



Vale Snow Emergency March 2018

CMT & Heads of Service Structured Debrief Report

STRUCTURED DEBRIEF REPORT

Summary of Incident

The snow that fell within the Vale of Glamorgan caused widespread issues and disruptions across the council area, including urban and rural areas. The rural Vale was worse affected due to the topography; this resulted in the response being extended to deal with the issues locally.

Structured Debrief

The structured debrief was attended by Corporate Management Team, Heads of Service and Operational Managers.

Debbie Spargo, Principal Civil Protection Officer introduced the debrief session, she explained to those present that we have a well-established process and system for opening up a tactical (silver) command room in F26. This has worked very well and we come from a position of strength, however, there is always areas that we can improve and this debrief session is an opportunity to examine 'our' response, identify any lessons and implement these into organisational learning.

An explanation of the reasoning behind the Structured Debrief process and the layout of the session were provided. It was also pointed out to the participants that this was a no-blame; equal value session and the group were asked to be as open and as honest as they felt they could be. They were also advised that the process is not for problem solving or decision making but rather a means to capturing all the issues.

The Aims and objectives were set out as a basis for the discussions and use was made of a graphical representation of the incident (on a white board) in orders to apply the findings of the personal experiences of those participants attending.

Aims and Objectives

- To get each participant to reflect on their Service area experience of the Incident.
- To identify personal experiences.
- To share and discuss these views to establish;
 - a. Personal learning
 - b. Future positive use of that learning.

The discussion of personal experiences was both frank and thorough. The participants were asked to identify 2 points for them which were the **least** effective and 2 points where response was **good**. A full list of comments is included in appendix 1, which include -

Negative Points

Where everyone was asked to " identify 2 areas where response was **least** effective" the following general areas of concern included –

1. IT

2. Communications
3. Resources

Discussion around communications related mainly to the initial communications internally on the first day, the decision to close the Council buildings caused some confusion as some staff had already made it into work. The communications to staff about the on-going incident could have been better, giving a consistent message to all staff using C1V, staffnet, website and Vale connect.

Not all staff can work from home due to lack of equipment, also some of the mobile phones were not useful as they have disabled the sending photos, this was a disadvantage as staff on the ground could not send in information, they had to attend the control room to provide the information.

There was a lack of any procedures or process for utilising local community resources, like the local Farmers; who may have had better resources based locally to assist with the situation.

Positive Points

Everyone was asked to identify 2 areas where they thought response was good: The positive points are numerous, and include –

1. Communications – Information to the public via social media/website
2. Command and Control – emergency (Snow) Room- Bringing coordination and resources/info together
3. Operational Response – excellent working

The Support within the Emergency /snow room was very good and this ensured an ease for communication. The coordination of effort and prioritising of resources, led to a flexible response resource and staffing during the in emergency phase. The leadership and team working achieved the necessary outcomes and readiness. The decision to close the schools on the Wednesday was really effective/planned/organised, looked as if we knew what we were doing even though it was potentially a risk.

The Communication via the website and using the Councils facebook and twitter account had proved very useful. This ensured that the correct information was in the public domain very quickly, the presence of a communication officer within the control room was very positive and assisted with the overall response ensuring accurate and timely information and messages.

Personal Learning Points

The positive learning points: ie. “Things I would do differently next time” include –

- “Ensure contact names and numbers are to hand “
- “Identify critical assets/area routes in advance of the snow emergency”
- “Regular SITREPS”
- “Link to webpage via staffnet/core brief”
- “Check what C1V are telling residents to ensure consistent comms.”

- “adverse weather policy need to be reviewed”

Future Positive Use of that Learning –

Application of that learning in the future: ie “If I was advising my organisation at a similar incident, 2 things I would suggest, would be....”

This section of the debrief included the following comments –

- “List of who’s doing what/who’s who in the incident room and when room open clear list of people who need to be there and their role (write on board)
- “Agree role and responsibility”
- “To be able to call in additional resources to help .e.g. manpower”
- “logging of incidents reported and response made; Use a single point/person of logging incidents”
- “Briefing of C1V to ensure a consistent message”

Recommendation:

That issues raised in the context of the Structured Debrief session be captured and compiled into an Action Plan to ensure that the lessons learnt from this incident are implemented.

Action Plan

No	Issue	Solution	Target date	Issue owner
1	Winter Service Manual	Review plan and procedures	September	Highways / CPU
2	Utilise resources available within the local Community – Farmers	Process for being able to activate local farmers’ resources to work for VOGC.	October 2018	Highways / CPU
3	IT – issues – restrictions on equipment – emergency room and mobile phones etc.	Meet with IT to highlight the issues and investigate solutions.	October 2018	CPU
4	contact list for schools	Contact list to be updated	September 2018	CPU

Appendix 1 – Feedback Comments from post-it notes.

Question 1:

Identify 2 areas where response was least effective

IT Issues:

- IT connections – enabling home working (need to over-haul)

Communications:

- Communications with Head Teachers – re- school opening arrangements
- Could we get private emails to notify staff of sit rep.
- Snow meeting was too late.
- Whilst comms was good, was it as if individuals not on social media
- Ambiguity and implementation of Adverse Weather Policy
- Civic Offices being open a necessity – quicker decision needed on closure.
- Internal Comms on Thursday – revealed our shortcomings
- Communications with the staff when the snow was forecast
- Knowledge of managers of how to respond in such an event and HR implications
- Lack of early information on Met Office warnings.
- Direct requests to my mobile phone from members.

Resources:

- We appear not to have made best use of snow clearance assets available privately – Farmers.
- Some comments from Western Vale re: contractors clearing snow and their effectiveness – local Farmers cleared Village of Wick and was refused diesel.
- 4 x4 availability and co-ords especially on second occasion – use of social media
- Impact of Western Vale and how long it took for normality to resume.
- Collaboration with unaffected neighbours in relation to equipment.
- Not having emergency contact numbers to hand – e.g. in a central and accessible place.
- Not having a plan in place to use the immense resource of the agricultural/contractor community to better effect.
- Some of the machinery being used – main roads not suitable, should have been used elsewhere.
- Requests for transport and services which were not urgent coming to the emergency room.

Question 2:

Identify 3 areas where there was good response.

Communication

- Clear advice to Schools on closure
- Communications with schools which was clear and immediate
- Communications with staff on the 2nd day of the snow.
- Good communications going out to residents in the Vale
- Ability of staff to work from home reduced level of users
- Social media presence and effectiveness
- Communications – externally via social media, with director and MD
- Comms and targeting of response.
- Comms with public on social media
- Messaging re: route closures etc.

Command and control structure

- Support of Emergency /snow room and ease to communicate.
- Snow room – coordination of effort and prioritising of resources
- Coordination and flexibility of response resource and staffing in emergency phase
- Leadership- Team working to achieve the necessary outcomes and readiness
- Wednesday – school decision really effective/planned/organised, looked as if we knew what we were doing even though it was potentially a risk
- Clear lead/decision to close offices
- Comms approach – embedded in snow room
- SRS delivery ‘out of scope’ services to three Council e.g. Marc AJ
- Engagement with staff, willingness to respond coordinated control effort
- Enabling response to foreseen and unforeseen.
- Early decisions taken on staff and routes

Operational Response

- Keeping critical services running
- Response by teams /goodwill/effort
- Staff willing to help in all areas/hours.
- The number of staff willing to assist with the emergency and go above and beyond
- Arrangements re: work being taken home (paper files) and telephones being linked to office mobiles.
- Using IT to enable officers to continue working remotely

Question 3:

If I was advising my organisation at a similar incident, 2 things I would suggest would be:

Preparedness

- List of who's doing what/who's who in the incident room
- When room open clear list of people who need to be there and their role (write on board)
- Agree role and responsibility
- Develop IT links to assist home working

Response

- Regular sit-reps so don't miss cases in confusion.
- To be able to call in additional resources to help .e.g. manpower
- Ensure adequate resources are available and have contact details

Coordination & Control

- Logging of incidents reported and response made;
- Consistent logs/records
- Use a single point/person of logging incidents

Communication

- Follow up the next day with any information so that we can keep comms up to date.
- Briefing of C1V to ensure a consistent message
- Ensure that communications are used to best effect.

(Comments collected from those officers who contributed to the Debrief session.)