



*St Edmundsbury*  
BOROUGH COUNCIL

# B196

## Cabinet 15 September 2010

### **Report of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee: Review of response of Borough Council to severe winter weather 2009/2010 (Sep10/08)**

1. This report set out the response of the authority to the severe winter weather experienced during the 2009/2010 winter. It detailed the impact on the delivery of services in the Borough and the steps taken to maintain these services and the assistance provided to Suffolk County Council in delivery of their highway responsibilities.
2. During the winter of 2009/2010 two periods of prolonged cold weather and significant snowfall were experienced. Members wished to receive details of Suffolk County Council's winter maintenance plan (the County Council had responsibility for winter maintenance of highways), and in particular the criteria used to decide which roads were gritted.
3. Matthew Riches, the County Council's West Area Highway Manager, attended the meeting and explained to the Committee that prioritisation of roads for gritting was difficult due to limited resources, and that a system of priority road grading was used. There were 1,200 miles of Priority 1 routes in the County (all A and B roads, and the busiest bus and commuter routes on other roads), and once all these routes had been gritted, should the snow continue, Priority 2 roads would be gritted (other significant bus and commuter routes). There were 800 miles of Priority 2 roads, and these tended to be roads which connected villages to main roads.
4. Members had been concerned that minor roads in villages had not been cleared and that some people had been marooned in their houses, unable to get to towns. Mr Riches advised that this was a resource issue, and the severity of the snow meant that the safety of the County Council's Priority 1 routes had to take priority. The County did, however, engage with the community with regard to self help measures they could take, such as using grit bins provided. Additionally, in very severe weather when the Borough Council's grounds maintenance or waste collection teams were unable to carry out their usual duties, they were redeployed to grit the depot areas, nearby footways, cemeteries and parks etc. The Borough Council also had 4x4 vehicles on standby for use by the County Council's Social Services to enable them to continue to support vulnerable people in their homes.
5. The Committee also discussed the provision of grit bins, and Mr Riches advised that the County Council would shortly be engaging with Town and Parish Councils to ensure grit bins were replenished for winter, and to provide additional bins should these be requested.

6. The Committee concluded that the conditions experienced in December 2009 and January 2010 had been unusual, and acknowledged that the resources available to cope with severe weather were based on more average conditions. Any additional resources would have to be balanced against the likelihood that they would be needed.

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