

FLINTSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

REPORT TO: **CABINET**

DATE: **TUESDAY, 23 APRIL 2013**

REPORT BY: **CHIEF EXECUTIVE**

SUBJECT: **REVIEW OF THE RESPONSE TO THE RECENT SEVERE WEATHER**

1.00 **PURPOSE OF REPORT**

1.01 To summarise the operational response of the Council and its partners to the recent severe late winter weather (21 March onwards), to outline the measures and costs of recovery and repair, and to invite member comment to complete a local debrief and learning exercise.

2.00 **BACKGROUND**

2.01 North East Wales was affected by heavy late winter snowfall and freezing temperatures for a spell starting, overnight, on Thursday 21 March. The snowfall was the heaviest and most prolonged for around 30 years according to records. The prolonged and repeated snowfall, coupled with freezing temperatures, caused severe disruption and considerable damage to roads, boundaries, trees and buildings.

3.00 **CONSIDERATIONS**

3.01 The Council responded by enacting its business continuity plans for critical services and worked with its partners, including Health and the emergency services, to prevent and manage incidents, and to ensure safe passage for emergency vehicles. The key business continuity plans were for the Streetscene and highways services, social services, housing repair and maintenance services, and supporting services such as ICT and communications. Council services and resources were stretched with considerable demands, and such was the risk and the widespread disruption that a regional Silver Command was called and overseen by North Wales Police to manage the situation and co-ordinate activities in response.

3.02 A full debrief of the operational phase (during the snowfall) and recovery phase (returning to normality once the snowfall had ended) is being completed with an assessment of how well we performed corporately in preparing and in co-ordinating our response; how effective we were in implementing our specific service business continuity plans; how our partners organisations responded with the Council e.g. the emergency services; the effectiveness of national weather forecasting and information; the timeliness and effectiveness of regional emergency command and co-ordination; the timeliness

and effectiveness of public and workforce communications; advice to the public for community and individual preparation for future winters given weather volatility and expectations for responsive community action possibly in liaison with town and community councils. Business continuity plans will be reviewed and learning applied.

3.03 Overall, the response of the Council was effective in exceptional climatic conditions, a fuller verbal report will be made at the meeting of the Cabinet. A number of operational teams performed exceptionally with dedication to maintain critical services.

3.04 The costs of the operational period were considerable and will exceed budget provision and will need to be met corporately as a special incident. The costs of the recovery period will equally be considerable, notably in road carriageway repair, boundary fence reinstatement and tree repair and clearance, and council housing repairs and will need to be met corporately as a special incident. Contact has been made with Welsh Government for possible financial assistance under the national emergencies scheme.

4.00 RECOMMENDATIONS

4.01 That the debrief report be noted.

4.02 That elected members and town and community councils be sent a copy of a debrief report with the options for structured feedback to share experiences and possible future solutions to support the business continuity plans.

4.03 That the Chief Executive in consultation with the Leader be given delegated authority to authorise additional expenditure, within overall available resources, for the emergency costs of the operational and recovery phases.

5.00 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

5.01 There are considerable financial implications, which are still being costed, as set out above.

6.00 ANTI POVERTY IMPACT

None

7.00 ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

As per the report.

8.00 EQUALITIES IMPACT

None

9.00 PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

The full debrief will include communication with the workforce and its preparedness for future severe weather incidents.

10.00 CONSULTATION REQUIRED

None

11.00 CONSULTATION UNDERTAKEN

None

12.00 APPENDICES

None

**LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION ACT) 1985
BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS**

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