

TITLE OF REPORT: Update on the Strategic Resilience and Emergency Planning Framework 2015-2016

REPORT OF: Alison Elliott, Interim Strategic Director - Care, Wellbeing and Learning

SUMMARY

To provide the Committee with an update on the progress over the last 6 months in relation to the Strategic Resilience and Emergency Planning Framework 2015 - 2016.

Background

1. The Strategic Resilience and Emergency Planning Framework 2015-2016 was presented to the Committee in March 2015. As a reminder for members, the framework was produced to continue the work undertaken from the previous Resilience Strategy and to provide the future focus and direction for 2015-2016 based on four themed areas.
2. The key focus for Resilience and Emergency Planning has been to continue to work in collaboration with partners and our communities to ensure that we have robust arrangements in place to assess risk, prepare, respond and recover from emergencies ensuring a resilient Gateshead.

Severe Weather Issues – Gateshead

3. Between 4th and 7th of January 2016, Gateshead experienced severe weather including prolonged intensive rainfall. This resulted in a number of issues including surface water flooding on roads throughout the borough, minor localised property flooding and overwhelming of area of the drainage and culvert network. This accumulated in an Amber Weather Warning being issued by the Met Office for the Gateshead area and the precautionary activation of the Council's Emergency Response Arrangements, which was coordinated from the Major Incident Room.
4. The debrief process has been completed and a summary of lessons learned for future incidents includes:
 - Clarification of the role of Councillors in an emergency situation or major incident
 - Considering and revisiting the implications of statutory legislation, national directives, initiatives and obligations relating to the flooding
 - Further development of the strategic approach to areas regularly affected by flooding and how this will be supported in the short term
 - Reviewing the sandbag policy in Gateshead, utilising best practise from partner organisations and other Local Authorities

- Gaining a greater understanding of the various metrological warnings and alert systems, adapting our response to the expected impacts
 - Reviewing the multi-agency co-ordination and response plans, in relation to responding to flooding issues to ensure there is sufficient resources, capacity and capability
 - Ensuring all flooding hazards, risks and infrastructure are identified and mapped within Gateshead
 - Strengthening relationships and networking arrangements between partner organisations and the Local Authority
 - Improving communications with the public and managing the expectations of each partner organisation
5. A time limited Task and Finish Group has been established to develop and progress this work, consisting of key Council Services and our partner agencies including the Met Office, Northumbrian Water Ltd, the Gateshead Housing Company and the Environment Agency.
6. The aim of the group is to review the current flood planning and response arrangements, including the management of infrastructure, resources, capacity and capabilities, coordination with partner organisations, and the promotion of business continuity advice to Gateshead businesses.
7. These lessons have been collated into a full debrief report with actions, lead officers and timescales identified to improve the response to this type of incident in future.

Update on Progress

8. 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:

- From January 2016, the Gateshead Business Breakfast Forum was re-established. The forums are networking events that allow business owners and entrepreneurs to share insights and information, whilst tackling problems and challenges together. An officer from the Resilience Team will attend future events throughout this year to ensure that business continuity advice and guidance for local businesses is provided
- Future work is to take place in the next few months with the management of Trinity Square and associated businesses within the Gateshead Town Centre. This ensures that businesses are better prepared to identify the possible impacts of disruptions and how to respond to an emergency, enabling a co-ordinated and effective recovery.
- The Resilience Team have recruited a number of former employees who have recently retired back into their former Emergency Response Team roles. These individuals have volunteered to become members of the Community Resilience Project therefore retaining vital knowledge, experience and expertise in assisting our response to an emergency or major incident.
- Collaborative work is continuing with our partner organisations including the Salvation Army to use their facilities and increase our capacity to shelter

evacuated residents. Future work is to continue with other community organisations throughout this year.

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

- The Flood Risk Management Strategy has been now developed and outlines responsibilities relating to flooding within the borough, the duties of Gateshead Council as Local Lead Flood Authority and other organisations. It also includes the duties and powers concerning new legislation on sustainable drainage and local policies including the core strategy and Vision 2030. The strategy identifies outcomes to deliver our aspirations for development, management of known flood risks and joint working with partners: these will be delivered through 23 policy objectives. The policies will determine how the Council will approach and manage flood risk in the long-term and in the immediate event of flooding.
- The Highway & Flood Risk Management Team in Communities and Environment is continuing to work with Northumbrian Water, the Environment Agency and various land owners to develop schemes to prevent flooding as outlined in the strategy.
- The Health Protection Working Group continues to provide assurance to the Director of Public Health that local health protection arrangements are in place and fit for purpose. The Annual Report of the Director of Public Health includes the Health Protection Annual Report and can be viewed here - <http://tinyurl.com/h43km5e>. Key highlights from the report include :
 - Major health protection issues in 2014/15 included the outbreak of Ebola in West Africa, an increase in Salmonella cases in Gateshead linked to local food establishments, and a substantial increase in cases of Scarlet Fever.
 - Gateshead continues to have good levels of uptake of child and adult screening, vaccination and immunisation programmes.
 - The North East has seen an increase in excess winter deaths from 9.5% in 13/14 to 28.3% in 14/15, an increase of 198%. At the time of writing, there is no explanation for this large increase. However, excess winter deaths are associated with influenza, falls, cold homes, malnutrition and other complex factors.
- An emerging area of concern is the uptake of winter flu vaccination that will be looked at in the Health Protection Assurance Working Group.

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:

- The flooding incident in January has highlighted the pivotal role that community organisations and facilities can potential play in assisting with emergency response in partnership with the Council. A future seminar is to be held with the Community Centre Network that will explore the mutual benefits of working together and will explain how the local community offer is a vital cog in the borough's resilience arrangements that will develop an enhanced partnership approach that will strengthen our humanitarian assistance arrangements.
- Agreement has now been reached with all Local Authorities within the Northumbria area that Kenyon International will continue to be the provider of Emergency Mortuaries in the event of an incident resulting in mass fatalities

beyond normal mortuary capacity. Future work will now take place with key partner organisations including the Coroner to review and update the Gateshead Emergency Mortuaries Plan.

- Work is ongoing to strengthen links with the Department for Communities and Local Government to ensure that in the event of geographical areas being affected by natural events such as severe weather, that Gateshead residents and businesses are considered for national funding/ grant schemes where eligible.

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:

- A Members Seminar took place on 29 January 2016 which presented the Emergency Response Guidance for Councillors. This provided councillors with an overview of their role in Emergency Response before, during and after an incident or emergency; the details in relation to communication channels for councillors both internal and external communication and the key contact details to report any issues
- An alert message system for councillors is now implemented. During an emergency or a major incident the Communications Protocol will be activated. In the initial stages, councillors in the affected area will be sent a text message which will ensure you are aware of the situation and contact details provided to report any issues. A councillor Communication Card has been developed and this will be circulated to all councillors. This provides the key information and key contact numbers in a pocket size credit card.
- Future work is to take place on a number of communication campaigns that will provide advice, guidance and awareness raising of the various risks that are pertinent within Gateshead to ensure communities are empowered and able to self-help themselves in an emergency.

Recommendations

9. 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 6 months
- Agree to receive a further report in September 2016.

Contact: Val Hall

Ext: 2782