

HAMPSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL**Decision Report**

Decision Maker:	Cabinet
Date:	26 July 2010
Title:	Update regarding Scrutiny Review of Severe Winter Weather experienced in Hampshire in 2009/10
Reference:	1922
Report From:	Policy & Resources Select Committee

Contact name: Marie Mannveille, Scrutiny Officer

Tel: 01962 845018

Email: marie.mannveille@hants.gov.uk

1. Executive Summary

1.1. The purpose of this paper is to update Cabinet on the progress of the review of the severe winter weather experienced in Hampshire in 2009/10 being undertaken by the Policy & Resources Select Committee following the request made by Cabinet at its 25 January 2010 meeting.

2. Contextual information

2.1. Hampshire experienced the most severe winter for many years in 2009/10, and following this, various recommendations were agreed by Cabinet on 25 January 2010 in order to strengthen our responsiveness in future. At this time, Cabinet extended an invitation to the Policy & Resources Select Committee to lead and coordinate a strategic review of the County Council's response to the severe winter weather.

2.2. The Policy & Resources Select Committee agreed this topic would benefit from an in-depth scrutiny review, and decided to put on hold their planned work programme for this year to prioritise consideration of the severe winter weather. A review group was formed, and met in February to agree the terms of reference for the review (attached at Appendix 1).

3. Review Progress

3.1. Relevant stakeholders were identified and contacted, inviting their written feedback to the key questions the review panel posed. The review panel also wrote to all County Councillors, inviting their feedback regarding experiences in the area they represent.

- 3.2. Members of the review group were provided with information regarding the national context for winter service issues and Hampshire County Council's current policies.
- 3.3. Oral Evidence Select Committee style sessions were arranged to provide the review group with the opportunity to explore the issues raised in the written evidence with key stakeholders. An oral evidence day was held on 7 June to which County Councillors were invited to discuss their views further with the review panel. Sessions were also held on 17 and 21 June, to which representatives from Hampshire County Council departments and external partner agencies were invited.
- 3.4. A broad range of stakeholders have contributed to this review, including health services, emergency services, district & borough councils, parish councils, farmers representatives, business representatives and the voluntary sector. All the stakeholders who have provided feedback, and those who attended the oral evidence sessions, are listed at Appendix 2.
- 3.5. Plans to obtain specific feedback from District and Borough Councils were revised when the conference on winter pressures initially planned by the County Council was postponed due to the general election. The review panel therefore wrote to the Leader and Chief Executive of each District and Borough Council to invite them to provide evidence to the review. A number responded with written feedback and a representative from Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council attended one of the oral evidence sessions.
- 3.6. Throughout this process the Policy & Resources Select Committee has taken careful note of further work in this area being taken forward by the County Council as well as other Local Authorities and agencies in Hampshire, in order to avoid overlap and duplication.

4. Key Themes Emerging

- 4.1. Overall the evidence indicates that the services provided by the County Council were responsive, flexible and effective. There was also a significant amount of support for the steps already taken by Hampshire County Council (e.g. provision of extra grit bins). Stakeholders gave various examples of practice that worked well and identified a number of areas where there may be opportunities to further improve responsiveness. Key themes emerging from the evidence to date include:
 - Access was a recurrent issue, with concern raised regarding the extent to which the current priority 1 gritting routes enable access to schools, health service facilities and main public transport links.
 - The use of 4x4 vehicles and trained drivers came up frequently as a mechanism to ensure services could be maintained when some minor roads were not able to be gritted.
 - Several stakeholders suggested further use be made of farmers and large landowners to assist with gritting minor roads as well as clearing snow.

- Good partnership working among agencies was reported in many circumstances however it was indicated there are opportunities to further improve communications with partners, including District and Parish Councils and the Highways Agency.
 - It also became clear that it is important for local people and organisations in Hampshire to be aware of the responsibilities and priorities of Local Authorities at times of severe weather events. There was some confusion for example over the responsibility for, and priority of, clearance of car parks and pavements.
- 4.2. The review group will be considering opportunities to respond to the issues raised through the review report and supporting recommendations. This will take account of work already underway in relation to the winter service.

5. Future direction

- 5.1. The review group will now carefully consider the written and oral evidence received, and set out their findings in a full report. This will include recommendations regarding areas that could be explored to further improve Hampshire's responsiveness to severe winter conditions in future.
- 5.2. It is anticipated that the final report of the review group will be presented to Cabinet at its 27 September 2010 meeting.

6. Recommendation(s)

- 6.1. That the progress with the scrutiny review of the severe winter weather experienced in 2009/10 to date be noted and the final report of the Policy and Resources Select Committee be received by Cabinet on 27 September 2010.

CORPORATE OR LEGAL INFORMATION:**Links to the Corporate Strategy**

Hampshire safer and more secure for all:	yes
Corporate Improvement plan link number (if appropriate):	
Maximising well-being:	yes
Corporate Improvement plan link number (if appropriate):	
Enhancing our quality of place:	yes
Corporate Improvement plan link number (if appropriate):	

Other Significant Links

Links to previous Member decisions:		
<u>Title</u> Review of Winter Maintenance Arrangements 2009-10	<u>Reference</u> 1250	<u>Date</u> 25 January 2010

Section 100 D - Local Government Act 1972 - background documents

The following documents discuss facts or matters on which this report, or an important part of it, is based and have been relied upon to a material extent in the preparation of this report. (NB: the list excludes published works and any documents which disclose exempt or confidential information as defined in the Act.)

DocumentLocation

None

IMPACT ASSESSMENTS:

1. Equalities Impact Assessment:

1.1. n/a

2. Impact on Crime and Disorder:

2.1. n/a

3. Climate Change:

a) How does what is being proposed impact on our carbon footprint / energy consumption?

n/a

b) How does what is being proposed consider the need to adapt to climate change, and be resilient to its longer term impacts?

This report provides an update on a review of Hampshire's resilience to severe winter weather. It is acknowledged that due to climate change, severe weather may occur more frequently in future, therefore the County Council needs to take steps to ensure that its processes are robust enough to ensure, as far as is reasonably practicable, that the County Council supports Hampshire to be resilient to severe winter weather.