. The availability of salt became the single biggest influence over treatment regimes across all highway authorities, including Herefordshire Council.	The Winter Service Plan	The Department for Transport has initiated a lessons learned review of winter 2009/2010. Details can be found by using the following links Press release: http://nds.coi.gov.uk/clientmicrosite/Content/Detail.aspx?ClientId=202&NewsAreaId=2&ReleaseID=412822&SubjectId=36 Terms of Reference: http://www.dft.gov.uk/pgr/regional/reviewofwinter0910/ Written ministerial statement: http://www.dft.gov.uk/press/speechesstatements/statements/	The review is to be in two phases and phase two will include an economic analysis.	It is hoped that this review will identify measures that can be implemented relatively quickly in preparation for next winter 2010/11, and; take a longer term view on the nations preparedness for severe weather in future years.

Ref	Subject	Summary of Issue	Community Impact	Relevant Policy	Scope Improvement for	Possible Financial Implications	Comment on Risk
					khan20100330a		
O2	The resilience of road salt supply arrangements regionally.	<p>A regional debrief was held at Government Office West Midlands on the 2nd February 2010.</p> <p>As part of this debrief consideration was paid to stocks and supplies of salt in the West Midlands.</p>	As above.	The Winter Service Plan	<p>As a result of this review consideration is being paid regionally to:</p> <p>Supply chain contracts and furthering the supply base.</p> <p>The possibility of collaborating to bulk purchasing a salt supply from overseas.</p> <p>The feasibility of establishing bulk storage facilities within the region.</p>	<p>Any regional solution should result in shared cost and shared risk.</p> <p>The results of the actions arising from this review are not as yet known, however better value should be achievable through collaboration.</p> <p>+££</p>	
O3	The resilience of road salt storage arrangements	We currently hold 6500T of road salt at the start of each winter season, in the past decade we have typically used 3500T	Further local resilience would mean that decision making regarding the extent and nature of the	The Winter Service Plan	Further storage might be provided at the existing Pontrilas depot, subject to some environmental improvements. In	Establishing and stocking an environmentally sound store of salt in the County will	If we invested in further storage locally, then we would be less vulnerable to issue in the supply chain.

Ref	Subject	Summary of Issue	Community Impact	Relevant Policy	Scope for Improvement	Possible Financial Implications	Comment on Risk
	s locally	per season. In 2008/09 we used 10,000T approximately and in 2009/10 we have used 12,000T approximately.	service delivered will be less constrained by the resilience of salt supply arrangements and more focussed on need.		the past this depot has been used as a strategic store (several hundred tonnes only) and in recent years we have withdrawn from this depot for environmental reasons. Other long term (potentially non-operational) storage might be available in the county. Also see O4 below.	result in significant expense. +£££	
O4	Self help gritting in the community	See N6 and N9 above.	In response to this review several Parish Councils have expressed a desire to organise their own gritting operations on minor roads that are not usually the subject of our own treatment regimes.	The Winter Service Plan	To assess the potential for improvement the Highway Network Manager has met with two Parish Councils who expressed a desire to deliver their own gritting operations. To take this forward, even if initially on a limited trail basis, the following matters would have to be addressed: Salt storage in the parish; a secure and environmentally sound year around store would have to be found in or near each participating parish. Equipment; spreading equipment would have to be provided and/or		

Ref	Subject	Summary of Issue	Community Impact	Relevant Policy	Scope Improvement for	Possible Financial Implications	Comment on Risk
			<p>Resources placed in each locality may be best placed to address the local need and overcome some of the issues associated with isolation during prolonged and severe winter periods.</p>				<p>existing equipment (such as agricultural fertilizer spreaders) would have to be adapted within each participating parish.</p> <p>Labour; a workforce would have to be identified and trained.</p> <p>Command and Control; It is anticipated that any such operation would only be activated in times of severe weather and as such clear parameters for when it would be activated and the extent of the operation would have to be established and adhered to.</p> <p>Payment; Together with the above this might be achieved through either the extension of the existing parish lengthman contracts, or through an extension to the scope of the existing arrangements with the snow clearance contractors.</p> <p>Liability; ultimately the duty sits with Herefordshire Council as the highway authority and the associated liability cannot be contracted out. Clearly the operations needed to fulfil this duty can be contracted out. Provided the contractor, be that the Parish Council or a snow clearance contractor has delivered works in accordance with the contract and has not been negligent, then the risk associated with service delivery will sit with Herefordshire Council.</p> <p>To properly quantify the potential for improvement and the level of investment needed to forward this initiative the two Parish Councils who have expressed an interest in this matter have been asked to provide their views on the above matters.</p> <p>Storage of salt in the community through these means may offset the potential need to invest in further salt storage locally (see O3).</p>

Ref	Subject	Summary of Issue	Community Impact	Relevant Policy	Scope Improvement for	Possible Financial Implications	Comment on Risk
					+£ to trial +£££ to operate countywide		
O5	The environmental impact of salt	Salinisation of watercourses and the death of plants can result from the improper storage of salt, particularly when stored in any quantity, such as in roadside salt piles or at depots.	Wherever possible spread rates need to be kept low and salt should not be stored in the open and be adequately banded in bins or barns.	Good Environmental Management (GEM)	The environmental impact of salt and the risk this presents does need to be carefully considered, along with the cost of any control measures when furthering the improvement actions considered in this report.		
O6	School closures	The decision to close schools sits with the head teachers of each school. When that decision is taken part way through the day it has resulted in an immediate increase in traffic volumes as parents leave work and home in order to transport their children home and make appropriate childcare arrangements. This peak in traffic can and has occurred at	As a result parents have made their journeys from work/home to school and then back to home / work etc. on roads that have yet to be treated in response to the then current snowfall. Treatment of the roads has taken longer as gritters have to make their way through traffic.	The Winter Service Plan The Major Emergency Plan	If the decision to close schools can be coordinated with, or better informed by the highway service then the overall welfare of the pupils and their parents might be improved.	The cost of sharing information between services and schools are small. If the level of liaison required is on a one to one basis with all schools then clearly the cost of achieving this will raise. The benefits could be significant in terms of	We accept that difficult decisions do have to be made in real time regarding child welfare in times of severe weather. At present the decision to close any school appears to be taken with full regard for the welfare of the child on the school premises, with lesser attention paid to the timing of their journey home and impact of that timing.

Ref	Subject	Summary of Issue	Community Impact	Relevant Policy	Scope Improvement for	Possible Financial Implications	Comment on Risk
		the very same time that we have needed to grit roads, thereby impeding treatment.				improved welfare and reduced disruption to the wider community. +£	
O7	The treatment of the trunk roads in Herefordshire	Whilst Amey also treat the trunk roads in Herefordshire alongside our county Roads, they do so as agents for the Highways Agency and in accordance with their regimes. The HA's treatment regimes are forecast based and whilst they do have mechanisms in their arrangements to take account of local conditions and residual salt (salt from previous treatments that is still working well) they do not employ these	As a consequence the draw on the salt supplies held in the county (which are shared) is disproportionately higher for the Trunk Roads. Whilst these treatment regimes tend to air on the side of caution they do erode the resilience of the county's salt stocks at a higher rate than our own regimes.	The Winter service Plan	If the HA were to allow their Agents to adopt an outcome focussed approach to service delivery then treatment regimes that mirror our own approach to our priority routes might be introduced, resulting in a service that is more responsive to local needs that utilises less salt to achieve the same aim, thereby promoting resilience.	No direct financial implication to Herefordshire Council.	The Highways Agency's current approach is risk adverse when considered on a treatment by treatment basis. However, when considered on a more global outcomes basis it erodes the resilience of our salt supplies. We accept that the treatment of motorways and dual carriageways does differ from the approach needed on most of our county's roads and the HA's regimes are based on the practices needed on the majority of the strategic road network

Ref	Subject	Summary of Issue	Community Impact	Relevant Policy	Scope Improvement for	Possible Financial Implications	Comment on Risk
		<p>mechanisms. This results in a typically higher than necessary frequency of treatment, which also takes place at a higher spread rate than on our own roads. In addition to this their regime is less responsive to changes in conditions locally with action being 'called' on a more regional basis.</p>					<p>nationally.</p>

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

21 MAY 2010

SCRUTINY REVIEW OF THE IMPACT OF THE WINTER WEATHER AND THE RESPONSE TO IT

Response by ICT Services**General Comments**

What went well.

- Many ICT staff were able to continue to work as normal via remote access / teleconferencing.
- Many council/NHS staff now have remote access and/or mobile devices which allow a degree of connectivity.
- Managers and team leaders applying flexibility with regards to staff working remotely and flexible hours
- Staff able to cover for other staff (in other departments) who were unable to get to work

What could be improved / what did not go well.

- Communications were good, but if you are away from your computer you will miss them.
- Closure of schools/services information on the website and communications between departments.
- Access to HC/NHS networks from all sites not available
- Some Buildings were closed early, this was not communicated to all staff.

Recommendations

- Severe Weather 'Handy Guide' for staff to keep in their cars/at home so staff are aware of their responsibilities for getting to work etc.

Schools Closure Information

- 51 of the top 100 web pages visited on the website in January were related to the extreme weather conditions and account for 133,594 of the page views and 101,096 of the visits.

- Significantly, however, only just over a third of the visits (36,946) and less than half of the pages views (46,475) were to the Press releases content. Yet this was where the web emergency information efforts were focused. The other service pages were not managed as part of the emergency information communication plan but account for the majority of the searches and visits. Appendix 1 includes the independent 'Better Connected' survey of severe weather coverage on all Council websites and acknowledges the currency of the news content. Appendix 2 is a summary of relevant comments from members of the public in our January 2010 website take-up service (397 respondents).

- It is clear from these figures and the independent reports that although information was available, publishing it in News articles not as effective as updating relevant service areas on the website where the public would expect to find it.

- In addition although the schools closures information appears to have been available from 6:00 am (CYPD report) there seems to be significant confusion about its route to other information channels. I could find no example of the data being available to publish on the Council's website before 7:00 am and more generally after 8:00 am. This appears to be at odds with its availability to the Emergency helpline and the BBC website for instance. For the public the timeliness of the information is critical. See email in Appendix 3.

- Although web staff are/were available our-of-hours to enable updates 24 hours if necessary and appropriate this is only an informal service and relies on the information being available to the web staff to publish and goodwill.

- The accuracy of the information was questionable and appeared to conflict with other published web content. Two examples:
 - Multiple press releases on the same day or multiple updates to the same press release on the same day. To help clarify communication's updates to press releases a timestamp was added to the published date.

 - County gritting routes for January 2010 were put onto the website on the 6 January in the "Snow Clearance and Winter Maintenance - Herefordshire Council" section which received a total of 5169 page views during this time. However the older gritting route documents for each area e.g. Leominster or Bromyard, were last updated in 2005 and were not removed or replaced.

- Lack of consistency in the presentation of key information which was raised in the website take-up service feedback. For example whether school closures were reported as open or closed.

Key Issues

- Timeliness of key information: A key issue is the lack of accurate, timely information for the Council website about emergency incidents. Parents need the information before 8:00 am for it to be useful e.g. to make alternative childcare provision, travel arrangements, getting the children dressed and breakfasted etc. The earlier the information is communicated the easier it is for families, and by extension employers, to manage the potential impact. Please note the comment we received from a parent that morning (in appendix 3).
- Under-utilisation of the Web and poor communication chain: there is a reliance on the Web team to troubleshoot news content but we are not given priority as part of emergency information communications. It also seems that the Communications team do not get the emergency information early enough e.g. the BBC were able to provide the information on their website well over an hour before the Web team received any information from Communications. As with previous incidents, there seems to be a critical delay in getting the information from Schools to Communications and then to the Web team. It is not clear when the school closure information was made available to the emergency telephone hotline. It would be a concern if there was a significant difference between getting school closure information on these channels (the phone line and website) OR if it wasn't available on the telephone hotline either until after 8:00 am.
- Communications with local media outlets : An immediate improvement measure would be to place a link to the BBC website as the school closure information is always up and available on the BBC Herefordshire & Worcester local radio website, however there is concern is that other local radios (e.g. Wyvern and Sunshine) point to the Council website, and expect that the Council can provide this information rather than another media outlet.
- Service information published in News articles only: Core service information is only contained in News articles. This year Local directgov has requested that all local authorities provide a link to the information on their websites for school closures and for gritting routes. This requires a service page for each. The gritting route information is on a service page managed by that area of the business but we have nothing similar for school closures. However there is also insufficient accountability for management of the service content we do have e.g. the January 2010 gritting routes on the service page were published by the web team but they do not have the service knowledge to know if information is no longer accurate. That is the responsibility of the service manager and this needs to be reinforced. The remaining documents were last updated by service user 'jlm' in 2005.

Recommendations

1. Include representation from the Web team in emergency planning meetings and actively engage them in exploring options to utilise digital communication channels. Provide a mobile work phone for the Corporate Web Editor if out-of-hours support is expected.
2. Review information flows across ALL channels of communication to the public to support the automatic distribution of service information e.g. implementing service information pages on the Council website for school closures, containing **auto-published** details of school closures.
3. Agree and implement mechanism(s) to improve the flow of school closure information, for example through SMS texting and txt to voice services so they allow information to be supplied once and used in many ways e.g. hotline, web and mobile. ICT work closely with Children's Services and Rob Reid [?] to identify a viable solution e.g. neighbouring authorities, specialist suppliers, and customised generic services. The SMS solution should be a corporate tool as the statistics clearly show that the public require timely as well as accurate information for not only school closures but other service areas such as transport (e.g. road usage and buses), refuse and recycling, public spaces e.g. libraries (but could also be clinics), and bus timetables. One option would be to consider the Emergency Planning team as the business sponsor for this piece of work.
4. Utilise social networking sites such as twitter and facebook to distribute the information as widely as possible and as soon as possible and seek to engage social media enterprises with open data sets e.g. gritting routes & mappa-mercia.
5. Put a link to the BBC local radio school closures on the website, as a related link.

Appendix I – external assessment of information on website

Socitm carried out a structured survey of the websites of the 121 subscribers to the Socitm Website take-up service (Herefordshire Council is a subscriber) to see how they were publishing information about service disruptions during the snow and ice in the first two weeks of January. The results for the Herefordshire Council website are in blue below.

Questions about website

- Q1 Does the homepage contain a link or statement about service disruptions due to current weather situation? (Yes/No)
Yes
- Q2 Is a graphic used to highlight this information? (Yes/No)
Yes
- Q3 How is the information being provided? (0-nothing found, 1-news release only, 2-dedicated webpage, 3-several refs on home page, v comprehensive)
3
- Q4 Which services are highlighted as being disrupted?
- 4a Library closures? (Yes/No) No
- 4b Refuse & recycling collections? (Yes/No) Yes
- 4c Road gritting information? (Yes/No) Yes
- 4d School closures? (Yes/No) Yes
- 4e Services for older people (meals on wheels / day care centres)?
(Yes/No) No
- 4f Something else? (please state in Q6) (Yes/No) No
- Q5 Rate how effectively you think this council is promoting service disruption information? (0-none found, 1-poor, 2-satisfactory, 3-very good)
2
- Q6 What comments do you have to make about what you have found? -
Number of news releases. Not just one, but no dedicated page.
At the content page for the first service named in Q4.
- Q7 Does the service description page refer to current service disruption information (ref what's on the home page)?
No

Questions about Twitter

Q8 Does the home page include a link to Twitter? (Yes/No)

No

The council website does not link to Twitter so the following questions are all negative.

Q9 Am I encouraged to follow Tweets for service disruption information? (Yes/No)

Click the Twitter link and check the feed.

Q10 How long ago was the last Tweet posted? (Hours)

Q11 How long ago was the last Tweet about disruption to service posted? (Hours)

Q12 Is there any evidence that the council is actively engaging with Twitter users (eg. a message acknowledging Twitter users, a reply to an individual) (Yes/No)

Q13 How many followers does the Twitter account have? (Hours)

Q14 What comments do you have to make about what you have found?

Questions about Facebook

Q15 Does the council homepage include a link to Facebook? (Yes/No)

No

The council website does not link to Facebook so the following questions are all negative.

Q16 Am I encouraged to visit Facebook for service disruption information?

Click the Facebook link and check the news feed or wall.

Q17 How long ago was the last entry posted by the council? (Hours)

Q18 How long ago was the last entry about disruption to service posted? (Hours)

Q19 Is there any evidence of Facebook users interacting with the Council (e.g. responding to updates by leaving comments on the 'wall') (Yes/No)

Q20 Is the Facebook presence a 'page' rather than a 'group'? (pages have 'fans', groups have 'members') (Yes/No)

Q21 How many 'fans' or 'members' does it have?

Q22 What comments do you have to make about what you have found?

Overview

Q23 How do you rate this council? (1- poor, 2- satisfactory, 3-very good)

1

Q24 Please note any further comments or innovations

Just press releases really - high 1 or low 2.

Response from the Communications Unit

What went well?

The multi agency silver group had regular teleconferences which provided a daily update on weather conditions and challenges faced by partners and emergency services. This informed regular communication updates and media statements.

Regular updates on schools, roads and services were forwarded to council and primary care trust employees and elected members by the communications team.

Highways personnel were available for media interviews in the early hours and in difficult conditions, and this helped to reassure public. Head of Communications available for early morning radio interviews or press briefings to update on progress

Flow of information from Amey on road conditions was good – although we needed more detail on actual roads and their exact location

BBC commended the council on its responsiveness and quality of information, and the BBC put extra resources in to keep residents informed – but there is an over reliance on the BBC to do this

The Hereford Times web site willingly accepted updates from the council and provided another source of information for residents

Emergency information line up and running and effective when needed – voluntary staff were dependable and there was good working between that unit and communications team

Regular Silver meetings with all agencies enabled the council and others to share and provide much more information and advice to residents

Great sense of community in some parts and the volunteer 4X4 drivers provided a vital service

Good relationships with local press helped to secure positive coverage for the council and primary care trust efforts in the main

What did not go well?

BBC Hereford & Worcester are understandably concerned with having to read out on air long lists of schools closed or open. The quantity of information, and

how it flows in from individual schools, is difficult to process and package quickly for media at the time it is most needed (between 6 and 8am each morning).

Advice changed from schools closed to schools open, and then back to schools closed which made it difficult to package information and avoid confusion

The sheer volume of public queries on refuse collection made life difficult for info line

Met Office forecasts were often inaccurate for Herefordshire, which made it a challenge to plan resources and predict the nature of media attention

Residents and media could not understand why some schools open but school bus services not running. The focus on primary routes by Amey was regularly explained but not always accepted by residents.

Although it was widely reported that we were experiencing the worst weather conditions for 30 years, it was difficult to get this across to residents who would compare winter conditions and response services this year with last

The Safer Roads Camera Safety Partnership sometimes put out their own advice that conflicted with ours (which was picked up by media on one occasion)

What improvements you think could be made?

The new web-based, self registration system for schools to contribute to directly, will present a single source of regularly updated information for residents, employees, the communications team and local media.

More resources could be made available to update quickly information of importance to residents on the council's web site (currently it happens but is overly dependent on communications team and their being available in the office from very early each morning to collect data, issue press releases, respond to media enquiries, communicate with staff and members and update the web site – usually there is one person doing all this from 6 to 9am throughout the period of extreme weather)

More information could be gleaned from other groups – such as the voluntary 4X4 drivers who had good experience of local conditions

What relevant policies are in place?

Communications protocols, principles and values governing how we work with media

Business continuity plans – but these did not specifically prepare for the severity of weather conditions experienced

Major incident response plans and the local resilience plan

Whether any reviews have already been undertaken at service level of policies or service delivery arrangements or are proposed and whether any action plans have already been put in place to generate improvement.

A new web-based, self registration system for schools will present a single source of regularly updated information and will be piloted in time for adverse weather later in the year.

Any other observations you consider the Committee needs to take into account

The protracted period of extreme weather resulted in sustained pressure on individuals, over a three week period including weekends, that perhaps needs to be managed for next time

Response by the Joint Emergency Planning Unit**MULTI-AGENCY SILVER GROUP**

1. General. The Major Incident Response Plan was not activated. That said, the Multi-Agency Silver Group, chaired by West Mercia Police's Superintendent Purcell, met a number of times a day (as appropriate and including the weekends) via tele-conference. These tele-conferences enabled a cohesive and coordinated response from the County's responders, being facilitated and administered by the Joint Emergency Planning Unit (JEPU). Representatives were:
 - a. Local Authority – Highways & Contractor, JEPU, Schools & Media.
 - b. Provider Services.
 - c. HHT Operations Director
 - d. ASC
 - e. Police
 - f. Fire
 - g. WMAS
 - h. Primecare OOH
 - i. Patient First – Non Acute patient Transport
2. What Went Well. Partnership and multi-agency working, through the Silver Group, was both effective and synergistic. Moreover, the JEPU received laudatory comment from Superintendent Purcell.
3. What Improvements Could Be Made. Whilst the role of the Silver Group was to coordinate the priorities of the multi-agencies to ensure these agencies needs were known and addressed, the process could be improved by detailing 'priorities' as a specific agenda item. In turn, the JEPU would produce an agreed and visible prioritisation of tasks available to multi-agencies. This priority list could encompass details such as road clearance, actions surrounding school closures and access to key infrastructure, such as GP surgeries.
4. What Relevant Policies Are In Place.
 - a. Respective organisations' Major Incident Response Plans.
 - b. The Herefordshire Multi-Agency Silver Group Activation Plan – published and maintained by the JEPU.
5. Whether Any Reviews Have Already Been Undertaken At Service Level Of Policies Or Service Delivery Arrangements Or Are Proposed And Whether Any Action Plans Have Already Been Put In Place To Generate Improvement. The JEPU have produced an overarching multi-agency Major Incident Plan (applicable to police, NHS, council etc) to make sure we have a shared understanding of the policy and all know what the other should be doing in a major incident. The aim of this plan is to provide a framework to enable Herefordshire's Multi-Agencies (including Herefordshire Council and NHS Herefordshire) to carry out their responsibilities in dealing with an emergency or major incident. Whatever the cause of a disaster or emergency, the range of actions which will be required of the County's Multi Agencies will follow these generic arrangements. Under

this document will be annexes pertinent to specific areas (ie, PCT, HHT, Council). The overarching document and most of the annexes are in draft form and, pending completion of the HHT annex, will be distributed for comment.

COUNTY VOLUNTARY EMERGENCY COMMITTEE – 4x4 RESPONSE

6. General. Herefordshire 4x4 Response Group is a registered member of the National 4x4 Response Network. There are currently 26 volunteer groups around the UK that are involved in helping the country's emergency services and local community. The Herefordshire Volunteer 4x4 Group offer assistance to Emergency Services, Herefordshire Council and the residents of the County by providing all-terrain vehicles and advanced off road driving capabilities across uneven terrain, flooded roads and to other areas inaccessible to most vehicles. The Response Group voluntarily provided support 24 hours a day. Similarly, St John provided a limited 4x4 capability when available, alongside Primecare (Out of Hours), whose vehicles and drivers were made available inside core working hours, and Patient First. The British Red Cross provided additional patient transport at weekends, allowing the HHT to discharge or transfer patients, therefore make hospital beds available.
7. What Went Well. Vehicle support was coordinated through the JEPUs allowing these County Voluntary Emergency Committee (CVEC) organisations and Primecare to provide transportation of essential staff for the County's Community Hospitals, HHT, District Nurses and Mental Health.
8. What Did Not Go Well. It was considered that some journeys undertaken were not justified when taking in to account factors such as priority, location, distance, road conditions and access to alternative transport. Moreover, some staff took it for granted that this limited capability would be made available and did not actively pursue self help.
9. What Improvements Could Be Made.
 - a. The requesting organisations should establish key information to pass to JEPUs and volunteer services to allow a coordinated and tailored response, reducing the number of journeys undertaken.
 - b. Business Continuity Plans across The Partnership should incorporate a contingency for severe winter weather and contain a questionnaire template to confirm the need for a journey.
10. What Relevant Policies Are In Place. CVEC Plan – published and maintained by the JEPUs.
11. Whether Any Reviews Have Already Been Undertaken At Service Level Of Policies Or Service Delivery Arrangements Or Are Proposed And Whether Any Action Plans Have Already Been Put In Place To Generate Improvement.
 - a. As there is no dedicated 4x4 plan that allows future operations to be organised in line with the lessons identified and best practice, the JEPUs need to improve the 4x4 Volunteer Group details within the CVEC Plan.
 - b. Highways should include the 4x4 Volunteer Group on the distribution list for road conditions. When passed, this information allows the response group to plan their

routes. Also, they have real-time experience of roads which could be used in the updates.

SURGE INFORMATION LINE¹.

12. General. As the snow impacted on the people of Herefordshire, the JEPU activated the Surge Information Line (SIL), based at the Brockington Annex, in accordance with the guidance contained within the Council's existing Major Incident Response Plan. Activation of the SIL prevents disruption to existing switchboards and can be requested by multi-agency partners. The SIL, operated on a single dedicated number (publicised on local media) and manned by volunteers, provided:
 - a. A public telephone information service, largely relating to school and road closures along with public transport disruption.
 - b. Accurate and up to date information to all callers.
13. What Went Well. Without the willingness of volunteer staff from within the Council and PCT, many critical services within the County would have been disrupted.
14. What Improvements Could Be Made. Without Council and PCT volunteer staff, the SIL facility would not have been available. Yet, there is not a HR policy for those partner employees wishing to volunteer to respond during an emergency/incident; confusion exists on issues such as budget reimbursement, TOIL and pay.
15. What Relevant Policies Are In Place. SIL Activation Guidance and rota – published and maintained by the JEPU.

{Brief prepared by Erica Hermon, Emergency Planning Manager}

¹ Previously known as the Emergency Information Line.

