

5th November 2013**Agenda Item: 11****REPORT OF THE SERVICE DIRECTOR FOR PROMOTING INDEPENDENCE
AND PUBLIC PROTECTION****EMERGENCY PLANNING FOR SEVERE WINTER WEATHER****Purpose of the Report**

1. The purpose of this report is to provide an overview of the emergency plans in place, and other arrangements that have been made, for responding to the impact of severe winter weather in Nottinghamshire during the coming winter.

Information and AdviceBackground

2. Following the severe winter weather of 2009 and 2010 it was decided to produce a specific 'Winter Weather Emergency Plan' for Nottinghamshire County Council (NCC). The aim of this plan is to facilitate and coordinate NCC assistance to Nottinghamshire communities during winter weather, and its objectives are to:
 - Outline gritting routes, and the impact of salt conservation on communities
 - Establish a flexible activation procedure to ensure a timely response to severe weather
 - Outline the measures in place to ensure effective communications with communities, County Council staff, elected members, and partner organisations, prior to and during a severe winter weather event
 - Document the system for recording school closures
 - Detail arrangements for obtaining additional resources to help maintain critical services
3. The plan is approved annually by the NCC Risk, Safety and Emergency Management Board (RSEMB), and is supplemented by further plans and policies including a specific '4x4 Vehicle Plan'. Elements of these arrangements have been utilised each winter since their creation, and lessons from each incident are fed back into the planning process.

Snow Clearance Assistance to Priority Sites

4. In 2010 a number of specific sites, such as special schools, meals at home facilities and residential centres, all requested assistance with snow clearing to keep services running. As a consequence of this, all eleven special schools in

the County were added to the severe weather highways gritting routes to maintain a route open to them. The 'Meals at Home' distribution centre in Mansfield was also added.

5. In addition, staff groups who already worked outdoors, and who have the equipment to help manually clear snow at critical service sites, are pre-identified for undertaking this work during severe weather. Teams from Landscape Services and 'Tarmac' (who work in conjunction with Highways) are now matched to a list of pre-identified sites on a district by district basis. It remains the sites' own responsibility (under business continuity arrangements) to have grit salt on site for the teams to use once the snow is cleared.

Assistance from District and Borough Councils

6. It is planned that some District and Borough Council staff groups, such as park operatives, can be redeployed to assist Highways with snow clearing, when the conditions mean that they are unable to conduct their normal duties. NCC Highways have agreed to provide these councils with a supply of salt for this purpose, and to offer further supplies to be purchased at the County Council negotiated cheaper rate.

Assistance to Communities

7. Through County Council Highways, Parish Councils are annually offered five bags of salt free of charge to assist their community with snow clearing. They can also then buy additional 25kg or 1 tonne bags at a highways negotiated cheaper rate. Parish councils can also apply for and buy grit bins for locally affected areas. The bins are delivered by highways complete with grit for a charge of £150. It is then the responsibility of parish councils to refill them each year. They are coloured blue to distinguish these from NCC replenished yellow grit bins. In total, there are currently 1200 grit bins in the County.
8. Snow wardens are appointed by Parish Councils as a link to NCC during winter conditions. Snow wardens receive training and basic levels of equipment from NCC Highways and are able to carry out basic clearance work within their community. They act as a local contact point providing up to date information on local conditions to highways area offices.
9. Also, a scheme has been established by County Council Highways to enable farmers to assist with snow clearance. Routes for snow clearing are pre-arranged and farmers must have machinery for snow ploughing. Farmers are paid a fixed fee for clearing pre-arranged routes and are activated through highway area offices. (NCC highways hold further details of the scheme).
10. Community resilience and self-help messages continue to be promoted particularly around the government's 'Snow Code' which advises on health and safety measures as well as offering practical tips and advice to householders and communities.

NCC 4x4 Vehicles Plan

11. 2010 saw extensive use of 4x4 vehicles with 23 vehicles used by NCC. A member of the Emergency Planning Team chaired the Local Resilience Forum (LRF) logistics cell set up to coordinate multi-agency use of vehicles. As a consequence of this, in 2011 a specific 4x4 Vehicle Plan was produced to pre allocate NCC vehicles to selected critical services and to pre-allocate the vehicles available to NCC in times of snow.
12. The aim of the plan is to facilitate and coordinate the County Council's deployment of 4x4 vehicles to critical services during an incident. To achieve this, the plan has the following objectives:
 - To outline the critical services pre-identified who require 4x4 vehicles
 - To match donating services to requesting services
 - To outline how services activate the use of 4x4s in an incident
 - To outline staff 4x4 familiarisation sessions available through NCC departments.
 - To outline what 4x4s will not be used for.
 - To outline the use of the LRF Logistics cell to supplement 4x4 provision
13. NCC has the advantage of having its own 4x4 vehicles that can be redeployed immediately if the need arises. These are from services such as country parks, children's outdoor adventure, and highways training. Staff costs and petrol during redeployment are met by the receiving service.
14. It is recognised that there is a need to provide appropriate specialist training for personnel in critical services who may need to drive 4x4s in times of heavy snowfall. This is provided by Transport and Travel colleagues and is mandatory for these drivers.

NCC Staff 4x4 Volunteer Drivers

15. It was also recognised that there was an untapped resource of NCC staff who own their own 4x4 vehicles, or who had previous experience of driving 4x4s. Advice was taken from Health and Safety and Risk and Insurance colleagues, and a recruitment campaign has taken place for the last three years to encourage NCC staff in non-critical services to volunteer to assist with 4x4s in times of snow. These colleagues were provided with access to the mandatory 4x4 training. It was decided not to ask for public volunteers, to maintain the safety of both staff and the public, and to only use trained volunteers.
16. For winter 2014 NCC currently has:
 - 20 4x4 vehicles (redeployed or owner driver)
 - 50 4x4 drivers (NCC staff volunteers or critical service volunteers)
17. There is access to additional vehicles through voluntary and partner organisations:
 - Voluntary agency Nottinghamshire 4x4 response

- Voluntary agency Nottingham emergency scout support team (NESST)
- Voluntary agency British Red Cross

18. In extreme circumstances, access to further vehicles may be possible through an LRF Tactical Coordinating Group (if established). Sources may include:

- Environment Agency
- Nottingham City Council
- Mansfield District Council

Exercises

19. A training and exercise session of the 4x4 plan was held with critical services in 2012 and each year in autumn a call out exercise takes place with the NCC staff 4x4 volunteers to check contact details and to update details regarding availability.

Communications

20. To aid the public in accessing information on NCC services closed during times of snow there is a disruption to services email that managers contact if their service needs to close and this information is updated directly onto the website. The schools 'NG Alert' system also comes through to this email address allowing an accurate record of all schools closed or affected by the weather. To aid communications with elected members a specific winter weather elected members briefing template has been created.

Activities in progress currently

21. At the time of preparing this report, activities in progress included:

- Winter Weather Emergency Plan under review for approval at the November RSEMB
- 4x4 Vehicle Plan under review for approval at the November RSEMB
- Emergency Planning staff attend Highways winter planning meetings
- 4x4 training sessions and refresher training for staff trained in 2010 are being planned to start in late October early November.
- A new venue for 4x4 training has been investigated
- Update meetings taking place with all services pre-identified in the 4x4 plan
- Standard operating procedure for snow clearance assistance to social care sites under review
- A review of pre-identified sites has begun
- Attendance at Ashfield 'Prepare for winter event' to promote community resilience and self-help messages.

Statutory and Policy Implications

22. This report has been compiled after consideration of implications in respect of crime and disorder, finance, human resources, human rights, the public sector equality duty, safeguarding of children and vulnerable adults, service users, sustainability and the environment and ways of working and where such implications are material they are described below. Appropriate consultation has been undertaken and advice sought on these issues as required.

RECOMMENDATION/S

It is recommended that the Community Safety Committee:

- 1) Note the emergency plans in place and other arrangements that have been made for responding to the impact of severe winter weather in Nottinghamshire during the coming winter.
- 2) In the event of severe weather during the coming winter, receive a further report in spring 2014 to review the operation of Emergency Plans and any lessons learned.

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Constitutional Comments

23. As the report is for noting only, no Constitutional comments are required.

Financial Comments (CLK 28/10/13)

24. There are no financial implications contained in this report.

Background Papers

Except for previously published documents, which will be available elsewhere, the documents listed here will be available for inspection in accordance with Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972.

- a. Nottinghamshire County Council Winter Weather Emergency Plan
- b. Nottinghamshire County Council 4x4 Vehicle Plan

Electoral Division(s) and Member(s) Affected

All.

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