

TITLE OF REPORT: Resilience and Emergency Planning Annual Update

REPORT OF: Alice Wiseman, Director of Public Health and Wellbeing

SUMMARY

Corporate Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee receive annual updates on the Council's Resilience and Emergency Planning activities. This report provides a summary from the date of the last report in June 2022 through to the current date.

Background

1. The Council's Resilience and Emergency Planning functions continue to operate in adherence with the Civil Contingencies Act 2004, ensuring that we perform our statutory duties in collaboration with our partners and communities.
2. Within the Civil Contingencies Act 2004, Gateshead Council, along with all other local authorities, emergency services, NHS England, Integrated Care Board and the Environment Agency are defined as Category 1 Responders. A Category 1 responder is subject to the full set of civil protection duties which requires them to:
 - 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).

Resilience and Emergency Planning Team

3. The Council's Resilience and Emergency Planning Team has recently been restructured following the departure of Marc Hopkinson, who was the Service Director for Transformation, System Resilience and Emergency Preparedness, Resilience and Response.
4. Marc had joined the Council as 50% of his contracted hours with the Newcastle Gateshead Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) at the height of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020. This provided stronger links between the Council's Public Health functions and Gateshead's Primary Care systems. His arrival coincided with the departure of the Resilience and Emergency Planning Manager, David Patterson, and Marc then assumed the management arrangements of the Resilience and Emergency Planning Team.

5. Following the replacement of the CCGs with Integrated Care Boards (ICBs) in July 2022, Marc Hopkinson returned to work for them full time initially on secondment in November 2022, which became a permanent move in March 2023. Michael Reynard was appointed Acting Resilience and Emergency Planning Manager in November 2022, a role that became permanent in March 2023.
6. The role of Resilience and Emergency Planning Coordinator was advertised in March 2023 and following shortlisting, the interviews were held on 18th and 23rd May 2023. The successful applicant is due to commence employment during the summer period.
7. Should any further pandemic scenarios arise, the Council would work closely with Marc's new team at the ICB, who would coordinate the multi-agency response to outbreak management and work closely with local authorities, health trusts and the primary care sector.
8. The Resilience and Emergency Planning Manager is responsible for ensuring that the Council adheres to the statutory duties outlined in paragraph 2 of this report, in adherence with the Civil Contingencies Act 2004.
9. The Resilience and Emergency Planning Team are generally the first point of contact during working hours when a response to an incident is required from the Council. The team will manage any escalation requirements to ensure a proportionate response is provided on behalf of the Council.

Emergency Response Team

10. During out of hours periods, a rota is in place which is covered by Strategic Directors/Service Directors (who are contractually obliged to undertake this role) and a Duty Officer. Should an incident be declared and an escalation to emergency response arrangements be necessary, the Director would assume the role of Incident Director and provide strategic leadership and commit resources as appropriate. The Duty Officer would liaise with others involved in the response, gather information about the incident, advise the Incident Director on the appropriate strategy/response and coordinate Council assets to assist in the management of the incident.
11. Dependent on the severity or impact of the incident, it may also be necessary to bring in other personnel to assist. All other roles within the Emergency Response Team are provided on a voluntary basis by Council employees below the grade of Service Director although a standby payment is made to anyone undertaking this role.
12. Team numbers are constantly monitored to ensure that a large team remains in place to allow flexibility and to ensure arrangements can be activated. Several officers have joined the team over the course of the year, due to interest in the subject matter and a willingness to be involved. A planned recruitment campaign later in the year will also hopefully attract new members to the variety of roles available.

Go Gateshead Officer and the Communications Team

13. The duty arrangements for the Emergency Response Team have been in place for several years and has very successfully helped to facilitate 24/7 response arrangements. A report was presented to Corporate Management Team in October 2022 advising that there had been risks identified in current response arrangements.

At that time there were no duty arrangements in place for the provision of the Council's main emergency reception centres and there was an over reliance on Iain Burns, the Service Director for the Communications Team. Corporate Management Team endorsed the content of the report and agreed to support the provision of these additional duty arrangements.

14. Following a period of consultation and the provision of briefing sessions, working duty protocols have been established for Go Gateshead officers and the Communications Team. Go Gateshead's Duty Protocol commenced on the 1st May 2023 and the Communications Team's Duty Protocol is due to commence on 1st July 2023.
15. Go Gateshead will now have a duty officer on call to ensure that should an evacuation be required in Gateshead, we will now have arrangements in place to open emergency reception centres at Gateshead leisure sites. These centres provide an initial place of safety for those displaced, until they can be returned to their homes or moved to more suitable temporary accommodation.
16. The Council's Communications Team plays an integral part in every incident that the Council is involved in. Duties include communicating with Ward Councillors of affected areas, providing information to residents via the Council website and social media pages, alerting employees of issues and collaborating with communication representatives from other responding organisations to ensure consistent messaging.

Escalation and Activation of Emergency Response Arrangements

17. The learning gained from the response to Storm Arwen in late 2021 highlighted the need for more robust and proactive response mechanisms to be in place for future incidents. As a result, an Escalation Protocol has been drafted for use by the Emergency Response Team, which provides guidance to Incident Directors on the proportionate command and control arrangements that should be considered.
18. This guidance has initially been summarised and incorporated into Emergency Response Team role-based guidance documentation but will form part of the new Emergency Response Process which is currently under review and due for publication later this year. The Escalation Protocol and summarised guidance provides Incident Directors with clear trigger points, including the receipt of severe weather warnings and flood alerts, each with a recommended command and control structure to be established proactively to ensure proportionate response arrangements are in place. Issues such as weather warnings have also been discussed at multi-agency levels to ensure that more proactive arrangements are in place (please refer to paragraphs 22 and 23 for further information).
19. The introduction of regular internal tactical coordination group meetings prior to and during an incident are now also incorporated into Council command and control arrangements. This ensures that appropriate representatives from relevant services meet as often as required to discuss and manage priority issues relating to the incident at hand. A 'battle rhythm' will be created to ensure that these internal meetings compliment the timings of any multi-agency coordination meetings, to ensure any concerns or issues raised internally can be communicated to partner responding organisations as required.
20. Once the Council has escalated to emergency response arrangements, an email will be sent to all councillors of affected areas to advise that response arrangements have been activated and the emergencyresponsegatesheadcouncillors@gateshead.gov.uk

inbox is now being monitored. Councillors can use this email address to report emergency issues directly to the Emergency Response Team, who will be monitoring this inbox during an incident. Reporting of other issues should continue via Customer Services to ensure they are recorded and addressed by operational teams. It should be noted in some circumstances, such as high winds, there could be delays in response due to unsafe working conditions and a duty of care to employees.

Training

21. Role based refresher training was offered to all existing members of the Emergency Response Team and provided to those who'd expressed an interest in November and December 2022. Further training has been provided to new members of the Incident Director Team in May 2023 and to other new members of the team throughout the year.

Exercises

22. The following multi-agency exercising has taken place over the past 12 months:

- **Exercise London Bridge, 24th May 2022:** This timely exercise tested localised planning arrangements for Operation London Bridge, which manages the period of mourning following the death of the Monarch. Following the exercise, regional and local plans were updated accordingly, which enabled required duties to be undertaken without incident following the death of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II.
- **National Exercise Flood-ex, 15th and 16th November 2022:** The scenario focussed on a tidal surge affecting the whole of the east coast of the UK and concurrent stormy weather. Although this was played as a table-top exercise by multi-agency partners, our Emergency Response Team opened the Incident Room and played the incident as a real event, gaining very useful experience for newer members of the team.
- **Exercise Mighty Oak, 28th – 30th March 2023:** One of the largest scale exercises of recent years focussed on a total loss of national electrical power and was played out at strategic and tactical levels. National planning for this type of scenario is at an early stage, meaning that local plans were relatively sparsely populated. Largely thanks to the large number of partner organisations involved and range of perspectives provided, the exercise was very successful in identifying a lot of information and good practice that will inform future planning arrangements, which are now in development.

Incidents

23. The Emergency Response Team has responded to the following incidents since the last annual update report in June 2022:

- **1st July – 20th July 2022, Extreme Heat:** Over a period approaching three weeks, many parts of the UK including the Northeast, were subjected to extreme temperatures. This type of heat can be very dangerous for vulnerable members of the community, with many deaths occurring across Europe. During this period daily multi-agency coordination meetings took place to ensure that issues were being raised accordingly and that consistent communications and safety messages were being issued by all partner organisations directly to schools, care homes and the wider public.
- **8th – 19th September 2022, Operation London Bridge:** Following the death of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II on the 8th September 2022, the national plan for Operation London Bridge was invoked. This immediately triggers coordination meetings at local and regional levels, and as such Gateshead Council started to attend daily multi-agency Tactical Coordination Groups. Gateshead Council's own

Operation London Bridge, which mirrors national and regional plans, was activated and arrangements were put in place for flag raising and lowering, designated floral tribute sites, books of condolence at Council venues, the lighting of the Millennium Bridge and the proclamation for the new King.

24. There have been recent reports of Avian Influenza outbreaks nationally, but fortunately at time of writing there has not been any further cases reported in or around the Gateshead area since February 2022. Should a similar incident occur in future however, we are assured that representatives from the Council's Public Health, Trading Standards, Communications and Resilience and Emergency Planning Teams would again provide a joint response with multi-agency colleagues from the UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) and Animal and Plant Health Agency (APHA).

Multi-Agency Preparedness

25. Northumbria Local Resilience Forum (LRF), of which Gateshead Council is a member, is the mechanism used to enable multi-agency planning arrangements to be documented, tested and exercised. In 2022 a restructure of the LRF resulted in the recruitment of an LRF Manager and supporting team of officers and administrators, which replaced the previous structure of one administrator and a support officer.
26. These additional resources have benefited all multi-agency organisations in the LRF's membership, providing a much more structured and proactive approach to the potential threats to business continuity and the public:
- **December 2022 – Present, Industrial Action:** A calendar of weekly multi-agency meetings was put in place from December 2022 to allow information to be shared, issues to be raised and discussions to take place with regard to ongoing industrial action. This has included:
 - Assisting health partners to share public messaging about attending hospital A&E during industrial action periods or quickening the flow of hospital discharges to reduce risks to patients.
 - Monitoring the business continuity of essential services during teacher's industrial action, due to unexpected employee absences because of unexpected childcare requirements.
 - **December 2022 – March 2023; Winter Pressures:** Similarly to the industrial action meetings, winter pressures were also discussed weekly as part of a multi-agency forum. This enabled information and concerns to be shared about potential impacts on the transport network, dangerous conditions and severe low temperatures, to ensure that relevant information was provided in a timely manner. This proactive approach also lends itself to potential issues such as salt/grit shortages and the coordination between local authorities as was seen a few years ago.
 - **April 2023 – November 2023:** A weekly calendar of meetings remains tentatively in place for the duration of this period, to enable issues such as high temperatures or stormy weather to be discussed and planning and response arrangements to be coordinated at very short notice.
27. The attendance at multi-agency coordination and command and control meetings also now includes relevant utility representatives. There was significant scrutiny at national and local levels of the role of utility companies in the debriefs of Storm Arwen and as a result, representation is now an expectation to enable all partners to make fully informed decisions on the response required.

Martyn's Law and the Publicly Accessible Locations (PALs) Pilot

- 28.** The 'Protect Duty' has been in development by the Home Office over recent years, in response to the evolvment of terrorist threats in public spaces all over the world over recent years. This has included the Westminster Bridge attack using a vehicle as a weapon, vehicle and knife attacks at Borough Bridge Market and of course the Manchester Arena attack.
- 29.** The aim of the Protect Duty is to ensure that people entering or using publicly accessible spaces, are better protected from malicious attacks via proactive security mitigations to prevent an incident occurring, and better response arrangements should an incident still occur.
- 30.** Gateshead Council was one of 33 local authorities in the north of England that took part in the Publicly Accessible Locations (PALs) Pilot from 1st April 2022 to 31st March 2023. This was the first stage of development work from the Home Office as part of the 'Protect Duty', which has now been renamed 'Martyn's Law' in memory of Martyn Hett, one of the victims of the Manchester Arena attack in 2017.
- 31.** Martyn's Law aims to ensure that security considerations are made in publicly accessible places to reduce the potential for terrorist activities and to mitigate the impacts of an incident occurring. Publicly accessible locations can be classified under 4 key areas:
 - Sites: key sites that must assess and manage their own arrangements including all security aspects (e.g. sports facilities, performance venues, etc.).
 - Groups: this could range from military groups, faith groups or LGBT groups for example, who should be engaged with appropriately.
 - Sectors: this relates to somewhere that could receive messaging/ direction from a particular Government sector or department (i.e. Department for Education and schools).
- 32.** The fourth element is 'Zones', which has been the focus of the PALs Pilot. The initial definition of a Zone was initially quite vague and open to interpretation, with a rationale of identifying different approaches and good practice from the local authorities involved. This will help to inform the finalised national guidance, which should be published by the end of 2023.
- 33.** A Gateshead Protect and Prepare Group (PAPG) was established in March 2023 to undertake the Pilot, which initially included representation from Council services, Northumbria Police and the Counter Terrorism Security Advisor (CTSA) Team. The membership of the group has been broadened over the course of the Pilot to include partners from health, the Metrocentre, Northumbria Local Resilience Forum management and public transport providers.
- 34.** Many of the local authorities involved, including Gateshead, decided to use existing ward boundaries as the Zones. This was a common-sense approach as the boundaries were already mapped, ward profiles were already in place and the political leadership for each area was already in place.
- 35.** Following identification of the Zones, a template has been created for each area to list the areas for scrutiny within. This has included:
 - Open spaces: What are the spaces (i.e. parks, squares, etc.) and what are they used for (i.e. day to day use, staging events, etc.)?

- Retail areas and night-time economies: are there large shopping complexes or bar areas/hotels that could be at risk from marauding terrorist attacks?
 - Groups: are there collections of individuals or organisations such as faith groups, students or military personnel that could be potential targets?
 - High profile/ iconic sites: Which areas have sites that are widely known, and could they be at risk/ targeted?
 - Industrial areas: are there any sites that could be a target for terrorism due to the work they undertake, equipment they store or due to security aspects?
 - Infrastructure: is there any key infrastructure (i.e. road/ rail network, bridges, etc.) in the zone?
 - Events: are there large-scale/high profile events held within the zones?
- 36.** We've already started to note the mitigations that are already in place, such as which events have suitable accredited security arrangements in place and which locations already have lock-down planning arrangements in place in case of attacks. Site visits have begun to identify any potential security weaknesses (i.e. missing bollards, etc.) and any potential opportunities for engagement with local businesses and community representatives.
- 37.** Although the full guidance has yet to be issued and Martyn's Law is currently a draft bill, we have a better understanding of what the likely requirements for security considerations will be for publicly accessible locations such as Council buildings and sites hosting events. Internal planning is underway to ensure when the bill is passed and the final guidance is published, we will already have strengthened our security arrangements or identified issues to be addressed and will be able to evidence the work undertaken.

National Resilience Framework

- 38.** Government published 'The UK Government Resilience Framework' in December 2022. This is the Government's new strategic approach to resilience and is based on 3 core principles:
- A developed and shared understanding of the civil contingencies risks we face is fundamental
 - Prevention rather than cure wherever possible with a greater emphasis on preparation and prevention
 - Resilience is a 'whole society' endeavour, so we must be more transparent and empower everyone to make a contribution.
- 39.** The impacts of Storm Arwen in 2021 highlighted the shortfalls of some areas of response, which as the content of this report shows, has led to the strengthening of single and multi-agency arrangements. Storm Arwen did however also show how a community can come together under difficult circumstances, with some community facilities opening their doors to their neighbours during times of need.
- 40.** The Resilience and Emergency Planning Team provided a Members Seminar in 2022 to advise councillors that plans were underway to engage with community groups and facility managers to formalise their role in emergency response. A campaign was published in the winter edition of Council News asking for groups to contact the Resilience Team with expressions of interest. Unfortunately, this campaign wasn't successful in engaging with any groups, but work is now beginning with the Council's Neighbourhood Management Team to develop a structured offer, terms and conditions and guidance.

41. We want to ensure that with careful planning, community groups and volunteers will be fully involved in emergency planning arrangements for the long term. Engagement will take place with all interested parties so that we can discuss and document the practicalities and possibilities of using their facilities and resources. We can work together with other organisations, such as utility companies to look at the potential for funding of generator installations or other adaptations and also with the emergency services and voluntary sector to look at how facilities can be supported during incident response arrangements.
42. Much of this work, along with helping to safeguard residents, will also be the first steps to community preparation and prevention and providing resilience as a whole society endeavour. This will be reflected in the Council's Resilience Strategy, which will be published later in 2023.

Recommendations

43. Overview and Scrutiny Committee is requested to:
 - Consider and comment on the report
 - Indicate whether it is satisfied with the work undertaken
 - Agree to receive a progress report in a further six months

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