



<b>Subject:</b>	Winter preparedness update
<b>Date:</b>	9 <sup>th</sup> November 2021
<b>Reporting Officer:</b>	Siobhan Toland, Director of City Services
<b>Contact Officer:</b>	Seamus McBride, Emergency Coordination Officer

<b>Restricted Reports</b>	
<b>Is this report restricted?</b>	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<b>If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?</b>	
After Committee Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
After Council Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
Some time in the future	<input type="checkbox"/>
Never	<input type="checkbox"/>

<b>Call-in</b>	
<b>Is the decision eligible for Call-in?</b>	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>

<b>1.0</b>	<b>Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues</b>
1.1	The purpose of this report is to update 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>Recommendations</b>
2.1	The Committee is asked to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Consider and note the arrangements in place for winter preparedness.</li></ul>
<b>3.0</b>	<b>Main report</b>
	<u>Key Issues</u>
	<b>Emergency Planning overview</b>
3.1	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.

### **Regional Community Resilience Group**

3.2 All local community resilience groups in Belfast have been re-engaged with over the summer months updating residents contacts details and refreshing existing community emergency plans. Re-engagement has included awareness raising within these communities on existing resources including sandbag containers and equipment to help assist during adverse weather, particularly flash flooding.

3.3 In preparation for COP26 in Glasgow, Belfast City Council's Emergency Planning team participated in a regional film production to raise awareness on the work of the Regional Community Resilience Group. Interviews were conducted with local multiagency Emergency Planners and community volunteers in Belfast, Dromore Co. Down and Eglinton. This regional piece will highlight community resilience best practice demonstrating how multiagency partners have worked together engaging with local communities, empowering local people to improve their resilience and capability to deal with adverse weather.

3.4 Sandbag containers 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. <https://www.belfastcity.gov.uk/Community/Community-Safety-and-Advice/Emergency-planning/Flooding-advice>

### **Snow clearance and salting**

3.5 DfI Roads are in the process of restocking community grit boxes in preparation for winter. 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	<p>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 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>. Existing 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>
	<p><b>Information and Outreach</b></p>
3.7	<p>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>A briefing paper, 'Elected Member Information on Major Emergencies' will be emailed to all members which includes a Hotline number for members use during an emergency.</p>
3.9	<p>There is winter emergency information 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>
	<p><b>Age-friendly Belfast</b></p>
3.10	<p>Age-friendly Belfast hosts two interagency winter planning meetings in August 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>
3.11	<p>National Energy Action (NEA) are co-ordinating winter warmth packs provided by the Public Health Agency for Belfast. Referrals can be made for those at risk of fuel poverty, a particular concern this year with rising energy costs by calling National Energy Action on <b>028 9023009909</b>. Appendix 2 provides an outline of this 'Warm and Well' project.</p>
3.12	<p>Community and voluntary groups are hosting walks and other small-scale face-to-face activities with older people in Autumn/Winter 2021 whilst it is safe to do so. The ongoing</p>

3.13	Age-friendly activities also provide a mix of virtual and in-person 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.
3.14	Age-friendly Belfast and Belfast PCSP have distributed 15000 'safe seniors' packs across Belfast in October through community centres and community voluntary organisations which contains information on Keeping Well at Home, Scams, staying safe and being prepared for emergencies. The Affordable Warmth Scheme continues to operate as normal. Referrals can be made via the Affordable Warmth Coordinator.
	<u>Financial &amp; Resource Implications</u>
3.15	None. Winter preparedness being delivered by existing resources.
	<u>Equality or Good Relations Implications /Rural Needs Assessments</u>
3.16	None
<b>4.0</b>	<b>Appendices – Documents Attached</b>
	Appendix 1: People and Communities Committee Report February 2019. Provision of salt in communities during prolonged severe winter weather.  Appendix 2: Belfast Warm and Well Project leaflet