



The Council

Adverse Weather Policy

Introduction

Wareham Town Council (the Council) is committed to delivering its services throughout the year. The Council's operations are diversely spread between services provided by officers at the Town Hall including administrative functions and the services officers deliver across Wareham's public realm.

The Council realises an essential component to maintaining these diverse services is ensuring that officers are prepared to handle circumstances such as adverse weather so that work can be delivered consistently and safely for members of the public and officers alike.

This policy serves as a publicly available guide for how the Council will navigate adverse weather conditions to deliver services as far as is practicable and safe as well as the measures which will be taken to ensure members of the public and officers are protected from risks associated with adverse weather.

This policy has been composed with a view to reflect the needs of Wareham, factoring in the various types of adverse weather the town is most likely to experience. The policy seeks to compliment broader existing guidance from organisations such as the Met Office, Health and Safety Executive and other partner organisations as well as legislative guidance and requirements.

This policy is reviewed every three years.

Scope

This policy covers all aspects of the Council's operations. Including, but exclusively not limited to:

- The Town Hall building and 3 East Street.
- Officers working within the Town Hall and members of the public visiting.
- Officers working within other the Council buildings and in Wareham's public realm.
- Recreation Grounds and Play Parks and members of the public using these spaces.
- Howard's Lane car park, Howard's Lane Public Toilets and The Quay Public Toilets.
- Officers travelling offsite for work.
- 2 Mill Lane
- Other Council owned land

Definitions

The Council refers to the following terms throughout this policy. For clarity, these terms are defined according to the Council's interpretation below:

"Adverse weather", refers to bad weather that can be dangerous or damaging. Adverse weather can manifest in a variety of ways but is categorised by weather that may disrupt travel, infrastructure, daily activities or has a high propensity to damage property.

"Member(s) of the public", refers to any person who is not directly employed by the Council. This broadly includes residents, contractors, visitors, volunteers and those otherwise using the Council's facilities or spaces.

"Officer(s)", refers to a person directly employed by the Council or another Council if that Council's name precedes "officers".

"Public realm", refers to anywhere within Wareham which is not Council owned but the Council officers might work or travel through.

"Offsite", refers to anywhere outside of Wareham where an officer has Council business.

"Equipment", refers to tools, machinery, temporarily installable fixtures, vehicles and other equipment which may be deployed by the Council throughout the public realm.

"PPE", refers to Personal Protective Equipment which are characteristically wearable items which protect wearers from external risks or minimise their impact. e.g., gloves or masks.

High Winds, Storms, Floods Ice and Heavy Snow

Wareham's location brings it into contact with periodic episodes of high winds and storms equally experiencing snow, ice and periodic flooding. These can pose risks to people and property and the Council takes its responsibility to safeguard members of the public using its facilities, its officers and its property seriously.

Early Detection and Prevention:

The Council's officers will monitor guidance, advice and warnings as disseminated by the Met Office¹. When Met Office guidance is given in advance of adverse weather the Council will seek to make appropriate preparations to minimise the impact to service delivery, risks to members of the public or officers and risk to the Council's property.

The preparations the Council will make at an operational level will be directed by the Town Clerk informed by guidance from the Met Office for business and service continuation.

Yellow Warnings will prompt preparations to ensure that property and equipment is stored safely to prevent damage to the property and equipment and minimise the risk of these causing harm to members of the public or officers during the adverse weather.

Officers should seek to notify members of the public of the increased risk attached to using some of the Council's facilities, such as play parks and recreation grounds in such weather through practicably available channels.

¹ Met Office Warnings and Advice Page: <https://www.metoffice.gov.uk/weather/warnings-and-advice/uk-warnings>

Councillors will be notified of the adverse weather conditions and any impact this may have on the Council meetings and services.

Amber Warnings will prompt preparations to ensure officers are able to safely travel to and from work. Should officers working primarily from the Town Hall expect difficulties travelling to work in a timely manner or safely, preparations should be made to work from home at the direction of their line manager. In the unlikely event this should impact all office-based officers, preparations to notify the public will be made. Should officers working within the public realm expect difficulties travelling to work in a timely manner or safely, alternative preparations should be made in consultation with their line managers to:

- Allow for public toilets to be opened for the public.
- Notify members of the public that the use of play parks should be avoided during the adverse weather in the interest of health and safety.

If alternative provisions for the opening of public toilets are not possible, these facilities will remain closed to the public until the adverse weather has passed and staff are able to return to work.

Dependant on the severity of the adverse weather and elements of adverse weather present, bookings and other activities arranged by members of the public may be cancelled at the discretion of the Town Clerk in the interest of public safety. Should it be deemed necessary to cancel paid events, arrangements to host the event at a later date will be investigated or, if not possible, a refund will be considered at the discretion of the Council.

Preparations will be made to ensure that property and equipment is stored safely to prevent damage to the property and equipment and minimise the risk of these causing harm to members of the public or officers during the adverse weather.

Officers should seek to notify members of the public of the increased risks attached to using some of the Council's facilities, such as play parks and recreation grounds in such weather through practicably available channels.

Councillors will be notified of the adverse weather conditions and any impact this may have on the Council meetings and services. It may be the case that meetings must be rescheduled, and this will be done in line with current legislation.

Red Warnings will prompt preparations to be made to allow the continuation of the most urgent the Council activities and those which are safe to still be carried out in severe adverse weather.

During severe adverse weather, officers will not be expected to travel into Wareham to work in the Town Hall or public realm. The Town Clerk will inform officers of the period the adverse weather is expected and the arrangements to close the office to members of the public. All office-based officers will prepare to carry out administrative duties from home. Officers working within the public realm will not be expected to work in dangerous conditions.

Preparations should be made to:

- Notify members of the public of closure dates for public toilets.
- Notify members of the public that the use of play parks should be avoided during the adverse weather in the interest of health and safety.

Bookings and other activities arranged by members of the public will be cancelled in the interest of public safety. Arrangements to host the event at a later date will be investigated or, if not possible, a refund will be considered at the discretion of the Council.

Preparations will be made to ensure that property and equipment is stored safely to prevent damage to the property and equipment and minimise the risk of these causing harm to members of the public or officers during the adverse weather.

Officers will seek to notify members of the public of the increased risk attached to using some of the Council's facilities, such as play parks and recreation grounds in such weather through practicably available channels.

Councillors will be notified of the adverse weather conditions and the impact this will have on the Council meetings and services. The Council meetings will be rescheduled, and this will be done in line with current legislation.

During Adverse Weather:

The Council will seek to continue to deliver as many of its services during adverse weather events, however it will only deliver services which are safe to do so for members of the public and officers under the prevailing conditions. The way some services are delivered may need to adapt for the purposes of business continuity and safety.

The way these services are delivered will be at the direction of the Town Clerk in conjunction with guidance from the Met Office, Health and Safety Executive, Dorset Council and national government and the procedures outlined within this policy.

Yellow warnings may only require minor alterations to the way the Council delivers its services.

The ongoing adverse weather conditions will be monitored by officers using the Met Office's guidance. Should adverse weather conditions change, The Council's preparations and ongoing management of the adverse weather will change in accordance, at the Town Clerk's direction.

During yellow warnings officers working within the Town Hall are likely to be able to discharge their duties without interruption.

Officers working within the public realm should ensure that they have familiarised themselves with risk assessments for tasks within the public realm, and that any additional risks are identified and managed appropriately. It will be the responsibility of these officers and their line manager to ensure that risks are suitably mitigated or eliminated, and appropriate PPE is available and used.

Some tasks may no longer be safe or practicable to carry out in the public realm. These tasks will be rescheduled at the direction of the officers' line manager.

Officers will monitor the condition of the Council property and equipment to ensure they remain safe from damage and do not pose a risk to members of the public or officers.

Amber warnings may require more thorough alterations to way the Council delivers its services.

The ongoing adverse weather conditions will be monitored by officers using the Met Office's guidance. Should adverse weather conditions change, the Council's preparations and ongoing management of the adverse weather will change in accordance, at the Town Clerk's direction.

During amber warnings officers working within the Town Hall will be consulted to ensure they will be able to travel to and from work safely. Officers who may experience considerable difficulties in travelling to and from work, or who might be exposed to significant risk may work from home at the Town Clerk's discretion.

Officers working within the public realm should ensure that they have familiarised themselves with risk assessments for tasks within the public realm, and that any additional risks are identified and managed appropriately. It will be the responsibility of these officers and their line manager to ensure that risks are suitably mitigated or eliminated, and appropriate PPE is available and used.

Some tasks may no longer be safe or practicable to carry out in the public realm. These tasks will be rescheduled at the direction of the officers' line manager.

Officers will monitor the condition of the Council property and equipment to ensure they remain safe from damage and do not pose a risk to members of the public or officers.

Red warnings require the Council to operate carefully to ensure the safety of members of the public and officers. This will impact the Council's ability to deliver its services.

Officers who typically work within the public realm will not be expected to travel into work.

Officers who work within the Council offices will not be expected to travel but will be expected to carry out their duties at home to the best of their ability.

Following Adverse Weather:

The Council seeks to return to normal operations as swiftly as possible following adverse weather.

Should there have been any changes to open hours for members of the public, officers working in the Town Hall will update any notices informing members of the public of the return to normal operations.

Officers working in the public realm will check the integrity of the Council equipment and property to identify and escalate any damage or maintenance work.

The Council operated play parks, recreation spaces and public toilets will be reopened as normal.

Heavy Snow and Ice:

The Council appreciates the impact snow and ice can have on members of the public and the Council operations.

Dorset Council assumes primary responsibility for ensuring the public realm is safe and accessible in the event of heavy snow and ice.

Officers working within the Town Hall should be able to discharge their duties with limited impact in the event of snow and ice.

All officers should heed Met Office advice, and the guidance set out instructing actions to be taken in the event of different weather alerts.

Officers working within the public realm should ensure that they have familiarised themselves with risk assessments for tasks within the public realm, and that any additional risks are identified and managed appropriately. It will be the responsibility of these officers and their line

manager to ensure that risks are suitably mitigated or eliminated, and appropriate PPE is available and used.

Some tasks may no longer be safe or practicable to carry out in the public realm. These tasks will be rescheduled at the direction of the officers' line manager.

Floods and Flooding:

The Council is aware of the impact floods and flooding can have on its operations as well as their impact on members of the public.

The Council works closely with Dorset Council officers to support in flood signposting and will continue to do so.

Floods and flooding are expected to have a lessened impact on the direct daily operations of The Council officers.

In the event of floods and flooding, the Council will support the dissemination of guidance as provided by Dorset Council for the benefit of members of the public. Officers working within the public realm may be unable to carry out some of their tasks in areas experiencing active flooding. These tasks will be rescheduled as appropriate. The Quay Toilets will be closed in the event of flooding which is likely to make these toilets inaccessible.

Officers working within the public realm will inspect the Council property and equipment to identify any damage or appropriate maintenance following floods and flooding.

Extreme Temperatures:

The Council carries a responsibility as an employer to protect the wellbeing of officers in extreme temperatures. The Council will follow guidance from the Health and Safety Executive² to ensure that officers working within the public realm can do so safely.

² HSE Guidance, Temperature in the workplace:
<https://www.hse.gov.uk/temperature/employer/index.htm>