

RURAL, ECONOMIC AND ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

16 MARCH 2011

REPORT OF THE HEAD OF COMMUNITIES & NEIGHBOURHOODS

RESPONDING TO SEVERE WEATHER CONDITIONS

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 To approve a Service Level Agreement between the Council and Leicestershire County Council for the provision of labour in exchange for salt and spreading equipment during Severe Weather conditions and to seek approval from members for the Melton Severe Weather Procedure.

2.0 RECOMMENDATION

- 2.1 That members approve the joint 'Gritting Service Level Agreement' attached as Appendix D
- 2.2 That members note the Melton Severe Weather Procedure

3.0 KEY ISSUES

- 3.1 Members will recall the severe weather conditions experienced during the winter of 2009/10. Whilst the level of snow and ice and its geographical coverage was noted as generally being extraordinary there are predictions suggesting that this could become 'normal' in future years. The winter of 2009/10 and that of 2008/9 which was also particularly harsh followed a number of relatively mild and stable winters. This tested the ability of many local authorities to respond with an increase in their winter maintenance programmes (snow clearing, salting and gritting).
- 3.2 Earlier this year, Leicestershire County Council's established a Scrutiny Panel to review the winter maintenance service provided by the County Council. The district councils in Leicestershire also undertook their own scrutiny reviews to feed into the County Scrutiny Panel.
- 3.3 We held our own Overview and Scrutiny Workshop on the 26 May 2010 to consider the circumstances witnessed in Melton and to identify how we could respond positively in the future. To inform our own scrutiny we consulted Parish Councils in March 2010 (copy of the comments received are attached at **Appendix A**). The findings of our scrutiny workshop were made available to the County Council Scrutiny Panel (minutes of Melton Overview and Scrutiny Workshop held on the 26 May 2010 attached as **Appendix B**). The findings of our own scrutiny workshop were:
- Better communication of roles is needed;
 - Consideration should be given to updating the 'plan' for a response to severe weather;
 - Consideration should be given to increasing 'grit bins' in the rural and town areas;
 - The role of snow wardens in the parishes was seen as crucial; and
 - A formal arrangement between the Borough and County Council for sharing staff and grit should be pursued.

- 3.4 Leicestershire County Council held their Scrutiny Panel between June and August 2010. A session on the 23rd June 2010 offered an opportunity to the District Councils to participate and was attended by the Principal Policy Officer. Leicestershire County Council approved the recommendations included in the Scrutiny Panel report in September 2010 (**Appendix C**).
- 3.5 A number of the recommendations require action to be taken by the Borough Council. Most notably these include the preparation of a District Winter Maintenance Policy, a Service Level Agreement to formalise responsibilities for future winters and identification of key personnel for improved communication between agencies that are involved in responding to severe weather. Further recommendations relate to the parish councils and the snow warden scheme and provision of 'grit bins' in rural areas.
- 3.6 A number of liaison meetings have been held between officers and a 'Gritting Service level Agreement' attached as **Appendix D** has been produced setting out the following key responsibilities:
- All supplies of grit / salt for use on County highway responsible areas would be provided by Leicestershire County Council along with spreading equipment
 - The Borough Council will provide spreading equipment and bins for the storage of grit/salt to be used on Council land
- 3.7 A Melton Severe Weather Procedure has been prepared (attached as **Appendix E**). The Procedure sets out the responsibilities from the Service Level Agreement, identifies our priorities in supplementing the statutory duties of the County Council as Highways Authority and acts as signposting for the Snow Warden and 'Grit Bin' procedure of the County Council.
- 3.8 The Procedure sets out the role of the Borough Council to undertake snow clearance and salting on land and property within its ownership as well as supplement the hierarchy of locations that are the responsibility of the County Council. The first priority for Melton Borough Council will be to treat land within the ownership of the Borough Council, with a focus on that to which there is public access. Maintaining the market place and key linkages to public sites in the town centre will be the second priority. Thirdly, the Borough Council will supplement the County Councils hierarchy of salting routes where resources permit and it is practical to do so. The snow clearance and salting location priorities which are identified as benefiting the most from supplementary treatment are prioritised and detailed in Appendix A attached to the Procedure.
- 3.9 The Melton Severe Weather Procedure sets out the circumstances when the Borough Council will pre-treat and post treat in response to a severe weather event:

The Borough Council will attempt to re-deploy resources in order to pre-treat when:

- *the County Council notify us of an anticipated weather event;*
- *the Grounds Maintenance and Street Cleaning Teams are unable to undertake their normal duties; and*
- *Salt and equipment are available for the re-deployed staff to utilise.*

The Borough Council will re-deploy resources in order to post-treat when:

- *the Grounds Maintenance and Street Cleaning Teams are unable to undertake their normal duties; and*
- *Salt and equipment are available for the re-deployed staff to utilise.*

3.10 In terms of communication, the County Council have already noted that Melton already has a dedicated contact for the Melton Highways Forum; the Principal Policy Officer. The Principal Assistant-Environment has been identified as the key contact at Melton Borough Council in the event of severe weather.

4.0 POLICY AND CORPORATE IMPLICATIONS

4.1 The Melton Severe Weather Procedure will form part of our Corporate Policy Framework.

5.0 FINANCIAL AND OTHER RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

5.1 The re-deployment of staff and the materials and equipment needed to undertake salting and snow clearance can be met within existing budgets Grit/salt and equipment for use on County highway responsible areas will be provided by Leicestershire County Council. The Borough Council already uses spreading equipment and has installed bins for the storage of grit/salt to be used on Council land.

6.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS/POWERS

6.1 No direct issues have been identified.

7.0 COMMUNITY SAFETY

7.1 The production of a Severe Weather Procedure is intended to provide for safe access to and from homes to employment and shops during times of severe weather.

8.0 EQUALITIES

8.1 There are no direct equality issues.

9.0 RISKS

9.1 The joint working service development and formally structured Melton Severe Winter Procedure are expected to:

- Increase the ability of both Councils to respond to severe, extreme weather thereby reducing the risk of injury to the public; and
- Increase public confidence in winter management procedures by identifying the level of support the community can expect during periods of severe weather.


9.2 The two main risks to meeting these desired outcomes are:

Probability

Very High A				
High B				
Significant C			2	
Low D			1	
Very Low E				

Risk No.	Description
1	Insufficient materials are available
2	Weather conditions prevent staff involved in scheme from attending work

Almost Impossible F				
	IV Negligible	III Marginal	II Critical	I Catastrophic



Impact

10.0 CLIMATE CHANGE

10.1 There are no issues relating to climate change arising from this report.

11.0 CONSULTATION

11.1 The views of Parish Councils were sought for the purpose of the scrutiny workshop at Melton Borough Council. The priorities set out in the Severe Weather Procedure have been developed through the Melton Mowbray Town Centre Partnership. The Service Level Agreement has been prepared in partnership with Leicestershire County Council.

11.2 Owing to an increase in the prevalence of severe weather during this Winter period it was necessary to consult Lead Members on the Procedure and Service Level Agreement prior to this committee to allow for responsible action to be taken by officers at times of severe weather conditions.

12.0 WARDS AFFECTED

12.1 All wards are affected.

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Date: 10 January 2011

Appendices:

- A: Comments received from Parish Councils
- B: Minutes of the Melton Overview and Scrutiny Workshop of 26th May 2010
- C: Final Report of the LCC Scrutiny Review Panel on Winter Maintenance
- D: Gritting Service level Agreement
- E: Melton Severe Weather Procedure