

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

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

SUMMARY

To provide the Committee with an update on the progress 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 over the last six months for Resilience and Emergency Planning has been to continue to work in collaboration with our partners and communities; increase our capacity and capability to respond; strengthen community resilience; and ensure we continue to learn lessons to respond to future incidents.

Update on Progress

3. 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:

- Working with the Neighbourhood Management Team, work is continuing to develop our Community Resilience Volunteers throughout Gateshead working directly with our community organisations. The overall aim is to strengthen response arrangements in all communities and for volunteers to work with us during an emergency, with the overall objective of increasing capacity to safeguard communities.
- The North East Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) held a seminar in April to promote the launch of their new interactive 'Business Support and Finance Provider Toolkit'. The event was extremely high profile, featuring many guest speakers from the world of commerce and was very well attended. A member of the Resilience Team attended and provided business continuity and resilience advice to delegates at the event via a series of group discussions and also from

a branded table offering one to one advice and a range of literature to take away.

- 'Exercise Prioritas' Stage 2 also took place during the last six months. This was a local exercise to understand the expectations and limits of sharing and prioritising information during a major incident or emergency that was held over two specified areas in Gateshead and Newcastle. The purpose of stage 2 was to gather information on the known people at life risk (e.g. in receipt of care services) with participating organisations requested to identify and prioritise so those services can continue in the duration of the incident. A methodology of prioritising data was developed. A number of key learning points and next steps were identified from the exercise which will be taken forward over the next 12 months.

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

- The Cold Weather and Heatwave Plans are published jointly by NHS England and Public Health England on an annual basis to provide a framework intended to protect the population from harm to health from extreme weather conditions. The plans aim to prevent the major avoidable effects on health during periods of cold and hot weather by alerting people to the negative health effects of the weather, and enabling them to prepare and respond appropriately. There are various recommendations for the NHS, local authorities, social care, and other public agencies; professionals working with people at risk; individuals, local communities and voluntary groups. An assessment is being undertaken to provide assurance within all sectors that there are plans in place to deal with the impact of these extreme weather conditions with a gap analysis to be produced
- In addition, Public health England (PHE) and the Department of Health (DH) published the Flu Plan for winter 2016/17 in May 2016. Gateshead Council, through the Director of Public Health, has responsibility for providing appropriate advocacy and leadership with key stakeholders and challenge to local arrangements to ensure access to flu vaccination and to improve its uptake by eligible populations. Gateshead Council also commissions health visitor and school nursing services that will deliver the flu vaccine to primary school children this year. The Council is also responsible for ensuring that their own frontline social care staff are offered the flu vaccine to protect both staff and vulnerable clients. The Health Protection Assurance Group will provide independent scrutiny to improve access and uptake of the flu vaccine.
- Health protection describes those activities and arrangements that seek to protect the population from risks to health arising from biological, environmental or chemical hazards. The Director of Public Health (DPH) is responsible for coordinating the Council's contribution to health protection issues. This includes planning for and responding to threats to the public's health. The Health Protection Assurance Group is undertaking a review of local health protection arrangements to ensure that they are robust and sufficient. The review, including the production of recommendations, will be completed by the end of October 2016.
- Following revised guidance published by the Counter Terrorism Security Office, a review of Council procedures for handling bomb threats is underway with key council services and officers. Awareness sessions for all staff and councillors will be undertaken once complete

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:

- Work has been ongoing with Community Centre organisations and facilities throughout Gateshead to explore the mutual benefits of working together to use local facilities as an initial place of safety for residents during incidents and emergencies. To date there has been 24 community facilities added to the portfolio which also includes the Council's children centres, this has strengthened our humanitarian assistance arrangements across Gateshead
- A recruitment drive has been undertaken to enrol new council officer volunteers to the Emergency Response Team. As a result 27 new officers including 7 Chief Officers have volunteered to bring the number of members to 52 to undertake a range of roles. A review of the virtual team has taken place and additional members have been included. Awareness and Training Sessions have taken place and will increase our capacity and capability to respond to emergencies or incidents.
- A joint collaborative session took place in July with colleagues from Northumbria, Cleveland and Durham and Darlington Local Resilience Forums. The purpose of the session was to share learning and best practise across the three LRF areas; focus on consistent terminology of groups and governance structures; strengthen co-ordination in work-streams and issues; adopt some operational groups as sub-regional and share regional risk processes
- Awareness Raising Sessions have now been delivered to all the Neighbourhood Policing Teams within Gateshead. The aim of the sessions is to raise awareness of how the Council responds to an emergency and major incident, our statutory responsibilities and how to contact the Council in an emergency or incident
- Work is progressing to develop a sustainable sandbag policy for Gateshead. An options paper has been presented to the Communities Portfolio, a Corporate Resources Advisory Group has been held and a report is being presented to Cabinet with a preferred option on 13 September 2016

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:

- In conjunction with the Newcastle Council for Voluntary Service [NCVS] an emergency messaging facility has been developed on the 'Our Gateshead' website. This enables a banner alert message that can be displayed to communicate that there are issues within Gateshead. This automatically generates an email that is circulated to approximately 1000 community groups, organisations and members of the public who have registered on the site that there is alert and is a further communication method to relay messages.
- One of the learning points taken forward from the severe weather over Christmas and New Year 2016/17 was that we didn't have mechanisms in place to communicate specifically with Gateshead farming communities. The Resilience Team has since worked with the Rural Payments Agency to produce a database of Gateshead farmers and an initial letter is being issued to them to offer opportunities to become involved in community resilience and planning. They are also being provided with a reporting mechanism to report any issues

that may impact on their land and property during an incident, which could increase the chances of their eligibility to national grants and funding in the future.

Future Focus

4. The future focus for Resilience and Emergency Planning moving forward in 2017 will be to continue to work in collaboration with partners and our communities to continue to ensure that we maintain and have robust arrangements in place to assess risk, prepare, respond and recover from emergencies. We need to continue to strengthen the work undertaken to be ready and able to deal with potential emergencies and disruptive events.
5. This approach will ensure that Gateshead is continuing to work within a structure that is compliant with the statutory requirements of the Civil Contingencies Act 2004 and other associated legislation. The themes will be supported by an action plan which will set out the objectives, lead officers, timescales, and milestones necessary to deliver actions identified.
6. Our vision for Resilience and Emergency Planning will be to maintain that *'Gateshead is a safe and resilient place to live, work and visit'*.

Recommendations

7. 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 six months
 - Agree to receive a further report in April 2017.

Contact: Anthony Alder

Ext: 3880