

EAST AYRSHIRE COUNCIL
GOVERNANCE AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
18 JUNE 2010

WINTER RESPONSE ARRANGEMENTS

**Report by Depute Chief Executive / Executive Director of
Neighbourhood Services**

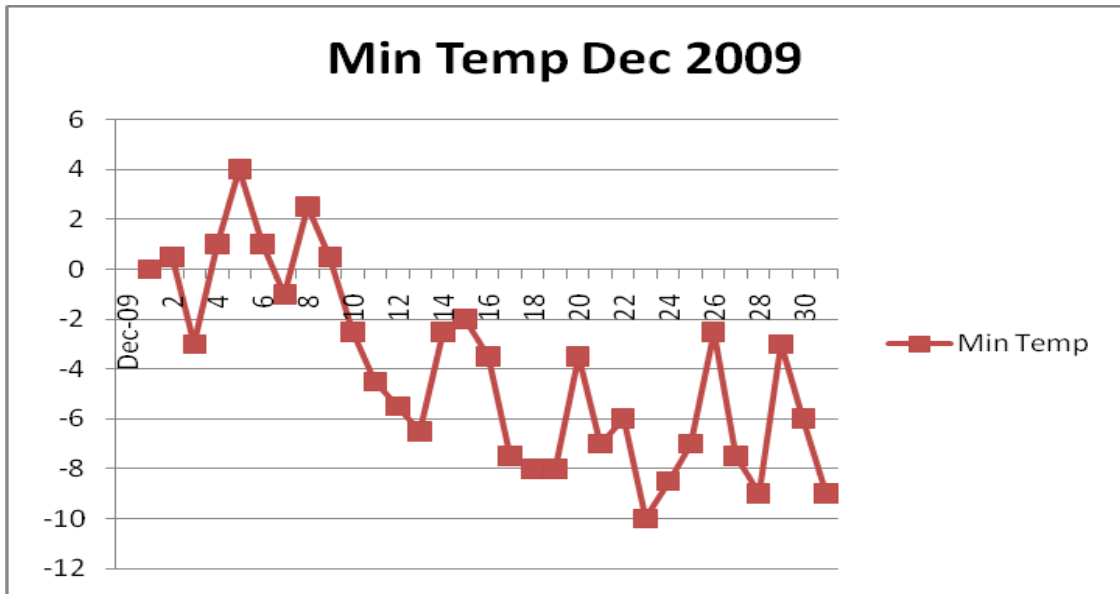
PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1 To provide an analysis of the Council's response to the severe weather conditions which occurred between 20th December 2009 and 15th January 2010, (referred to as the reporting period, unless otherwise stated) as agreed by the Governance and Scrutiny Committee on 28th January 2010;
- 2 To highlight examples of good practice implemented during this period, employee issues and costs; and
- 3 To make recommendations on improvement actions.

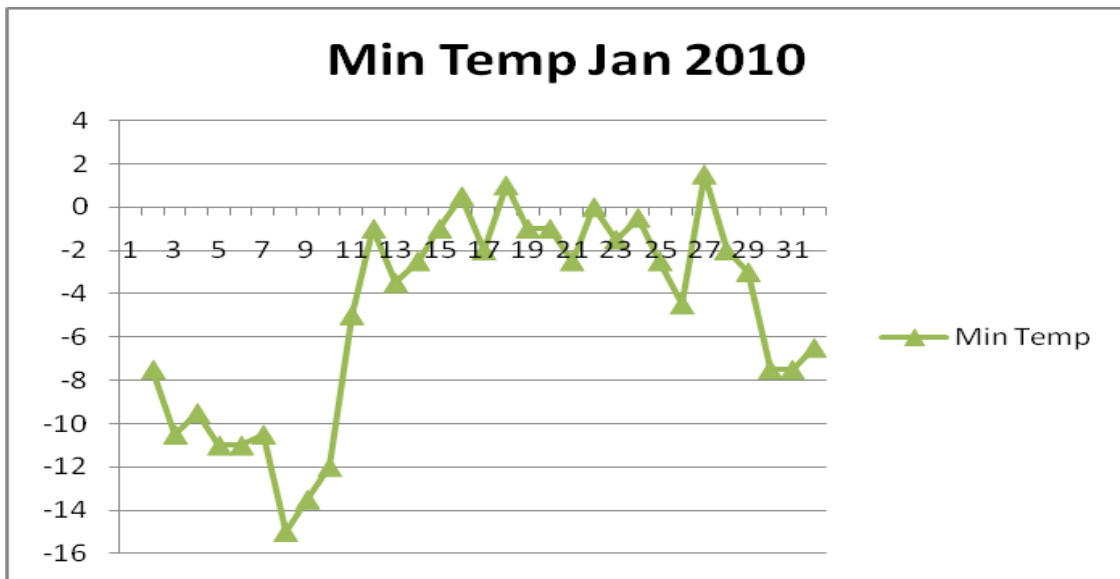
BACKGROUND

- 4 While winter weather in the UK is largely unpredictable, up until 1st December 2008 the presence of snow and ice for any more than a few days at a time has been relatively rare in recent times. Temperatures normally fluctuate around freezing point with a degree of uncertainty about whether ice may form on roads and other surfaces.
- 5 The period of severe weather from 20th December to 15th January 2010 affected the whole country. The 2009/10 winter has been confirmed by the Met Office as the coldest in Scotland since 1962/63.
- 6 On 20th December, a substantial snowfall occurred in the south of East Ayrshire with a further significant snowfall over all of East Ayrshire on the evening of 22nd December. The weather pattern then changed to extremely low temperatures both day and night with associated snow and sleet which meant there was no thaw during the daytime and the snow and ice did not melt as would normally be the case after a few days.
- 7 While the start of December was essentially mild, temperatures dipped below freezing on a number of nights. However, from 9th December onwards the temperature dropped below zero every night until 15th January 2010. Following the snowfalls of 20th and 22nd December 2009, the temperatures fell to lows of around -15°C on a number of nights with -10C being the norm and temperatures were regularly below -5°C as a high during the day. Table 1 below summarises the position.

Table 1



Nights below zero = 24, nights above +2°C = 2



Nights below zero = 28, nights above +2°C = 0

- 8** The severe weather resulted in an exceptional demand on Council services and employees over the Christmas and New Year holiday period. Challenges included a high demand for gritting and snow clearing operations; in executing refuse collection; and repairs to heating systems and burst pipes in Council housing, community facilities and schools. There were also challenges in accessing service user households to deliver care packages. Ensuring that the public were provided with timely and accurate information was an important priority.

WINTER RESPONSE ARRANGEMENTS

- 9** The following paragraphs of the report detail the service delivery context for affected service areas and how the Council responded during the period. This includes references to costs, to communications and to employee matters together with examples of good practice. Areas for improvement, should such a situation arise again in the future, are also detailed.

ROADS AND TRANSPORTATION

Service Delivery Context

- 10** East Ayrshire Council as Roads Authority has a statutory duty under Section 34 of the Roads (Scotland) Act 1984 to 'take such steps as it considers reasonable to prevent snow and ice endangering the safe passage of pedestrians and vehicles over public roads'. Each year the Roads and Transportation Service undertakes an operational review and determines how best to meet the policy criteria and level of service for the following winter, taking cognisance of lessons learned during the previous winter. The policy was reviewed by the Governance and Scrutiny Committee during 2009 following the previous winter 2008/09, which concluded that the policy, in general, was fit for purpose and robust but some areas required further review, particularly with regard to carriageway and footway gritting routes and priorities. This further review is programmed to be completed by summer 2010 and it will be presented to the Governance and Scrutiny Committee after the recess.
- 11** The policy reflects the relevant legislation and the Code of Practice for Highway Maintenance Management "Well Maintained Highways". It recognises that it is not possible to treat all roads and footways and identifies those that will be given priority for treatment. The Roads and Transportation Winter Service is provided to ensure that transport links, essential to economic and social activity, can continue to be used safely throughout the winter. 697km of the Council's 1,200km road network are designated as having a high priority for winter service. This ratio (57%) compares very favourably with other Council areas in Scotland and is much higher than the national average (44%). Fifteen pre-planned gritting routes are used to provide this level of service.
- 12** Lower levels of treatment are provided on the remainder of the carriageway and footway network when available resources permit, as and when required during normal working hours. Some very low priority carriageways and footways are normally not treated unless hard packed snow or ice threatens to prevent access for essential services and these are attended to upon request, again if resources permit.
- 13** Whilst target times for the completion of gritting routes are identified in the policy, it also recognises that treatment times in severe weather conditions will be longer. The policy recognises that in snow conditions, higher priority route may have to be treated several times before any attention can be given to other lower priority routes.

- 14 The policy also details the priorities for the treatment of footways which generally cover the town and village centres and other areas of high pedestrian concentrations. Footway routes are only treated when deemed absolutely necessary and normally only during normal working hours.
- 15 The Council has its own in-house fleet of 17 vehicles to undertake the winter gritting functions; these multi-purpose vehicles can also be fitted with snow ploughs when required. The fleet is maintained in-house, with mechanics on stand-by during the winter period. Additional resources can also be obtained from the private sector as required, for example gritters, excavators and snow ploughs. Details of Council resources are provided in the table below.

Table 2 - Summary of Winter Service Resources for Council Roads

<u>Description</u>	<u>Type</u>	<u>Total</u>
Vehicles	Gritter - 9 tonnes	15
	Gritter 6 tonnes	2
	Loading Shovel	2
Tractors	Footway	5
Gritting Units	Demounts	1
Snow Blower	Trailer	2
Grit Bins		395
Salt Stocks	Tonnage at 01/11/09	6,009 tonnes
Manpower		
(On Standby)		
Drivers		54

- 16 Weather updates are provided by MeteoGroup using information supplied by the Met Office and from weather stations located throughout SW Scotland. Within East Ayrshire, there are stations located at Dalmellington, Cumnock, Dunlop and Fenwick. Three Engineers designated as Winter Controllers, operate on a weekly rota to access weather information and make appropriate treatment decisions.
- 17 54 Roads and Transportation employees are on standby to carry out gritting duties on a rota basis. Eight trained 'Winter Supervisors' are responsible for organising resources and ensuring that the work is undertaken on a day to day basis. They receive updates from the gritter drivers and can also contact the Winter Controllers to advise of changing conditions. Again, these employees are on rotas to ensure 24/7 cover during the winter period.

- 18** To assist with the delivery of the service, 395 grit bins have been laid out at known trouble spots, generally at steep gradients and junctions. They are not generally placed on the pre-planned gritting routes. Small stockpiles of salt are also placed at depot entrance gates for residents to obtain small amounts for personal use.
- 19** Assistance is provided by Outdoor Amenities who undertake footway gritting and filling of grit bins when requested by the Roads and Transportation Service. This work is generally carried out during normal working hours.
- 20** Salt is supplied by Salt Sales (based in Northern Ireland) via a contract with a consortium of 6 other roads authorities in the West of Scotland, including both North and South Ayrshire. The salt is stored in 2 salt domes at Gauchalland and Underwood depots. 6009 tonnes of salt were held in stock at the 01 November 2009. A stockpile of 70 tonnes of salt was also placed at Chalmerston Opencast Coal Site near Dalmellington to assist in providing footway gritting in the Doon Valley area. Additional salt is ordered as required during the winter period. This has proved adequate for 'normal' winter conditions in recent years with few problems encountered in getting additional deliveries. The recommendation of the UK Roads Liaison Group in their report 'Lessons from the Severe Weather February 2009' is for roads authorities to hold at least 6 days resilience salting supply. This requires a salt stock of 3,240 tonnes for East Ayrshire for 6 days of heavy usage levels.

Challenges and Our Response

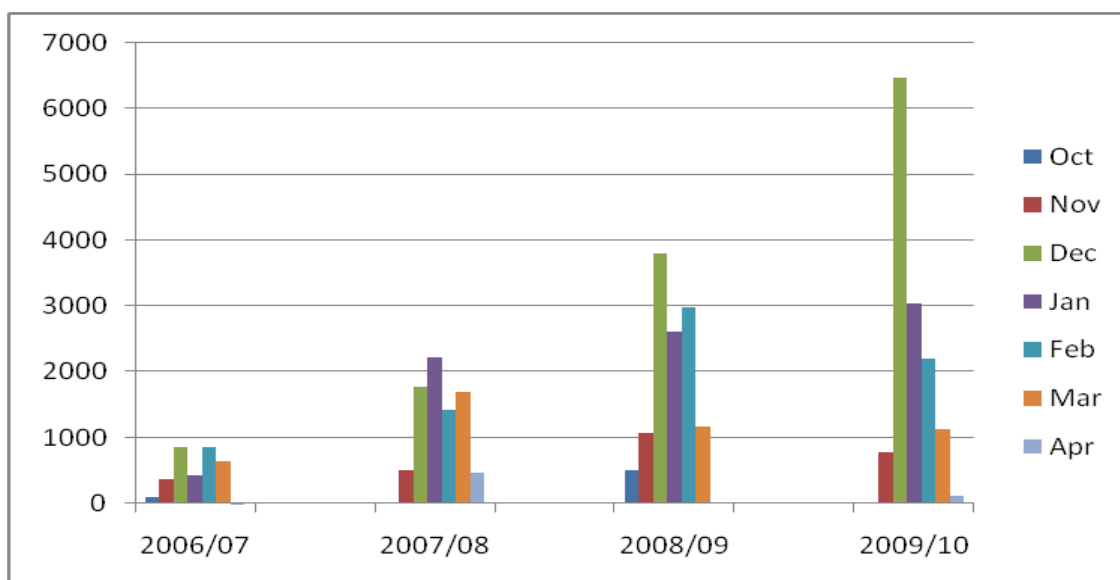
- 21** The challenge for the Roads and Transportation Service was keeping the road and footway network clear of ice and snow during the period of extremely low temperatures, made more difficult by repeated snow and sleet showers. The situation was exacerbated further by a shortage of salt supplies on a UK wide basis.
- 22** Snow clearing and gritting commenced on Sunday 20th December 2009 and continued on a daily basis through to 15 January 2010. 10,218 employee hours were expended on these operations during this period. Additional plant from external contractors, including 17 excavators and seven additional gritters were also deployed. Priority was given to repeated treatment of priority gritting routes throughout the reporting period. Treatment of non-priority routes was directed to emergency situations and responding to requests for assistance from emergency services and members of the public. Priority footways were treated by Outdoor Amenities and Housing Asset Services. Footways at schools and sheltered housing units were also treated. However, it was not possible to expand treatment to all footways due to the necessity to conserve salt.
- 23** Grit bins were refilled in the week prior to Christmas. However, due to the extremely high and in some instances, excessive demand, bins were emptied very quickly and it was not possible to keep them filled at all times. Normally small stockpiles of salt are placed outside depots for members of the public. Again because of the extremely high usage, salt conservation measures and

health and safety implications (the public parking at entrances to depots in large numbers), this service was suspended.

- 24 During the reporting period, the priority route network was kept largely free of snow and ice at all times, and other roads were kept open albeit that due care had to be exercised. Difficulties were encountered by gritters, with snow ploughs attached, accessing minor residential roads due to parked and abandoned cars, resulting in a number of streets only having a single lane cleared.
- 25 Table 3 below details the comparative salt usage with previous years. In addition 950 tonnes of grit were used over the reporting period.

Table 3 Salt Usage – Comparison with Previous Years.

Month	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10
Oct	87	13	490	7
Nov	362	506	1,071	782
Dec	866	1,784	3,802	6,468
Jan	424	2,221	2,606	3,034
Feb	849	1,429	2,989	2,205
Mar	639	1,703	1,163	1,127
Apr	4	477	0	120
TOTAL	3,231	8,133	12,121	13,743



- 26 2,000 tonnes of salt were ordered for delivery before Christmas. Of this order, only 1,500 tonnes were delivered prior to 24th December 2009. Salt Sales were contacted on 21st December 2009 to place more orders, and to try and maximise deliveries before Christmas and to ensure deliveries were obtained between Christmas and New Year due to the forecast conditions. However, they advised they could not guarantee deliveries. The Council investigated other suppliers and ordered 1,000 tonnes of marine salt from Peacock Salt in

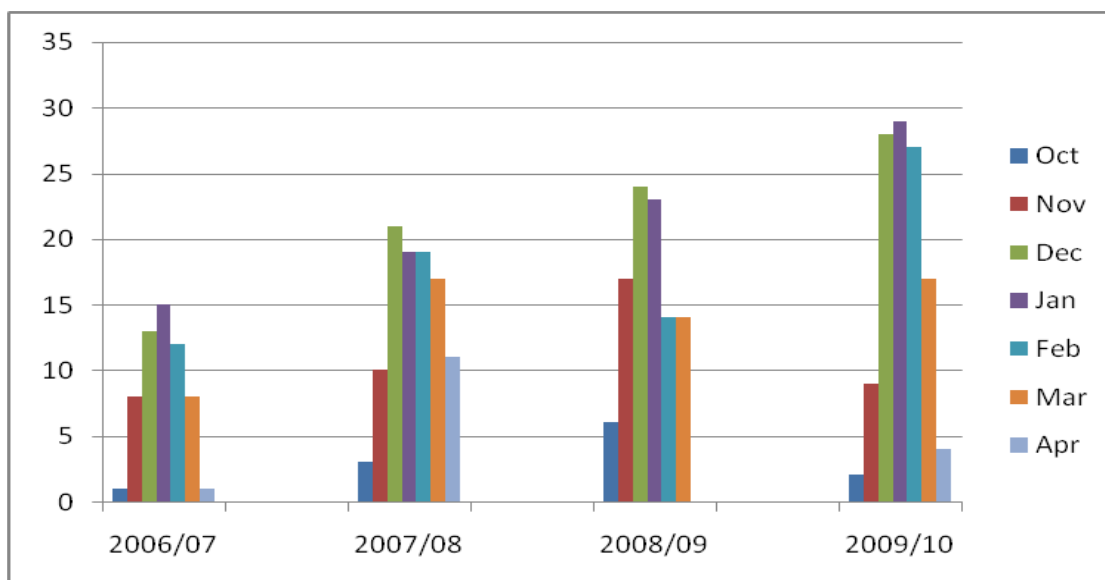
Ayr on 23rd December 2009. Although it was advised that 500 tonnes would be delivered before New Year and 500 tonnes about 6th January, these delivery dates were not fulfilled due to delays in shipping and only 200 tonnes was obtained on 31st December 2009. The remainder of the order was delivered during January 2010.

- 27** Due to ongoing treatment being required, salt stocks diminished and salt conservation measures were implemented. This approach was adopted by all Scottish local authorities, the Scottish Government, and later by all UK roads authorities and ensured that East Ayrshire Council did not run out of salt, contrary to reports in the media. Even with these conservation measures in place, the Council used 5,405 tonnes during the reporting period.
- 28** In response to concerns that salt usage throughout the UK was outstripping national production, the UK government set up a national Salt Cell to manage the distribution of salt to roads authorities throughout the UK on 7 January. A Scottish Salt Cell was set up on 8th January to provide daily briefings to the Scottish Government who continued to receive daily salt returns until 31st March 2010 from all Scottish Councils. This was to ensure that adequate supplies of salt were in place within each Authority for the remainder of the winter.
- 29** Table 4 below and the graph show the number of treatment days for the previous four winters for comparison.

Table 4

TREATMENT DAYS IN 2006/07, 2007/08, 2008/09 AND 2009/10

Month	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10
Oct	1	3	6	2
Nov	8	10	17	9
Dec	13	21	24	28
Jan	15	19	23	29
Feb	12	19	14	27
Mar	8	17	14	17
Apr	1	11	0	4
TOTAL	58	100	98	116



30 The Transport Service supported all Council Services in keeping fleet vehicles operational throughout the reporting period in particular through the extreme low temperatures experienced.

31 Transport Services provided garaging facilities for Council vehicles at Crookedholm during the lowest temperatures preventing vehicles from freezing and providing “chocks” allowing the vehicles to be parked overnight within the depot preventing air brakes freezing.

Cost

32 The total cost of the Winter Service for 2009/10 outturned at 80% above the budgeted figure as detailed below:-

Table 5

	Budget	Out-turn
Labour	£240,715	£404,543
Overheads / materials	£366,355	£385,244
Plant	£185,754	£306,984
Sub-contractors	£7,176	£6,152
Salt	£164,220	£382,166
Ground Maintenance	0	£130,275
Building & Works	0	£115,964
TOTAL	£964,220	£1,731,328

33 In addition to the Winter Service costs there was severe damage to the road network as a result of the prolonged period of extremely low temperatures. Damage was also caused to the road surface when removing hard packed snow and ice with excavators.

- 34** It has been estimated that the cost of repairing the damage is £3.05M and is detailed below.

Lengths of Road requiring urgent reconstruction/resurfacing	£1.300M
Urgent potholing / patching	£0.500M
Other areas of road and footways requiring remedial works	£1.250M
Total estimated remedial works	£3.050M

- 35** On 11th February 2010 Council approved an additional allocation of £2.0m for the repair of Roads damaged following the severe weather during the reporting period. Up to the end of May 2010, £1m has been expended repairing 18km of road.

HOUSING AND HOUSING ASSET SERVICE

Service Delivery Context

- 36** The Housing Asset Service (HAS) closes each year on Christmas Eve (with a standby service of a total of 21 employees identified for 2009/10 Christmas and New Year holiday period) up to 5th January 2010 to respond to requests for emergency repairs to the Council's housing stock. The HAS call centre is normally closed during that period with requests from the public being dealt with by the Risk Management Centre/Helpline.

Challenges and Our Response

- 37** The challenge for Housing and the Housing Asset Service was dealing with the huge number of requests for repairs to heating systems and frozen and burst pipes particularly during the Christmas and New Year holiday period and immediately thereafter.

Emergency Calls

- 38** The Council's Risk Management Centre maintains the emergency out of hours service 24/7.
- 39** The table below provides information on the number of calls received by the Risk Management Centre for the reporting period, totalling 11,717. Information on calls received during comparative periods in previous years is not available.

Table 6

DATE PERIOD	NO. OF CALLS
20-23 December 2009	1,365
24-25 December 2009	773
26 December 2009 – 01 January 2010	3,193
2-5 January 2010	2,537
6-15 January 2010	3,849

- 40 Given the level of calls, the HAS supplemented the Risk Management Centre activities and kept open its own call centre to help meet the demand relating to frozen and burst pipes and central heating failures in our housing stock.
- 41 The table below provides details of the number of calls handled by the HAS call centre during the reporting period totalling 11,247.

Table 7

Calls Handled by Housing Asset Service									
21st Dec	22nd Dec	23rd Dec	28th Dec	29th Dec	30th Dec	31st Dec	4th Jan	5th Jan	6th Jan
568	443	342	389	504	481	338	342	896	708
7th Jan	8th Jan	9th Jan	10th Jan	11th Jan	12th Jan	13th Jan	14th Jan	15th Jan	
1,088	676	655	382	1,089	820	589	496	441	

- 42 Normal operating hours of the HAS call centre are Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm. These hours operated initially; however, from Monday 11th January 2010 until Friday 15th January 2010. The centre was open 11 hours per day. The centre was also open during the weekend of 9th and 10th January, 8.00 am – 5.00 pm.
- 43 In summary, over the reporting period **22,964** calls were received by the Council, the smooth management of which was aggravated by a significant number of repeat calls.

Concern Cards

- 44 HAS developed “Concern Cards” to be used by employees during the reporting period. These cards were completed if, when carrying out a repair for a tenant, a vulnerable individual or family were identified. The cards were passed to Social Services, alerting them to any additional needs that the person or persons may have, for example, food or water requirements or personal care needs.

Gas Central Heating Failures

- 45 Due to the sustained period of sub-zero temperatures, the water produced by modern condensing boilers froze, causing boilers either to cut out, or in severe cases flood the boiler. 31 boilers (of a total of approximately 8,000 boilers) were damaged beyond repair and replaced.
- 46 Where condensate pipes froze, temporary repairs were effected to make systems operational quickly; however, each property was revisited when the external pipes thawed to facilitate a permanent repair. This procedure was carried out on 600 systems – a total of 1,200 visits.

- 47 As well as repairing boilers and condensate pipes, plumbers also dealt with a range of minor faults exacerbated by the winter weather.
- 48 The table below details the number of central heating repairs executed totalling 4,561 repairs.

Table 8

Central Heating Repairs Executed									
21st Dec	22nd Dec	23rd Dec	28th Dec	29th Dec	30th Dec	31st Dec	4th Jan	5th Jan	6th Jan
234	161	135	147	160	188	114	186	386	346
7th Jan	8th Jan	9th Jan	10th Jan	11th Jan	12th Jan	13th Jan	14th Jan	15th Jan	
486	278	297	176	420	308	212	180	147	

- 49 Despite best efforts to resource additional plumbers none were available given the local and national demand. Therefore to meet demand for heating repairs, all gas servicing and installation works were suspended from 5th to 15th January. The programme to recover the backlog of annual servicing which resulted was completed by 31st March 2010 and installations of new systems resumed thereafter.
- 50 Proactive planning resulted in the majority of parts for central heating repairs being in stock or available from suppliers. However, the national shortage of certain parts resulted in delays; suppliers confirm that from 1st January to 28th February, 6 months supply of spares were used.

Frost Damage Repairs

- 51 From 4th January onwards, 2755 reports of frost damage repairs were addressed, requiring 24/7 cover and with plumbers working 11 hour days from 5th to 15th January. The workforce of 48 plumbers was augmented by 7 qualified Supervisors and Housing Inspectors and 55 other tradesmen.

Temporary Heating

- 52 To ensure the safety of our most vulnerable residents, 256 homes without heating were supplied with temporary / mobile heaters. 500 units were delivered by a dedicated squad of 8 employees, who were unable to carry out their normal duties and by others as required.

Drinking Water

- 53 59 homes with frozen or burst pipes, were supplied with drinking water, initially purchased from local supermarkets at a cost of £1,480 and following dialogue,

Scottish Water supplied drinking water at no cost. Supplies of water to elderly and vulnerable persons were prioritised.

Temporary Accommodation Provision

- 54** Tenants required to move out of their properties, 10 of whom were provided with decant accommodation using a combination of temporary accommodation units and making use of available void properties which were suitable for letting. The remaining tenants made other arrangements, generally electing to move in with relatives for the duration of the drying out and repair of their property.
- 55** Despite the severity of the weather, the level of damage was minimised and while priority was accorded to repairs to damaged properties, the timescale during which tenants were decanted extended into March in a small number of cases, due mainly to the volume of plasterwork repairs to be undertaken overall.

Non-Occupied (Abandoned) Tenancies

- 56** The service operates a policy of draining down void houses over the winter months. Tenants, however, vacating their property, for example, going on holiday and perhaps not turning off their water resulted in additional floodings. A number of other properties, while tenanted, are not occupied. During the reporting period, 6 properties were identified in this category and consequently required repairs.

Gritting of Pathways

- 57** HAS supported Roads and Transportation and Outdoor Amenities in clearing access routes into all schools and pathways at sheltered housing and amenity housing units. Thereafter, squads assisted in clearing town and village centre footways and bus stops. 60 HAS employees were deployed in this activity.

Housing Improvement Contracts

- 58** All Housing Improvement contracts were suspended from 5th January to 1st February 2010, and the tradesmen deployed as described above and laterally addressed outstanding repairs to heating systems. Tenants were notified of cancellations and the explanations for this.

Costs

- 59** The cost of Housing Asset Service response to the period of extreme weather is outlined in the table below.

Table 9
Housing Asset Service Additional Cost of Frost Damage 2009/10

	Additional Costs at 12/03/2010 £	Notes
1 Overtime for Craft Operatives		
Week 42 (4/1/10 to 10/1/10)	11,730	1
Week 43 (11/1/10 to 17/1/10)	37,830	1
2 Overtime for Staff		
Overtime for December (Payrun wk44)	12,560	1
Overtime for January (Payrun wk48)	8,700	1
3 Materials		
Purchase of additional copper	30,000	
31 Boilers	19,250	
Gas spare parts & other materials	16,380	
Gas Torches	550	
Gas Bottles	700	
Timber Tressles	3,980	
Additional Heaters	3,000	
Additional Dehumidifiers	2,250	
Salt	3,580	
4 Vehicles		
Hire of vehicles (4x4)	1,350	2
5 Other Items		
Water Containers for distribution	480	
Water from Supermarkets for distribution	1,000	
Food from Supermarkets for Employees	700	
Catering (soup & sandwiches) for Employees	600	
	154,640	

Notes

- 1 All overtime is assumed to be frost related
- 2 2 vehicles hired externally & 1 from Dean Castle

CLEANSING

Service Delivery Context

- 60 Cleansing provide a residual waste, refuse/recycling and garden waste service to all residents and businesses throughout East Ayrshire with the volumes of waste requiring collection during the Christmas and New Year holiday period being particularly high.

Challenges and Our Response

- 61 Due to the severe weather during week beginning 21st December, refuse/recycling collection services were suspended on Wednesday 23rd December and Thursday 24th December, affecting approximately 40,000 households. Employees were redeployed to assist in snow and ice clearance operations.
- 62 Collections recommenced on Monday 28th December with additional hours being worked to collect outstanding uplifts. Priority was given to residential waste followed by paper, cardboard and black boxes. Roads and Transportation and Outdoor Amenities operatives carried out gritting in advance of refuse vehicles to ensure access and service delivery. Despite access difficulties the majority of households received a residential collection. A full service was resumed on Monday 18th January 2010
- 63 Community Waste Officers utilized pick ups to collect any outstanding uplifts.

Costs

- 64 No additional costs were incurred.

LEISURE SERVICES/OUTDOOR AMENITIES

Service Delivery Context

- 65 As part of the Roads and Transportation Winter Service Plan, Outdoor Amenities carry out gritting of priority footway routes and assist with the refilling of grit bins. These arrangements are confirmed annually.

Challenges and Our Response

- 66 The challenges for Outdoor Amenities were to maintain the operation of the burial service in Council graveyards, which required access roads and footways to be passable and to maintain street-cleaning services while assisting with the footway gritting operations.
- 67 39 (of a total of 114) Outdoor Amenities employees were allocated to grit the priority 1 and 2 footways and to fill grit bins during the reporting period. Also, 26 Outdoor Amenities employees maintained cemetery roads and footpaths in

a passable condition to facilitate the operation of the burial service, which carried on without disruption.

- 68** From 15th January onwards, Outdoor Amenities put in place a coordinated approach for the removal of litter, dog fouling, grit and other detritus from footways.

Costs

- 69** The cost of service provision to support Roads and Transportation was £130,275. The subsequent clear-up operation was carried out using available resources with no additional costs incurred

EDUCATIONAL ESTABLISHMENTS

Service Delivery Context

- 70** Schools were scheduled to close on Wednesday 23rd December 2009 and reopen on Wednesday 6th January 2010.

Challenges and Our Response

- 71** The main challenges faced by Educational Services were securing pathways, playgrounds and road access for pupils, parents, staff and transport to access schools and to ensure that heating and catering facilities were available.
- 72** Having experienced closures due to adverse weather prior to the Christmas and New Year holiday break, it was agreed that all educational establishments would reopen as planned on Wednesday 6th January; that Roads and Transportation would coordinate and facilitate the clearance and maintenance of at least one entrance and exit to each establishment; and that the Corporate Communications Team would communicate with service users through the council web-site and local radio on the establishments that were operational.
- 73** The table below details the number of educational establishments which were closed, the period of closure and the reasons for this.

Table 10

Date	Reason for Closure	Secondary	Primary	Special	Early Years
Mon. 21 Dec	Access/snow	3	22	1	5
Tues. 22 Dec	Access/snow	3	21	1	5
Wed. 6 Jan	Heating/Frozen pipes	0	1	0	0
Thurs. 7 Jan	Heating/Frozen pipes	0	1	0	0
Fri. 8 Jan	Heating/Frozen pipes	0	1	1	0

- 74** All educational establishments reopened on Wednesday 6th January, apart from Fenwick Primary which remained closed for a further two days as a result of a water mains problem in the village. Arrangements also had to be made for children in Witchhill Special School and Woodstock Annex in Witchhill School on Friday 8th January to be educated elsewhere due to frozen pipes under the road.
- 75** School transport, in the main, continued to provide a service to all schools. By 8th January, only 29 pupils, mainly on isolated farms remained absent from school. This information was passed to Roads and Transportation Services and access to these areas was prioritised and were cleared for access for Monday 11th January.
- 76** Where problems arose with heating systems or water supplies, janitorial staff reported issues quickly and remained on site to assist contractors in identifying and remedying the problems as required.
- 77** Catering in schools continued in all locations throughout the reporting period, although a degree of flexibility with menu choices was required where supplies were not delivered.

Costs

- 78** Due to weather conditions, the Educational Services bore additional costs of £2,300 for janitorial overtime.
- 79** As a result of some schools being closed over the period and a reduced number of school meals being purchased, income levels for period 10 fell against projected budgets. There was a consequent under recovery of income of £4,000 compared to the same period in the previous year.

SOCIAL SERVICES

Service Delivery Context

- 80** The focus for Social Services was on the Home Care Service which provides personal and practical support to approximately 2,000 vulnerable service users to enable them to live in their own homes in the community, with approximately 6,000 visits being made per day.

Challenges and Our Response

- 81** The main challenge faced by Social Services was reaching service users in isolated properties to deliver care packages (home care, day care, Meals at Home).
- 82** With the exception of a very small number of service users, staff accessed clients as normal. Where vehicle access was restricted, employees travelled on foot necessitating support to be prioritised to the most vulnerable service users and non-personal care appointments postponed.
- 83** Social Services managers communicated with both employees and service users' families to ensure that care packages were delivered or if delayed, alternative arrangements were made, for example, support by family, friends and neighbours.
- 84** Carers operated flexibly in areas close to their own homes as opposed to their scheduled routes.
- 85** Day Care Services were suspended from 21st December 2009 to 18th January 2010 primarily due to safety concerns in respect of transport and risks associated with supporting frail people from their homes to and from buses. Day centre employees were re-deployed to assist homecare staff during that period.
- 86** The Apetito Meals at Home service continued to be delivered with only intermittent difficulties in rural areas.
- 87** Berryknowe Residential Unit, Auchinleck is home to 10 people with learning disabilities. Due to ongoing problems with the heating and water systems, the unit was closed on 9th January 2010. The residents were relocated to a care home in Dalmellington along with care staff. The unit reopened on 28th January 2010.
- 88** As a result of all of the activities described above, none of our service users was left without essential support during the reporting period.

Costs

- 89** £11,902 costs were incurred in the relocation of residents from Berryknowe, Auchinleck.

COMMUNICATIONS

- 90** Throughout the reporting period, the Corporate Communications Team (CCT) responded to media enquires (and to general enquiries which they redirected) in relation to matters arising from the weather, and also managed proactively the flow of information leaving the Council through our website and to the media including television, radio and the press.

Daily Briefings

- 91** From 5th January 2010, the CCT attended daily briefings, chaired by the then Executive Director of Neighbourhood Services, when the latest position in terms of the status of salt supplies, road conditions, school closures, school transport, refuse collections and social care services was provided.
- 92** The CCT also supported the then Executive Director of Neighbourhood Services in the provision of daily briefings to the Corporate Management Team and elected members throughout the period.

Key messages

- 93** The CCT supported senior managers in the development of key messages which were continually reinforced throughout all media and information announcements, as follows:-
- Encourage community resilience - reminding local people to keep an eye out for the vulnerable and elderly and to offer assistance where possible.
 - Reinforce the good work and outstanding efforts being made by our own workforce;
 - Advise the public that many council employees had to forgo Christmas leave to help with emergency gritting and plumbing repairs;
 - Advise the public that workers were working extended hours and going beyond their usual remit to ensure the safety of local communities;
 - Reassure the public that salt and grit supplies were being used sparingly but wisely, regularly updating them on the position regarding new deliveries.
 - Urge tenants not to repeatedly call the helpline to report the same problem (thereby clogging the helpline) and to reassure them that their call had been logged and an operative would be with them as soon as possible.

Website

- 94** The CCT with the IT team devised a more efficient means of uploading emergency information on the website. A blog for severe weather updates was developed and updated as required, using the following categories:-
- General news
 - Roads & Transport
 - Schools (including Nurseries and school transport)

- Refuse Collections
- Social Services
- Leisure (including libraries, community centres and sports facilities)
- Buildings & Works (details of which types of repairs were being prioritised at any given time)

95 During the reporting period the Council's web site received 62,000 visits from 38,000 individuals, with 250,000 pages being viewed. The peak period was on 4th and 5th January, recording a 300% increase on the same period the previous year and returning to normal levels on the 9th and 10th January, with again a slight increase from 11th January for a few days.

96 The Home Page and the Education Section showed a 130% increase and the News Section, where the alerts and updates were to be found, saw 1,000% increase on normal levels of activity.

Community Resilience

97 The CCT also supported the promotion of the Community Resilience message. The Chief Executive wrote to a network of community contacts and agencies including local landlords and churches, outlining the measures being put in place by the Council to help local people, encouraging them to share the information and emergency details with their own communities, to ensure that the information reached as wide an audience as possible. To supplement this and to gauge the response, a team of officers spoke to each contact; who confirmed generally that this had been very helpful. A leaflet was designed for use by home care workers, outlining the steps to take if they discovered any leaks or frozen pipes whilst visiting an elderly / vulnerable resident in their own home.

Post Crisis

98 The CCT were also key to the promotion of the numerous exemplary actions taken by some of our own employees in the protection and support of many vulnerable and elderly residents, as well as promoting the efforts of a team of community offenders who contributed by clearing bus stops and pathways.

Costs

99 No additional costs were incurred.

EMPLOYEES

100 A significant number of staff across Council services worked extremely hard during the reporting period and beyond, to minimise the impact of the severe weather on our communities. This resulted in many working long hours, suffering disturbance and being away from their families.

Working Arrangements

- 101 Due to the length and severity of the weather conditions, the Department of Transport issued advice that gritter drivers would be exempt from the normal conditions relating to working hours; notwithstanding, the exemption was not applied and gritter drivers operated within the domestic drivers hours rules. While other employees work extended days, managers ensured that those employees working excess hours were given appropriate rest periods.

Incident and Accident Reporting

- 102 While there have been many positive comments about the work of the Council and its employees, there were also a number of instances of unacceptable behaviour on behalf of the public. Extreme examples, are of a gritter vehicle being attacked in Muirkirk, resulting in a lump of tar being thrown through the vehicle window, narrowly missing the driver. A similar incident occurred in Rankinston, where the snow plough was subjected to a barrage of snowballs containing stones. These sorts of incidents are unacceptable
- 103 A number of accidents were also reported during the period and these are provided in the table below.

Table 11

ACC1s

Group	07/08	08/09	09/10
Employees	29	29	37
Non-employees	27	22	34
TOTAL	56	51	71

Complaints

- 104 While there was no increase in the reporting of formal complaints, a significant level of informal negative comments were expressed during the reporting period. However, much of this resulted from the unreasonably high public expectation of the role of the Council. This was mirrored throughout the country and as an issue that we, and other Councils, will address.

Training

- 105 As part of normal preparations for the delivery of our winter maintenance programme, a number of toolbox talks and refresher training sessions were provided to a range of staff groups including Roads and Transportation, Housing Asset Service, Outdoor Amenities and Schools Janitors and to Community Offenders who assisted with snow clearance.

EXAMPLES OF GOOD PRACTICE AND SERVICE HIGHLIGHTS

- 106** By utilising its employee teams flexibly, the Council was able to focus its resources to the areas of immediate need and proactive planning enabled it to prepare for each stage of the severe weather.
- 107** The in-house service provision ensured there was inter-changeability and full flexibility across Council services, avoiding potential demarcation which might otherwise have occurred.
- 108** Good communication and early decision making, internally between council employees, departments and elected members and externally with contractors, agencies and media assisted in timeous responses and effective communication
- 109** The 'Concern Cards' used by HAS employees alerted Social Services colleagues of any additional needs that our tenants may have had.
- 110** Priority was given to the collection of residual waste over recycling. In the main householders were willing to wait for collection of recycling bins after their residual waste bins had been emptied. Uplift and removal of all excess waste/recycling was carried out wherever access was possible. The Council utilised alternative methods of uplifting waste e.g. pickups with lifting equipment.
- 111** Coordinated working between Roads and Transportation, Outdoor Amenities and the Housing Asset Service ensured successful snow and ice clearance and the gritting of difficult to reach areas and providing access to schools in time for the 6th January opening.
- 112** Transport Services provided garaging facilities for Council vehicles at Crookedholm during the lowest temperatures preventing vehicles from freezing and providing "chocks" allowing the vehicles to be parked overnight within the depot preventing air brakes freezing.
- 113** There was a fallback system in place for emergency payments for fuel costs where gas central heating systems had failed and the Council had provided temporary electric heaters pending repairs being completed. Guidelines were issued to managers that in cases of financial hardship being notified to us, and where tenants were using pre-paid electricity meters, tenants could get limited financial assistance to purchase additional fuel credits. This facility was used in two cases during the period.
- 114** Home care was delivered continually throughout the reporting period.
- 115** With regard to social care, local contacts were utilised; neighbours assisted where appropriate ensuring that the elderly were safe and visited regularly.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 116** In 2009/10 the Council incurred an additional £895,973 in excess of budget as a result of the severe winter weather as noted in the table below. The additional expenditure included staff overtime costs, the hire of additional vehicles and additional salt supplies within services. These costs were met from within existing Departmental budgets. At 31 March 2010 the outturn position for Roads & Transportation was an overspend of £162,565, which included the winter maintenance costs noted below and was offset within the overall Neighbourhood Services budget.

Table 11 – Winter Costs Analysis 2006/07–2009/10

	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10	2009/10	2009/10
	Actual (£)	Actual (£)	Actual (£)	Budget (£)	Actual (£)	Variance (£)
Roads Winter Maintenance	911,920	1,105,994	1,565,249	964,220	1,731,328	767,108
Housing Asset Service	58,960	66,290	50,900	50,000	154,640	104,640
Education – Janitor Overtime	0	0	0	0	2,300	2,300
Under-recovery of School Meal Income	0	0	0	0	4,000	4,000
Waste Collection Costs	33,267	46,772	61,243	50,000	56,023	6,023
Social Work – Berryknowe Residential Unit	0	0	0	0	11,902	11,902
Total	1,004,147	1,219,056	1,677,392	1,064,220	1,960,193	895,973

* Note: The costs incurred by Outdoor Amenities are recharged to Roads and Transport and are therefore included in the Roads Winter Figure.

- 117** Additional costs for essential repairs to the road network will have an impact on budgets. These include costs to reconstruct and resurface lengths of road, carrying out repairs to potholes and remedial works to footways and are estimated at £3.05M.
- 118** The Bellwin Scheme gives specific financial assistance to local authorities faced with a financial liability arising from large scale emergencies. The Council along with other local authorities, made an application for assistance to meet the additional cost pressures caused by the damage to local roads network following the severe winter weather. The Scottish Government decided not to activate the scheme and instead distributed £5.000m equitably between authorities to support the repair of potholes, the Council's share being £0.107m. In addition £2.000m has been allocated from the Renewal and Repairs Fund specifically for this purpose.

LEGAL AUTHORITY/POLICY AND RISK IMPLICATIONS

- 119** In the delivery of daily services and exceptional services throughout the reporting period, the Council adhered to its statutory requirements and where service disruption proved impossible to avoid, the policies of the Council were considered as were, most importantly, the risks and decisions on service delivery and priorities were taken on the basis of such assessments.
- 120** As a result, our communities and service users experienced minimal disruption and, at no time, were any of our most vulnerable service users left without support.

CONCLUSIONS

- 121** As reflected throughout the report, the Council and its employees responded effectively, efficiently and flexibly to the extreme weather conditions and the challenges it posed.
- 122** Our communities and our residents, while at times understandably frustrated by the inconvenience caused by the weather, in the main, appreciated the nature of the Council's response.
- 123** Our most vulnerable residents were protected; our schools with very few short-lived exceptions, remained open; and our road network ensured that travel around and in and out of the area was safe.
- 124** Our employees performed outstandingly in the most difficult of circumstances and over a prolonged period putting their communities before themselves and their families.
- 125** While it was not deemed necessary to invoke the Emergency Plan given that the response was in-house and was not multi-agency, the arrangements put in place mirrored those of the Plan and ensured, therefore, that activity was coordinated appropriately and consistently at the most senior level in the Council.
- 126** No matter how successful arrangements are deemed to be, the Council always seeks to continuously improve and so, based on all of the foregoing, an Improvement Plan has been developed for Members' consideration; this can be found at Appendix 1 to this report.

RECOMMENDATIONS

127 It is recommended that the Committee:-

- (i) considers and approves the analysis of the Council's response to the severe cold weather conditions which occurred between 20th December 2009 and 15th January 2010, as set out in the report;
- (ii) considers and approves the Improvement Plan attached to the report at Appendix 1;
- (iii) invites the Depute Chief Executive/Executive Director of Neighbourhood Services to report to Committee on progress in implementing the Improvement Plan at the meeting of the Committee on 23rd October 2010; and
- (iv) otherwise note the contents of the report.

Elizabeth Morton
Depute Chief Executive / Executive Director of Neighbourhood Services

EM/JB

7th June 2010

LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS

Report to Governance and Scrutiny Committee on 28th August 2009 Review of the Council's Winter Emergency Response Policy

Report to Cabinet 21st October 2009 reporting the review of the Council's Winter Emergency Response Policy.

APPENDIX 1 – WINTER SERVICE IMPROVEMENT PLAN - JUNE 2010

A detailed Improvement Plan to facilitate the Winter Service response arrangements across East Ayrshire Council is displayed below. To ensure clarity, officer responsibility and timescales have also been provided within the action plan.

No.	Topic	Action	Responsibility	Progress	Due Date
1.0		Roads and Transportation Service			
1.1	Winter Service Policy	The Winter Service Policy to be reviewed in line with 'Well Maintained Highways' the Code of Practice for Highway Maintenance Management. This document was updated in May 2010 and takes into account lessons learned in the previous two winters. The twenty recommendations in the revised guidance will be considered as part of this review.	Head of Roads and Transportation	Commenced in May 2010, partly achieved	Aug 2010
1.2	Review of Gritting Routes	The primary gritting routes were established in 1996 and have not been subject to a full review since. The existing priority routes treat 57% of the road network. However not all roads are included on gritting routes. The primary routes will be reviewed and secondary and tertiary gritting routes to cover the majority of public roads in East Ayrshire will be developed. Trigger levels will be established to determine when these additional routes will be treated.	Head of Roads and Transportation	Commenced in May 2010, partly achieved	Aug 2010
1.3	Footway Gritting	A review of the existing policy, service levels and the routes themselves will be undertaken. Access to facilities such as schools, doctor's surgeries, care homes and community centres will be taken into consideration. This may require increased resources, including the purchase of additional plant.	Head of Roads and Transportation	Commenced in May 2010, partly achieved	Aug 2010

No.	Topic	Action	Responsibility	Progress	Due Date
1.4	Grit Bins	A review of the existing policy will be undertaken. An increase in the numbers of bins provided maybe necessary to increase community resilience. It may also be necessary as a means of allowing the public access to salt / grit if the facility to collect from the depots is removed on health and safety grounds. As well as providing guidance on locating grit bins the policy will determine how often the bins will be re-filled and materials to be used.	Head of Roads and Transportation	Commenced in May 2010 with review of policies from other councils, partly achieved	Aug 2010
1.5	Salt Levels	In line with the recommendations of Well Maintained Highways stock levels will be determined to provide a set level of resilience to cover the Christmas and New Year period (up to 12 days) when supplies will generally be unobtainable. Trigger levels for re-ordering stock will be set.	Head of Roads and Transportation	Commenced in May 2010, partly achieved	Aug 2010
1.6	Salt Conservation Methods	Gritting routes for a reduced network coverage will be developed and implemented in periods when salt has to be conserved. Consideration will also be given to the use of salt / grit mixes, particularly when snow is forecast. Trigger levels for salt conservation methods will be set and included in the policy.	Head of Roads and Transportation	Methods developed by SCOTS during last winter. Trigger levels to be developed	Aug 2010
1.7	Treatment Decision	The decision making process will be reviewed in line with Well Maintained Highways. In particular the co-ordination with other services will be reviewed, particularly during periods of severe weather. Consideration will be given to the procurement of a new Winter Service Management System.	Heads of Services	Ongoing, more frequent updates and CCTV imaging will be available next winter	Aug 2010

No.	Topic	Action	Responsibility	Progress	Due Date
2.0		Housing Service / Housing Asset Service			
2.1	Boilers	Review of installation procedures with regard to condensing boilers.	Head of Housing Services	Commenced, meetings with manufacturers have taken place and manufacturers are reviewing alternative methods of installations to identify best practice.	July 2010
2.2	Water Supplies	Review of existing arrangements to provide bottled supplies to affected properties. Review of existing communication arrangements with Scottish Water.	Head of Housing Services	Achieved Communication arrangements confirmed and stock of bottled water now held by HAS	Aug 2010
2.3	Stand-by Arrangement	Review the arrangements for providing a stand-by service, particularly over the Christmas and New Year period. This review will consider the effects of weather on the provision of the service and the requirements for closer co-ordination with the Risk Management Centre.	Head of Housing Services	Commenced partly achieved,	Aug 2010

No.	Topic	Action	Responsibility	Progress	Due Date
2.4	Repairs and Recovery	Review existing arrangements for providing temporary heating. Review existing arrangements for decanting tenants and improving the communication with affected parties.	Head of Housing Services	Commenced, stock of 600 temporary heaters held in store, partly achieved	Aug 2010
2.5	Empty Properties	Review processes for identifying potential and actual abandonments and actions required to reduce problems during winter from burst pipes, etc.	Head of Housing Services	Will follow after completion of the review	Aug 2010
3.0		Educational and Social Services			
3.1	Access to schools	Review existing arrangements at schools for providing access during periods of severe winter weather. Ensure arrangements are in place for gritting access paths by janitorial staff.	Exec. Director ESS	Complete Access has been discussed with all janitors. Individual risk assessment have been developed	Aug 2010

No.	Topic	Action	Responsibility	Progress	Due Date
3.2	Access to other Community Services	Review winter gritting routes with Roads and Transportation Services with regard to maintaining access to community facilities such as Day Centres, Doctor's Surgeries, Care Homes and Community Centres.	Exec. Director ESS	Complete Plans exist to ensure access to all day centres, doctor's surgeries, care homes and community centres	Aug 2010
3.3	Remote Working	Review procedures for remote workers, particularly those providing personal assistance to vulnerable clients during periods of severe weather.	Exec. Director ESS	Complete Procedures have been reviewed and appropriate measures are in place	Aug 2010
3.4	Mobile Care Teams	Protocols to be enhanced to support the expansion of mobile services during periods of severe weather.	Exec. Director ESS	Partially Complete The review is underway in partnership with Roads.	Aug 2010

No.	Topic	Action	Responsibility	Progress	Due Date
3.5	Meals at Home	Review of contingency arrangements regarding the use of emergency freezers for service user meals.	Exec. Director ESS	Complete, Reserve stores have been established at sheltered housing units	Aug 2010
4.0		Communications and Community Resilience			
4.1	Training	Extend training in Winter Service activities to non-core staff. The pre-winter exercise will be extended to cover staff in other services that are likely to be involved in providing the winter service.	Head of Roads and Transportation / Heads of Democratic Services	Will follow after completion of this review	Sept 2010
4.2	Communications	Ensure that the Winter Policy, Plans and gritting routes are available on the Council website. The existing 'Winter' leaflet will be reviewed and updated and further information regarding preparing for winter, etc will be developed.	Head of Roads and Transportation / Heads of Democratic Services	Will follow after completion of the review	Sept 2010
4.3	Elected Members	Information packs will be prepared for Elected Members following the review and in preparation for winter 2010/11.	Head of Roads and Transportation / Heads of Democratic Services	Will follow after completion of the review	Sept 2010

No.	Topic	Action	Responsibility	Progress	Due Date
4.4	Community Councils and Residents Panel	Consultation with the community via Community Councils and the Residents Panel will take place as part of the review.	Head of Community Support	Will follow after completion of the review	Aug 2010
4.5	Communities	Supporting and encouraging communities more resilient and with greater self reliance. This will be promoted through members information packs and the winter leaflet.	Head of Democratic Services	Will follow after completion of the review	Sept 2010
4.6	Community Planning	Communicate our Winter Service Policy and Plans to our Community Planning Partners following completion of the review.	Head of Roads and Transportation / Community Planning Partnership Manager	Will follow after completion of the review	Sept 2010