

REPORT TO: Cabinet

MEETING DATE: 13 March 2018

BY: Depute Chief Executive (Resources and People Services)

SUBJECT: Urgent Item – Severe Weather/Red Warning

1 PURPOSE

- 1.1 To update Cabinet on the Council Adverse Weather Policy following the recent severe weather and Red Warning covering East Lothian.

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 That Cabinet note the intention to review the Adverse Weather Policy in light of the recent severe weather experience, changes to the national weather warning classification system and Police Scotland advice.
- 2.2 That Cabinet agree that discussions take place with the Scottish Government to seek clarity on the practical implications stemming from their national travel advice.
- 2.3 That Cabinet consider whether an exception to the Adverse Weather Policy should be made during the period of the Red Warning on this occasion, given this was the first Red Warning in Scotland using the new system.

3 BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The Council experienced severe weather conditions, which resulted in a Red Alert Warning being issued by the Met Office covering the period from 3pm on Wednesday 28th February through until 10 am on Thursday 1 March 2018. The impact was felt in many areas of the county either side of this time frame which was covered by an Amber Warning (see table below).

Warning	Issued	Covering period
Amber Warning	Sunday 25th Feb at 1.51pm	4 am on Wednesday 28th February until 9 pm on 28th February
Amber Warning	Monday 26th at 3.22 am	6 am on Wednesday 28th February through to Noon on Thursday 1st March
Amber Warning	Tuesday 27th at 10.55 am	6 am on Wednesday 28th February through to 6 pm on Thursday 1st March

Amber Warning	Wednesday 28th 10.08 am	10.15 am on Wednesday 28th February through to 6 pm on Thursday 1st March
Red Warning	Wednesday 28th 11.12 am	3pm on Wednesday 28th February to 10 am Thursday 1st March
Amber Warning	Thursday 1st 10.26 am	10.30 am on Thursday 1st until 10 am on Friday 2nd March

- 3.2 During the period of the red warning, the advice from Police Scotland and the Minister for Transport was “*Do not travel unless it is absolutely necessary to do so*”. Discussion should be undertaken with The Scottish Government regarding the practicalities of this advice, to delivering key Council services.
- 3.3 As a result of the severe weather and the resultant disruption the Council instigated the Business Continuity Plans and established the Emergency Control Centre at Penston. Twice daily meetings were held, involving relevant council services, along with representatives from the Police and Fire services, to coordinate and progress the Council response to the Adverse Weather. The Emergency Control Centre was operational from Wednesday 28th February through until Sunday 4 March 2018.
- 3.4 The triggering of service business continuity plans along with the efforts of employees who attended work, many working from places other than their normal work locations meant that the Council was able to deliver most of the key services. Many employees played key roles in clearing snow as well as coordinating and delivering services to vulnerable residents throughout East Lothian. There are many examples of the great work and fantastic effort employees have made in assisting the community, a number of examples of these and how services worked together are detailed in the latest version of Inform, as well as comments on Facebook and Twitter.
- 3.5 As a result of the weather warnings the Council reminded employees of its Adverse Weather Policy and that if it was safe to do so then they should report for work as normal in accordance with the Policy. An example of the many communications which went to employees throughout the period is attached as Appendix 1. This summarises the main points of the policy and some precautions employees should take for their health and safety.
- 3.6 In accordance with the Council’s Adverse Weather Policy employees are paid for work undertaken. If circumstances arise where employees have been unable to get to work and cannot cover their absence by some form of leave or working back the hours, should they require to cover their absence by unpaid leave, arrangements are in place to allow them to repay lost days over a maximum of 3 months.
- 3.7 Representation was made by the Joint Trades Unions at the Joint Consultative Committee on 7 March 2018 that consideration should be given to granting paid time off to those employees who did not attend work as a result of the severe weather.
- 3.8 Advice issued to staff before and during the period of severe weather was in accordance with Council Policy. Given the Red Warning status was the first since the new warning system was introduced, Cabinet may wish to consider an

exception to the Adverse Weather Policy for the period the Red Warning was in place, for those employees unable to attend work due to the severe weather.

4 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 The Council Policy on Adverse Weather as well as Business Continuity Plans will be reviewed and updated accordingly in light of the recent experience of severe weather.

5 INTEGRATED IMPACT ASSESSMENT

- 5.1 The subject of this report does not affect the wellbeing of the community or have a significant impact on equality, the environment or economy.

6 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

6.1 Financial

- 6.1.1 There are no immediate budgetary implications associated with this report.

6.2 Human Resources

- 6.2.1 HR will review the current Adverse Weather Policy and bring it through the normal review process.

- 6.2.2 Any deviation from the Adverse Weather Policy could result in further challenge.

6.3 Other - none

7 BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 7.1 Appendix 1 – Example of Adverse Weather Policy Communication

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ADVERSE WEATHER

You may have seen the recent press coverage of the severe weather which is due to hit predominantly the East Coast today and continuing into Wednesday/Thursday of this week with snow and low temperatures forecast. This may affect employees ability to get to their work either due to the weather, transport disruption, because of their parent responsibilities linked to school closures, etc.,.

It is a good opportunity to remind all staff about the Councils Adverse Weather Policy which can be found on Elnet using the attached link [Adverse Weather Policy](#)

A brief summary of the main points of the policy are:

All employees have a duty to make every effort to report for work, recognising that there may be occasions when the weather conditions are so severe that they may be prevented from reporting for work, arrive late or have to leave early

- Employees absent or delayed must contact their line manager as early in the working day as possible.
- Employees who either start late or leave work early due to the adverse weather conditions will only be credited for the hours they work.
- Employees who do not report for work will not be paid and the absence should be recorded on a special leave form and approved as unpaid special leave.
- Alternatively employees may with their line manager's agreement, substitute the unpaid leave for annual leave, TOIL or flexi where applicable.
- Where the employee has tried to get to their normal place of work, the line manager where appropriate and subject to the needs of the service may authorise the work where possible to be undertaken from another place. The employee should however return to their normal workplace as soon as travel arrangements allow
- Where an employee has childcare arrangements which have broken down as a consequence of the severe weather conditions, e.g. a school closure, their absence should be treated as unpaid special leave in accordance with the Council Special leave Policy

Employees should also give consideration to the following when travelling in severe weather and unusual climate or environmental conditions:

- Delaying the journey to a more suitable time, using public transport if possible or going by a potentially safer route.
- Listening to radio reports and adjusting the journey appropriately.
- Ensuring that a mobile phone is readily available to summon help and is fully charged.
- Friends, relatives and work colleagues (as appropriate) are aware of their intended route and likely arrival time so that they can summon help if needed.
- Carrying a flask of hot coffee/soup/drinks and other high energy foods.
- Having a spade, tow rope and other equipment to help release a stuck vehicle.
- Having a supply of warm blankets in case you are stuck in a location for an extended time.

- Ensuring your vehicle is fully fuelled so that you can maintain the vehicle's heating in the case of an extended delay.
- Carrying a torch, to get help if needed.
- Carrying suitable footwear, warm clothing and overcoat for the conditions, if a breakdown occurs e.g. sturdy boots, scarf and gloves, waterproof jacket.

Currently all roads in East Lothian are open, but the weather is predicted to dip later this evening.