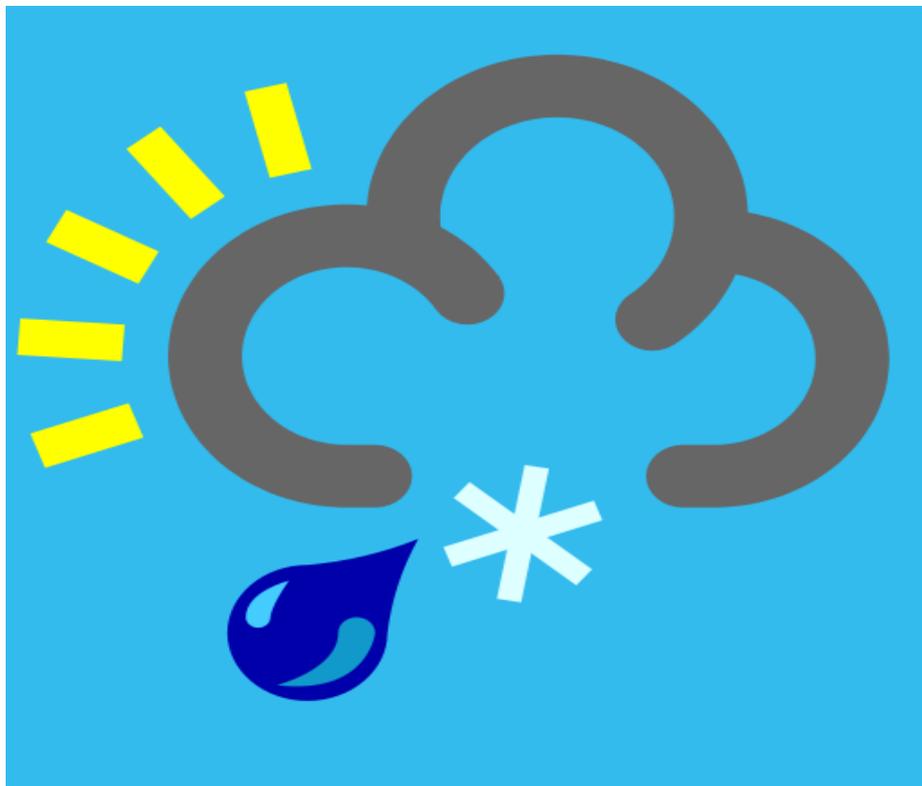


MID SUSSEX

DISTRICT COUNCIL



SEVERE WEATHER PLAN

v 1.6



PREPARING FOR EMERGENCIES

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Introduction

From time-to-time, Mid Sussex will be hit by severe weather, which can threaten lives, damage property and cause disruption. The District was badly hit by the storm of 1987, when high winds brought down thousands of trees, blocking roads, bringing down power lines and damaging many buildings. More recently, the District has seen disruptive winter snowfall and some areas have also been affected by localised flooding.

Whilst such incidents are thankfully quite rare, climate change experts have warned us to expect more extreme weather in the years to come so it will become increasingly important to prepare for them in advance.

Thankfully, more accurate forecasting and better communication provides us with an opportunity to be better prepared for severe weather. Prompt action will help to minimise the impact the incident has on our community and maximise the effectiveness of the responding organisations, shortening the recovery process.

Mid Sussex District Council is committed to working with its local partners to prepare for, respond to and recover from severe weather events. The Council is an active participant in the Sussex Resilience Forum, which enables joined-up emergency planning among all of the main responders, utility providers and voluntary organisations.

This Severe Weather Plan specifies how the District Council will respond to severe weather events in Mid Sussex.

The aim of this plan is to ensure that Mid Sussex District Council is capable of responding to a local severe weather event, whilst complementing the roles of other agencies and continuing to deliver essential services.

This plan will be reviewed annually by the Council's Emergency Planning & Outdoor Services Manager in consultation with the Mid Sussex Emergency Planning Liaison Group.

The Civil Contingencies Act 2004 places a statutory duty on the District Council to plan for incidents that may have an adverse effect in the community. The District Council's Emergency Plan provides additional information regarding the response to large-scale incidents in Mid Sussex.

Version 1.6 1st September 2017

1.0 – Preparedness & Response

1.1 MSDC Severe Weather Preparedness Activities

The Mid Sussex Emergency Planning Liaison Group (EPLG) meets four times a year and will review the planning and preparation for severe weather events as an agenda item at each meeting. This group includes officers from all emergency responders, the relevant District Council departments and representatives from local Town and Parish Councils. During a severe weather event, a special meeting of the EPLG may be convened to discuss the situation, as necessary. Severe weather preparedness advice is also included on the Council’s website and in publications such as Mid Sussex Matters.

Mid Sussex District Council has subscribed to the National Severe Weather Warning Service provided by the Met Office. Severe weather warning emails are received by the Council prior to an anticipated event. These severe weather email warnings are then automatically forwarded to key officers and members, local partners who may be involved in the response in the wider community.

In line with the Sussex Resilience Forum’s Adverse Weather Plan, the Emergency Planning & Outdoor Services Manager (or his representative) will call in to an Adverse Weather Teleconference (AWT) if significant weather impacts are forecast. The AWT will provide Sussex Resilience Forum (SRF) partners with the latest weather information. The key messages from the AWT will be shared with the Council’s severe weather email group. Diagram 1 below shows the triggers and responses to severe weather warnings as specified in the SRF Adverse Weather Plan.

| Response / Trigger | Normal Operational Response | TAG Telecon | TAG Office | Strategic Co-ordinating Group | Lead for Activation |
|--|--|--|--|---|---------------------------------|
| Flood Guidance Statement |  |  |  |  | Environment Agency / Met Office |
| Flood Warnings for coastal / fluvial flooding |  |  | |  | Environment Agency |
| Met Office Severe Weather Warning or PWSA Advice |  |  |  |  | Met Office |
| Cat 1/2 Responder Reports of Adverse Weather | <div style="border: 1px solid red; padding: 2px;">e.g. Reports of: • Trees blown down • Roads flooding</div> | <div style="border: 1px solid red; padding: 2px;">e.g. Reports of: • Widespread traffic disruption • Properties flooding</div> | <div style="border: 1px solid red; padding: 2px;">e.g. Reports of: • Severe impact on infrastructure • Significant property flooding</div> | | Any Cat 1 or 2 responder |
| Drought | <div style="border: 1px solid red; padding: 2px;">Environment Agency move to 'Potential Drought' status</div> | <div style="border: 1px solid red; padding: 2px;">• Environment Agency move to 'Drought' status • Water company applies for a Drought Permit / Order</div> | | | Environment Agency |

When severe weather is expected in Mid Sussex, key officers will communicate together and liaise with local partners to identify any particularly vulnerable locations. These areas will be given priority during the response in an attempt to mitigate the impact of the severe weather.

1.2 Activation of this Plan

This plan will be activated in the following circumstances:

- An Amber or Red Weather Warning covering Mid Sussex is issued by the Met Office
- A Flood Warning is issued by the Environment Agency in Mid Sussex
- A Yellow Weather Warning and/or Flood Alert has been issued and officers believe that it is likely to have a significant impact in Mid Sussex
- A local weather related incident develops so that a multi-agency response is required to protect life, property or infrastructure, or threatens the continuity of MSDC services

In these circumstances, key officers will be notified using the cascade system specified in the Council's Emergency Plan.

1.3 MSDC Severe Weather Response

Once this plan is activated, the Emergency Planning & Outdoor Services Manager (or the Duty Incident Liaison Officer) will liaise with the Head of Corporate Resources regarding the Council's initial response.

The Severe Weather Response Team will meet to determine how MSDC responds, including the implementation of business continuity plans as appropriate. This officer group will decide on the allocation of MSDC resources to support the community, based on the perceived impact of the severe weather event across the District. See Appendix 1.

The Council's Customer Services and Communications Team will be briefed to inform local partners and the wider community at appropriate intervals throughout the severe weather event.

1.4 Initial Actions and Business Continuity

- Assess conditions at key assets (such as the Oaklands Campus, town centre parks and car parks, trash screens etc.) and take action to protect life
- Assess the initial impact upon the Council's services and across the District as a whole. Assess front-line staffing levels for essential services
- Contact local responders, (including Town and Parish Councils) to share information, agree priorities and inform them of action to be taken by MSDC
- Consider activating the Council's Emergency Plan if a major incident is anticipated
- Identify and secure additional resources that may be required to effect the response
- Consider re-deploying contractors (e.g. grounds maintenance and cleansing) to undertake emergency duties (e.g. snow clearance instead of street cleansing)
- Consider re-deploying staff to work with local partners to avoid unnecessary journeys and provide assistance to communities close to their homes
- Prepare rest centre(s) if emergency shelter is likely to be required
- Consider offering resources to other Districts or Boroughs who may be more severely affected, in accordance with the relevant Mutual Aid Agreements

1.5 Responding to different types of Severe Weather

1.5.1 Winter Weather (Snow & Ice)

When cold weather, ice and heavy snowfall affect the District, the Council will assess the impact and make contact with the relevant partner agencies. West Sussex County Council will initially clear snow from primary roads whilst other local routes and pavements may be treated by Town or Parish Councils, as part of their own Winter Management Plans. In more extreme cases, the District Council will identify any gaps in the response and provide support to any untreated high priority areas as they arise. See Appendix 2 for more information.

1.5.2 Flooding

As it has no coastline or major rivers, the Mid Sussex District is considered relatively low risk in terms of flooding. However, it is acknowledged that surface water flooding can occur anywhere following heavy localised rain.

The Environment Agency has identified 'wet spots' in the Districts three main towns, Burgess Hill, Haywards Heath and East Grinstead. These areas can be susceptible to surface water flooding following intense periods of heavy rain. Such weather is difficult to predict and it may not be possible to forewarn people in specific locations. During flooding incidents of this kind, the Council will work with the relevant partners to support the response and recovery.

It is noted that some properties in Lindfield, Ardingly, Copthorne and Hassocks have occasionally been affected by flooding from nearby rivers and streams. Local Parish Councils have been notified and in some cases, property owners have been given advice as to how to prepare for flooding and protect their homes.

When there is a heightened risk of flooding in Mid Sussex, contractors will be mobilised to monitor and clear Council-owned trash screens. Contractors will be on-call when significant rainfall or flood alerts are in force and screens will be treated in priority order (Appendix 3).

If more severe flooding is expected in an area of the District, additional resources will be mobilised and deployed to support the community and protect critical infrastructure. These emergency actions will be co-ordinated and authorised by the Severe Weather Response Team. However, the District Council will not supply sandbags or other equipment to protect individual properties from flooding, as this responsibility lies with the owner.

1.5.3 Wind Storms

High winds may bring down trees and/or power lines and can also cause serious structural damage to property. Trees which have fallen on District Council owned land will be inspected and prioritised for clearance by approved contractors.

Should any severe weather incident result in the need to evacuate properties, the District Council will activate the Emergency Plan and provide emergency shelter for people who are displaced. In all such cases, vulnerable people requiring support will be given priority.

2.0 Command & Control

The vast majority of severe weather incidents do not require more than a normal operational response from the agencies involved - for example, the District Council's contracted gritting or trash screen clearance arrangements.

However, if the prevailing or expected conditions are likely to cause significant disruption to the community, SRF partners will consider activating the Adverse Weather Office to enable tactical co-ordination, in accordance with the Sussex Adverse Weather Framework. The Adverse Weather Office team will be made up of specialist officers from the Met Office and Environment Agency, supported by Emergency Planners from other responders. During a major incident, key officers will be mobilised and rest centres activated as stipulated in the Council's Emergency Plan. Officers will refer to the MSDC Emergency Contacts Directory and call-out procedures to initiate action.

When widespread, severe disruption is expected with the possibility of a threat to life or property, a Red Weather Warning will be received and a Strategic Coordinating Group (SCG) will be convened. The SCG will normally meet at Sussex Police Headquarters in Lewes, but alternative venues or teleconference facilities may be considered appropriate as determined by the weather conditions. The SCG will include senior officers from the emergency services, local authorities, the Met Office, Environment Agency, Health Authorities, Utilities and Telecoms companies, voluntary groups and possibly, the military. When requested, the District Council will provide a member of Senior Management Team to take part in the SCG meetings.

3.0 Warning & Informing

The Council's Customer Service & Communications Team will provide accurate information relating to a local severe weather event for officers, members and the public.

3.1 Action to be taken by the District Council:

- to provide accurate and timely information via the Council's website and social media.
- to inform Members, local partners and business groups about the Council's response.
- to co-ordinate press releases with other agencies and liaise with local media.
- to brief Members and/or Officers in advance of press conferences or interviews.

3.2 Key messages to the public:

- Listen to weather warnings; take action to protect your property but don't risk your life.
- Prepare an emergency kit for your home containing vital supplies for your family.
- Avoid non-essential journeys and be aware of local road closures, school closures and disruption to public transport.
- If travelling by car, let others know of your plans, take warm/waterproofed clothes, a sleeping bag, some hot drink and food.
- Your business should be prepared for weather-related disruption, make sure you have a plan and have shared it with your staff, suppliers and other key stakeholders.

4.0 Isolated Communities & Vulnerable People

4.1 Isolated Communities

Severe weather can cause roads to become impassable and this can be particularly challenging in the more rural areas of the District. In many cases, local communities are able to cope with such disruption without the need for external assistance but it helps if their arrangements are shared with other agencies, so that their capabilities are known.

During the response phase of a severe weather event, local Town or Parish Councils should report any concerns to the MSDC Severe Weather Response Team. Upon receipt of such reports, the District Council will endeavour to provide support to any isolated communities as requested, in conjunction with West Sussex County Council.

4.2 Vulnerable People

Vulnerable members of the community will be given priority for assistance, as they are less likely to be able to help themselves during an incident. All responders should work together to identify those most at risk and prioritise response work to meet those in urgent need of support. The District Council will share information and local knowledge to help locate those deemed to be vulnerable.

4.3 Activities undertaken by Volunteers

Local partners may deploy volunteers to support those identified as vulnerable in their communities during severe weather incidents. The following tasks have been undertaken:

- Snow clearance and salt spreading of footpaths in key locations
- Door-knocking - volunteers deployed to visit the most vulnerable residents as identified by partners
- Leaflet or letter drops to provide information
- Communicating via business associations, community or residents groups
- Liaising with other voluntary sector organisations during the response

When notified of such activities, the District Council will liaise with partners to in order to share information and agree priorities.

5.0 Mutual Aid

Local authorities in Sussex have entered in to a mutual aid agreement to provide support to one another during emergencies.

As a result of this, Chief Executives may request emergency resources from another local authority (should the need arise) and there is an expectation that they will be provided, unless that authority is experiencing similar difficulties.

For example, the Districts of Lewes and Wealden to the East have a higher risk of flooding than Mid Sussex and it is feasible that they may request support from the District Council in the event of a major incident within their boundaries.

6.0 - Recovery

Under the Civil Contingencies Act, Local Authorities assume the lead role during the recovery phase from a major incident. Mid Sussex District Council will work with the relevant multi-agency partners to initiate community recovery, in accordance with the Sussex Resilience Forum Recovery Plan.

This could include providing specialist officers (as requested) to support the activities of the:

- Recovery Coordinating Group (RCG)
- Health & Welfare Sub-group
- Business & Economic Recovery Sub-group
- Housing & Homelessness Sub-group
- Environment & Site Clearance Sub-group
- Infrastructure Sub-group
- Finance & Legal Sub-group
- Scientific & Technical Advice Cell (STAC)

During the recovery phase from a severe weather event, local Councils (led by WSCC) will consider providing a Humanitarian Assistance Centre (HAC) to support people in the affected community. The intention of a HAC is to:

- provide accurate information from the relevant agencies throughout the recovery process
- enable community-led recovery
- provide advice on welfare issues (e.g. food and water supplies)
- gather information from insurance and utility companies, benefits, council tax etc.

7.0 – Review & De-brief

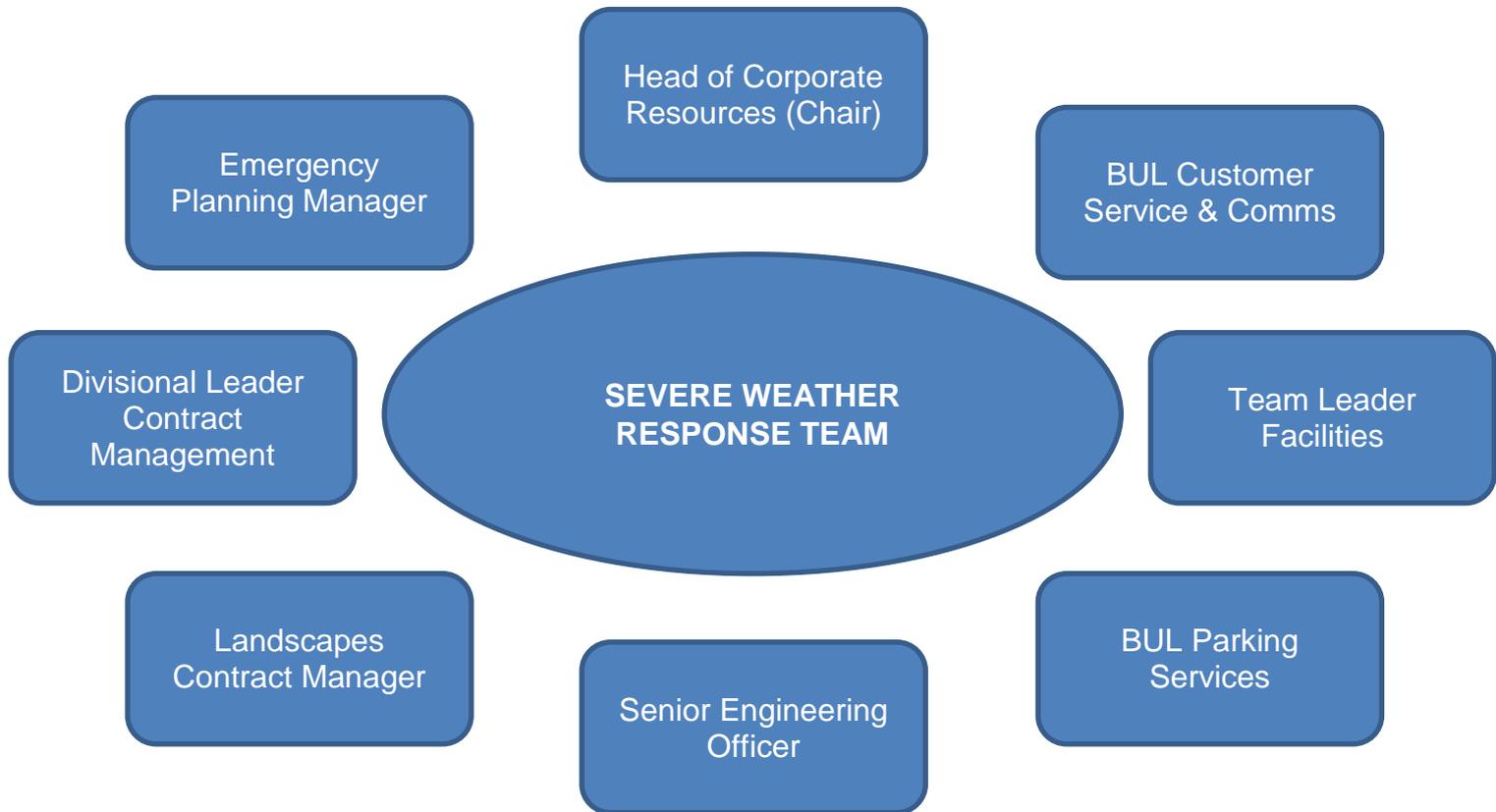
Following a severe weather event in Mid Sussex and the activation of this plan, the Council will convene a meeting of officers, members and partner organisations, to review these arrangements and identify any lessons that can reasonably be learned.

The Sussex Resilience Forum will also hold a multi-agency de-brief if there has been severe disruption to lives, property or the environment across the County.

Once this process is complete, the Emergency Planning Officer will provide a de-brief report and make recommendations for improvements to the District Council's severe weather arrangements.

In the absence of any incident which may trigger the activation of this Severe Weather Plan, these arrangements will be reviewed annually by the Council's Emergency Planning & Outdoor Services Manager.

Appendix 1 MSDC Severe Weather Response Structure



| Status | Impact | Response | Action |
|--------|--|---|---|
| Green | No significant disruption or damage reported | Business as Usual Normal operational response | Pro-active and reactive works as contracted. No additional resources. Complement others. |
| Amber | Significant disruption and some damage to property | Severe Weather Response Tactical Management by specialist officers | Severe Weather Plan activated. Additional resources required and costs incurred to support the community and promote business continuity |
| Red | Severe disruption and significant damage to property Threat to life | Emergency Response Strategic Management by senior officers | Emergency Plans activated. Additional resources deployed to support critical infrastructure. Mutual aid may be requested. Prepare for recovery phase. |

Appendix 2 – PRIORITY AREAS FOR SNOW CLEARANCE IN MID SUSSEX

West Sussex County Council assumes overall responsibility for the clearance of snow and ice on the public highway.

A. Carriageways

The objective is to keep as much of the road network as safe and free flowing as possible. If conditions deteriorate to the extent that the entire network cannot be kept open, a reduced network shall be adopted based on the following priorities:

Priority 1 - Primary and emergency access routes

Priority 2 - County Distributors, District Distributors

Priority 3 - Other carriageways according to the Area Office Divisional Manager

Priority 1 & 2 routes are published on the WSCC website and the general expectation is that these will be cleared before the morning rush hour and monitored throughout the day. Priority 3 routes will be cleared subject to a 'Daily Decision' and this will be communicated via the WSCC website and twitter feed.

B. Footways and Cycle-ways

WSCC Area Office Divisional Managers (or their authorised representatives) will instruct the contractor to clear snow from selected footways, pedestrian precincts and cycle-ways starting with those most heavily trafficked.

Once the clearance programme for these routes is known, District, Town & Parish Councils will agree the local priority areas for clearance and combine their resources accordingly, whilst also having considered their own assets and business continuity requirements.

Local Arrangements in Mid Sussex

Parish & Town Councils will be primarily responsible for providing salt bins within their boundaries. Prior to each winter, WSCC will inspect these and ensure they are filled with salt.

Parish & Town Councils are advised to formulate a Winter Management Plan in conjunction with WSCC to specify the provision of local salt supplies and the distribution method during the winter months. Completed Winter Management Plans should be shared with the District Council, so that local capabilities and requirements are known.

Should the above arrangements come under pressure during any incident involving severe winter weather; the District Council will work with local partners to assist in the clearance of snow and ice in high priority areas, as they arise.

From the outset of any severe weather incident, the District Council will request a brief situation report from local Parish and Town Councils to help prioritise the response efforts.