

TITLE OF REPORT: Gateshead Council Pandemic Influenza Plan

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Purpose of the Report

1. The purpose of this report is to seek Cabinet's endorsement of the Council's Pandemic Influenza Plan.

Background

2. The Council Constitution specifies that the Director of Public Health is responsible for 'exercising the Council's functions in planning for, and responding to, emergencies that present a risk to public health (page 228)'.
3. In October 2016 the Council's Director of Public Health, Alice Wiseman, represented the Council at regional pandemic influenza 'Exercise Swan'. The objectives of the exercise were to:
 - a. Validate the Regional Pandemic Influenza Plan
 - b. Explore the potential impacts on business continuity for partaking organisations
 - c. Exercise multi-agency strategic decision making processes and identify roles and responsibilities in pandemic influenza response.
4. The recommendations from the exercise were that all organisations should review and update their own internal response and business continuity planning arrangements in relation to pandemic influenza incidents.
5. A new Gateshead Council Pandemic Influenza Plan has been developed to meet these recommendations, which reflects the content of the Regional Pandemic Influenza Plan.
6. The purpose of the plan is to:
 - Mitigate the impacts of an influenza pandemic by protecting the Council's internal and commissioned critical services
 - Provide clarity of roles and responsibilities in relation to command, control and coordination
 - Pre-plan communication mechanisms and templates
 - Manage the worst case scenarios that could ultimately affect Gateshead residents, including excess deaths.

7. The Council's business continuity plans have also been reviewed using criteria adopted by all neighbouring local authorities in Tyne and Wear and Northumberland. The rationale behind this is to pre-identify the Council's 'critical' services, which will be prioritised during a pandemic outbreak
8. The plan will be reviewed on an annual basis or as soon as notification is received that an outbreak of pandemic Influenza has been located anywhere in the world.
9. The plan is attached as appendix 2.

Proposal

10. It is proposed that Cabinet endorses the Gateshead Council Pandemic Influenza Plan.

Recommendations

11. Cabinet is asked to endorse the Gateshead Council Pandemic Influenza Plan as set out in appendix 1 to the report.

For the following reasons:

- (i) To ensure compliance with our statutory duties under the Civil Contingencies Act 2004.
- (ii) To ensure that the Council has robust arrangements in place to prepare for, mitigate and respond to the impacts of an outbreak of pandemic Influenza.

Policy Context

1. The reviewed plan is in line with Vision 2030, in particular to the 'City of Gateshead' outcome relating to ensuring that Gateshead remains a safe place to live and visit via the continuation of critical services to those most reliant upon them.
2. The plan supports the delivery of all policy objectives within the Council Plan 2015-2020.

Background

3. Resilience is the ability to anticipate risk, limit impact and recover quickly and effectively from emergencies and disruptive events affecting organisations, businesses, individuals, families, neighbourhoods and communities.
4. The Civil Contingencies Act 2004 places a statutory duty on local authorities and other agencies to work together to develop emergency and business continuity plans and arrangements to mitigate, prepare for, respond to and recover from emergencies.
5. All local authorities are classed as 'Category 1' Responders in the event of an emergency/major incident under the Civil Contingencies Act (2004). The Act requires all Category 1 Responders to undertake these wide ranging statutory duties to help to protect the population within their boundaries. These duties include:
 - assess the risk of emergencies occurring and use this to inform contingency planning
 - put in place emergency plans
 - put in place business continuity management arrangements
 - put in place arrangements to make information available to the public about civil protection matters and maintain arrangements to warn, inform and advise the public in the event of an emergency
 - share information with other local responders to enhance co-ordination
 - co-operate with other local responders to enhance co-ordination and efficiency
 - provide advice and assistance to businesses and voluntary organisations about business continuity management (local authorities only)
6. The Council's Pandemic Influenza Plan was originally developed in 2009. This was in adherence with national planning arrangements in response to an outbreak of H1N1 Pandemic Influenza, which was known as 'Swine Flu'. Due to the ever changing priorities of the national resilience landscape, particularly in relation to terrorism, this area of work has not been revisited until 2016.
7. There have been significant changes in health structures and local authority resources and capabilities since the original national plan was produced. As

a result North East Public Health England and NHS England for Cumbria and the North East produced a draft 'North East Pandemic Influenza Framework', which was validated in October 2016 as part of Regional Exercise Swan.

8. Exercise Swan participants included all health bodies, emergency services and local authorities from the Northumbria, Cleveland and Durham and Darlington areas. One of the objectives of the exercise was to 'explore the potential impacts on business continuity for partaking organisations'. The debrief of this exercise highlighted that all organisations' arrangements for dealing with an outbreak of pandemic Influenza required strengthening, to bring arrangements in line with current regional and national guidance.
9. The Council's new Pandemic Influenza Plan has been developed over a 12 month period, which has included:
 - Wide ranging consultations with partner organisations and council services
 - The validation of planning arrangements via a table top exercise
 - Cross referencing with national and regional documents to ensure our internal arrangements adhere to and dovetail with wider arrangements.
10. The overall purpose of the plan includes:
11. **Mitigating the impacts of an Influenza pandemic by protecting the Council's internal and commissioned critical services** – The development process has incorporated a full review of services using regionally consistent criteria, which was undertaken by the Council's Audit and Risk Team. The new list of rated services enables the quick identification of critical services, including those providing care services. This has simplified the coordination arrangements to ensure that business continuity efforts are diverted and prioritised to these critical areas in the event of a pandemic.
12. The plan addresses which employees should be prioritised to receive personal protective equipment (PPE) that will allow them to continue to deliver close, personal care during a pandemic. Work is ongoing with partner organisations across the region to ensure sufficient stock of items such as facemasks, gloves and eye protection is available to allow employees to safely carry out their roles for the duration of an outbreak.
13. **Providing clarity of roles and responsibilities in relation to command, control and coordination** – The plan aims to overcome many of the practicalities involved in coordinating our response to an incident of this magnitude and nature. The development of pre-documented and tested coordination mechanisms and command and control structures ensures that we can hit the ground running when an incident occurs.
14. Having the right people in the right places at the right times, knowing what needs to be discussed with a knowledge of what other organisations will also be doing at the same time, removes guess work and saves valuable time in making what can be difficult decisions under highly emotive circumstances.

15. The Council's Corporate Risk and Resilience Group, which meets quarterly to discuss and strengthen internal business continuity arrangements, has been identified as the mechanism to coordinate the operational response to a pandemic influenza outbreak.
16. The Group consists of representation from a wide range of Council services and, with the additional support of pre-identified specialists specific to a pandemic, would effectively become the Pandemic Influenza Coordination Group. The Chair(s) of this Group would then liaise with Strategy Group to ensure that informed strategic decisions can be made in relation to service provision.
17. **Providing pre-planned communication mechanisms and templates** – The content of information and the method of delivery will differ depending on the audience receiving it.
18. Pre-planned templates and mechanisms for delivering information updates have been included in the plan to ensure that coordinators know who should be providing the information and via which routes (i.e. email, literature, website/social media, templates, etc.).
19. **Managing the worst case scenarios that could ultimately affect Gateshead residents, including excess deaths** – Unfortunately an outbreak of pandemic Influenza could result in many deaths, which no amount of planning can prevent. The plan provides guidance on managing the demands on Cemeteries and Crematoria Services, the possible changes to service provision and how this will be communicated to those affected. A protocol is being developed for Strategy Group to accompany the plan to ensure all options are documented to allow difficult decisions to be made and communicated appropriately.

Consultation

20. The Council's Corporate Risk and Resilience Group membership and additional supporting officers specific to a pandemic influenza outbreak have been consulted throughout the development of the Plan. The Plan has been circulated to multi-agency partner organisations of the Gateshead Multi-Agency Resilience and Emergency Planning Group as part of the formal consultation in November 2017. The Leader of the Council has also been formally consulted on the contents of the Plan.

Implications of Recommended Options

21. **Resources:**

a) Financial Implications – The Strategic Director, Corporate Resources confirms that there are no financial implications arising directly from this report.

b) Human Resources Implications – There are no human resources implications from the recommended options.

c) Property Implications - There are no property implications directly arising from the recommended options

22. **Risk Management Implications** - The effective implementation of this framework will mitigate the risk to the achievement of the Council's objectives and legal obligations in the event of an emergency. Failure to implement this plan effectively could lead to a failure to meet statutory responsibilities and Council objectives and also delay mitigation arrangements that could prevent deaths and limit damage to local infrastructure, economy and the Council's reputation.

23. **Equality and Diversity Implications** - There are no equality and diversity implications directly arising from this report.

24. **Crime and Disorder Implications** – There are no crime and disorder implications from the recommended options.

25. **Health Implications** - This framework will provide everyone in Gateshead with the information they need for their health, safety and wellbeing before, during and after a pandemic outbreak.

26. **Sustainability Implications** - There are no sustainability implications from the recommended options

27. **Human Rights Implications** - The framework is compliant with Article 8 the Human Rights Act.

28. **Area and Ward Implications** - This report affects all wards.

29. **Background Information**

- Civil Contingencies Act (2004)
- Vision 2030
- Council Plan 2015-2020