

## **Review of the Severe Winter Weather Experienced in 2009/10**

### **Oral Evidence Day – 7 June 2010: County Council Members**

#### **Review Group Members in Attendance**

Cllr Keith Chapman (Chairman)

Cllr Keith Evans (Vice Chairman)

Cllr Sharyn Wheale

Cllr Bruce Tennent

Cllr Adrian Collett (arrived part way through)

Cllr Pat West – apologies

#### **Oral Evidence Received:**

##### **Cllr Peter Mason (Bishops Waltham)**

Considered the response by the County Council worked well over all. However, he did receive a number of calls from residents of Durley who couldn't get to the main road. Durley did not have any grit bins at the time. (Durley have now taken up the offer from the County Council and requested grit bins)

He reported in some cases where there were grit bins, grit had been taken for personal use.

He indicated that when he reported a grit bin was empty, it was refilled the next day.

He offered a suggestion by a Parish Council that grit be kept in a locked container, with Parish Council representatives to hold the keys and control its use, to ensure it was used on the roads as intended (rather than private driveways).

Reported that where there are grit bins, located in strategic places, e.g. Colden Common, this helped.

When asked if he was aware of elderly residents not being able to leave their homes he reported he was not aware this was a problem in his area.

##### **Cllr Mark Kemp-Gee (Alton Rural)**

Gave statistics for East Hampshire e.g. that it included 14% of Hampshire's road length and 8% of the population. He indicated that his division is a wide area, mostly rural, with only approximately 50km of A roads. He also reported that the highest point in Hampshire is adjacent to his division, and that bad weather hits the high ground in East Hampshire when coming down from the North East, therefore East Hampshire was badly hit this winter.

Suggested when bad weather is predicted, that resources are flexible enough so that areas that are less affected could provide aid to those worst hit. He suggested better planning may be required in relation to the positioning of resources.

Welcomed extra grit bins planned.

Suggested that farmers who currently plough snow for the County Council could be used more, especially in rural areas. (to help with gritting B roads, so this could be done more quickly, without the County Council needing a large number of vehicles for this in-house)

Indicated that some B roads carry a lot of traffic, in some cases more than the A roads. Reported East Hampshire has its share of traffic, as people drive through it to get to other areas.

Suggests Parishes know local black spots, and could link with farmers e.g. to assist with gritting hills.

Raised issue of legal indemnity for those clearing snow or ice in public areas.

Raised issue of Red Diesel (farmers are allowed to use this cheaper form of fuel in specific situations) and fact that if farmers were to grit on behalf of the County Council, they would need confirmation that they would have exemption for using it.

When asked about issues in urban areas, he reported that getting children to school was a problem, as people may need to travel from various locations to get to the school.

#### **Cllr Jenny Radley** (Church Crookham and Ewshot)

Appreciated the opportunity to give evidence, and gave credit to the Highways Maintenance Staff for the work they did.

Reported that a common issue was the smaller roads not being cleared, meaning residents couldn't get out to the roads which were cleared.

Indicated that abandoned cars caused a problem, as it meant others could then not get past.

Indicated that a Parish Council was sourcing grit bins to help for when this happens again.

Reported people parking their cars on roads that were gritted (instead of minor roads which weren't) but that this had a knock on problem that the roads were narrower and therefore harder for the grit lorries to pass through. Suggested providing advice to the public regarding responsible parking in severe weather may help in future.

Suggested guidance would be useful regarding use of grit bins, and guidance for the public regarding what other simple measures they could take to help themselves.

Suggested it was important to identify areas with high numbers of elderly residents, and school access routes.

Reported parents were frustrated with school closures and access issues. Reported schools were left to their own devices in relation to clearing their own sites, and that in some cases school governors arranged working parties to help clear school grounds.

Need for clear advice to people regarding clearing areas near their property (though some did so anyway). She personally cleared an area near her house used by a school crossing patrol, and some passers by warned her it was risky to do so.

Un-even snow and ice on pavements was difficult for push chairs. Some resourceful parents pulled children to school on sledges, however in some cases this caused back problems.

In relation to schools in her area, she reported that most were good at doing daily updates for the web and local radio, however there were 1 or 2 who could be encouraged to do more. She agreed it may help to encourage schools to have a formal policy to plan for severe weather events.

When asked if there were issues with elderly residents, she indicated that for the most part people looked out for their neighbours.

### **Cllr Frederick Allgood (Winchester Southern Parishes)**

Reported there were particular problems in Whitely (just off the M27), as there is only one road from an industrial estate to Junction 9 of the motorway. This was particularly bad on 7<sup>th</sup> January 2010. Reported he was contacted by people who work for National Air Traffic Services which is based on this site, who couldn't get out of the car park. He contacted the Area South Highways Team to request their help, only to discover their gritters were stuck in traffic and couldn't get to the road in question to help. Reported an emergency route out of the estate was opened which helped ease the situation. Also referred to the fact the access to the motorway is up an incline, and groups of people helped push cars up the hill.

Indicated that overall the County Council did a good job on the main roads. Suggested that beyond that it is mostly up to people to help themselves, and that more grit bins may have helped.

Raised issue of unadopted roads on new estates, where the developer has not yet handed them over to the County Council, so the County Council does not undertake any maintenance or gritting. Suggested the County Council could do more to influence or apply pressure to the developers, to either provide services themselves on roads they are responsible for, or speed up the process by which the County adopts the roads from them (commonly takes 2 or 3 years). Suggested that with increased housing development, this could be an increased problem in future years.

Highlighted example given in written evidence where request to Highways was responded to, which enabled a chain of house moves to take place during the severe weather.

In relation to elderly residents, he reported that this was an issue in some cases, particularly where houses have long drives. Reported that neighbours helped each other clear their drives. Reported that sheltered accommodation was looked after by the District council/ voluntary sector.

### **Cllr Edward Heron (Fordingbridge)**

Reported that the District Council provided staff to the County Council to help with gritting e.g. waste collection staff. However, they had to manually grit their own carparks, which took time. If the car park had been done quickly by a County gritter, they could have got to clearing the pavements, as requested by the County Council, quicker. Suggested the response worked well generally, although there was potential to plan a bit better how organisations work together.

Suggested biggest concern was what would have happened if the severe weather had gone on any longer. The elderly who try to be self sufficient, who are not known to us, were getting to the point where they could not cope. As they don't normally access our services, they would not necessarily know what to do when they needed help. Suggests the local Parish Council would be best placed to

be aware of these residents, and to encourage them to come forward, and point them to who they could speak to if needed.

Reported that there are many large landowners and farmers in his area who did a lot of work, but could have done more. Suggested they could do more, to assist communities to help themselves.

Indicated rural residents accept their roads can't be covered by the County Council. If had access to gritters and grit to spread, the farmers could do more, to help rural areas help themselves, though he raised the issue of farmers being insured to grit.

Reported rural schools accepted it was unlikely they would be able to open.

When questioned regarding landowners other than farmers providing assistance, he reported there were examples where large landowners had been helpful. Reported that he didn't think they had been in contact with the County Council, but had just got on with it voluntarily.

Issue raised of clearing snow and not gritting potentially making the situation worse (if the cleared area then freezes).

In relation to schools having an adverse weather plan, he indicated his impression was that their response was rather ad hoc on this occasion. He commented that whatever plans were prepared, if the weather is particularly severe they will still need to close.