

MEETING:	CABINET
DATE:	16 SEPTEMBER 2010
TITLE OF REPORT:	WINTER WEATHER DECEMBER 2009 – FEBRUARY 2010 AND THE RESPONSE TO IT
PORTFOLIO AREA:	ENVIRONMENT & STRATEGIC HOUSING

CLASSIFICATION: Open.

Wards Affected

County-wide.

Purpose

To respond to the 'Scrutiny Review of the Impact of Winter Weather December 2009 – February 2010 and the Response to it'.

Key Decision

This is not a key decision.

Recommendation(s)

THAT:

- (a) The Committee be thanked for undertaking a comprehensive review and producing an excellent report;**
- (b) The Executive joins with the Committee in recognising and commending the considerable efforts made in response to the winter problems;**
- (c) All thirty recommendations be agreed and implemented within existing budgetary provision.**

Key Points Summary

- The Overview and Scrutiny Committee considered that there are some local considerations that it could bring to the Executive's attention and invite them to consider. It believes that these may well supplement or complement the findings of a national review. These are reproduced in the Action Plan at Appendix 1.

Further information on the subject of this report is available from Paul Nicholas
Assistant Director Public Health on Tel: (01432) 260543

Alternative Options

- 1 There are no alternative options. However, Cabinet may wish to amend the proposals or agree additional actions for our Winter Weather Plan.

Reasons for Recommendations

- 2 To ensure that lessons learned, which should improve service provision during any future episode of disruption, are acted upon.

Introduction and Background

- 3 Prolonged, severe weather disrupted service delivery and impacted upon communities across the County. The Executive requested that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee conduct a review of the impact of the severe winter weather on communities in the County and across the public services and the response of those services to the situation to identify good practice and support future improvement.

Key Considerations

- 4 The Committee met on 21 May 2010 and considered written and verbal contributions.

Prior to the meeting, the Committee had sought written information on what went well, what did not go well, what improvements respondents thought could be made, what relevant policies are in place, and, whether any reviews had already been undertaken at service level of policies or service delivery arrangements or were proposed and whether any action plans have already been put in place to generate improvement. Any other observations were invited that the Committee needed to take into account.

Although the principal and initial focus of the review related to the transport network (gritting, road maintenance etc) the Committee invited information on the financial implications, legal implications, school closures, public transport and waste collection and any impact on health and social care provision.

Details of the scope of the review are contained within the Report at Appendix 1. There are many areas of activity that occurred across the range of services that Herefordshire Public Services provide, and provided during the period in question, that have not been highlighted in the report. There were many areas of success involving provision of service in some very difficult conditions and by working in partnership that have not necessarily been captured but nevertheless should be commended. This is particularly the case with respect to the delivery of health and social care services.

Subsequent to the Executive's request to the Committee to undertake this review, a national review was being undertaken of the transport industry's response to the winter weather. The aim was to identify practical measures to improve the response of the transport sector – road, rail and air, to severe winter weather. That review is to report in two phases: by July 2010, identifying and reporting on measures that can be implemented relatively quickly in preparation for winter 2010/11, and reporting in Autumn 2010 with a longer term view of preparedness for severe winter weather in future years and measures that can improve future resilience. The Phase One report has been published and relevant recommendations incorporated into the Winter Service Plan 2010/11.

A key element of the Executive's view on the subject of planning for and responding to adverse weather is how the organisation identifies and looks after vulnerable members of the community. This is particularly relevant to those who, ordinarily, are not in a vulnerable situation but become vulnerable because of the effects of severe weather. Encouragement to communities to organise and help themselves plus negotiating a way through perceived or actual red tape, are key strands of activity.

Thirty recommendations were made by OSC many of which either had already been actioned or were in the process of being considered. Lead Officers have confirmed that these actions can be implemented within existing resources. There are many other activities, not highlighted in the review, that the organisation is already undertaking (see Appendix 2). Any useful suggestion will, of course, be considered for its reasonableness, impact and value.

Community Impact

- 5 Implementation of the recommendations will make a positive contribution to the way communities are dealt with and deal with disruptions caused by severe weather such as snow and ice.

Financial Implications

- 6 Actions associated with the recommendations will be resourced with available resources from existing organisational budgets.

Legal Implications

- 7 None.

Risk Management

- 8 Whilst the response last Winter was regarded as good, failure to learn lessons would place the organisation in a position where reputationally, at least, it would be at risk.

Consultees

- 9 None.

Appendices

- 10 Appendix 1 – Scrutiny Report
Appendix 2 - Action plan

Background Papers

- Scrutiny Review of the Impact of Winter Weather December 2009 – February 2010 and the Response to it' – Overview and Scrutiny Committee – 21 May 2010, Published 2 July 2010.
- Winter Service Plan 2010/11.