

Winter Weather – Working Together

Policy and Strategy Committee

6th September 2011

1 Purpose of report

- 1.1 To present an interim report on the review of the Council's arrangements for dealing with severe winter weather.

2 Summary

- 2.1 The review was commissioned by Policy and Strategy Committee in January 2011 following two winters where Edinburgh experienced extreme winter weather conditions. This report sets out the results of the strategic review of winter weather preparedness including the results of an extensive public consultation and community engagement exercise. Other stakeholders including a range of Council services and key partners such as bus companies, Lothian and Borders Police, and NHS Lothian have also been involved in the review.
- 2.2 The report presents a range of costed enhancements to the Council's severe winter weather response. These improvements have been categorised into three tiers based on the level of additional resources required and the impact on Council budgets. Tier 1 involves improvements to existing provision and can be implemented at little or no cost. Tier 2 involves increasing the capacity of Council services and requires additional resources. However most of this additional expenditure can be contained within existing budgets. Tier 3 improvements would involve a step change in the way the Council responds to severe winter weather and would require significant increases in resources and costs. These additional costs could not be contained within approved budgets and are not considered to represent best value.
- 2.3 The report seeks endorsement of the proposals contained within Tiers 1 and 2.
- 2.4 This has been a very demanding and thorough piece of work and some elements of the review are not yet complete. This report seeks to address the most substantial issues, and in particular those with significant financial implications. An Action Plan identifying key

outstanding workstreams will be circulated prior to the Committee meeting and, if necessary, further reports may be presented to future meetings of the Committee.

3 Main report

3.1 Winter Weather Research

3.1.1 Edinburgh experienced two bouts of particularly severe weather in 2009/10 and 2010/11 including the coldest average daily temperatures since 1947 and the highest number of days with snow lying since the winter of 1963. The Met Office charts for Scotland showing *Mean Monthly Temperatures* and the *Number of Days with Snow Lying* are shown in Appendices 1 and 2. Both of these measures demonstrate the exceptional nature of last winter.

3.1.2 A key factor in carrying out any review of preparedness is to assess the likelihood of similar events recurring in future years. Met Office records show that the last two winters reversed a trend of nearly 10 years of milder winters. A number of sources were consulted and the outcome is that the forecast for the next winter period cannot be predicted with any certainty. Equally, it cannot be categorically stated that the following few years will not see a return of the same weather.

3.1.3 The recommended response in light of this uncertainty is to adopt flexible, low-cost solutions that can be easily mobilised in the event of severe winter weather, or demobilised in the case of a milder winter. The report illustrates that very considerable sums would be needed to achieve a level of response which would be of a different order of magnitude to the present, and this is clearly not justifiable given the relatively infrequent occurrence of very severe weather. Such investment would not constitute best value, especially in the current financial climate.

3.2 Community Engagement

A key element of the reviews has been to engage with residents, businesses and other stakeholders in order to determine:

- Perceptions of the Council's response in dealing with the events of last winter – what went well and what could be improved.
- Priorities for dealing with any future events
- Ideas for improvement
- The potential for volunteering

3.2.1 Methodology

- Residents were engaged through community groups, focus groups and the use of an online survey.
- The Project Team attended 23 positive and well attended meetings between the end of February and the beginning of June 2011. These ranged from scheduled Neighbourhood Partnership Meetings, Business

Meetings and Sub Groups to specific workshops with Community Council's, YoungEdinburgh and business organisations such as Edinburgh Federation of Small Businesses.

- An online customer survey has been available on the Council's website since 17 March 2011. The survey was finally closed on 1 July 2011 so that the results could be analysed and summarised for this report. In total, 315 people participated by completing the survey. This is considered to be a good response rate to an online survey of this nature.
- Children and Families held a department wide debrief with required changes being made to the departmental contingency plan. The Consultative Committee with Parents, which involves all Parent Council Chairs, has been encouraged to feedback into the consultation process and complete the public survey as well as notify other parents
- From May to July 2011, around 20 process-mapping sessions were carried out with a cross-section of Children and Families establishments. The staff interviewed were mainly head teachers, business managers and service support officers which provided a detailed overview of the issues faced by staff and pupils during the period. Establishments were selected to ensure representation from all neighbourhoods and services within the department.
- Feedback was gathered regarding services to vulnerable people from partner agencies via contacts within the Edinburgh Vulnerable People Working Group and Edinburgh Resilience Core Group
- Knowledge Partnership, a company specialising in consultation, recruited and facilitated twelve focus groups with members of the public, hosting one group in each of the neighbourhood partnership areas during April 2011. Two focus groups were held with customers in the following six categories:
 - Older active people
 - People living in dense/urban housing areas
 - People resident in rural areas, i.e. Almond and Pentland neighbourhoods
 - Parents of primary and secondary school children
 - People who cycle and/or use public transport
 - People who are car users.

3.2.2 Responses and issues raised

The responses from the consultees were broadly consistent. Generally, the feedback was that the Council responded well to the severe weather of last winter, particularly after the additional resources were mobilised and deployed across the city. A summary of the issues raised follows (more detail on these issues can be found in Appendix 3).

a) Information and advice

There was a strong feeling from the public that information and advice could be improved both in advance of the winter and during a severe weather period. Improved communications was high on the list of priorities for nearly all consultees.

Good communications relies on the accuracy of information and timely publication in the most appropriate formats. Customers clearly wanted to see improvements in all areas including frequent updates on school closures; road and footway treatments, salt and waste dump locations and weather alerts.

In particular, parents emphasised the need for earlier decisions on school closures so that they could make alternative child care arrangements.

Many asked for clear advice and guidance on how to help themselves including advice on potential liability issues.

It was clear that preferred means of communication varied widely across communities and age demographics and depended on the level of detail required. Many preferred to receive information via social media such as Twitter and Facebook, others relied on local radio for roads information whilst those who were elderly and housebound said that they preferred television for their information.

b) The Treatment and Clearance of Roads and Pavements

Whilst people generally accepted that it was impossible for the Council to treat all roads as a priority there were requests for additional areas to be included for priority treatment. The biggest demand was for pavement treatment, particularly for key access routes to schools, hospitals and health centres, food shops and facilities for elderly and infirm people.

Many also suggested a restoration of the by-law requiring residents and businesses to clear snow from their frontages to help the situation.

c) Salt Bins and Salt Dumps

The community salt/grit dumps and the community waste collection sites developed during December 2010 were welcomed and local availability was high on the list of issues raised. Respondents highlighted the need to replenish salt bins more frequently and prioritise locations on higher ground and steep gradients, particularly in Category 3 streets. They also requested that the Council identifies and advertises community salt dump locations in advance of the winter.

d) Use of Community Volunteers

Much attention was focused on the greater use of volunteers from the community. A number of community representatives offered to organise volunteers working to clear their local area. One third of people who responded to the online survey said that they would be prepared to volunteer and 25% actually left their contact details so that their offer could be taken up.

e) Inconsiderately Parked Cars

Participants identified inconsiderately parked or 'abandoned' cars as a problem. Many people had witnessed cars blocking bus routes and denying access to gritting or refuse collection vehicles.

f) Waste Collection

Residents emphasised the importance of providing a consistent refuse collection service. They also valued the provision of 'community waste dumps' but felt that these would benefit from being identified and publicised in advance. Many residents indicated they were unaware these existed or were unaware of the locations.

g) Vulnerable People

It is recognised that, ideally, there would be a single database holding details of all those who could be deemed "vulnerable" in the context of severe winter weather. This view was supported in the consultation. However, efforts to create such a database have proved frustrating because of the difficulty in maintaining an up to date database across the many agencies involved. Nevertheless, work continues to find a solution to this issue.

3.3 Current Winter Weather Service

The Council's current winter weather plans set out the resources and planned deployment of staff, vehicles and plant. The Council has a gritting fleet comprising 31 road gritters of varying size and 20 mini-tractors to plough and salt pavements.

The Council operates a priority system for the treatment of roads and pavements as follows:

- **56 Category 1** routes are treated first and comprise of important principal roads and major bus routes, roads to hospitals, ambulance depots and fire stations. These routes can normally be treated in 3 to 4 hours.

- 28 **Category 2** routes cover all other main roads and local arterial routes and are treated, again in 3 to 4 hours, after the Category 1 routes are safe for vehicular use.
- **Category 3** roads cover the remainder of the roads that are maintained by the Council. These 84 gritting routes are treated when no further treatment of Category 1 and 2 routes is required. This is estimated to take 12 hours.
- Outside normal working hours, (7.30am to 4.00pm Monday to Friday), Category 1 routes are prioritised for treatment during freezing conditions.

Pavements are also categorised:

- Eight Pavement **Category 1** routes cover the city centre and the high level areas in Balerno, Gilmerton and Liberton and are the first to receive treatment or pre-treatment when snow is forecast
- Pavement **Category 2** routes incorporate other central urban shopping areas and precincts, urban shopping areas along the main arterial routes and other busy pavements including routes to hospitals and schools.
- **Category 3** pavements on the remaining weather affected priority treatment routes are treated prior to the treatment of other affected pavements.
- The remainder of the weather affected pavements that are maintained by the Council are treated after the Category 1, 2 and 3 routes are safe for pedestrians.
- The eight Category 1 pavement routes are prioritised for pre-treatment when snow is forecast.
- In the event of severe winter weather the regular Road Services operations are reinforced by the re-deployment of other SfC staff, predominantly Task Force and, in extreme conditions, by the use of external contractors' staff.

3.4 Three tiers of service improvements

The Project Remit (see Appendix 4) sets out a requirement to identify three tiers of service improvements.

Tier 1 – Recommendations for improvements to existing provision at little or no additional cost

Tier 2 – Recommendations for service enhancements that will require some funding growth for more vehicles and equipment but will also focus on greater community involvement and 'self help'.

Tier 3 - Options for a 'step change' increase in service preparedness with significant increases in resources – vehicles, plant, staff and sub

contractors – to enable the Council to respond comprehensively to regular and prolonged periods of severe winter weather.

3.4.1 **Tier 1 proposals** - Improvements at little or no additional cost

Tier 1 improvements seek to consolidate the measures and best practice developed over the last two severe winters as well as incorporating lessons learnt. Much of this has now been captured and documented in winter weather plans are being developed for each Neighbourhood as well as at service and departmental level. As well as detailing the response to a severe winter weather event these plans clarify roles and responsibilities including decision-making at strategic, tactical and operational levels. Enhancements to the provision of salt for use by the public; improved communications and information; contingency arrangements for waste collection; measures to prevent or remove obstructions that restrict the passage of buses and other essential vehicles or pedestrian access (e.g. parked or abandoned cars, piles of ploughed snow at bus stops and pedestrian crossings etc...); staff training; staffing of schools; the procurement of external contractors and the identification and co-ordination of support to vulnerable people are all issues that have been addressed in detail as part of the Tier 1 improvements (see Appendix 5 for a more detailed summary).

3.4.2 **Tier 2 proposals** - Recommendations for increasing the Council's preparedness and capacity and for increasing community resilience

The Tier 2 proposals (see Appendix 6) if approved will increase the Council's preparedness and capacity to respond to severe weather events, particularly in the treatment of roads and pavements. The most significant proposals seek to significantly increase salt stocks from 7,500 to 25,000 tonnes, increase the winter weather standby-rota thereby allowing more gritters and mini-tractors to be deployed and invest in more specialist snow clearing equipment including adapting and modifying existing equipment and plant. The effect of this increased capacity will allow Category 1 and 2 roads and 640km of priority pavements to be pre-treated with salt and when required snow ploughed as soon as possible after a severe weather alert. The additional specialist equipment will be used by staff who are re-deployed to snow clearing including staff in schools and residential care homes as well as those in street-cleaning and grounds maintenance and enable them to make a far bigger impact more quickly.

The estimated additional cost of these enhanced stand-by arrangements is £64,000 and this can be accommodated within SfC's existing revenue budgets. However these costs will increase depending on the number of times this increased stand-by capacity is actually mobilised. The costs for the additional equipment would be £622,000, of which £547,000 would be capital, and this would be accommodated within existing budgets. The cost of the additional salt supplies including storage is £850,000. However it is unlikely that this would be used in one year and can

therefore be managed in accounting terms using cash flow arrangements.

The Tier 2 improvements also contain proposals for improving community resilience through supporting locally organised snow-clearing by volunteers and also using volunteers to enhance the two way flow of information between the Council and local communities. Work is ongoing on two further proposals – the potential introduction of a by-law requiring residents and businesses to clear snow from the pavements and using farmers to assist with snow clearing in the more rural communities to the west of the City. Further detail on these areas of work is contained in Appendix 6.

These proposals while significantly increasing the Council's overall capacity to respond to severe winter weather events are proportionate and represent best value.

3.4.3 **Tier 3 proposals – “step-change”**

In an ideal world, there would be a fleet large enough to treat all roads and pavements in a single sweep, and to be able to repeat this as often as necessary to keep them all clear of snow and ice. In order to illustrate the significance of the costs involved, an increase in the size of the road gritting fleet by 50% would cost an extra £1.6m capital and £2.5m revenue. This example is based on the level of mobilisation needed in a “normal” winter. To this would need to be added additional pavement treatment too. It is estimated that even at this level of resource, it would still not be possible to treat all Category 3 routes in a single sweep.

Given the current financial situation, and also the uncertainty of weather predictions, it is impossible to justify such levels of expenditure. It is likely that much of the fleet would lie idle for most of the year, at a time when vital public services are under great pressure. For these reasons, the Tier 3 level response is not considered to constitute best value and it has therefore not been pursued any further.

4 Financial Implications

- 4.1 The Council's winter maintenance budget has traditionally been set at a level designed to fund 'normal' winter activity. Operations to tackle even short Winter Weather events inevitably lead to budget overspends. Even in mild winters the budget has proved insufficient. The table overleaf shows the budget versus actual expenditure for the last five years:-

Year	Original Budget	Actual	Variance
2006 / 7	£1,229,385	£1,232,836	£3,451
2007 / 8	£1,254,652	£1,479,524	£224,872
2008 / 9	£1,272,652	£2,093,037	£820,385
2009 / 10	£1,389,383	£3,133,670	£1,744,287
2010 / 11	£1,389,383	£7,077,633	£5,688,250
Total	£6,535,455	£15,016,700	£8,481,245

Whilst these pressures have so far been contained within the approved budget for Services for Communities there is a case for increasing this budget by around £500,000 pa to reflect the real expenditure likely during a “normal” winter”.

- 4.2 There are no financial implications arising from the adoption of Tier 1 recommendations.
- 4.3 The cost of Tier 2 proposals is described earlier in the report. The only element for which a funding solution is required is the additional revenue costs associated with mobilising the enhanced gritting standby response. This should be seen as additional to the £500,000 “shortfall” in the existing winter maintenance budget. Based on the typical volume of mobilisations in a “normal” winter, it is proposed that the winter weather budget should be increased from £1.3m to £2.3m. It is proposed that this matter should be considered through the forthcoming budget review and that meantime, SfC will endeavour to contain any such costs within approved budgets.

5 Equalities Impact

- 5.1 It is recognised that severe winter weather impacts upon all in the city to a greater or lesser degree. Those with mobility difficulties may experience significant disruption to their daily business. To mitigate this, the project has focussed on attempting to identify and prioritise groups who may be more adversely affected by severe winter weather including sheltered housing, special schools and care homes. The project has consulted with a broad range of service users and providers in order to gain an accurate picture of needs across the city, including a survey issued to the Edinburgh Equalities Network.
- 5.2 The report contents and recommendations are therefore of some relevance to equalities and human rights duties. The overall equalities relevance score is 2 (out of a possible 9). A full Equalities Impact Assessment was not required.

6. Environmental Impact

- 6.1 SEPA has been consulted in order to mitigate any potential environmental impact caused by the movement and deposit of snow and

ice contaminated by salt and other agents such as petrol and has confirmed that this is permissible in emergency circumstances.

6.2 Salt storage will be of a specification suitable to guard against seepage into the surrounding environment.

6.3 The improvements proposed in this report would help to keep open key transport routes and minimise the disruption to public transport.

7 Recommendations

7.1 It is recommended that Committee:

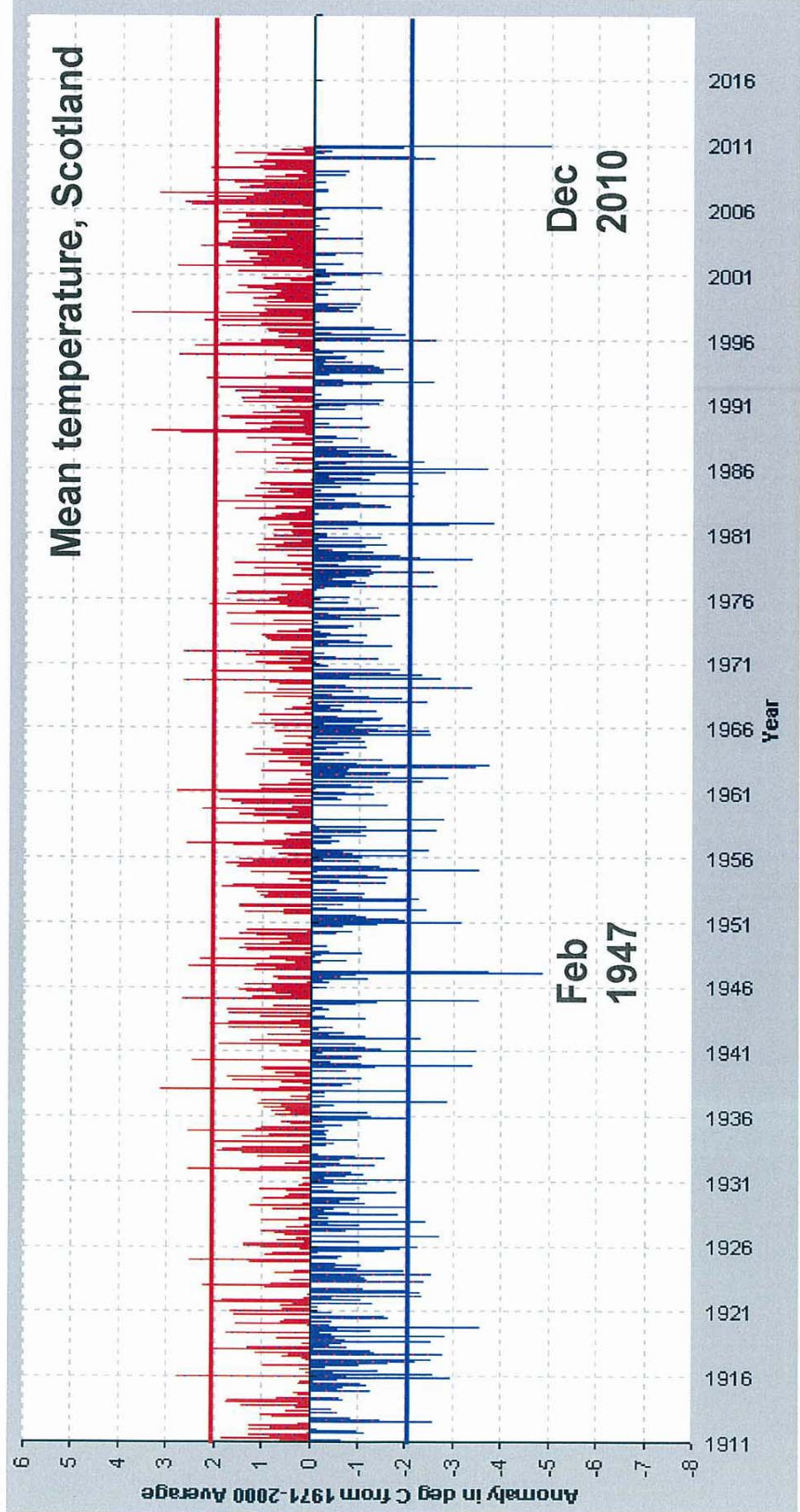
- a) Notes this thorough review of arrangements to deal with severe winter weather
- b) Approves the new arrangements as detailed under Tiers 1 and 2
- c) Rejects Tier 3 options as unaffordable and not constituting best value, and
- d) Notes that further consideration of the financial implications of Tier 2 will be given during the Council's budget process but that meantime, if the city experiences further severe weather, the normal arrangements for dealing with any resultant financial implications will continue to apply.

Mark Turley
Director of Services for Communities

Appendices	- Appendix 1 – Mean temperature, Scotland 1911 - 2010 - Appendix 2 – Days with snow lying, Scotland 1962 - 2010 - Appendix 3 - Issues arising from Community Engagement - Appendix 4 - Project remit - Appendix 5 -Tier 1 Improvements - Appendix 6 -Tier 2 Improvements
Contact/tel/Email	Tony Lear 0131-529-3436 tony.lear@edinburgh.gov.uk
Wards affected	All
Single Outcome Agreement	National Outcome 15 – Our public services are high quality, continually improving, efficient and responsive to local peoples needs.
Background Papers	Severe Weather – Interim Report, Policy and Strategy Committee 18 th January 2011 Severe Weather Review – Interim Report, Policy and Strategy Committee 17 May 2011 *



Perspective



Perspective



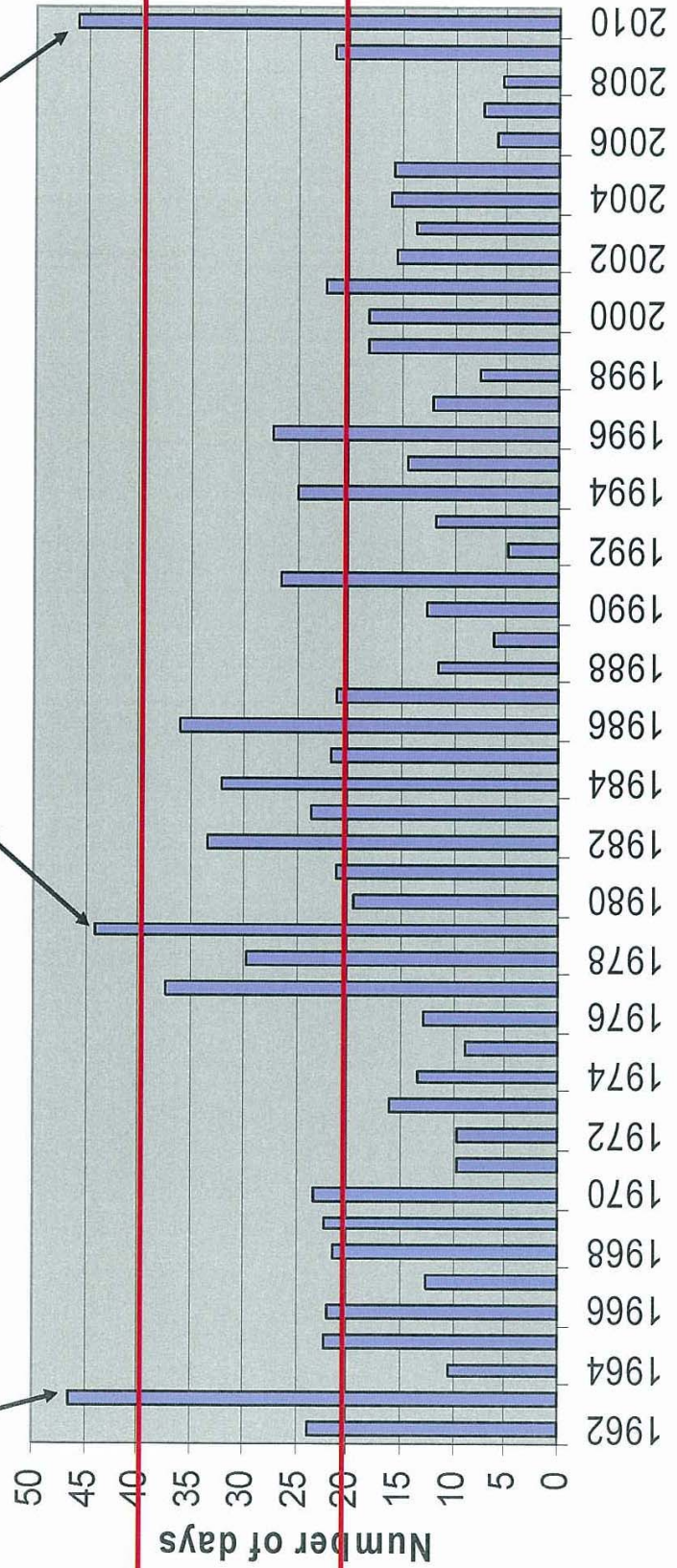
Met Office

1963

1979

2010

Days with snow lying - Scotland



1.

Winter Weather - Issues Raised through Community Engagement and Consultation

1. Better Communication with the Public
2. Road priority routes
3. Salt / Grit mix supplies (grit dumps)
4. Pedestrian priority routes
5. Better Plant / Equipment
6. Schools information earlier
7. Use of Volunteers
8. Better Internal Communications between services and with other agencies
9. Inconsiderately parked cars
10. Waste Collection
11. Staff Redeployment
12. Vulnerable People
13. Snow Dumps
14. Flooding
15. Preventative gritting
16. Cycle Routes
17. Potholes
18. Policing

Communication with the Public

Customers want frequent updates on:

- School closures
- Roads and pavements that have been treated
- Road and footway categories and priorities
- Service standards
- Salt bin locations
- Salt dump locations
- Strategic waste collection points (skips)
- Snow dump locations (for use by residents)
- Weather alerts
- Adopted roads

They also want clear advice and useful guidance on how to help themselves. Examples given were:

- Guidance to encourage residents and businesses to clear the footways in front of their properties
- Clarification of liability issues about clearing footways
- Advice on how to drive in winter conditions (if encouraged to drive)

- Advice on how to clear snow, how to use salt/grit effectively and where to dump snow

Many suggested a restoration of the by-law requiring residents and businesses to clear snow from in front of their properties.

It was clear that preferred means of communication varied widely across communities and age demographics. Many advocated increased use of social media such as Twitter and Facebook. Those who had to drive in winter conditions said that they relied heavily on local radio information whilst those who were elderly and housebound said that they relied on television for their information. Suggested means of communication were: -

- Radio Forth
- Mobile phone text messages (for school closure updates)
- TV adverts and local news bulletins
- CEC Website (dedicated front page)
- Leaflets (with guidance /advice prior the winter)
- Mobile units in every community (providing information updates)
- Community Council notice boards
- Community Council social network page (facebook)
- CEC social network page(s)
- I-phone applications
- Recorded message with a daily update on weather and local issues
- Publication of key winter weather emergency numbers in the A-Z

The Treatment and Clearance of Roads

Whilst people generally accepted that it was impossible for the Council to treat all roads as a priority (if everything is a priority then nothing is a priority) there were requests and suggestions for further areas to be included for priority treatment. These were:-

- Roads on high ground or with long or steep inclines.
- All bus routes to the outskirts of the city. (Route information had not been perfect on some non-Lothian Buses routes during last winter and some routes notably in South Queensferry had not been cleared until very late on)
- Key access routes to schools, hospitals and health centres.
- Local Neighbourhood priorities such as access to food shops, facilities for elderly and infirm people, park and ride sites and car parking areas (to avoid people having to abandon their cars on main roads).

Salt Bins and Salt Dumps

The local availability of salt (not grit) in permanent salt bins and 'strategic salt dumps' was also high on the list of issues raised. Respondents highlighted the need to:

- Replenish Salt Bins more frequently.
- Maintain more accurate and transparent records of salt bin replenishment.

- Identify locations that require more / larger salt bins.
- Prioritise salt bin locations on higher ground levels and steep inclines and in Category 3 residential streets that will not be treated by the Council as a priority.
- Identify and advertise strategic salt dump locations which are easily accessible by residents.

Pedestrians

Reported priorities for footway treatment were:

- Roads on high ground or with long or steep inclines.
- Key walking routes to essential food stores / highly used footways.
- Pavements alongside bus stops and pedestrian routes to main bus stops.
- Pedestrian crossing locations.
- Routes to schools
- Routes to hospitals and health centres
- Routes to sheltered housing / care homes / nurseries

Schools

Many people at the meetings identified the importance of keeping schools open and functioning. They particularly emphasised the following:

- Prioritise the treatment / clearance of routes to and around schools in order to keep them open or re-open them sooner.
- Identify treatment routes for vehicular and pedestrian access including turning circles to special schools.
- Improve the systems and practice of communication between:
 - Teachers with schools
 - Schools with parents
 - Schools with CEC Headquarters
 - Improve the utilisation of GLOW
- Protect and enable fuel deliveries to ensure schools can be kept open and running.

Use of Community Volunteers

Much attention was focused on the greater use of volunteers from the community. A number of community representatives offered to organise volunteers working to clear their local area. One third of people who responded to the on-line survey said that they would be prepared to volunteer and 25% actually left their contact details so that their offer could be taken up.

Inconsiderately Parked Cars

Participants identified inconsiderately parked or 'abandoned' cars as a problem. Many people had witnessed cars blocking bus routes and denying access to gritting or refuse collection vehicles. Solutions based on both 'carrot' and 'stick' were advocated:

Waste Collection

Residents emphasised the importance of providing a consistent refuse collection service. They also valued the provision of organised use of 'strategic waste dumps' but felt that these would benefit from being identified and publicised in advance. (It was reported that many residents were unaware these existed or were unaware of the locations).

Staff Redeployment

Many participants thought that, given the total number of staff employed by the Council, far more staff could have been deployed in the streets to clear snow and ice.

Training

People also emphasised the need to provide more information to contact centre staff and better training for contractors brought in to treat roads and pavements.

Vulnerable People

There was much discussion about the importance of identifying and supporting local vulnerable people. However it was recognised that there are significant data protection issues.

Feedback to Respondents

The summarised results of the community engagement and consultation exercise have been fed back to Neighbourhood Partnerships and community meetings in the form of a 'you said' report. It is planned to return for a further round of meetings in the autumn cycle setting out the improvements agreed by Committee for implementation next winter. In this way the Council will be able to report in terms of 'You said – We did'. The results of the on-line survey have been published on the Council's web site.

Winter Weather – Working Together

Project Remit

To undertake a fundamental review of (the Council's / SfC's) winter emergency preparedness, policies and practices.

Specifically:

- To identify and use national and international research being carried out to assess the probability of future severe winter weather emergency events.
- To carry out research to identify best practice nationally and internationally in preparing for and responding to severe winter weather.
- To engage with stakeholders and partners including emergency services; transport operators; business organisations; neighbourhood partnerships, community councils and the wide community to understand their needs and priorities; to obtain their views and ideas; and to explore the opportunities for collaborative working.
- To identify and propose a comprehensive range of fully developed and costed options for dealing with future events.
- To review the Council's response to the winter emergencies during 2009/10 and 2010/11 in order to build on what went well and to identify areas for improvement.

The Project outputs will fall into three categories:

1. Short Term Improvements at little or no additional cost
2. Recommendations for service enhancements that will require some funding growth for more vehicles and equipment but will also focus on greater community involvement and 'self help'.
3. Options for a 'step change' increase in service preparedness with significant increases in resources – vehicles, plant, staff and sub contractors – to enable the Council to respond comprehensively to regular and prolonged periods of severe winter weather.

Tier 1 Improvements

An 11 point plan for significant improvements in performance has been developed and is being implemented. It is based upon the smarter more effective use of existing resources and will deliver significant improvements in performance during any future severe winter weather event within existing resources. The improvements are summarised below.

- I. Improved planning and preparedness – as a result of the review the three main service departments (SfC, C&F, H&SC) and all six Neighbourhoods have developed detailed local plans for responding to severe winter weather events. These plans build on the experiences of the past two severe winters as well as local knowledge and views captured through the local consultation events. These plans put strong emphasis on the preventative pre-treatment of roads and pavements clearly identify local priorities key tasks and how resources will be deployed and responsibilities. The plans will also give improved ‘command and control’ arrangements through clearly defined roles and responsibilities across the Council including decision making responsibilities at strategic, tactical and operational levels. The benefit of having these plans in place will be to ensure the prompt and effective deployment of resources both at city wide and local level.
- II. Improved communications and customer contact – further improvements will be put in place to enhance the communications given to the public about the action the Council is taking in response to severe winter weather. This will include providing up to date and, where possible, ‘real time information’ on gritting and snow clearing including activity that has already been carried out and activity that is being planned as well as the location and replenishment of salt boxes and bags, school closures, refuse collection and other Council services. A range of methods will be used to disseminate this information including the Council’s website, social media such as Facebook and Twitter, T.V., radio, the local press and the Contact Centre.
- III. Salt Bins and Bags – a comprehensive review of salt bins across the city is currently being undertaken. This includes a survey of the location, size and condition of all salt bins so that the Council has an accurate and up to date record. This will help ensure that all bins are refilled at the start of every winter and allow the plotting of more efficient salt box servicing routes. New locations for salt bins are also being identified by Neighbourhood Management Teams based on information gathered at local community engagement events. Building on the experience of ‘community salt dumps’ last winter, salt box provision will be supplemented by the deployment of up to 1000, one-tonne salt bags at previously identified locations across the city. The use of salt bags will enable swift delivery of additional salt supplies for community use when snow and ice is being forecast. The use of bags will also make replenishment quicker and easier.

- IV. Snow dumps – each Neighbourhood has identified locations which can be used as snow dumps. This will allow for the removal and disposal of the piles of snow that accumulate at the sides of roads as a result of snow ploughing and which can block or restrict access to pavements, particularly at bus stops and pedestrian crossings.
- V. Parking Snow Zones – work is taking place on the development of ‘snow zone clearways’ to tackle the problems caused by vehicles being parked or abandoned on certain key routes and locations and thereby preventing the passage of buses, gritters and refuse collection vehicles. The snow zone clearway would be created through a Traffic Regulation Order that would prohibit the parking of vehicles on specific roads or parts of roads during a severe winter weather event. The details on the feasibility and implementation of snow zone clearways will be the subject of a future report to this committee.
- VI. Improved Staff Training – a training DVD for Council staff redeployed from other services and contingency contractors who are brought in to assist with gritting and snow clearing activity has been commissioned. The DVD will include advice on basic snow clearing techniques, salt spreading, use of specialist equipment and safe working procedures. Improved training will help make staff more effective and productive when being deployed to treat and clear ice and snow.
- VII. School Staff Re-deployment – again building on experience gained in last year’s severe winter, Children and Families are formalising arrangements for school staff to report to work in the nearest City of Edinburgh school if they cannot reach their normal place of work. Head Teachers will meet with groups of staff who would come to their school to work during periods of severe winter weather. This measure will help mitigate the risk of school closures due to staff shortages.
- VIII. Support for Vulnerable People – work is currently on-going to enhance the support provided to vulnerable people during severe winter weather. This work includes improving the identification and recording of vulnerable people who may require support or additional services (e.g. food parcels, assistance with attending critical hospital appointments etc); reviewing the prioritisation of gritting/snow clearing requests from key partners such as the Police, the Scottish Ambulance Service and NHS Lothian and agreeing definitions of urgent medical appointments and emergencies; measures to enable staff to reach vulnerable people such as increasing access to 4x4 vehicles and provision of protective clothing for staff who have to visit customers on foot.
- IX. Improved Resilience for Waste Services – the provision of skips and other containers at locations across the city last winter helped households dispose of their waste while kerbside collections were suspended. This contingency arrangement is being formalised through a framework contract which will enable the Council to call on up to five contractors to provide and service skips at Community Waste Sites should they be required. The sites have been identified and agreed between Neighbourhoods and Waste

Services. Other improvements include measures to reduce the level or incidence of service disruption such as suspension of garden waste collections so that domestic waste collections can be prioritised, the fitting of a limited number of vehicles with winter weather tyres and close liaison and co-ordination with Gritting Control to treat difficult to access locations and keep open access to priority locations such as chute fed bin rooms in multi-storey flats and Community Recycling Centres.

- X. Improved procurement of external contractors – last winter the Council made extensive use of external contractors in snow clearing at a cost of £1.7 million. A procurement exercise is taking place so that future use of external contractors will be through a framework contract which would require them to supply up to 100 staff together with vehicles and excavation plant at 12 hours notice. Procurement of this framework contract is in the final stages and is projected to realise savings of 20% should external contractors be deployed to the same extent that they were in 2010/11

- XI. Bereavement Services – as in the previous severe winters grave-digging and grounds maintenance staff will be re-deployed to snow clearing duties on cemetery and crematorium access roads, footpaths and car parks. Cemeteries which are still being used for burials have been incorporated as priority locations for pre-treatment and snow clearing in the plans developed by Roads Services and Neighbourhoods referred to previously.

Tier 2 Improvements

The service enhancements developed are summarised below.

- I. Increased salt stocks and storage locations – following the winter of 2009/10 salt stocks were increased from 5,200 tonnes to 7,500 tonnes but during the course of the 2010/11 winter, some 16,000 tonnes were used. Additional stocks were brought from the Council's usual suppliers but such was the demand across the country that use had to be made of the Scottish Government's strategic salt supply. In order to ensure that there is sufficient salt supply to cope with another winter as severe as 2010/11 without resorting to salt conservation methods (reducing spread rates, mixing salt with grit etc) it is recommended that Edinburgh has a salt stock of at least 21,000 tonnes and ideally 25,000 tonnes. Storage space for this has been identified and, in future, the construction of an additional salt dome will be considered. It is also proposed to create a number of small local salt stocks to improve and speed up access to the salt required to support local road and pavement treatments, snow-clearing and the replenishment of salt bins. The locations for these local salt stocks have also been identified.

The total cost of the additional salt stocks is estimated to be £850,000. One-off costs of additional storage facilities are £80,000 and these costs, together with additional annual recurring storage costs of £50,000 costs, can be accommodated within SfC's existing revenue budget. The cost of purchasing additional salt supplies is estimated at £720,000, however it is unlikely that this would be used in one year and any balance remaining at the year end would be reflected on the Council Balance Sheet.

- II. Increased capacity to treat Category 1 and 2 roads and additional priority locations – as described earlier, consultation has identified additional priority locations for treatment and snow clearing. These additional priorities are primarily aimed at ensuring access to schools, residential homes, health facilities and shops. It is proposed to reflect these additional priority locations in revised Category 1 and 2 routes.

This option also proposes sufficient resource to treat both Category 1 and 2 routes overnight. This will require the Council to increase the number of staff who are on stand-by in order to be able to potentially mobilise at least 28 of the 31 gritters (some allowance has been made for vehicles being unavailable due to mechanical failure or other similar reasons) at any one time. This will take fleet utilisation from approximately 60% to 90%.

The estimated additional cost of these enhanced stand-by arrangements is £32,000 and this can be accommodated within SfC's existing revenue budgets. However these costs will increase depending on the number of times this increased stand-by capacity is actually mobilised.

- III. Increased capacity to treat pavements – as described earlier, the categorisation of priorities for the treatment of pavements has been reviewed

in the light of the feedback gained through consultation. The review has identified 640km of pavements that should be prioritised for treatment in order to ensure pedestrian access to schools, bus stops, care homes, health facilities and shops. To ensure that these priority pavements are treated, the Council will need to deploy all its fleet of 20 mini-tractors at any one time but particularly at night time when pedestrian traffic is greatly reduced. This would require a further expansion in the number of staff on the stand-by rota.

The estimated cost of increasing the winter maintenance stand-by capacity to include priority pavements is £32,000 and this can be accommodated within SfC's existing revenue budgets. However these costs will increase depending on the number of times this increased stand-by capacity is mobilised.

- IV. Adapting and modifying existing plant and equipment - the modification of non-winter plant and equipment to turn mowers and sweeping equipment into mechanised pavement snow ploughs and salt spreaders makes good economic sense. Use of mechanised salt spreading and snow clearing is more effective than manual methods and will enable staff deployed on snow and ice clearing to make more of an impact more quickly.

The estimated cost of this enhancement is £232,000 (see section V below).

- V. Investment in improved equipment and plant – specialised snow clearing equipment which can be used by Neighbourhood Task Force, schools and residential homes staff would enable their performance in snow clearing to be greatly improved. Pedestrian operated salt spreaders, snow brushes and snow blowers are among some of the specialist equipment that has been identified.

The estimated cost of this enhancement is £315,000 which together with the £232,000 cost of adapting or modifying existing plant and machinery is a capital cost. The additional capital expenditure can be managed through slippage in the approved capital programme with this additional overall commitment being treated as a first call on any additional capital resources provided in the 2012-15 Financial Settlement above that already assumed in the current Capital Investment Programme.

In addition, all services have reviewed their requirements for personal protective equipment (PPE) for staff who will be called on to clear snow and spread salt. Risk assessments are being carried out to ensure that PPE is appropriate for the different staff and duties. The total cost of this PPE is £75,000 and each Director has agreed to contain this within their approved revenue budgets.

Use of Farmers - exploratory meetings have been held with farmers who have expressed an interest in working with the Council and supporting snow clearing activities. From the discussions so far their activities could provide an effective local service to local communities in more rural areas such as Ratho, Balerno, Currie, Kirkliston and, potentially, South Queensferry. A meeting has been organised with representatives from Edinburgh,

Midlothian and West Lothian Councils and farmers from these areas to develop how this will work in practice.

Rates would be comparable with those being received for External Contractors support (see above).

The re-introduction of a by-law -the potential issue of a by-law to re-introduce obligations on residents to clear snow and ice from the public footways fronting their properties was a major topic arising from community consultation and was also the subject of a motion by Councillor Burns to Council in December 2010. The issue has been explored in consultation with the Council's legal officers.

Previously, there was a cleansing by-law, enacted under the Edinburgh Corporation Confirmation Act 1933, which went into some detail about where and when residents were obliged to clear snow from their paths. However, all local legislation, including by-laws, was repealed on 31st December 1999 in terms of section 59(6) of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1994.

Since the current situation is set out in primary legislation, amendments would have to be made by the Scottish Government also through primary legislation. There are a number of additional problems, not least how any by-law could be enforced; definitions of what constitutes 'cleared'; exemptions for people with disabilities, etc. The issue is being looked at by COSLA but there is unlikely to be a short term resolution.

In the meantime it is proposed that the council promotes changes in public attitudes to encourage voluntary clearing of residential and business frontages and ensure that the public are aware of the government advice on public liability and snow clearing methods

- VI. Volunteering – the consultation undertaken as part of this review indicated a willingness by many members of the public to contribute to the Council's response to severe winter weather on a voluntary basis. Volunteers could usefully provide local feedback on conditions in their area, problems with parked or abandoned cars or other obstacles that restrict access. People have also volunteered to become conduits for information from the Council to the local community using social media such as Facebook, a function that some performed last winter when they passed on Neighbourhood Managers briefings. Many residents also organised themselves locally to undertake snow clearing work and this could be encouraged and supported by the Council through the provision of equipment and protective clothing. Although there are potential issues around personal injury liability which are being explored by the Council's legal and insurance staff, the facilitation of volunteering in snow-clearing work would be an effective way of increasing community resilience and enhancing the overall response to severe weather events.

Neighbourhoods have been tasked with identifying community groups and individual volunteers who would be willing to be involved in the above

activities and developing plans for how they would be mobilised in the event of severe winter weather.

The recommended approach is to operate a Snow Warden scheme during emergency situations only. Those who volunteered in response to the online survey would be contacted in advance and a list of willing Snow Wardens drawn up. Each Snow Warden would be issued gloves, a shovel and a vest and set to clearing minor roads and footways only in their local area. Salt will be provided from the proposed 300+ salt dumps. Snow Wardens will only be expected to do what they feel capable of doing based on their level of health and fitness.

Council officers will inspect volunteers informally and anecdotally. The position regarding liability for volunteers is currently being explored with Legal Services. The Snow Warden scheme will be coordinated by the Neighbourhood teams, to ensure that there is no discord between the work of the Snow Wardens and of local Task Force and/or sub-contractors.