

MEETING:	OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
DATE:	27 SEPTEMBER 2010
TITLE OF REPORT:	SCRUTINY REVIEW OF THE IMPACT OF THE WINTER WEATHER AND THE RESPONSE TO IT - EXECUTIVE'S RESPONSE
REPORT BY:	ASSISTANT DIRECTOR – PUBLIC HEALTH

CLASSIFICATION: Open

Wards Affected

County-wide

Purpose

To consider Cabinet's response to the recommendations made to it in the Scrutiny Review of the impact of the winter weather and the response to it.

Recommendation(s)

THAT:

- (a) **Cabinet's response to the findings of the review of the impact of the winter weather and the response to it be noted, subject to any comments which the Committee wishes to make;**

and

- (b) **a further report on progress in response to the Review be made after six months with consideration then being given to the need for any further reports to be made.**

Alternative Options

- 1 The Committee can accept the Executive's response or submit comments to the Executive as it sees fit.

Introduction and Background

2. In July 2010 this Committee approved the findings of the Scrutiny Review of the impact of the winter weather and the response to it.

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

3. The Committee agreed that the Executive's response to the Review including an action plan be reported to the first available meeting of the Committee after the Executive had approved its response.
4. Cabinet considered its response to the findings on 16 September 2010. The report to Cabinet setting out the response to the Review is appended. Cabinet agreed the recommendations as set out in the report with the additional recommendation that the Government be lobbied to provide clarity and legislation on the responsibility for snow and ice clearance for individuals and businesses. An action plan is appended.
5. Members will be aware that the Winter Service Plan needs to be approved in sufficient time to enable appropriate preparations to be made. This meant that approval by the Cabinet Member (Highways and Transportation) is expected to take place in advance of this meeting. The approved Winter Service Plan will be circulated separately to Members of the Committee for reference and will be available to the public on the Council's website or on request.
6. In view of the tight timescale for finalising and approving the Plan, to accommodate this Committee's recommendation (recommendation L of the review) that the proposed Winter Service Plan for 2010/11 should be the subject of pre-decision scrutiny, Councillors Bowen, Edwards and Watts, who had originally been authorised by the Committee to finalise the Committee's review report, met informally with the Highways Network Manager.
7. Members were particularly keen to clarify with the Highways Network Manager the extent to which the Plan addressed the concern set out in recommendation L and whether the Priority Routes had been amended to take account of Committee's view that there was scope to extend at least some priority routes to some schools and sheltered housing facilities and urban estate roads.
8. The Highways Network Manager advised that whilst minor amendments only had been made to the priority routes, he considered that the Plan did address the Committee's concerns. He explained that this has been achieved through a number of detailed revisions to the Winter Service Plan, clarifying the extent of treatment beyond the priority routes in more severe or prolonged periods of winter weather; developing opportunities for self help in the community; and through setting out clear levels of service to which the highway service can deliver given the forecast conditions and the availability of resources.
9. Members also emphasised the following points to the Highways Network Manager:
 - the need for assurance that the Communications Strategy was being revised to take account of concerns highlighted during the Scrutiny Review.
 - the potential damage to the Council's reputation that outdated material on the website presented, recognising the importance of ensuring that out of date material on the website is removed as soon as possible and no later than several days before the first of a series of planned Winter Service Awareness Events.
 - support for recommendation q of the review relating to the plan to explore the possibility of partners making a financial contribution to gritting of hospital entrances and the frontages of key emergency service premises and the gritting of pavements with a view to reducing demand on acute care in severe events as a direct result of increased levels of preventative treatment of footways in busier urban areas.
 - the planned measures to encourage self-help in the community were welcome.

10. Members also sought and received clarification on a range of other issues including:
- that the treatment of the bus stops located at Tesco's Hereford City Centre store will be subject to the available resources and the prevailing conditions and sustained treatment will inevitably be compromised without the cooperation and financial support of the store.
 - the scope for Hereford Hospital to be far more proactive in clearing its surroundings, noting that the WSP provided for gritting of access to the County Hospital, including off-highway vehicular access to and from the accident and emergency department; and
 - that whilst there is a cross border working arrangement with each neighbouring county, it was intended to seek to confirm the commitment to treat each others' routes in formal agreements.

Appendices

Report to Cabinet on 16 September – Winter Weather December 2009 – February 2010 The response to it

Background Papers

- None identified.