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|---------------------------|--------------------------------------------|
| <b>Subject:</b>           | Winter preparedness update                 |
| <b>Date:</b>              | 9 <sup>th</sup> November 2023              |
| <b>Reporting Officer:</b> | Siobhan Toland, Director of City Services  |
| <b>Contact Officer:</b>   | Patrick Mallon, Emergency Planning Officer |

**Restricted Reports**

**Is this report restricted?** Yes  No

**Please indicate the description, as listed in Schedule 6, of the exempt information by virtue of which the council has deemed this report restricted.**

Insert number

1. Information relating to any individual
2. Information likely to reveal the identity of an individual
3. Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the council holding that information)
4. Information in connection with any labour relations matter
5. Information in relation to which a claim to legal professional privilege could be maintained
6. Information showing that the council proposes to (a) to give a notice imposing restrictions on a person; or (b) to make an order or direction
7. Information on any action in relation to the prevention, investigation or prosecution of crime

**If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?**

|                                 |                          |
|---------------------------------|--------------------------|
| <b>After Committee Decision</b> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <b>After Council Decision</b>   | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <b>Sometime in the future</b>   | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <b>Never</b>                    | <input type="checkbox"/> |

**Call-in**

**Is the decision eligible for Call-in?** Yes  No

|            |                                                 |
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| <b>1.0</b> | <b>Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues</b> |
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| 1.1        | The purpose of this report is to update Members on winter preparedness following a Notice of Motion (NOM) referred by Standards and Business Committee on 24/01/2023 requesting a Winter Preparedness Strategy to be presented by quarter 3 of this financial year. This report advises Members on measures taken by BCC and multiagency partners to support the people of Belfast over the winter period, specifically in terms of emergency planning and Age Friendly Belfast.                                                                                                                                                                 |
| <b>2.0</b> | <b>Recommendation</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
| 2.1        | That the committee considers and notes the arrangements in place for winter preparedness.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| 2.2        | Members agree to the recommendation to permit DfI Rivers Staff access to Council land to complete necessary onsite maintenance of infrastructure, subject to relevant access agreements.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| <b>3.0</b> | <b>Main Report</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
| 3.1        | <b>Emergency Planning overview</b><br>Belfast City Council has an emergency plan in place to prepare for, respond to and recover from all kinds of emergencies including severe winter weather. In addition, the regional severe weather plan is a multiagency approach to planning for, responding to and recovering from severe weather. These plans enable partner agencies to co-ordinate their response to and recovery from any severe winter weather.                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| 3.2        | <b>Council Site maintenance of grills and culverts</b><br>DfI Rivers Staff are required to maintain grills and culverts upon Council lands acting within their statutory maintenance responsibilities. To facilitate this ongoing maintenance, an access agreement between Council and DfI to facilitate access is proposed.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| 3.3        | <b>Community Resilience Group</b><br>There are a number of community resilience groups in Belfast who are supported by multi agency partners to be better prepared for adverse weather, particularly relating to flooding. These community resilience groups have recently been re-engaged with, updating residents contacts details. Re-engagement includes awareness raising within these communities on existing resources including sandbag containers and equipment to help assist during adverse weather.                                                                                                                                  |
| 3.4        | Sandbag containers have been audited and continue to be replenished by multiagency partners including NIW, DfI Roads and DfI Rivers in preparation for winter. The sandbag containers have combination locks to improve speed of access by BCC staff or community volunteers when required. Locations of the sandbag containers are published on the Council website. <a href="https://www.belfastcity.gov.uk/Community/Community-Safety-and-Advice/Emergency-planning/Flooding-advice">https://www.belfastcity.gov.uk/Community/Community-Safety-and-Advice/Emergency-planning/Flooding-advice</a>                                              |
| 3.5        | <b>Snow clearance and salting</b><br>DfI Roads continue their annual scheduled process of restocking grit boxes and also responding to requests through their online Public Interface Portal (PIP) - <a href="#">Report an issue with ice or snow   nidirect</a> . An agreement is in place between DfI Roads and Belfast City Council in which council resources can be used to treat predefined areas when prolonged severe icy conditions are forecast. This protocol is triggered when a prolonged cold period is expected or experienced. The areas agreed include arterial routes into the city and streets in and around the city centre. |
| 3.6        | Members may recall a report agreed at People and Communities committee in February 2019 (Appendix 1) regarding the provision of salt for Members use in communities during prolonged                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |

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|            | <p>severe winter weather. Small quantities of salt will be made available in council owned premises this winter, for <u>Members' use in the community during prolonged, severe, high impact cold weather</u>. Stocks of salt (25kg bags) will be made available at appropriate council community/leisure centres or other council sites. Higher elevations residential areas will be prioritised where icy conditions are more prevalent, and impacts are greater.</p>                                                                                             |
| 3.7        | <p><b>Information and Outreach</b><br/>Links are in place with Age Friendly Belfast's multiagency group and homeless support groups to raise awareness when weather warnings are issued.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| 3.8        | <p>The winter emergency information has been updated on our BCC website which also contains a link to the NI Direct page: <a href="https://www.belfastcity.gov.uk/community/community-safety-and-advice/advice/emergency-advice#495-2">https://www.belfastcity.gov.uk/community/community-safety-and-advice/advice/emergency-advice#495-2</a> Corporate Communications also have specific winter advice pages, which can be highlighted on the website and via BCC social media channels as required.</p>                                                          |
| 3.9        | <p><b>Age Friendly Belfast</b><br/>Age Friendly Belfast hosts two seasonal planning meetings in May and November each year. Partners from community, voluntary and statutory organisations share their plans for the winter, raise any issues of concern and update contacts for communication of information in extreme weather. Some of the key projects to support older people over the winter are outlined below.</p>                                                                                                                                         |
| 4.0        | <p>National Energy Action (NEA) co-ordinate the distribution of winter warmth packs provided by the Public Health Agency to local voluntary and community groups within Belfast. Individuals and organisations can make referrals for those at risk of living in fuel poverty. Contact National Energy Action on 028 9023009909 for further details. With continued high household energy costs remaining a concern, NEA continues to support vulnerable households via the Belfast Warm and Well project. See Appendix 2 for details and qualifying criteria.</p> |
| 4.1        | <p>Community and voluntary groups are hosting walks and other activities with older people in Autumn/Winter 2023. The ongoing Age Friendly activities provide activities to help tackle loneliness and isolation. Check-in schemes such as Good Morning schemes and local phone befriending will continue to provide important support for older people in the winter period.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| 4.2        | <p>Age Friendly Belfast hosted a 'Be Prepared' drop in event on Tuesday 3<sup>rd</sup> October in 2 Royal Avenue, with a number of organisations offering advice on financial entitlements as well as ways to keep warm and well during the winter months.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| 4.3        | <p>The Affordable Warmth Scheme is now being delivered by the Northern Ireland Housing Executive and referrals can be made through the Executive.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| 4.4        | <p><u>Financial &amp; Resource Implications</u><br/>No financial or resource implications, being delivered within existing resources.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
| 4.5        | <p><u>Equality or Good Relations Implications /Rural Needs Assessments</u><br/>None</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
| <b>4.0</b> | <b>Appendices - Documents Attached</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| 4.1        | Appendix 1: People and Communities Committee Report February 2019. Provision of salt in communities during prolonged severe winter weather.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| 4.2        | Appendix 2: Belfast Warm and Well Project leaflet                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |