

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 2023 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. Following a restructure within the Council's Public Health Service, a Head of Service position was created to oversee the Community Safety and Resilience and Emergency Planning functions.
4. Michael Batty was appointed on a temporary contract as the Interim Head of Service in December 2023 and has been instrumental in developing the remit of this role in preparation for a permanent appointment. Interviews for the role will be taking place after the submission of this report in the first week of June 2024, which at this point means that the name and commencement date of the successful applicant are to be confirmed.

5. The previous annual update reported that the team was in the process of recruiting a new Resilience and Emergency Planning Coordinator to support the newly appointed Manager, Michael Reynard.
6. Joe Rushbrook was the successful applicant and commenced working for the Council in August 2023. Joe has brought with him a wealth of Resilience and Emergency Planning experience and is a very welcome addition to the team.
7. The Resilience and Emergency Planning Manager continues to be 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.
8. 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

Out of hours arrangements

9. During out of hours periods, a rota is in place to ensure that the Council can provide 24/7 incident response arrangements:
 - Initial point of contact: Care Call will receive the initial call, record the information using a specific template and relay the information on to the Emergency Response Team Duty Officer.
 - Emergency Response Team Duty Officer: this voluntary role is staffed by trained Council officers from a wide range of service areas. Upon receipt of the information from Care Call, an initial assessment will be made as to whether the incident can be managed using operational arrangements or if an escalation to emergency response arrangements is necessary. If an escalation is required, the duty officer will contact and liaise with a duty Incident Director.
 - Incident Directors: this role is undertaken by Strategic Directors/Service Directors (who are contractually obliged to undertake this role) to provide strategic leadership, make decisions and to commit resources as part of a proportionate incident response.
 - Communications Team Duty Officer: A Communications Team Officer will be on standby to support the incident response and will assist the Incident Director in providing accurate and consistent communications to the public, councillors and MPs, senior management and partner organisations.
 - Go Gateshead Duty Officer: Should an evacuation be required out of hours it may be necessary to open a leisure facility, this will be facilitated by this officer who will ensure a building is accessible and secure should this be needed.
10. 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. Additional officers may also provide support to the response in their operational capacity, which will be directed by the Incident Director.

Recruitment

11. Although the Emergency Response Team is large with 32 volunteers (not including Incident Directors, Communications Team and Go Gateshead) we are always looking for new members to ensure flexibility when required. Every year prospective new

members contact the Resilience and Emergency Planning Team proactively to seek further information, which is usually because they work with or know existing members of the team. The last 12 months have been no different and as a result 3 new volunteers joined the team.

12. Due to staff turnover (i.e. retirements and employment changes) the Resilience and Emergency Planning Team undertake a regular recruitment campaign, which is aimed at all Council staff. A recruitment campaign is due to take place this calendar year, with a view to having new volunteers in role and suitably trained by the end of the year.

Training

13. In July and August 2023, a full consultation was undertaken with all existing Emergency Response Team members to determine specific training requirements. As a result, an annual training calendar has been established for the team, which over the last 12 months has seen the following training delivered:
 - Quarterly Incident Room Training: 2 sessions provided.
 - Internal Tactical Coordinating Group Training: 1 session provided.
 - Incident Director Refresh Training: 1 session provided.
 - Strategic Response Training for Corporate Management Team: 1 session provided.
 - Site Incident Officer Training: 1 session provided.
 - Resilience Direct Training (Home Office system): 1 session provided.
 - Strategic Action Counters Terrorism (ACT) Training: 2 sessions provided.
 - Multi-Agency Gold Incident Commander (MAGIC) Training: 2 sessions provided.
 - Scientific Technical Advisory Cell (STAC) Training: 1 session provided.

Exercising

14. The Council's Emergency Response Team has also had the opportunity to take part in several multi-agency exercises over the last year, which are as follows:
 - **Metrocentre Emergency Exercise, 13th October 2023:** multi-agency exercise to validate the newly reviewed Metrocentre Emergency Plan.
 - **Operation Tarlac, 18th January 2024:** multi-agency exercise to test response arrangements to a terrorist incident in the Gateshead area.
 - **Rust-Oleum Europe Control of Major Accident Hazards (COMAH) Exercise Domino, 12th March 2024:** multi-agency exercise to test and validate the newly reviewed off-site plan of the Rust-Oleum Europe chemical site.
 - **Akzo-Nobel (International Paints) Control of Major Accident Hazards (COMAH) Exercise Albatross, 9th May 2024:** multi-agency exercise to test and validate the newly reviewed off-site plan of the Akzo-Nobel chemical site.

Incidents

15. The Emergency Response Team has responded to the following incidents since the last annual update report in June 2023:
 - **Storm Isha, 19th - 21st January 2024:** High winds and heavy rain required coordination at a multi-agency level to ensure that proportionate response arrangements were in place for the duration of this severe weather event.
 - **River Tyne School (Carr Hill) Bomb Hoax, 28th February 2024:** An automated telephone bomb alert was received by the school who evacuated the premises. This turned out to be a hoax but was responded to as a real incident until this could be confirmed.

Multi-Agency Preparedness

16. Northumbria Local Resilience Forum (LRF), of which Gateshead Council is a member, is the mechanism used to enable multi-agency emergency planning arrangements to be documented, reviewed, tested and exercised. As a key member of this group, we regularly partake in structured and proactive planning discussions and ensure proportionate arrangements are in place to mitigate the potential threats to business continuity and the public:
- **June 2023 – Present, Industrial Action:**
 - NHS: Regular multi-agency meetings take place in preparation for industrial action from a range of service providers. The last 12 months have seen unprecedented strikes within the NHS which has required Council assistance to allow information to be shared about only using A&E services in emergencies and quickening the flow of hospital discharges to reduce risks to patients.
 - Go Northeast: The Go Northeast bus service strikes last year also required coordination to mitigate the risk to those most vulnerable from the loss of services. Care was taken not to interfere with the industrial action while assessing the situation to ensure that services were still available in some capacity via existing means from other providers.
 - **October – June 2024, Israel Gaza Conflict:** Meetings have taken place since the conflict began in relation to the potential for community tensions and pro-Palestinian protests, which have taken place as recently as 19th May 2024.
 - **November 2023 – March 2024, Winter Pressures:** Similarly to the industrial action meetings, winter pressures were also discussed regularly 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.
 - **June 2023 – June 2024:** Regular meetings took place to allow issues such as weather to be discussed and planning and response arrangements to be coordinated at short notice.

Review of Emergency Response Arrangements and Escalation Protocol

17. The Protocol has previously been reviewed every 2 years, but this cycle has been delayed due to COVID-19 response and capacity issues meaning that this is the first review since 2020.
18. The Emergency Response Arrangements and Escalation Protocol (**Appendix 1**) documents the potential triggers for an escalation from normal business to emergency response arrangements, and the command-and-control structures that should be in place to proportionately manage the incident in hand.
19. The opening 4 sections of the attached Protocol remain very much the same as the 2020 version due to little change in the definitions within these sections. The following amendments have been undertaken to subsequent sections of the document:
- Section 5: What type of incidents do we manage: This section has been added to provide some additional information and context relating to the variety of incidents that we've previously managed.

- Section 6: Council Emergency Planning and Preparation: Additional information has been added to provide an overview of the work undertaken by the Resilience and Emergency Planning Team with regard to the development and review of arrangements and how the process dovetails with the Council's business continuity and risk mitigation arrangements.
- Sections 7 & 8: Council Emergency Response Arrangements/ Escalation from Council Services: Several updates have been made to this section to provide clarity of escalation arrangements, potential triggers for action and the appropriate levels of command and control that should be in place depending on requirements. These updates are also reflected in the flowcharts within the appendices at the back of the Protocol. Recent updates to 24/7 duty officer availability to include Go Gateshead and Communications Team representatives has also been documented.

Review of the Strategic Resilience Management Framework

20. Similarly to the Emergency Response Arrangements and Escalation Protocol, there has also been delays in reviewing the Strategic Framework due to COVID-19 and capacity issues.
21. The Strategic Resilience Management Framework (**Appendix 2**) outlines the key objectives to be undertaken by the Council's Resilience and Emergency Planning Team, as part of single agency or multi-agency partnership working in adherence with our statutory duties under the Civil Contingencies Act (CCA) 2004.
22. The content of the framework is as follows:
 - Council Liability: This section provides a summary of the Council's risk from an emergency/ major incident, which has not changed since the 2019 version of this document.
 - Statutory Legislative Requirements and National Context: The Council's statutory duties under the CCA 2004 remain the same, but the list of Government policies, legislation and associated guidance has been updated to reflect revisions in some of this documentation.
 - Local Governance Arrangements: Little has changed from the previous incarnation of this document, although changes are likely to take place over the coming year in terms of the Northumbria Local Resilience Forum (LRF) framework and strengthened political accountability as part of the Stronger LRFs Pilot. Further reports will be provided as the pilot progresses.
 - Gateshead Council Emergency Planning and Response Arrangements: This section of the document has been revised to better illustrate the key areas of work undertaken to ensure Emergency Planning and Response Arrangements are in place.
23. The final section of the Strategy provides details of the planned key service objectives for 2024-26, the life cycle of this version of the Strategy. The action plan table provides details of what each objective is, the statutory duty driving the objective, the activities, responsible officers/bodies and timescales in place to achieve each objective and the outcomes and resulting evidence upon completion.
 - Objective 1: Review and develop plans, action cards and strategies to enable effective emergency response arrangements. This is an ongoing cycle for the Resilience and Emergency Planning Team to ensure that all documentation and procedures are up to date. There are new plans in development to reflect national

risk priorities, including cyber-attacks, national power outages, counter terrorism and community resilience and engagement.

- Objective 2: Work with partner organisations to promote Resilience, Emergency Planning and Response with public, private, multi-agency and voluntary sector organisations. Work with partner responding organisations via a range of different groups has always been key to successful planning and response arrangements. These arrangements will continue with work already well underway to strengthen engagement and partnership working with the community and voluntary sectors.
- Objective 3: Advise elected members, senior officers and partner organisations on emergency preparedness legislative changes to ensure that they are aware of policy implications.
 - Reports have been taken to Corporate Management Team, Gateshead CONTEST Board and the Community Safety Board in relation to the creation of a Corporate Counter Terrorism Group (as referenced in paragraphs 38 – 48 of this report), which will join up all aspects of the Council’s counter terrorism duties and enable clearer, more regular reporting to be provided.
 - The newly reviewed Emergency Response Arrangements and Escalation Protocol aims to provide clarity for services on the escalation process from operational to emergency response arrangements.
 - The Stronger LRFs Pilot (as referenced in paragraphs 34 -37 of this report) will strengthen political involvement and accountability in community resilience.
 - All aspects of these activities and all Resilience and Emergency Planning updates will continue to be provided via the appropriate reporting streams.
- Objective 4: Promote Community Resilience via the establishment of networks and engagement programmes: Engage with communities to promote self-resilience and to develop arrangements incorporating community groups and facilities into response arrangements (as referenced in paragraphs 25 – 33 of this report).
- Objective 5: Contribution to the creation, planning, delivery and evaluation of bespoke emergency planning training and exercising packages to multi-disciplinary staff: Continue with the ongoing recruitment cycle for new members of the Emergency Response Team and, via consultation, put in place a calendar of bespoke training and exercising for all team members (as referenced in paragraphs 13 and 14 of this report).
- Objective 6: Promote business continuity guidance to local businesses and the voluntary sector: Continued engagement with local businesses proactively and reactively as required.
- Objective 7: Incorporate good practice and lessons learned from debriefs undertaken at local and national levels of emergency planning/ response to incidents, training and exercises: Continue to strengthen in-house and multi-agency response planning arrangements via full engagement with the official debrief processes in place to incorporate good practice identified and to learn from lessons experienced.
- Objective 8: Provision of practical guidance, supervision and mentoring to staff involved in the emergency planning/ response approach: Continue to provide role-based training and documentation to all staff involved in emergency response arrangements (as referenced in paragraph 13 of this report).

National Resilience Framework

24. Government published ‘The UK Government Resilience Framework’ in December 2022, which is the Government’s strategic approach to resilience. Within the Framework are objectives in which the Government aims to implement certain

mitigation and engagement procedures to achieve more resilient communities by 2030 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.

Community Engagement

- 25.** As alluded to in the previous paragraph, a shared awareness of risks, prevention rather than cure and resilience as a 'whole society' endeavour places a significant emphasis on community involvement and awareness.
- 26.** During Storm Arwen many communities across the Northeast were without power, support, and assurance for a significant number of days. It was noted during the incident and as part of the incident debrief that some Gateshead community groups had demonstrated community resilience by self-activating and opening the doors of their facilities to welcome impacted members of their communities. This was identified as good practice and we have taken the national objectives and aligned our community engagement and community resilience work to them as part of the Gateshead Council Resilience Strategy.
- 27.** The Resilience and Emergency Planning Coordinator has since worked in partnership with the Council's Locality Connectors (previously Community Engagement Officers) to identify groups and venues, due to their existing working relationships with building managers and community groups. Identified community buildings have been electronically mapped and added to a database and are being approached and engaged with to determine which locations could be used as part of emergency incident response.
- 28.** To date 19 of 24 identified buildings have been visited and an agreement made with the trustees or committee. It is understood that the building 'owners' will be able to open their respective buildings during an incident that requires residents to leave their homes for a short period of time. This known 'safe' place will allow residents to stay safe, warm and dry, charge electronic devices, talk to family and friends and access food and refreshments. If the building is opened by the manager/chair/key holder it is understood that they inform the council to enable the Council's Emergency Response Team to assist in any way they may be called upon. Regular information updates will be provided to residents using the facilities to provide confidence in responders and the assurance they need.
- 29.** Meetings are to be arranged with the remaining 5 buildings identified. These are: Birtley Leisure Centre (nominated rest centre), The Millenium Centre, Dunston Activity Centre, St Chads and Gateshead International Stadium (nominated rest centre).
- 30.** Most of the identified buildings to date are in the West of the borough, due to working with the West area Locality Connectors. From June 2024 further work will be undertaken with the Locality Connectors in the East of the borough to carry out the same exercise.

31. Interested community groups have all been advised as part of engagement to date that the community buildings will not be used for sleeping accommodation and building managers are aware of the arrangements the council has in place if overnight or longer-term accommodation is required.
32. Working with the Locality Coordinators has allowed their expertise in the funding and grants application process to make building owners aware of opportunities to help them ensure their buildings can become more resilient. Funding applications include installations of solar panels with back up batteries, ground and air source heat pumps, energy efficiency assessments or new LED lighting.
33. The aim is that the Council will have thirty or more community buildings across the borough as part of a Community Resilience and Engagement Framework, with agreed memorandums of understanding for use during emergency incidents to support local residents by the end of September 2025.

Stronger Local Resilience Forums (LRFs) Pilot

34. Another key aspect of the Government's National Resilience Framework is to strengthen political involvement and accountability as part of the 'whole society resilience' endeavour. Northumbria LRF, of which Gateshead Council is a member organisation, was 1 of 8 successful bidders nationally to partake in the Government's Stronger LRFs Pilot.
35. The 3 main elements of the pilot are:
 - Strengthened Leadership, including the trialling of a new Chief Resilience Officer Post.
 - Strengthened accountability: improved scrutiny, including a multi-level new assurance model, with political and wider stakeholder engagement.
 - Developed Integration: widening the partnership working to incorporate political spheres, business, academia, third sector, voluntary, and whole of society resilience.
36. The successful bid is being funded by Government at a rate of approximately £400k per year over a 2-year period, which covers the staffing costs of the new Chief Resilience Officer and the team of officers working to them, all of whom are yet to be appointed.
37. An initial report was provided at Leader's Meeting on 21st November 2023 to outline the scope of the pilot and the recommended option for governance, which is via the creation of a Resilience Board. Meetings have since taken place between the Chair of Northumbria LRF, Peter Heath the Chief Fire Officer for Tyne and Wear, and all local authority Leaders and Chief Executives who have agreed the concept of the Resilience Board. A final draft of the proposal will be presented at the LRF Strategic Board meeting on the 26th June.

Corporate Counter Terrorism

38. The national CONTEST Strategy was refreshed in July 2023 and sets out how the UK's Counter Terrorism response will adapt to the enduring and evolving threat from terrorism. The strategy remains structured around what is known as the 4 P's:
 - Prevent: The overall aim of Prevent is to safeguard and support those vulnerable to radicalisation, to stop them from becoming terrorists or supporting terrorist activities. This area of work is led and undertaken by the Community Safety Team.

- Pursue: This element of CONTEST is not undertaken by the Council and is provided by the security services, with the aim of stopping terrorist attacks using gathered intelligence and bringing those involved to justice.
- Protect: The Protect Duty/ Martyn's Law will shortly become law and has the purpose of analysing and mitigating the risks of attacks in publicly accessible locations and reducing the impacts of attacks should they still occur.
- Prepare: Prepare is designed to mitigate the impact of a terrorist incident by bringing an attack to an end rapidly and recovering from it effectively. The Prepare and Protect elements are both led and undertaken by the Resilience and Emergency Planning Team.

39. The Council currently performs duties in the Prevent, Protect and Prepare elements of CONTEST. Some of these duties have been performed for years, whilst others are still developing at a national level as part of the new Protect Duty, which should become law in 2024. **Appendix 3** of this report provides a diagram to illustrate the range of work undertaken as part of the Council's counter terrorism activities and the considerations and complexities involved.
40. On the 20th March 2024 Corporate Management Team agreed to support the Resilience and Emergency Planning Team's recommendation of the creation of a Corporate Counter Terrorism Group.
41. The Corporate Counter Terrorism Group (CCTG) will ensure cross-council compliance with The United Kingdom's Strategy for Countering Terrorism (CONTEST) duties, the Counter Terrorism and Security Act 2015, Prevent Duty Guidance 2015, Channel Panel Guidance 2020 and the Civil Contingencies Act 2004.
42. This group will not replace existing mechanisms (i.e. Channel Panel, Gateshead Multi-Agency Resilience and Emergency Planning Group, etc.) but will provide a central point of coordination for all of the Council's counter terrorism activities.
43. An aim of the group is also to ensure that reporting processes are in place to inform the frequency of meetings of groups such as the Gateshead CONTEST Board. On the 30th April 2024 a report was taken to the Gateshead CONTEST Board, who endorsed the creation of the CCTG.
44. The Multi-Agency Gateshead Contest Board aims to provide leadership, guidance, and strategic oversight in relation to all aspects of Counter Terrorism within the Gateshead area. The updates provided to the Board from the CCTG will greatly assist in achieving key objectives for Gateshead in relation to providing assurances of the plans and safeguards in place. Initial delays in establishing these arrangements may however be likely due to current capacity issues within Community Safety.
45. The remit of the CCTG will also be to:
- Ensure all Council services with a role in counter terrorism are fully aware of ongoing requirements and duties.
 - Ensure that all proportionate counter terrorism considerations are incorporated into Council business activities to protect those using Council facilities and to mitigate the impacts of any attacks.

- Provide consistent advice and enforcement to ensure compliance from those within sectors including local business, education, leisure and education.
- Document all reporting responsibilities, frequencies, and deadlines in relation to counter terrorism.
- Continually review Council service provision to ensure national compliance.
- Coordinate all progress recording for audit and assurance purposes.
- Assist in the development and review of all Council counter terrorism plans as required.
- Ensure all Council employees are appropriately trained via official counter terrorism training courses.
- Coordinate the provision of proportionate counter terrorism information and guidance to the public.
- Liaise with the Chairs of the Council's Corporate Risk and Resilience Group and Corporate Health and Safety Group to ensure appropriate Counter Terrorism issues are considered within those group's remits.

46. The group will be chaired by the Council's Head of Community Safety and Emergency Planning, Prevention and Resilience with support from the Resilience and Emergency Planning and Community Safety Managers.

47. Initial recommendations for group membership would include officers from:

- Resilience and Emergency Planning (Protect/ Prepare Lead)
- Community Safety (Prevent Lead)
- Facilities Management (Customer Engagement/ Site Security/ Planning)
- Go Gateshead (Customer Engagement/ Site Security/ Planning)
- Libraries (Customer Engagement/ Site Security/ Planning)
- Legal and Democratic Services (Members Training)
- Customer Services (Customer Engagement/ Threats from Telephone/ Customers)
- Care Call (Customer Engagement/ Telephone Threats)
- Neighbourhood Management (Community Engagement/ Site Security/ Planning)
- Housing (Customer Engagement/ Telephone Threats)
- Benefits and Revenues (Customer Engagement/ Telephone Threats)
- Adult Social Care (Prevent – Channel Panel/ Customer Engagement)
- Occupational Health and Safety (Site Planning/ First Aid)
- Human Resources and Workforce Development (All Training Elements)
- Trading Standards (Potential Licensing and Enforcement/ Customer Engagement)
- Planning Development (New/Major Planning Development Site Planning)
- Events (Event Safety)
- Network Management (Road Network Planning)
- Procurement (Contracts/ Contractor Management)
- Business, Employment and Skills (Customer Engagement)

48. A documented calendar of reports from the CCTG is being generated for the following bodies to provide information updates and assurances:

- Annual Home Office Assurance Report
- Quarterly CONTEST Board Report

- Quarterly Gateshead Multi-Agency Resilience and Emergency Planning Group Update
- Bi-Monthly Community Safety Board Update
- Bi-Monthly update to the Gateshead Council Corporate Risk and Resilience Group
- Bi-Monthly update to the Gateshead Council Corporate Health and Safety Group
- 6 monthly Gateshead Council Corporate Management Team Report
- 6 monthly Gateshead Council Corporate Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee Report
- 6 monthly Gateshead Council Housing, Environment and Healthier Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee Report

Recommendations

49. 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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