

Appendix 1

Adverse Weather Task and Finish Review Report and Recommendations

Purpose of the review

During December 2009 and early January 2010, South Somerset, along with most of England, experienced episodes of some of the most adverse weather for decades. This included snow and prolonged periods of sub zero temperatures, leading to widespread disruption due to ice.

An initial assessment by officers of Somerset County Council on the winter salting was discussed at the Scrutiny Committee of Somerset County Council on 11 May 2010, as part of an overall review of winter salting and gritting. A member of the SSDC Scrutiny Committee was invited to attend to participate in the discussion. Cllr Tony Lock attended.

At the June meeting of the SSDC Scrutiny Committee members agreed that a Task and Finish Review should be convened to look at:

- the strategic salting routes in the district and their priority;
- communication planning and managing public expectation;
- indemnity / liabilities for clearing snow or ice

The ambition and reason for this review was to:

- ensure SSDC effectively contributed to the SCC review
- identify what, if anything, SSDC is specifically responsible for and ensure this is being done as effectively and efficiently as possible.

Contributors and Task and Finish Review Meetings

The Task and Finish group met on three occasions. The first meeting ascertained information to be sourced, the second meeting was a discussion with officers. The final meeting concluded the recommendations to be put forward to District Executive and discussed concerns of Task and Finish group members that a decision on an SSDC Car Park Winter Maintenance Policy was originally scheduled for November.

Contributors to the Task and Finish Review were:

Councillors	Officers
Sue Steele Tony Lock Ros Roderigo Cathy Bakewell	Jo Gale, Scrutiny Manager Becky Sanders, Scrutiny Manager Vega Sturgess, Strategic Director – Operations & Customer Focus Laurence Willis, Assistant Director, Environment Garry Green, Engineering and Property Services Manager Pam Harvey, Civil Contingencies and Business Continuity Manager

Process the Task and Finish Group took to conduct the review

Firstly there was a fact finding exercise which included finding information on:

- Local hospital statistics about snow/ice related injuries/accidents
- SSDC policy regarding the clearance of ice and snow
- Status of SSDC insurance and terms & conditions for staff to clear ice and snow
- Responsibilities for clearing SSDC owned car parks

- Grit bins and the removal of the grit bins in Yeovil
- Emergency planning
- Publicity and communication
- Strategic gritting routes

As a result of sourcing the information and a meeting with key officers, the Task and Finish Group members have been reassured that, amongst other points, the following actions and procedures are in place for this winter:

- An SSDC Car Park Winter Maintenance Policy is being developed which will cover the operational areas of SSDC owned public car parks and SSDC office car parks. (Due for consideration at District Executive on 7 October).
- An SSDC Corporate Severe Weather Plan is being developed (for Nov) by the Civil Contingencies Manager regarding working arrangements and responsibilities for staff during times of any severe weather including ice/snow, heatwaves and flooding.
- The grit bins were removed from car parks in Yeovil as the salt had solidified and was unusable. The bins will be relocated for the next winter.
- In addition to the Somerset County Council leaflet 'Your Guide to Winter Service in Somerset', there is likely to be further publicity to households and businesses detailing what can be done in clearing snow and ice around properties. SCC would be the lead but SSDC would have the opportunity to comment.
- Lufton Depot/Artillery Road will be added to the strategic gritting route
- Park Road, Princes Street, and Silver Street in Yeovil will also be added to the strategic gritting route to enable a safe route into Yeovil Town Centre and the Bus Station. Where logistically possible the Bus Station is also likely to be treated.
- Trigger points have been discussed for when SCC may need assistance from SSDC staff during prolonged episodes of ice or snow.
- Somerset County Council highways held an open evening for parishes on 19 August 2010. This meeting gave parish councils the opportunity to input into the SCC review of 2009/10 winter maintenance services. The invitation also gave brief legal advice about clearing snow and encouraged the parish councils to consider the purchase of grit bins which SCC would undertake to replenish with de-icing material. This meeting was very poorly attended.
- The Somerset Local Authorities Civil Contingencies Partnership will have a Severe/Extended Cold Weather Plan in place for this winter.

Conclusions

The Task and Finish Group concluded that there are procedures in place, where practicable, for the coming winter. However it was acknowledged that the supply of salt was still under the control of the Salt Cell and may limit, or impact upon, any actions to be taken. They also noted that there needed to be clear communication to the public during times of ice and snow, including the role of the Salt Cell. Information regarding SSDC's liabilities and indemnity will be included within the Car Park Winter Maintenance Policy and this includes SSDC's employer liabilities to have a winter maintenance policy in place.

Recommendations to Scrutiny Committee and District Executive

The SSDC Car Park Winter Maintenance Policy being developed which will include proposed changes to the current winter maintenance arrangements in order to increase operational efficiency and to minimise the risks associated with severe ice and snow

weather conditions. It will cover the operational areas of SSDC owned public car parks and SSDC office car parks only.

The Task and Finish Group had the opportunity to view the initial draft of the Car Park Winter Maintenance Policy document and feedback comments to the officers. Based on the draft document the Task and Finish Group make the following recommendations:

- The car parking space availability signs (the illuminated signs) should be used to indicate car parks which are closed during times of ice and snow etc.
- There should be signs in the treated/salted car parks to explain what, if any, pathways from the car park have been salted.
- There needs to be clear communication to staff and the public about the office car parks and public car parks to be treated during times of adverse weather. E.g website, local radio, and email bulletins. Email bulletins should be sent to parish clerks, other parish contacts and staff as a minimum.
- To manage public expectation clear messages need to be circulated to the public about:
 - The role of the Salt Cell
 - Limitations of the SSDC winter maintenance policy – in particular it is the salting of public car parks and not the pavements through the town centre.
 - Sources of information in times of adverse weather
- The list of car parks mentioned in the report should be further prioritised, or ranked, in preferential order of gritting. Car parks on highway gritting routes should be the higher priority.

Note:

At the time of writing this report the policy was in a draft format. At Scrutiny Committee on 5 October the final version of the policy should be published for consideration by District Executive on 7 October. Therefore it is possible that some of the above recommendations may have been incorporated into the policy.