

Thame Town Council

Severe Weather Policy

1. Introduction

- 1.1 This policy defines the manner in which the Town Council approaches severe weather conditions.

2. General Statement

- 2.1 Severe weather is defined as extreme high winds, flooding, heavy snow and icy conditions, or heat waves. The policy applies to Town Council owned or managed land. Individual landowners are responsible for dealing with their own property and Oxfordshire County Council for highways, pavements, schools, etc.

3. Responsibilities

3.1 Town Clerk

The Town Clerk must identify and prioritise where action is required and allocate the Council's resources as effectively as possible.

3.2 Councillors

Councillors must ensure sufficient resources are allocated to deal with severe weather conditions. They must recognise that employees may have difficulties in travelling to and from work and the effect on their starting and finishing times.

4. Procedure

- 4.1 Appendix 1 is the Weather Parameter sheet detailing a list of sites, the type of adverse weather conditions and the control measures in place. The Asset Manager will review the list of sites annually.
- 4.2 The Maintenance Team will deal with the physical issues arising from severe weather and will be adequately trained to undertake any remedial actions required as detailed in the Weather Parameter Sheet Appendix 1 and the Precautionary Gritting Decision Making Index Appendix 2.
- 4.3 The Maintenance Team will be able to operate chainsaws to cut down unsafe small trees and branches in high winds, the tractor to spread grit on footpaths and minor roads. The training qualifications required to undertake these tasks are listed within Appendix 1.
- 4.4 Staff who live in Thame and can walk safely to work will ensure that the Town Hall and the Depot are open for business. The hours of work may have to be reviewed depending on the severity of the weather conditions.

- 4.4.1 Those staff unable to attend work must take the time off as either annual leave to ensure payment or as unpaid leave.
- 4.5 Town Councillors may be asked to assist staff at the Town Hall and Depot depending on the severity of the weather.
- 4.6 Staff may be required to work out of hours depending on the severity of the weather to ensure services are maintained.

5. Actions

5.1 Town Clerk

The Town Clerk will identify and undertake the following actions, including out of office hours:

Will assess the risk regarding severe weather and the impact this will have by obtaining information from the Meteorologist Office, the Environment Agency and Oxfordshire County Council's website. During periods of extreme weather the Emergency Planning Department will e-mail the Town Clerk providing up to date information and advice. The Asset Manager will assist the Town Clerk with assessing the risk of severe weather.

- 5.2 Will check the parameters set defining severe weather.
 - 5.2.1 High winds – winds above a scale 9 are defined as high winds.
 - 5.2.2 Flooding – flood warnings will be monitored. The Environment Agency may be contacted to advise the Town Council.
 - 5.2.3 Snow and ice – weather warnings will be monitored.
- 5.3 Will inform Councillors and staff of the current situation regarding the severe weather. Will ensure the Town Hall remains open if possible. If staff cannot travel to work, then Councillors will make themselves available to assist with continuity of services.
- 5.4 The Council will endeavour to keep the website continually updated if the appropriate staff are able to attend work during normal office hours Monday – Friday.
- 5.5 The Maintenance Team will be alerted to undertake the following activities depending on the weather conditions and the associated risks:
 - a) High winds - following periods of high wind, the following sites will be visually inspected for damage:
 - Churchill Crescent
 - Elms Park
 - Cuttle Brook
 - Southern Road Recreation Ground
 - Queen Elizabeth Circle
 - Ham Wood

- b) Flooding – during and following periods of flooding, the drainage ditches at Cuttle Brook will be checked and cleared as necessary. The ditches shall also be checked and maintained annually to help prevent blockages. The stream through Cuttle Brook shall be checked at least every month and large obstructions removed.
- c) Heavy snow and ice – gritting will take place as detailed in Appendix 1 and 2 within the areas as defined on the map of Thame Appendix 3. The stock of grit held by the Council will be checked annually in September by the Asset Manager and any additional stock ordered through The Adverse Weather Manager at Oxfordshire County Council.
- d) Heat Waves – work patterns and tasks may be altered to avoid outside work during heat waves. This is for staff safety, as well as to avoid damage to plants through watering in daytime. The Council will comply with any water restrictions.
- e) Plant, equipment, signs, PPE and materials shall be checked at least every six months and prior to use in preparation of severe weather, e.g. grit, chainsaws.
- f) In extreme weather conditions where transport is difficult or dangerous it may not be possible to treat/inspect Council owned land as staff may have difficulty in reaching locations.
- g) Staff will endeavour to pass on reports about severe weather problems outside of the scope of this policy to the appropriate body, e.g. Oxfordshire County Council.

6. Records

- 6.1 Incident reports will record any occurrence affecting Council owned land or property and what remedial action has taken place in support of this policy.
- 6.2 These records will be retained for one year after the end of the period of severe weather or until any claims arising have been settled (whichever is the longer).
- 6.3 The Town Clerk is responsible for ensuring the above records are retained and eventually destroyed.