

Development & Environment Scrutiny Panel

Assigned Task Report on Winter Maintenance



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1 BACKGROUND

- 1.1 Winter maintenance is an important role that is undertaken by the Council's Streetscene Service and is carried out in order to allow all road users to move about as safely as possible and to help minimise delays caused by adverse weather conditions.
- 1.2 Winter maintenance is also about meeting the needs of local communities across Kirklees particularly the districts most vulnerable residents and includes a focus on providing access to essential services, clearing pavements and supplying salt to the many grit bins that are located across the district.
- 1.3 The last few winter periods have seen average temperatures that are markedly below the longer term average. This cluster of unusually severe conditions has presented local authorities with major challenges in the approach they take to keep the road networks moving.
- 1.4 The Council's Winter Maintenance Plan was reviewed and approved by Kirklees Cabinet in November 2009 and now includes procedures that are followed during an 'ordinary winter' and an 'emergency plan' (which is applied during various defined adverse weather conditions).
- 1.5 When considering the review, members of this assigned task were clear that they would take account of the inclusion of the 'emergency plan' to cover for periods of heavy falling snow and continuing cold weather and the steps that the Streetscene Service take to improve service delivery following the review that takes place after every winter period.

2 AREAS OF FOCUS

- 2.1 The agreed terms of reference of the assigned task were:

1. Establish what was done differently for the winter period 2010/11 compared to 2009/10, the impact of these changes, the lessons learned and the implications for the approach to be taken for the winter period 2011/12.
2. To review the policy for road salt supplies including locations.
3. Review the impact that the severe weather conditions has had on local residents access to services and the delivery of services: including comparing the outcomes experienced by residents during the winter period 2010/11 against 2009/10 and identifying good practice and scope for improvement; the approach taken by the council to communication, the co-ordination of services and managing public expectation.

3 THE PANEL AND WORKING ARRANGEMENTS

3.1 The Panel comprised its membership from representatives of the Development & Environment Scrutiny Panel and from the pool of voluntary co-optees:

Councillor Andrew Marchington (Chair)
David Pinder (Co-optee)
Ian Steele (Co-optee)

3.2 The Panel was supported by Richard Dunne from the Scrutiny Office.

3.3 The Panel held a series of meetings between September 2011 and November 2011 in order to receive information and evidence from a range of individuals. A full list of attendees and witnesses are shown on page 21.

3.4 The review included input from Metro and local bus operators in the form of a postal questionnaire. Details of the questions asked are shown in Appendix 1.

4 SUMMARY OF EVIDENCE RECEIVED

4.1 This section of the report will set out for each area of focus, a summary of the key evidence that has been received, followed by an outline of the Panel's views.

4.2

Area of Focus 1

Establish what was done differently for the winter period 2010/11 compared to 2009/10, the impact of these changes, the lessons learned and the implications for the approach to be taken for the winter period 2011/12.

4.2.1 Every year the Streetscene Service undertake an annual review of the previous winter with the aim of identifying lessons learned and where required making appropriate changes to processes and procedures in order to improve the Council's winter service.

4.2.2 Most of the Council's contingencies and emergency plans are dependent on having adequate availability of salt. Throughout the winter period of 2009/10 the weather conditions facing the Council were extreme, not only from a temperature and snowfall perspective, but also due to the length of time the severe weather persisted. Taking into account the unprecedented demand for salt during the winter period 2009/10 the Streetscene Service started the 2010/11 winter period with 29,800 tonnes of salt (double the previous year).

- 4.2.3 The newly formed Streetscene Service has helped to improve communication and the move to more joined up working enabled the Service to prepare for the winter period 2010-11 through further improvements to the way the resources were utilised across the service. In addition the Service made a commitment to work more closely with councillors and communities to ensure that grit bins were located in the most appropriate place to meet the needs of the local community.
- 4.2.4 The commitment to a new way of working resulted in greater involvement from staff across the Streetscene Service in contributing to the work of winter maintenance. The creation of the new Streetscene Service enabled the service to mobilise staff resources more easily and in a structured manner. An example of this was the help provided from staff in refuse collection and street cleaning who helped to re-stock the salt supplies in grit bins.
- 4.2.5 Working with Ward Councillors and local community groups an audit of grit bins was carried out to ensure that grit bins were located in the agreed locations. This exercise resulted in the replacement of 125 bins, the supply of an additional 109 bins and the repositioning of 14 bins.
- 4.2.6 Although the primary focus for Streetscene is ensuring that the key road networks across the district are kept open the experience of winter 2009-10 highlighted the need to also maintain a focus on the clearance of pavements.
- 4.2.7 For the 2010-11 winter period Streetscene continued with the work undertaken in previous winters of prioritising pavements in town centres, hospitals, care homes, doctor's surgeries etc and utilising staff that couldn't carry out their normal duties to work in these areas. This resulted in the service helping to clear entrance ways and pavements in over 60 town and village centres and other important locations.
- 4.2.8 In recognition of the need to issue regular up to date information and provide access to services and schools Streetscene introduced a number of measures for the 2010-11 winter period including;
- The provision of additional salt supplies in identified areas of need - an example of this was the introduction of strategic salt piles in the Colne Valley area.
 - Working with schools and the learning section of the Children and Young People Service to agree on the approach to dealing with the clearing of snow and agreeing areas of responsibility.
 - The continuing use of social media as a means of communication which included the nationally recognised 'Gritter Twitter' which provided round the clock updates on weather and road conditions.
- 4.2.9 In response to the severe winter period 2009-10 the Government issued guidance aimed at encouraging individuals to clear snow and ice from pavements. The guidance called the 'snow code' was designed to overcome

the concern of being sued or held legally responsible for any injuries suffered by a path that an individual had cleared. The code provides simple tips and guidance on clearing snow and ice from pavements or public spaces.

- 4.2.10 Streetscene further developed the emphasis of self help by working with, and providing salt for, voluntary groups who help to clear snow. Streetscene supported around 80 groups who concentrated on clearing key locations in their area such as community centres and provided assistance to vulnerable people and elderly residents.
- 4.2.11 During severe weather conditions there is a greater demand in the use of public transport and the experience from the winter period 2009-10 highlighted to Streetscene the importance of working with Metro and local bus operators in order to maintain services on the main bus routes.
- 4.2.12 Prior to the winter period 2010-11 Streetscene met with Metro to discuss winter maintenance plans and worked with local bus operators to help support the bus services by altering some of the gritting routes to include important hubs and depots. In addition Streetscene provided access to real time information in order to help bus operators more effectively plan their services and keep their customers informed.
- 4.2.13 Streetscene identified the need to ensure that the good work that had been carried out to support the services provided by care organisations and Adult Services during the 2009-10 winter period was further developed This included reaffirming information on the winter maintenance procedures, emergency contact details, the support provided through the Council's Emergency Plan and details of gritting operations near to residential care homes and social day care facilities.
- 4.2.14 Streetscene also formalised plans to deal with the needs of vulnerable residents by providing transport and drivers to ensure that care workers were able to get to where they were needed.

4.2.15

PANEL VIEW

- The Panel welcomes the annual review that is undertaken after each winter period and would wish to ensure that the lessons learned following the recent severe winter periods are not forgotten and can be quickly implemented even if we experience a series of relatively mild winters.
- The Panel feels that there is clear evidence that the authority has taken significant steps to improve the co-ordination and effectiveness of the work that is carried out by the Streetscene Service.

PANEL VIEW (cont.)

- The Panel feels that the lessons learned from previous winters have been taken on board and this has been reflected in the improvements to the communication and co-ordination of the work that is carried out by the winter maintenance team, the various council services, external partners, organisations and local residents and community groups.
- The Panel welcomes the approach that has been taken to support those individuals and local community groups who have expressed a willingness to help others and would encourage the authority to continue with this positive engagement and dialogue.
- The Panel acknowledges the experience and knowledge of key officers in the winter maintenance team and would wish to see that procedures are put in place to ensure that this knowledge is passed onto staff that haven't experienced a severe winter and that all new employees who join the team are adequately trained and prepared for a severe winter.

4.3

Area of Focus 2

To review the policy for road salt supplies including locations.

4.4 Salt Supplies

- 4.4.1 Streetscene starts the preparations for winter almost immediately after the previous winter period has finished. The severe winter period of 2009-10 resulted in significantly increased demands for salt and led to shortages in supplies for many local authorities across the country including Kirklees.
- 4.4.2 In response to the shortages experienced in 2009-10 Streetscene significantly increased the Council's opening stock levels for 2010-11 in order to provide sufficient supplies to cope with another severe winter period. During the 2010-11 winter period Streetscene used in excess of 15,000 tonnes of salt. Streetscene would expect to use around 14,000 tonnes of salt in 'normal' winter conditions.
- 4.4.3 In preparation for the 2011-12 winter period Streetscene has secured 25,000 tonnes of salt as the opening stock level. This stock level is based on the amount of salt that the Council would have used, had it been available, during the 2009-10 winter period which Streetscene believe should be sufficient to cope with the severest of winters while providing a normal gritting service (as defined in the winter maintenance policy).

4.4.4 The table below shows the levels of salt stocks, usage and number of grits over the last 3 years.

Winter Period	Opening Stock Level (tonnes)	Salt Usage (tonnes)	Number of Grits
2008/2009	7,287	18,748	103
2009/2010	14,200	18,800	103
2010/2011	29,800	15,600	65

4.4.5 There are three main producers and suppliers of salt in the UK, Salt Union (SU) Winsford based in Cheshire; Cleveland Potash (CP) Ltd in Cleveland; and Irish Salt Mining (ISM) near Carrickfergus on the Northern Ireland Coast. During the winter period 2009-10 there was some criticism that these salt suppliers continued to supply DIY stores, despite the shortages faced by local authorities.

4.4.6 Response from the suppliers to these criticisms was that they operate as commercial enterprises and have freedom of trade. In addition to local authorities there are also other significant users of salt including businesses and institutions such as energy installations, hospitals, business parks and supermarkets.

4.4.7 In previous years the Council used to top up salt stock levels towards the end of the year; however this approach wasn't found to be very effective mainly because the suppliers didn't provide a reliable delivery service. In previous years Streetscene experienced situations where orders that had been requested towards the end of the calendar year were not delivered until the April of the following year.

4.4.8 The approach now taken by Streetscene is to secure the full allocation of salt before the onset of winter. Once an order has been issued to the salt supplier the Council is committed to the transaction. Placing bulk orders helps to reduce the price of salt and the Council typically pays around £25-£35 per tonne. It was noted that during the severe winter period of 2009-10 the demand of salt was such that the price tripled to around £75 per tonne.

4.4.9 Streetscene has trialled purchasing salt through the Yorkshire Purchasing Organisation as a way of reducing the cost however this was discontinued as Streetscene found that it was cheaper to purchase salt direct from the suppliers.

4.4.10 Streetscene is continuing to look at ways of reducing the costs of purchasing salt and is currently investigating the option of collaborating with other local authorities to bulk purchase salt.

4.5 Salt Storage

- 4.5.1 Provided salt is properly stored and covered, carrying over salt storage piles to the next year or even longer does not have a detrimental affect on the quality of the material. Salt can be lost due to exposure to precipitation, so although covered storage facilities may seem expensive the common belief is that the benefits will outweigh the costs in the long run.
- 4.5.2 Streetscene has a number of covered storage locations for salt including Honley Salt Barn, Headlands Batley, Pinfold Lower Denby and Slaithwaite. In preparation for the onset of the 2011-12 winter period approximately 8,000 tonnes is being held at Honley and Batley, between 2,000 – 3,000 tonnes at Lower Denby and the balance of the 25,000 tonnes is being held at Slaithwaite which holds the longer term supplies.



4.6 Grit Bins

- 4.6.1 The grit bins are generally placed at locations away from gritting routes where localised problems occur. The gritting salt supplied in the bins is primarily intended for highways use only and therefore spread on roads and pavements. It is not for use on private property such as driveways and footpaths.
- 4.6.2 An ongoing challenge for the Streetscene Service is the issue of stolen grit bins and the misuse of the gritting salt which over the last two years has resulted in Streetscene having to replace 80 missing grit bins.
- 4.6.3 Streetscene has entered into a number of arrangements with ward councillors where area committees have provided funding for the provision and supply of additional grit bins for a set period of time. There are currently 176 grit bins that have been funded by area committees, however many of these arrangements are coming to an end.

4.6.4 Streetscene has committed to supply salt to all grit bins for the winter period 2011-12 however Streetscene require a decision on the long term funding arrangements for those grit bins that were originally supported by area committees which if not resolved could result in the bins being removed.

4.7 Salt Spreading

4.7.1 Salt is spread on roads and areas used by pedestrians to prevent frost and ice forming and to reduce the build up of snow. Salt when spread on roads or pavements mixes with any moisture and creates a saline solution. Saline solutions freeze at lower temperatures than water which helps to prevent ice forming on the road.

4.7.2 As part of the winter maintenance policy Streetscene grit 60% of the road network in Kirklees. This part of the network has been classed as priority routes which are main roads, main bus routes and steep roads that provide important links to main roads.

4.7.3 Streetscene provide a pre salting and post salting service¹. Pre salting will take place on the Priority Route Roads whenever ice or snow has been forecast. Pre salting operations normally occur at either 05:00am or 18:00pm but dependent on the weather can take place anytime between 05:00am and 22:00pm.

4.7.4 Post salting of priority route roads will take place whenever ice has formed and Streetscene operate to a one hour response time between the hours of 05:00am and 22:00pm.

4.7.5 Streetscene operate 19 gritting vehicles supported by the commissioning of 13 other vehicles operated by contractors and partners including local farmers. The provision of strategically placed salt piles, such as those in the Colne Valley area, supports the gritting operations that take place in those areas that are particularly vulnerable to ice and snow.

4.7.6 Despite all the salt spreading activities that take place there is no guarantee that roads that have been treated will always be completely clear of ice or snow. This can be due to a number of reasons including: in periods of heavy snow salt treatment is usually only really effective with regular moving traffic; rain or running water can wash salt off roads leaving them prone to re-icing; if temperatures fall below a certain level (usually from around - 5°C) the effectiveness of salt is significantly reduced.

¹ Pre salting is the application of salt on roads in advance of forecasted conditions such as low temperatures or snow as a means to help prevent frost, ice or snow forming on the road surface. Post salting or post treatment is where the road is treated during or after severe ice or snow in order to aid the breakdown of ice or snow.

4.7.7 Salt can be applied to the road surface in a number of ways - the most common being:

- Rock Salt – This is the technique used by Kirklees at a spread rate of 20g per square metre. Streetscene favour this method as it has worked well over the years and the service has experienced few difficulties working with this material. Providing the salt is stored under cover and kept dry performance remains good for a number of years.
- Pre-wetted Salt – Salt is mixed with brine and has the benefits of reducing salt usage and can be applied at a faster rate. It also has the advantage of reducing the amount of salt displaced on dry surfaces by fast moving vehicles, although in Kirklees this has little benefit due to the relatively low numbers of high speed roads in the local network. This method would be a more expensive option for the Council as the set up costs required to alter the equipment and fleet to spread the material would be significant.
- Mixed with agricultural by products or molasses – This enables a lower spread rate and evidence has shown that it is less corrosive than pure rock salt. This method also has the advantage of sticking to dry surfaces. Streetscene did trial this technique but found the reaction was not favourable partly due to the public lack of confidence because the salt cannot be as easily seen due to the lower spread rates.

4.7.8

PANEL VIEW

- The Panel supports the strategic approach taken by the authority to secure sufficient quantities of opening levels of salt designed to cope with the severest of winters.
- The Panel is re-assured that in the event the authority does not use significant amounts of salt, for example during a mild winter, that the steps taken by the authority to provide covered storage ensure that the salt won't deteriorate and can be carried forward for use during future winters.
- The Panel notes that the major salt storage facilities are strategically placed across the district and would wish to see that these facilities continue to be funded and supported by the authority.
- The Panel welcomes the approach taken by the authority to continually review salt procurement in order to secure the most cost efficient method of obtaining supplies.
- The Panel supports the provision of strategically placed salt piles to help support those areas of the district that have been identified as having particular difficulties when faced with ice and snow.
- The Panel would like the authority to encourage local residents to inform the neighbourhood policing team or the Council of any person(s) who are seen taking salt in suspicious circumstances from salt bins or salt piles including wherever possible details of a vehicle registration number.

PANEL VIEW (CONT'D)

- The Panel notes that the authority has seriously investigated the various methods of applying salt to the road surface and supports the salting method used for the gritting operations in Kirklees.

4.8

Area of Focus 3

Review the impact that the severe weather conditions have had on local residents access to services and the delivery of services including: comparing the outcomes experienced by residents during the winter period 2010/11 against 2009/10 and identifying good practice and scope for improvement; and the approach taken by the Council to communication, the co-ordination of services and managing public expectation.

- 4.8.1 The Panel approach to this part of the review has been to focus on identifying good practice and to understand the approach taken to communication, co-ordination of services and managing public expectation.
- 4.8.2 The Panel has not had the opportunity to formally speak to residents in order to assess the impact that the severe weather has had on services. However the Panel has considered the feedback from those individuals and organisations that have helped to inform this review which the Panel believe has helped to provide anecdotal evidence on the impact to key services.
- 4.8.3 Severe weather conditions impact on all sections of the community as many services that are provided and required by residents rely on having access to reliable transportation whether this is private or public.
- 4.8.4 Although severe weather affects everyone there are sections of the local community who particularly feel the impact including: older people, people who rely on social care and other professional support, people with underlying health issues, young children, parents with children at school, people living in unsuitable housing and the homeless.
- 4.9 Kirklees Council Severe Weather Plan
- 4.9.1 Kirklees Council has developed a Severe Weather Plan that is produced and maintained by the Emergency Planning Team. The purpose of the plan is to outline the various weather warnings received from partner organisations and to assist the Council's response to a severe weather incident.
- 4.9.2 The main objectives of the plan are to protect life and property and to assist in returning affected areas to normal as soon as possible, after the severe weather incident has passed.

- 4.9.3 The Emergency Planning Team host a pre-winter planning meeting which involves key services from across the Council, partner organisations and local agencies including: NHS Kirklees, Locala Community Partnerships (provides NHS community services), West Yorkshire Police and West Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service.
- 4.9.4 The 2011-12 pre-winter meeting took place in October 2011 with the objective of reviewing the lessons learned from the previous winter period and agreeing plans to overcome any issues that had arisen from the 2010-11 winter.
- 4.9.5 One area of focus that the Emergency Planning Team will be looking to support for the 2011-12 winter period is the promotion of community resilience which will include the Council taking a more pro-active approach in highlighting what communities and businesses can do to help themselves.
- 4.9.6 The Emergency Planning Team work with a number of key services across the Council including Well-being and Integration, Streetscene and Housing and Children and Young People. The Severe Weather Plan includes an email circulation list to alert council services to severe weather warnings which in the event of conditions affecting the whole of the Kirklees area extends to external partners including local bus operators.
- 4.9.7 The Emergency Planning Team are responsible for coordinating the Council resources in response to severe weather conditions and can be contacted 24 hours a day and 7 days a week.
- 4.9.8 A key resource during periods of severe snow and ice is the access to emergency 4x4 transport and a plan that outlines emergency transport arrangements has been developed by the Emergency Planning Team in order to maintain critical service delivery and effectively co-ordinate the use of Council resources.
- 4.9.9 The plan has identified that the Adults Home Care Service is most likely to require the 4x4 transport resource which can be used to transport Home Care Assistants to their clients. The resource can also be used to transport key Council staff to and from their homes and work.
- 4.9.10 The 4x4 transport currently only covers the resource that is available through the Council, although Emergency Planning are currently investigating the feasibility of utilising external resources such as those available through the Yorkshire 4x4 club.
- 4.9.11 A key learning point identified from previous winters was the need to set up a system that would help to prioritise the allocation of resource such as the 4x4 transport. For the winter period 2011-12 the Well-being and Integration Service will set up an internal triage system that will help to make better use of the limited resources.

4.10 Well-being and Communities

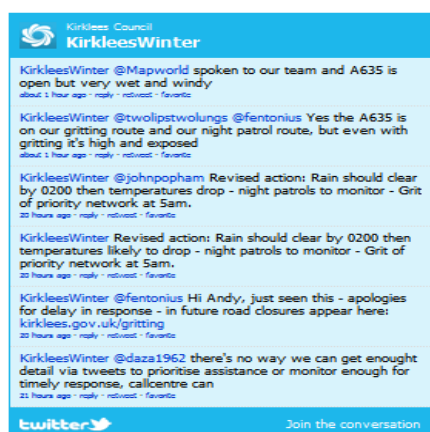
- 4.10.1 Every winter the effects of cold weather have an impact on the health of people and the most vulnerable group tend to be older people. Each year the Well-being and Integration Service run a promotional campaign highlighting the issues that face many elderly residents during periods of cold weather and snow.
- 4.10.2 Well-being and Integration use newsletters and press releases to encourage local communities to check on elderly neighbours who could be stuck inside and unable to get to the shops to buy food or obtain their medication.
- 4.10.3 The Service does not operate to a formal snow plan but each service team has a localised plan aimed at overcoming transport issues and will focus on those people who are most vulnerable.
- 4.10.4 The Service also steps up its activity for those known individuals who in normal circumstances are able to manage independently but who may struggle during periods of severe cold weather.
- 4.10.5 To support individuals who may need help or support, Gateway to Care has an emergency list of snow volunteers who are mainly made up of Council and NHS staff who are willing to help vulnerable people during adverse weather conditions.
- 4.10.6 In the event that the severe weather conditions continue over a prolonged period of time the senior management team in Well-Being and Integration take on a co-ordinating role and will escalate procedures to ensure that resources are deployed to provide the necessary service for those people who are most at risk.

4.11 School Closures

- 4.11.1 The closure of schools due to severe weather impacts on many people not least parents and carers who may struggle to arrange child care, often at short notice, or have no choice but to take a day off from work.
- 4.11.2 Kirklees provides guidelines for handling school closures which clearly states that the decision to close a school is that of the headteacher or nominated deputy. Guidance states that the primary reason for closure should be based on health and safety reasons and should not be based on the difficulties that children may face in getting to the school.
- 4.11.3 The decision to close a school requires careful consideration and the head teacher will have to make a judgement regarding the health and safety of the pupils and staff and ensuring that there will be sufficient numbers of teaching staff that will be able to get to school in relation to the number of pupils attending. The decision has been made harder in recent times as there is a

trend for greater numbers of teaching staff to live outside the local school area.

- 4.11.4 If the decision to close a school is taken, the school informs Kirklees Council through a dedicated email address using a unique 4 digit number and can also inform the Council using a 24 hour phone service.
- 4.11.5 Once informed, the Council will publicise the closure on the Kirklees website and also inform relevant services including transport, catering, cleaning, asset management and school crossing patrols. In addition, the Council will also notify the local press, radio and TV stations.
- 4.11.6 The Kirklees Council Learning Section provide a letter template to all schools that can be used to send to parents/carers outlining the steps that the school will take to inform them of school closure and promoting the information that will be made available on the Council website. Each school uses its own method to contact parents/carers, which can range from phone, text or email.



4.11.7 Kirklees Council Learning Section also encourage head teachers to use the 'Gritter Twitter' which enables anyone with a twitter account to be kept informed of weather warnings, road closures, details of the gritting operations and other important weather related information.

- 4.11.8 There isn't a standard policy or procedure that covers how schools should approach the clearance of snow or ice in its grounds. Each school will make its own arrangements which can include subscribing to a grit bin service provided by the Council and/or enlisting the help of parent volunteers.
- 4.11.9 Streetscene has strengthened the approach it takes to providing support for schools and now has procedures that include making contact with schools and the Children and Young People Learning Section and agreeing areas of responsibility. This has included an undertaking from Streetscene to clear a route to schools that are holding examinations. However for schools who are not located near to the priority routes the roads leading to schools are not routinely gritted.
- 4.11.10 Schools who are not local authority controlled are still able to use the Council website and have details of closure publicised. The Council will also provide support and advice where required.

4.12 Local Transport Operators

- 4.12.1 Public transport plays an important role in providing transport to all members of society. The main public transport for the residents of Kirklees is provided by the various local bus operators who provide a wide spread accessible service across the district.
- 4.12.2 During periods of adverse weather conditions the use of transport can be severely affected and people who normally travel in private vehicles often make alternative travel arrangements which results in a greater demand for public transport. The need for certainty in travel arrangements during periods of severe weather is important particularly in the case of public transport.
- 4.12.3 Three of the main bus operators in Kirklees (First, Arriva, and Centrebus) have identified the main routes that are most likely to be affected by weather conditions and have plans in place to alter these routes should some of the secondary routes become inaccessible. However due to the unpredictability of weather conditions the bus operators prefer not to formalise emergency arrangements as this could lead to the bus operations becoming inflexible and unresponsive to the changing conditions.
- 4.12.4 Currently the bus operators send details of disruption to services to Metro who promote changes and disruptions to bus services on its website. In addition the bus operator First also uses social networks to update its customers. Communication with Kirklees Council is currently done on a dedicated telephone number via the 'ROSS' service provided by Streetscene.
- 4.12.5 Most bus operators start commencing bus operations from around 5:00am, which coincides with the time that Kirklees potentially starts its normal gritting operations. Feedback from bus operators indicates that if gritting operations could commence prior to 5:00am this could potentially assist bus drivers travelling into work and provide a greater degree of certainty in getting early morning vehicles into service. This has been discussed with Streetscene although due to a number of issues including EU working time directives it is not currently feasible to routinely provide a service prior to 5:00 am.

4.13 Refuse Services

- 4.13.1 Severe weather conditions often disrupt many routine services that residents of Kirklees take for granted such as refuse collection. Although Streetscene provide a comprehensive gritting service during periods of severe weather it can often take some time before secondary routes and roads leading into estates can be treated which can result in delays to refuse collection.
- 4.13.2 The Council's cleansing section, responsible for refuse collection, take a flexible and pro-active approach to dealing with any backlog and wherever

possible aim to go back to those areas that have been missed by the end of the collection week including if necessary working additional hours.

4.13.3 The advice that is issued to local residents is to continue to present bins until they have been emptied and in the case of a prolonged disruption the Council will consider offering residents the option to have both the green bin (recycle material) and the black bin (general waste) emptied at the same time.

4.13.4 The cleansing section will also look to prioritise resources by altering the planned collection rotas in order to clear the backlog in the worst affected areas. In addition the cleansing section will liaise with gritting teams to target areas once the priority routes have been treated and arrange for areas to be gritted in advance of the refuse crew attending.

4.13.5

PANEL VIEW

- The Panel acknowledges that steps have been taken by the authority to help mitigate the impact of severe winter weather conditions by outlining the steps that can be taken in ensuring that there is a co-ordinated response from the Council, partner organisations and other local agencies.
- The Panel welcomes and supports the pre-winter meeting involving key services from across the Council, partner organisations and local agencies and would wish to see these continue even if it follows a mild winter period.
- The Panel welcomes the promotion of community resilience and would like to see the authority continue to highlight the need for residents to prepare themselves for the winter period and to help take on some of the responsibility of looking out for those who may require assistance.
- The Panel acknowledges the actions taken by the Well-being and Integration Service to help support older people in Kirklees during the winter period.
- The Panel supports the approach taken to encourage members of the public to check on elderly neighbours and would wish to see the authority continue to take a pro-active lead in encouraging all council services and members of the public to help identify vulnerable people so that plans can be put in place to meet their needs.
- The Panel acknowledges the procedures in place to communicate school closures and particular supports the use of social media such as 'Gritter Twitter' which is an initiative that has gained national recognition.
- The Panel acknowledges that the decision to close a school due to severe weather conditions is the responsibility of the headteacher and is based on grounds of health and safety.
- The Panel appreciates the difficulties that school closures can have on parents and carers and would like to see the authority encourage schools to take a positive approach when considering school closures and look for reasons for keeping the school open rather than focusing on reasons for closure.

PANEL VIEW (cont.)

- The Panel would like to see the Council and Metro in conjunction with local bus operators undertake further work to help improve and strengthen the communication and co-ordination of bus services during severe weather
- The Panel acknowledges the flexible approach taken by the authority in dealing with the backlog of refuse collection following a disruption of services due to severe weather conditions.

5 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 5.1 That Streetscene should continue to develop the expertise, knowledge and experience required to oversee and support the council's winter maintenance programme by developing a clear and robust succession planning policy that includes:
- Training and development activities that prepare future senior officers responsible for winter maintenance to deal with severe winter conditions.
 - The provision of tailored work experience that is relevant for the roles of key officer positions involved in winter maintenance.
- 5.2 That Streetscene continue with the policy of securing pre-winter salt stock levels that provide sufficient enough supplies to cope with the severest of winters (as experienced during 2009-10).
- 5.3 That the following actions be taken to resolve the long term maintenance of grit bins funded by Area Committees:
- That Streetscene in conjunction with Area Committees and the Cabinet Members for Investment and Housing clarify the future funding arrangements of existing grit bins including the provision of new grit bins as soon after the winter period 2011-12 as practicable in order to agree a policy before the winter period 2012-13.
 - That Area Committees in consultation with Streetscene continue to be involved in prioritising the location of grit bins.
- 5.4 That a commitment is made to continue with the annual Pre-Winter Planning Meeting and the Post Winter Review with the aim of improving the Council's response to severe weather conditions and should include:
- A focus on supporting vulnerable people across Kirklees
 - Incorporating the Winter Maintenance Plan in the Severe Weather Plan and producing an annual winter update, that is accessible to members of the public, local businesses and partner organisations, that details the outcomes of the pre and post winter review including the agreed actions.

6. ATTENDEES AND WITNESSES

The review was carried out between September 2011 and November 2011 and the Panel are grateful to the following people for their help and assistance in providing relevant documentation and information including attending Panel interviews:

- Mark Dobson – Unit Manager Streetscene and Housing
- John Edwards – Assistant Director for Learning
- Judith Hooper – Director of Public Health
- Neil Tootill – Operational Manager Streetscene and Housing
- Sally McIvor – Assistant Director Well-being and Integration
- Sue Richards – Head of Care Well-being and Integration
- Sean Westerby – Corporate Safety and Resilience Team Manager
- Paul Whittaker – Cleansing Manager Streetscene and Housing

The Panel would also like to thank Neil Stewart, Highways Liaison Coordinator, Metro and the bus operators Arriva, Centrebus and First for responding to a questionnaire, details of which can be found in Appendix 1.

7. SOURCES OF EVIDENCE

- Briefing on the likelihood of severe winter weather over the next 20-30 years for Sir John Beddington – Prof. Julia Slingo Met Office Chief Scientist December 2010
- Cabinet Report – Winter Maintenance Policy from 2009/2010 – November 2009
- Cold Weather Plan for England Protecting health and reducing harm from severe cold – Department of Health November 2011
- Guidance on community action during severe weather – Communities and Local Government December 2010.
- Kirklees Council 4x4 Transport Arrangements – October 2011
- Kirklees Council Severe Weather Plan – November 2011
- Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee – Winter Maintenance Update October 2009
- Questions to Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Environment and Transport (Councillor Sheard) – Council meeting January 2010
- Review of Highways Winter Maintenance – 2009 Presentation
- Scottish Road Network: Lessons learned and recommendations following the events of winter 2009/10
- Streetscene Winter Maintenance Presentation on Preparations for Winter 2010/11 – September 2010
- Streetscene & Housing Service Winter Maintenance update 2010/11
- The Resilience of England's Transport Systems in December 2010 - An Independent Audit by David Quarmby CBE December 2010
- UK Roads Liaison Group Report – July 2009
- Winter Board Report - Community Gritting Progress August 2010

APPENDIX 1

Kirklees Council Development and Environment Scrutiny Panel – Winter Maintenance Assigned Task letter to Local Bus Operators

Members of the Development and Environment Scrutiny Panel are currently undertaking a review of winter maintenance procedures in Kirklees which includes a focus on the co-ordination of services and managing public expectation.

As part of this review members of the Panel are keen to establish the role of public transport and would welcome your input to help inform aspects of this review.

I would therefore be grateful if you could spare a few minutes of your time to answer the questions that are listed below.

1. During periods of severe weather (including snow and ice) where a bus service is unable to gain access to roads that form part of its normal route are there any plans in place for a bus service to revert to an emergency route? For example do you have pre-agreed emergency route plans in place to enable a temporary suspension of routes into the secondary and tertiary routes (that aren't immediately targeted for gritting/snow clearance by the Council) thereby maintaining a service running along the main roads.
2. If there are emergency route plans what steps are in place to publicise in advance and to announce when they are in operation?
3. If there are no emergency route plans in place are there are any barriers that would prevent you from introducing them?
4. If required and subject to having the available resource would you be willing to cover another operator's bus route? If you aren't willing what are the reasons that prevent you from doing so?
5. What involvement, if any, do you have in communicating and coordinating action with Kirklees Council? For example communicating a suspension of a bus service, informing the Council of particular areas that may require a targeting of resource such as gritting or snow clearance, assistance from Council resource in transporting bus drivers to a depot to enable them to operate a bus.
6. If you have little of no involvement with the Council would you be willing or welcome the opportunity to participate in this coordinating approach?
7. Do you see there being any barriers to this coordinating approach?

SCRUTINY ACTION PLAN

Project: Winter Maintenance

Lead Scrutiny Officer: Richard Dunne

			FOR COMPLETION			
No.	Recommendation	KNH r(s) or organisation asked to coordinate the response to the recommendation	Do you agree with the recommendation? If no, please explain why.	How will this be implemented?	Who will be responsible for implementation?	What is the estimated timescale for implementation?
1	<p>That Streetscene should continue to develop the expertise, knowledge and experience required to oversee and support the council's winter maintenance programme by developing a clear and robust succession planning policy that includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training and development activities that prepare future senior officers responsible for winter maintenance to deal with severe winter conditions. • The provision of tailored work experience that is relevant for the roles of key officer positions involved in winter maintenance. 	<p style="text-align: center;">Interim Director of Place Jacqui Gedman</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Investment & Housing Cllr's David Sheard & Peter McBride</p>	YES	<p>4 additional staff members have now received the Met Office training which gives them the 'legal' qualification.¹</p> <p>Some of these staff 'shadowed' the experienced decision makers during the 2010/11 winter to further develop their knowledge and experience.</p> <p>3 of these staff are</p>	Mark Dobson	<p>3 'new' fully trained and experienced decision makers for the end of winter 2011/12, giving 6 in total for SS&H service</p>

¹ The Met Office provides a number of training courses for road operators that cover the impact of weather in relation to road operations. The Courses are accredited by the Chartered Institution of Highways and Transportation and the Institute of Highway Engineers.

				now the decision makers for the ongoing 2011/12 winter. These 'new' staff are undertaking this new role with the support of the remaining, more experienced winter decision makers.		
2	That Streetscene continue with the policy of securing pre-winter salt stock levels that provide sufficient enough supplies to cope with the severest of winters (as experienced during 2009-10).	Interim Director of Place Jacqui Gedman Investment & Housing Cllr's David Sheard & Peter McBride	YES	Currently progressing / agreeing joint procurement of salt with South and West Yorkshire partners. Salt stocks to be assessed as part of the usual 'winter review' process and replenished to 25k tonnes prior to commencement of winter 2012/13	Mark Dobson	September 2012

3	<p>That the following actions be taken to resolve the long term maintenance of grit bins funded by Area Committees:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • That Streetscene in conjunction with Area Committees and the Cabinet Members for Investment and Housing clarify the future funding arrangements of existing grit bins including the provision of new grit bins as soon after the winter period 2011-12 as practicable in order to agree a policy before the winter period 2012-13. • That Area Committees in consultation with Streetscene continue to be involved in prioritising the location of grit bins. 	<p>Interim Director of Place Jacqui Gedman</p> <p>Investment & Housing Cllr's David Sheard & Peter McBride</p>	YES	<p>Consultation to take place via Streetscene & Housing ward meetings and at Area Committee Business Planning meetings.</p> <p>The outcome of this consultation and way forward to be confirmed via Cabinet prior to winter 2012/13</p>	Mark Dobson	September 2012
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4	<p>That a commitment is made to continue with the annual Pre-Winter Planning Meeting and the Post Winter Review with the aim of improving the Council's response to severe weather conditions and should include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A focus on supporting vulnerable people across Kirklees • Incorporating the Winter Maintenance Plan in the Severe Weather Plan and producing an annual winter update, that is accessible to members of the public, local businesses and partner organisations, that details the outcomes of the pre and post winter review including the agreed actions. 	<p>Interim Director of Place Jacqui Gedman</p> <p>Investment & Housing Cllr's David Sheard & Peter Mcbride</p>	YES	<p>Monthly review meetings will continue to take place throughout the year where these issues (along with other winter planning issues) are discussed / debated. A report / presentation will then be delivered to area committees where our plans are explained and comments / recommendations received and acted upon as appropriate.</p>	Mark Dobson	November 2012
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