

TITLE OF REPORT: Strategic Resilience and Emergency Planning Framework

REPORT OF: Paul Dowling, Strategic Director – Communities and Environment

SUMMARY

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

Background

1. As a reminder for members, the Strategic Resilience and Emergency Planning Framework was produced to continue the work undertaken from the previous Resilience Strategy and to provide the future focus and direction based on four themed areas.
2. The key focus for Resilience and Emergency Planning over the last six months has been to review priorities and actions within the Strategic Resilience and Emergency Planning Framework; continue to review planning, response and recovery arrangements whilst intensively training and exercising; continue to work in collaboration with our local and regional partners and communities to respond to incidents and issues.

Recent Events

3. Over the past six months there have been a number of incidents that have changed the national landscape of the Resilience and Emergency Planning portfolio. Acts of mindless terrorism in both London and Manchester have dominated a very changeable and dynamic landscape that is now very much in the spotlight and recognised as a key national priority.
4. Following the tragic Grenfell Tower fire incident in June 2017, there will be much to review and reflect on especially when the Public Enquiry is concluded. The priority has been to support the work checking similar buildings across the country to review fire safety arrangements; however the emergency response provided by the local authority involved is being closely scrutinised.
5. Gateshead Council is continuing to review its planning, response and recovery arrangements to determine what the response could look like if a similar incident were to occur within Gateshead. This will be presented to members at a future date.

Review of Strategic Resilience and Emergency Planning Framework

6. As a result of this changing landscape and various ongoing changes at a national, regional and local level, it is an appropriate time to review the Strategic Resilience and Emergency Planning Framework
7. Cabinet originally approved the Resilience Strategy in 2010, with reviews undertaken in June 2013 and March 2015. Progress has been monitored on a six monthly basis by the Corporate Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee throughout this period
8. 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.
9. The current framework has been updated and includes further information on the Statutory Legislative Requirements and the National Context; the Northumbria Local Resilience Forum; Gateshead Council Emergency Response Arrangements; Training and Exercising; Council Liability; Emergency Response to incidents and pre-planned operations; Local Governance Arrangements; a Strategic Vision for Resilience and Emergency Planning; Service Key Objectives; the Priorities and Quality Assurance.
10. Following the review, the following emerging issues have increased the demand on the Resilience and Emergency Planning function:
 - Greater coordination of emergency responses to incidents and issues
 - Coordination of pre-planned operations led by the emergency services on a broad range of subjects
 - Coordination of responses to modern slavery, trafficking and exploitation issues
 - Increased scrutiny of event plans to ensure compliance with both resilience and Crowded Places Guidance
 - Increased tension and apprehension around the terrorism agenda and recent national events
 - Ongoing work to understand the implications of an increase in the terrorism threat level
11. It is proposed, following any comments received from Overview and Scrutiny Committee members that this will be presented to a future Cabinet meeting.
12. A copy of the refreshed framework is attached as appendix 1.

Incident Management and Response

13. The Emergency Response Team has been heavily involved in planning and responding to a number of incidents and pre-planned operations once again over the last six months. This has included:
 - **Power Outage [31 July 2017]** – the Resilience Team were informed by The Gateshead Housing Company that a power cut had affected 4 multi-storey

blocks within the central area of Gateshead for a period of time. Direct liaison was implemented with Northern Power Grid and standby welfare arrangements were considered but not utilised.

- **Operation Kestrel [24 July 2017]** – a pre-planned Northumbria Police operation to target foreign criminals operating within the Gateshead area, that also focussed on potential victims of modern slavery, trafficking and exploitation. The Major Incident Room was opened on standby to support the operation and single points of contact with council services were established to provide any necessary assistance.
- **Barry Street, Gateshead Incident [15 July 2017]** – Care Call received a call from the Police on the afternoon of Saturday 15 July 2017 and contacted the Emergency Response Team. A resident had flagged down a police car reporting that a suspected hand grenade had been found within the street and an immediate evacuation was undertaken. The Council placed a number of resources on standby including a reception centre for residents to attend at Gateshead Leisure Centre. When on site the bomb disposal unit deemed that the grenade was not dangerous and resources were stood down.
- **Grassbanks, Leam Lane Incident [13 July 2017]** - the Resilience Team received a call from The Gateshead Housing Company about potential explosive devices that were found within the rear of a garden shed and that the police had instigated a cordon within the immediate area. The Council placed a number of resources on standby including transport and a reception centre for residents to attend in the event of evacuation. When on site the bomb disposal unit quickly resolved the issue and our resources were stood down.
- **Avenue Road, Bensham Incident [4 July 2017]** – the Emergency Response Team received a call on the evening of Tuesday 4 July 2017 regarding an ongoing domestic incident involving a residential property. A cordon of the immediate area was activated and Gateshead Leisure Centre was put on standby in the event of an evacuation. The situation was quickly resolved and resources were stood down.
- **Tower Block, Bensham Court [2 July 2017]** – the Emergency Response Team received a call from Care Call on Sunday 2 July 2017 regarding a communications issue with the Care Call BT connection with Bensham Court. It was established that the line had been damaged resulting in all community alarms and contact with Care Call for vulnerable tenants not being operational. Various mitigation approaches were implemented including a review of the fire safety mechanisms with the issue resolved some time later.
- **Operation Bridler [19 June 2017]** – this was a pre-planned National Crime Agency led operation with Northumbria Police involving potential victims and offenders of modern slavery, trafficking and exploitation. The operation took place across Gateshead, Newcastle and the Manchester areas and to facilitate this, the Resilience Teams in both Gateshead and Newcastle worked together with services and partner agencies to develop the appropriate support and response arrangements.

The operation was delivered within a Command and Control structure with Tony Alder – Service Director undertaking the strategic lead role for Gateshead Council as standby Incident Controller. The Gateshead Council Major Incident Room was opened from 7.30am and staffed throughout the day, until 3.30pm, when the incident room was stood down. The room had representatives from key council services and the British Red Cross on standby to be activated to assist when required, however on this occasion they were not utilised. Our Environmental Health Team visited the Gateshead properties and a Site Liaison Officer, from our Emergency Response Team was located at a Victim Reception Centre. David Patterson, the Emergency Planning Manager operated within the National Crime Agency Silver Command Tactical Co-ordination Group.

- **Jeremy Corbyn Visit [5 June 2017]** – this was a pre-planned visit by the Labour Party Leader that was held in Performance Square on the Gateshead Quays. Although short notice was given the planning and preparations worked very well. For the first time, Northumbria Police ran their Tactical Command for the event from the Major Incident Room in the Civic Centre and worked directly with Council Officers. This worked very well and is to be used as an exemplar for other areas. There were two potential incidents during the visit that were quickly resolved by Police.

Update on Progress

14. Updates from the Themed 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, and;

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

- In June 2017, the Government published the new Crowded Places Guidance. This guidance is primarily aimed at those with a responsibility for security at crowded places and those who own or run businesses, organisations, amenities or utilities. It covers the key areas of protective security including physical, personnel, personal and cyber, and provides guidance on how different sectors can act to help make their business, institutions or organisations safer. Its purpose is to support those who are charged with security at crowded places to mitigate the threat and help make the UK less vulnerable to an attack. This is particularly relevant due to recent events and the short term increase in the threat level which rose to Critical.
- A great amount of work is being currently completed by the Resilience Team with event organisers and in particular with the management of stadiums and leisure centres, including the issuing of Counter Terrorism Run, Hide and Tell guidance.
- The Resilience Team are currently finalising work on refreshing and reviewing its counter terrorism plan. This includes the development of an overview council policy document that will provide advice and guidance on roles and responsibilities on being resilient before, during and after a terrorist attack which

may affect the whole organisation. A counter terrorism template has been developed to plan and provide advice on what to do in the event of one of the threats occurring. Work is also ongoing as to what the implications would look like in the event of an escalation of the national threat level to a 'critical' level, and how the council may need to change the way it operates during that time.

- The Resilience Team has been developing a new Pandemic Influenza Plan in consultation with the membership of the Council's Corporate Risk and Resilience Group, following regional Exercise Swan in October 2016. The recommendations of this exercise, together with the development of new national and regional guidance has helped to inform the content of this local plan, the first draft of which was tested at the internal table top Exercise Outbreak in April 2017. The final draft of the plan, together with newly reviewed internal business continuity arrangements, will be finalised by the end of October in preparation for the beginning of the national winter planning season, which officially begins on the 1st November.

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:

- In April 2017, the North East Counter Terrorism Unit provided Councillors with an overview of Protect and Prepare, part of the Government's Contest Strategy. The aim of the session was to understand the threat from terrorism; guide individuals on what to do if they find themselves involved in a terrorist incident or event; and provide the ability to recognise and report suspicious activity. The session was very well attended and positive feedback was received from Councillors. The Resilience Team is receiving training to be able to deliver this subject in future.
- A Gateshead Modern Slavery, Trafficking and Exploitation Concept of Operations has been developed. This document provides an overview as to how a response to issues in Gateshead would look like. The document supports a Multi-Agency response to an issue but focuses very much on what roles the Council may undertake within that response. The Gateshead Safeguarding Adults Board has endorsed this document.
- In May 2017, the Resilience Team undertook '*Strategic Incident Controller Exercising*' with Leadership Team with a mixture of both Strategic and Service Directors from the Council. '*Exercise Impact*' was a table-top exercise designed to test officers in a simulated scenario identifying and documenting any actions and decisions. Feedback from the exercises has been very positive and some further table-top exercising will take place during August 2017.
- The Council, working with Northumbria Police and its multi-agency partner organisations, has been involved in a multi-agency training exercise to test the emergency response to a major incident. An exercise was held in the early hours of Wednesday 17 May 2017 at intu Metrocentre in Gateshead which was designed to test the skills and processes of police, emergency services, intu Security Staff, and the local authority. The exercise was focused on a terror attack taking place at the shopping centre and is one of a number of similar exercises to have taken place across the country. This is one of a number of

routine exercises organised to test the response of the local authority, emergency services and other partner agencies, to test contingency plans and the co-ordination of the response to a major incident on a regular basis. The Council's Resilience Team is a member of the Metrocentre Steering Group, which, in partnership with Metrocentre Management Team and the emergency services, produces, reviews and validates the centre's Incident Management and Evacuation Plan.

As part of the scenario, the Council tested the activation of the Emergency Response Arrangements, opening the Major Incident Room and testing the various protocols and procedures with the Emergency Response Team. The team performed very well under extreme pressure to provide a supporting role to the overall emergency response to the incident. A huge amount of work and preparation was put into this exercise that was led and coordinated on behalf of the Council by Michael Reynard within the Resilience and Emergency Planning Team.

- Exercise Black Kite took place in June 2017 to test and facilitate a coordinated and effective response to a terrorist related incident resulting in building collapse with extended search and rescue. Led by Tyne and Wear Fire and Rescue Service the exercise included testing national mutual aid, fully tested the use of Resilience Direct (the secure web-based platform for the resilience community to share information amongst all emergency responders and agencies) in response mode and explored the use of a Multi-Agency Information Cell (MAIC) with the overall aim of achieving better partnership arrangements.
- Gateshead Council is taking part in a multi-agency safety and security exercise - Border Reiver - which runs in October. The exercise is being hosted by Police Scotland and has been developed jointly by the Home Office, Scottish Government, Northumbria Police and Police Scotland with partners from local government. It will involve a large scale test of UK and Scottish contingency plans and co-ordination.

Strengthening Communication and Community Engagement – communication is essential before, during and after an emergency or incident. A resilient community is well informed and aware of the assistance and advice available to them so they can help themselves. Updates include:

- The Environment Agency has relaunched their Community Engagement Officer Project, and Gateshead has a new officer to work with. The officer's work is focused towards increasing resilience from all sources of flooding in areas at risk across the North East and the officers will work with communities, businesses, schools and youth groups to look at:
 - A greater awareness and acknowledgement of local flood risk
 - An improved understanding of the actions a person or community can take to reduce the impact of a flood
 - Increased property/business sign up to the EA's Flood Warning System
 - Increased number of active Community Flood Plans
 - Increased number of Community Volunteers / Flood Wardens in at risk communities

- Increased creation and exercising of Business Flood Plans from businesses at risk
- Increased number of educational Flood Awareness sessions being held in schools and Youth Groups
- The Resilience Team has continued to work with volunteers in Blackhall Mill to develop a community emergency plan. This area was selected as the 'pilot' community for this type of specific community emergency planning due to the high number of Volunteer Community Resilience Wardens in the village and also due to the issues that the community has faced over the years. The initial draft plan was presented at a community meeting in February 2017, where attendees were consulted on the content of the plan to see if it worked for them. Several suggestions were made, including widening the area covered by the plan to include Lintzford and Rowlands Gill. All suggested changes have now been incorporated and the plan has been recirculated in July 2017 for comment. Once agreed, the plan will be made available to community members and the template will be adapted for all other areas of Gateshead to make all communities more aware of how they can prepare themselves and their properties for emergencies and also who to contact during a range of circumstances.

Recommendations

15. Overview and Scrutiny Committee is requested to:
- Consider and comment on the progress report
 - Provide any comments on the revised Strategic Resilience and Emergency Planning Framework, before it is presented to cabinet
 - Indicate whether it is satisfied with the progress achieved within the last six months
 - Agree to receive a further report in April 2018.

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