

6. SEVERE WEATHER POLICY (REVISED)

The Panel considered a report (copies of which had been circulated) by the Head of Corporate Services presenting a revised Severe Weather Policy, a copy of which was attached to the report at Appendix 1

The report recalled that during the early part of 2018, the country experienced exceptionally severe weather causing considerable disruption to businesses, workers and the public in general and prompting a Red Weather Warning to be issued. While the council had in place arrangements for dealing with disruption caused by severe weather, the unprecedented harshness of the weather conditions on this occasion exposed some weaknesses in the current policy.

Following consideration of a motion at Full Council on 30 March 2018 the Chief Executive was instructed to undertake a thorough review of communication procedures between managers and staff, and to engage with the recognised Trade Unions to establish clean lines of communication for adverse weather conditions. Additionally the Chief Executive was asked to undertake a review of the existing Severe Weather Policy.

A review of the existing policy had resulted in the inclusion of a specific section relating to Red Weather Warnings and the contingency arrangements that should be invoked in these circumstances to ensure the safety and well-being of staff and the continuity of essential service delivery.

The review had also been informed by the Severe Weather: Fair Work Charter developed jointly by the Scottish Government and the Scottish Trade Union Congress (STUC) which provided a set of guiding principles to support employers and workers to plan for and manage the impact of severe weather.

Discussions had also taken place with the recognised trade unions and a number of revisions to the policy have been made with a view to improving its effectiveness in dealing with extreme weather events. In particular there had been an emphasis on the need for well communicated contingency arrangements to be in place especially where decisions were taken to close council buildings or where workplaces became inaccessible due to severe weather.

It had also been agreed that a list of post types deemed as “essential works” would be discussed with the recognised trade unions.

A further key change proposed was for the Chief Executive, in the exceptional event of a Red Weather Warning, to have discretion to override the normal policy provisions which may include authorising the general application of special leave or crediting essential workers who attended work within their normal hours/pay during the period that the warning was in force.

It was recommended that the Panel :-

- a. Considers the revised draft Severe Weather Policy appended to the report with a view to submission to the Council Executive for approval;
- b. Notes that the revised policy reflected the guiding principles for supporting employers and workers set out in the Scottish Government's Severe Weather Fair Work Charter;
- c. Notes that the revised policy would be supported by a programme of improved contingency planning measures and guidance for employees; and
- d. Notes that the revised policy provided discretion to the Chief Executive to over-ride the normal provisions of the policy during periods when a Red Weather Warning was issued.

#### Decision

- 1. To note the content of the report; and
- 2. To agree that the report be submitted to the Council Executive for approval.