

TITLE OF REPORT: Strategic Resilience and Emergency Planning Framework

REPORT OF: Anthony Alder, Acting Strategic Director – Communities and Environment

SUMMARY

To provide the Committee with an update in relation to the Strategic Resilience and Emergency Planning Framework

Background

1. As a reminder for members, the purpose of the Strategic Resilience and Emergency Planning Framework is to determine the future focus for Gateshead Council working in collaboration with partners and the community. This will ensure that we continue to have robust arrangements in place to mitigate, prepare for, respond to and recover from emergencies and major incident situations.

Incident Management and Response

2. The Emergency Response Team has been involved in responding to a number of incidents once again over the last eight months. A highlight of some of the issues include:
 - **Regent Court Fire** [May 2018] - On Thursday the 10th May, the Council received notification that all the residents from Gateshead's high-rise tower block at Regent Court had been evacuated due to a fire after smoke was seen drifting from the roof. Although there were no injuries or fatalities, the nature of the fire resulted in residents being unable to return to their properties until Monday 14th May, with several requiring longer-term re-housing. This resulted in a major operation with the Council and The Gateshead Housing Company [TGHC] in finding suitable accommodation for the displaced residents over the course of 5 days with officers providing support, guidance and reassurance over the duration. The local ward councillors were informed as part of the Emergency Response Communications Protocol and regular briefings were provided to all councillors throughout the course of the response. The debrief process highlighted the major success of the response provided. Lessons learned will be utilised in any future similar emergencies. A future member's seminar is being arranged to present the debrief findings.
 - **Oak Square Fire** [June 2018] - the Emergency Response Team received a call in the early hours of 22 June 2018 regarding a fire that had broken at a block of flats in Oak Square, Teams. A member of the team was deployed to the scene and the Incident Room was opened to support the coordination of the council

response and recovery. Nine residents were evacuated from the flats, four of whom were taken to hospital and were treated for smoke inhalation. The welfare of the residents was coordinated by both Council and TGHC officers. The local ward councillors were immediately informed as part of the Emergency Response Communications Protocol and regular briefings to all councillors were circulated throughout the day. Findings from the debrief are being currently progressed.

Emergency Response Exercising

3. The council has participated in a number of both internal and external exercises over the last eight months with representation from a number of different groups and services. A number of highlights have included:
 - **Table-Top Exercising** [April, May 2018 and July 2018] – a number of table top exercises have taken place over the last six months which have involved the validation of key event plans, testing of emergency arrangements and protocols and identified many areas of learning and recommendations.
 - **Simulated Fire-Fighting Exercise** [June 2018] – this was a further simulated exercise led by Tyne and Wear Fire and Rescue Service [TWFRS] in conjunction with TGHC. It involved the protocol of work to test a new firefighting procedure on high rise buildings which took place at Crowhall Towers in Felling. This was very successful and is to be rolled out to operational fire teams across the region, and continues to highlight the excellent partnership working with TWFRS in the management of fire and tenant safety and reassure residents of the continued focus of fire safety within high rise blocks.
 - **Exercise Stephenson** [June 2018] – the exercise was a three-day counter terrorism exercise planned and delivered by the members of Northumbria Local Resilience Forum. Over the three days there was focus on the initial response, consequence management and recovery phases of a terrorist incident which was on a fictitious scenario in Newcastle City Centre. The exercise involved Northumbria Police, North East Ambulance Service, Tyne and Wear Fire and Rescue Service, Newcastle City Council, Nexus (operators of the Metro), Network Rail and other partners including Gateshead Council. The format of this exercise, which tested consequence management and recovery elements, has been nationally recognised as best practise for future exercising.

Key Debrief Findings

4. As part of all operations, exercises and incidents that are managed by the Council, a debrief process is completed to ensure a thorough analysis of the actions undertaken can be reviewed. This allows us to identify areas of good practice and enables us to learn from issues identified that will help us to improve our future response and planning. A summary of a number of key actions from the last eight months include:
 - Understanding the implications of the Kerslake Report following the Manchester Bombing
 - Reviewing and updating of the Emergency Response Team Action Cards, protocols and procedures
 - Reviewing of the council's out of hours processes and procedures

- Reviewing the terminology in relation to the name of the Major Incident Room to include the consideration of the various protocols and procedures if a major incident isn't declared, and the emergency response process is activated for monitoring and operational purposes only
- Continuing to review the capacity and capability of the Emergency Response Team maintaining the current numbers and skill levels of team members
- Reviewing of the management of the strategic command and control
- Further strengthen the awareness of all groups and services in relation to emergency response processes and procedures
- Reviewing of the Council's Evacuation Protocol
- To ensure that documented multi-agency debrief aims and objectives are met and identified learning and good practice is shared regionally, the Council now sit as a member of the Northumbria Local Resilience Forum Training and Exercising Group Audit Group which met for the first time on the 21st September

Update on Progress

5. A number of the key debrief findings cut across the themes of Strategic Resilience and Emergency Planning Framework, however further updates from the areas from the last six months include:

Building resilient and stronger communities - working with businesses, the voluntary sector, partner agencies, communities and individuals to ensure they are better prepared for and able to recover from emergencies:

- The Resilience Team has recruited two new Community Resilience Volunteer Wardens in different areas of Gateshead which takes the total to ten across the borough.

Future priorities include:

- Further development of our arrangements for sharing and mapping information about vulnerable people, the use of the Cabinet Office Resilience Direct system, the prioritisation of assistance and identification of support that needs to be provided during and after an incident
- Developing an approach to explore and utilise spontaneous volunteering in an emergency or incident situation – regionally principles have been developed but this needs to be translated and implemented to a Gateshead approach.

Assessing Risk – identifying hazards and threats that may affect Gateshead implementing measures that may prevent an emergency or incident occurring:

- Closer working arrangements are now in place and work is developing through the Risk and Resilience Group with the Corporate Audit and Risk Team to strengthen the approach to internal business continuity and critical services risks to the Council.
- The Council is part of a Northumbria Local Resilience Forum Risk Working Group that is in the process of reviewing the methodology and regional risk assessments in line with national approaches.

Future priorities include:

- Reviewing and adapting the criteria used to assess critical services within internal business continuity planning when there is an emergency or major incident in conjunction with the Audit and Risk Team in Corporate Resources
- Reviewing the council's approach in relation to the revised CONTEST guidance (June 2018) and continue to assess risk of terrorism occurring

Enhancing our partnership arrangements to respond and recover – the effective response and co-ordination of arrangements in the event of an emergency or incident occurring and achieving a rapid return to normality:

- A number of the Council's senior officers have recently completed the Multi-Agency Gold Incident Commander accredited training with the College of Policing Training which has developed knowledge and skills of being able to have clear understanding and awareness of the strategic element of the response to an incident or emergency

Future priorities include:

- Review our humanitarian assistance arrangements and continue to develop relationships with voluntary organisations and community facilities, utilising the Government's Human Aspects Guidance
- Developing a further Strategic Emergency Response Table Top Exercise for Chief Executives

Recommendations

6. Overview and Scrutiny Committee is requested to:

- Consider and comment on the progress report
- Indicate whether it is satisfied with the progress achieved within the last eight months
- Agree to receive a further report in April 2019.

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