
Meeting of the Cabinet – 29th January 2026

Report of the Director of Growth and Infrastructure

Review of Winter Maintenance

Purpose of report

1. To provide an update to Cabinet on the strategic review of the Winter Maintenance Programme following Storm Goretti and to outline what the review will cover and how the Council plans to engage the community and prepare for future winter weather.

Recommendations

2. It is recommended that the Council conduct a full strategic review of the Winter Maintenance Programme, as outlined in this report. The review should include: -
 - Assessment of primary and secondary gritting routes
 - Review of grit bin usage, bin locations and refill protocols
 - Review of winter maintenance equipment and stock
 - Assessment of communications
 - Analysis of enquiry responses and customer feedback

Background

3. The recent Storm Goretti, a severe multi-hazard winter weather event as identified by the Met Office had a significant impact on Dudley borough and the wider West Midlands region, prompting the need for a strategic review of the Council's Winter Maintenance Programme.
4. Storm Goretti caused widespread snow accumulation, including 20–25cm on higher ground across the West Midlands.
5. The Met Office issued Amber weather warnings, indicating likely risk to travel and infrastructure. The storm led to major disruption across multiple transport systems, trains, roads, bus services and air travel.

6. The severe weather had a significant impact on local communities, affecting residents, schools, businesses and frontline services.
7. In response to the challenges highlighted by the storm, the Council has reaffirmed its commitment to continuous improvement and initiated a formal strategic review of winter maintenance operations.
8. This review aims to ensure the borough is better equipped for future severe weather events and to enhance the resilience and effectiveness of our operational arrangements.
9. In the immediate term, the Council has strengthened its preventative measures to mitigate the impact of further unsettled weather.
10. Our goal is to co-design an improved schedule of Works for Winter Maintenance, that targets resources to deliver greatest impact in terms of connectivity and safety. The revised programme will ensure that the safeguarding of our Primary Network with specific or localised needs is appropriately balanced, including:-
 - To engage with residents and key community partners in the review. Particularly local residents, schools, businesses, health and care facilities and wider stakeholders. The engagement will help us understand specific community and resident needs to shape our winter maintenance priorities. A multi-faceted, inclusive approach to engagement including online surveys, engagement in community and business forums and a recruitment to a Winter Maintenance Task and Finish Group will be adopted.
 - The launch of a school-based campaign to name the gritters. It is proposed that an initiative to involve our schools in a “name the gritters” campaign, which will form part of a broader road safety awareness campaign and programme.
 - The review will commence in April 2026 and conclude in August 2026 thus introducing any changes and improvements before the Autumn/Winter season.
 - Continue to take immediate preventative action in advance of further unsettled weather, including:
 - providing targeted gritting around schools and health and care facilities;
 - As of 5th January 2026, the Director of Growth and Infrastructure, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Economy and Infrastructure, authorised the refilling of grit bins. Requests to refill

- grit bins in verified locations, based on service need and risk will continue to be responded to;
- As of 6th January 2026, the Cabinet Member for Economy and Infrastructure requested that no further grit bins are removed from the Highway;
 - Promoting safety advice to residents, including the Met Office's WeatherReady campaign to support winter preparedness.

Finance

11. The review and any actions will be funded from within existing budgets.

Law

12. Section 111 of the Local Government Act 1972 provides the Council with power to do anything which is calculated to facilitate or is conducive or incidental to, the discharge of any of their functions. Pursuant to Section 1 of the Localism Act 2011 a local authority has a general power of competence to do anything that individuals generally may do.

Risk Management

13. In the immediate term, the Council has strengthened its preventative measures to mitigate the impact of further unsettled weather and associated risks. We will continue to assess the significant risks and the severity level associated.

The Council has a legal duty under the Highways Act 1980 to ensure that priority routes are not endangered by snow or ice. This serves as the primary reason that priority routes are gritted first as failure to prioritise the primary network could result in road accidents, disruption to emergency services and school and business closures.

Equality Impact

14. This report supports the continued delivery of services for all residents of Dudley borough and does not result in any adverse impact on, or discrimination against individuals with protected characteristics as defined under the Equality Act 2010.
15. The direct implications of this report for children and young people have been fully considered alongside those for all residents of Dudley borough.

Human Resources/Organisational Development

16. Any additional work arising from this report will be delivered using existing internal resources, which have the capacity and flexibility to accommodate the requirements.

Commercial/Procurement

17. Any future procurement activity required to support the recommendations in this report will be undertaken in line with relevant legislation and the Council's Contract Standing Orders with support from procurement colleagues.

Environment / Climate Change

18. The Council will continue to evaluate changing climate, frequency and severity of extreme weather events affecting the borough, alongside the environmental impact of winter maintenance activities, including the use of road salt, fuel consumption associated with gritting vehicles, and the sustainability of equipment and material procurement. This review will also consider opportunities to minimise carbon emissions and support the borough's wider climate resilience objectives.

Proposals arising from the review will be aligned with the Council's Environmental Policy and Environmental Sustainability Action Plan, ensuring that winter maintenance operations contribute positively to long-term environmental sustainability.

Council Plan

19. This report supports the delivery of the Council's strategic objectives by strengthening preparedness, resilience and service quality across the borough. The proposals contribute directly to the Council Plan priorities, including:
 - Efficiency and Best Value – ensuring winter maintenance operations are effective, evidence based and provide value for money.
 - Governance and Assurance – enhancing oversight, risk management and operational control in response to severe weather events.
 - Delivering for Residents and Communities – improving safety, accessibility and community engagement, particularly during periods of severe winter weather.

Anne Boyd – Director of Growth and Infrastructure

Report Author: Anne Boyd, Director of Growth and Infrastructure
Telephone: 01384 818332 Email: anne.boyd@dudley.gov.uk