



Civil Contingencies and Whistle Blowing Updates

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Purpose of the Report

To provide Audit Committee with an annual update on strategic civil contingencies issues. The report also reports on any whistleblowing which has taken place in the last year.

Public Interest

Civil contingencies are important emergency planning functions of local authorities. Whistle blowing is a separate issue, which requires monitoring and managing by local authorities.

Recommendations

That Audit Committee notes the contents of this report.

Background

In 2019 SSSDC adopted a new approach for dealing with the out of hours calls to improve efficiencies with the process and of our preparedness for civil contingency emergencies. This remains in place with Deane Helpline providing this out of hours call centre, with them directing calls for emergency civil contingencies and for unsafe structures that present a risk to the safety and welfare of members of the public are routed through to the duty officer(s).

We have maintained the approach with our Civil Contingency capability and have a pool of trained officers from within SSSDC. There is a Strategic Duty Officer on call 24/7. The Strategic Duty Officer is supported by an Operational Duty Officer (Leadership & Management Team) who are also available 24/7. This gives us the ability to quickly establish high level command and control (usually linking in with the emergency services and County at the strategic level) whilst at the same time having an officer available to deploy to the scene of an incident to liaise with the emergency services on the scene, other responders, and the local community.

Civil Contingency Update



In response to the Covid-19 pandemic, SSDC stood up its Strategic Gold Command group in line with existing civil contingency plans. Gold group has been operating for the past year to lead and monitor the impact on the Council including finances, demand, and organisational performance across the Council. District Executive have received updates in relation to our response and the additional pressures on the Council, and will continue to receive updates through its normal budget monitoring and performance reports.

SSDC works with Somerset multi-agency partners on Covid-19, at strategic, tactical and operational levels, with command and control structures, plus agreed processes for escalation, response and recovery issues.

Over the past year there have been no calls which have been classified as a major incident where we have been asked to support any of the emergency services.

SSDC continues to be a member of the Somerset Local Authority Civil Contingency Partnership (SLACCP). A suite of county-wide plans and guidance is updated by the Civil Contingency Unit (CCU) including the SLACCP work plan and the Joint Corporate Emergency Response & Recovery Plan (JCERRP).

Over the past year the CCU has provided training to SSDC staff on the emergency duty officer role and separately on evacuation and rest centres. This has been necessary to ensure all those involved feel they have received refresher training to cope with an emergency situation should one arise.

Whistle Blowing Update

There are no recorded instances of whistleblowing concerns being raised in 2020. The Whistle Blowing Policy is due for revision and that work is now underway. A more detailed update will be brought to the next meeting of the Audit Committee.

Financial Implications

There are no financial implications as a result of this report.

Council Plan Implications

Aligned to our Council Plan values of empowering a confident, flexible workforce

Carbon Emissions and Climate Change Implications

None.

Equality and Diversity Implications



South Somerset
District Council

Any specific civil contingency plans to be assessed.

Background Papers

None.
