

## 7. Emergency Planning and Community Resilience

REPORT OF: Head of Corporate Resources  
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Wards Affected: All  
Key Decision: Yes / No  
Report to:  
Date of meeting 12th September 2017

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### Purpose of Report

1. The Scrutiny Committee for Community, Housing and Planning has requested a report to describe the Council's Emergency Planning arrangements and to define how the Council works in partnership with other responders in preparing for emergencies. The purpose of this report is to respond to this request and provide the Scrutiny Committee with an overview of the Council's Emergency Plans and to describe how the Council works in partnership to promote community resilience in Mid Sussex.

### Summary

2. The Emergency Planning & Outdoor Services Manager is responsible for maintaining the Council's Emergency Plan, which is regularly reviewed, updated and published on the website. The Emergency Plan specifies the roles and responsibilities of key personnel should the Council be required to respond to a major incident. The plan is consistent with the approach taken by other Local Authorities in Sussex and has been validated by an emergency exercise within the last year.

### Recommendations

3. **The Scrutiny Committee are recommended to:**
    - (i) **Note the contents of this report.**
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### Background

4. Recent events have highlighted the importance of the role that local authorities play in responding to and recovering from major emergencies. Whilst such incidents are rare, the Council must be prepared fulfil its duty to the community in this regard.
  - 4.1 In the event of a major incident in Mid Sussex, the District Council will be expected to support the emergency services during the response and recovery phases, whilst continuing to deliver its essential services. Should an emergency occur outside of the District, the Council may also be asked to provide support to a neighbouring local authority, under a mutual aid agreement. To achieve the required level of preparedness, the Council has developed a robust set of Emergency Plans, which have been shared with local partners.

## **Legal Context**

5. Local Authorities are defined Category One responders under the Civil Contingencies Act 2004.

Category One responders have seven statutory duties, these are to:

- assess the risk of emergencies occurring;
- make business continuity arrangements;
- conduct emergency planning;
- inform, warn and advise the public;
- co-operate with other agencies in resilience activities;
- share information;
- promote business continuity.

## **Partnership Working**

6. The Civil Contingencies Act requires Category One responders to work together in order to fulfil these duties and the statutory guidance recommends that civil protection arrangements are planned and delivered by a multi-agency Local Resilience Forum. In Sussex this is known as the Sussex Resilience Forum (SRF).
- 6.1 The District Council is a member of the Sussex Resilience Forum (SRF) and pays an annual subscription of £1311.66 as a contribution towards its costs.
- 6.2 The SRF is hosted by Sussex Police who provide two full-time staff to co-ordinate resilience activities among the partners, liaise with central government and provide administrative support.
- 6.3 The Districts and Boroughs of West Sussex are currently represented on the SRF Executive by the Chief Executive of Chichester District Council.
- 6.4 The SRF oversees the production of the Sussex Community Risk Register, which categorises the risks in Sussex and states what is being done in mitigation.
- 6.5 The SRF forms working groups of emergency planning officers who are responsible for producing, reviewing and maintaining the County-wide emergency plans for the higher risks, such as pandemic flu and adverse weather.
- 6.6 The SRF also produces the Sussex Emergency Response and Recovery (SERR) Document which specifies the roles of each member organisation when responding to a major incident.

6.7 According to the SERR Document, in the event of a major incident, Local Authorities will be expected to:

- alert other Local Authorities and organisations
- alert relevant internal departments
- deploy liaison officers to relevant joint commands as requested
- set up emergency control and co-ordination as necessary
- collect, collate and disseminate information
- alert voluntary organisations and co-ordinate their activities
- provide a Strategic Officer to the Strategic Co-ordinating Group
- set up and manage Rest Centres
- arrange emergency feeding
- organise transportation to Rest Centres
- arrange temporary accommodation for any remaining evacuees after Rest Centres are stood down

6.8 Under the three-tier system of local government in West Sussex, WSCC take the lead on the majority of these roles. The main expectation of District and Borough Councils would be to deploy an Incident Liaison Officer and to set up and manage Rest Centres. The procedures held within the Council's Emergency Plan have been designed to meet this expectation.

6.9 The Emergency Planning Officers from all Sussex Local Authorities have come together to form the Sussex Local Authorities Emergency Planning Group (SLAEPG). This group meets four times per year and the intention is to share good practice and to ensure compliance with the relevant legislation and guidance. This group also oversees the production of the Memorandum of Understanding which covers the Mutual Aid arrangements between Councils.

6.10 In addition to SLAEPG, the Sussex and Surrey Cross-Border Liaison Group meets twice per year to share good practice in emergency planning and any learning from previous incidents and events. This group is made up of the emergency planning officers from Mid Sussex DC, Crawley BC, Horsham DC and WSCC who are joined by their counterparts from Tandridge DC, Mole Valley DC, Reigate and Banstead BC and Surrey CC. The group was initially formed to discuss the shared cross-border risks associated with Gatwick Airport and to ensure that emergency planning arrangements are joined up. One of the main benefits of the group is the establishment of close working relationships between these officers so that if any major emergency should occur, a strong support network is already in place.

### **Emergency Planning Arrangements**

7. The District Council's Emergency Plan specifies the roles and responsibilities of the Emergency Management Team during the response to an emergency and gives guidance to the key officers on how to fulfil their roles, as an extension to their normal duties.

- 7.1 The Council has a trained Duty Emergency Officer who is on-call at all times. In addition to the Emergency Planning and Outdoor Services Manager, there are six trained Incident Liaison Officers who can attend incidents, brief key staff and co-ordinate the Council's response. Those acting as Incident Liaison Officers hold other day-to-day roles within Council services but are on-call to be re-deployed should an emergency occur.
- 7.2 The Emergency Planning and Outdoor Services Manager maintains a list of 45 buildings which can act as Rest Centres in Mid Sussex. Rest Centres are intended to provide emergency shelter for evacuees or uninjured survivors for up to 48 hours. Twelve officers have been trained as Rest Centre Managers and would be deployed to operate these facilities, should the need arise.
- 7.3 In the event of a major incident in Mid Sussex, it is likely that the Chief Executive will convene a meeting of the Council's Emergency Committee. The Committee consists of the Leader of the Council, the Deputy Leader & Cabinet Member for Resources & Economic Growth and the Cabinet Member for Community and its primary function is to keep Members informed about the incident.
- 7.4 The Sussex Warning and Informing Group (a sub-group of the SRF) have developed a multi-agency communications plan to stipulate how member organisations communicate during emergencies. During the response phase it is expected that the Police will take the lead role in communicating with the public, whilst during the recovery phase this role may fall to Local Authorities. The content of any statements will only be authorised once they have been agreed by all partners via the Strategic Co-ordinating Group. Suitably trained and briefed personnel will give statements to the media.
- 7.5 A major role for local authorities during emergency response and recovery will be coordinating the activities of voluntary sector organisations and individual volunteers. The Sussex Resilience Forum maintains excellent relations with the voluntary sector through the Sussex Community Resilience Partnership. This group maintains a list of contacts for each of the main organisations and details of their resources.
- 7.6 It is acknowledged that during times of emergency, local authorities can be overwhelmed with donations and offers of assistance from members of the community. In such circumstances, local authorities will be expected to manage donations and the activities of spontaneous volunteers. To this end, the District Council has developed an on-line form to record donations and facilitate the recruitment of spontaneous volunteers. This form can be published via the Council's website and social media channels to capture the required information from any volunteers and donors.
- 7.7 The Emergency Planning & Outdoor Services Manager maintains the Council's Business Continuity Plan, which provides a framework for Senior Management to make decisions should an incident cause disruption to services.
- 7.8 The Council also has a Severe Weather Plan which details the specific arrangements that are in place to enable officers to communicate and allocate resources when bad weather is expected to affect the District.
- 7.9 The Council's Emergency and Business Continuity Plans were most recently validated with an exercise on 4<sup>th</sup> October 2016.

- 7.10 Local authorities are expected to take the lead role in the recovery from major incidents, a process which can be ongoing for many years. These procedures are defined in the Sussex Resilience Forum's Recovery Plan. Depending on the severity of the incident, it is acknowledged that this can have significant resource implications for the local authorities involved.
- 7.11 In line with Cabinet Office guidance, the Chief Executives of all Sussex Local Authorities have signed a Mutual Aid Agreement to provide support to one another during times of emergency. Such support could include the provision of specialist officers (e.g. Emergency Planning, Environmental health, Building Control) to supplement those of an authority during the response or recovery phases.

### **Community Resilience**

8. Community resilience activities are intended to prepare communities for emergencies, so that they can assist in a way that complements the activities of statutory responders. It is anticipated that local communities will take a lead role during the recovery process and the District Council would be expected to co-ordinate this in partnership with the County Council.
- 8.1 To help promote community resilience in Mid Sussex, the District Council hosts quarterly meetings of the Emergency Planning Liaison Group (EPLG).
- 8.2 The EPLG is chaired by the Cabinet Member for the Community. The group is made up of representatives from the local emergency responders and invites partners from all local Town and Parish Councils. Town and Parish Councils are normally represented by the Clerk and/or a Member from a relevant Committee.
- 8.3 The meetings provide a forum for partners to share information about any recent developments in emergency planning and report any concerns, noteworthy incidents or forthcoming events. Discussions regularly include severe weather planning, emerging risks, funding opportunities and any new initiatives or guidance from central government.
- 8.4 Attendance at this group is intended to help Town and Parish Councils to formulate their own emergency plans, so that they are able to respond appropriately to local incidents. Their involvement is expected to include providing local knowledge and resources, mobilising volunteers, supporting the provision of rest centres and driving the recovery process. The EPLG stages occasional desk-top exercises using emergency scenarios to test these plans.
- 8.5 The Mid Sussex EPLG has been acknowledged across West Sussex as an example of good practice in strengthening community resilience. Partners are given the opportunity to discuss local risks and develop their emergency plans in an open forum. This enables the community to be better prepared for emergencies and more able to complement response and recovery efforts.

### **Policy Context**

9. Emergency Planning and Community Resilience relates to the District Council's Corporate Priorities, particularly in creating strong and resilient communities.

### **Financial Implications**

10. This report has no financial implications.

## **Risk Management Implications**

11. The UK National Risk Register for Civil Emergencies provides a resource to enable organisations to be prepared for emergencies. This document identifies and assesses the main risks faced by the UK and includes acts of terrorism as well as natural disasters, such as coastal flooding. The Cabinet Office is reviewing the current version of the UK National Risk Register and an update is expected in late 2017.
- 11.1 The Sussex Resilience Forum also produces a Risk Register for Sussex. In line with best practice, the District Council maintains a Community Risk Register that is specific to Mid Sussex. All of these documents identify the highest risks, whilst specifying the control measures that are in place and which organisation takes the lead role if an incident occurs.
- 11.2 The Council's Emergency and Business Continuity Plans have been designed to mitigate the identified risks as far as reasonably practicable.

## **Equality and Customer Service Implications**

12. The report contains no implications for Equality or Customer Service.

## **Other Material Implications**

13. An emergency can result in unexpected costs which have to be borne by the Council. This is anticipated in the Emergency Plan and there is system in place for the Head of Corporate Resources to oversee and record the expenditure incurred during an emergency.
- 13.1 When assisting in the response to a major incident, the District Council may be entitled to the reimbursement of certain costs under the Bellwin Scheme. To qualify, such costs must be incurred when the District Council takes immediate action to safeguard life or property or prevent suffering or severe inconvenience within Mid Sussex. The minimum spending threshold to activate the Bellwin Scheme is currently £32,378.
- 13.2 Examples of expenditure that would qualify for reimbursement via the Bellwin Scheme include, the hiring of vehicles, plant or equipment to commence salvage works, the cost of providing temporary accommodation, the cost of removing debris which causes a hazard and the cost of hiring temporary staff or contractors to assist with the response.

## **Background Papers**

- Emergency Plans are available via the Council's website.