



A question of priorities

SIR – In response to John Marks' letter on behalf of the WGC Society (Talk to us, don't use PR speak; Wednesday, February 10) I would like to take this opportunity to draw a line under the issue of snow and ice clearance and the disruption to refuse and recycling services, during what was an abnormal period of prolonged bad weather.

A point raised in the letter asks what we would do if there was three months of snow.

The winter period we have just been through, has been one of the coldest on record in this country and brought with it an unusual amount of snow.

If this country experienced three months of snow then the services would have to change, on a national level. Countries that experience this level of snow have plans, budgets and equipment available to cope with it. The UK as a whole does not suffer with the amount of snow to justify the extra resources that a hypothetical three month period of snow would require.

During periods of snow and ice, it is a given, that we will not be able to provide the same level of service for refuse and recycling. However, every effort was made to ensure services were back to normal as quickly as possible with extra collections taking place when it was safe to do so. The council's first priority is always to collect refuse before the collection of recyclables. This is for public health reasons.

Saying all that, I do appreciate the frustrations residents feel when services are disrupted. And we are always looking at ways that service provision can be improved during periods of, what remains, infrequent spells of extreme weather.

I think John Marks would be pleased to know that a scrutiny group, following the last environment overview and scrutiny committee, has been set up to investigate the council's actions during periods of snow and ice, with a particular focus on clearance of footpaths, refuse and recycling and communications.

**John Dean,
Leader,
Welwyn Hatfield Council.**