

Civil Contingencies Update

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Purpose of the Report

1. To provide Audit Committee with an annual update on strategic civil contingencies work that has occurred from 1st April 2021 onwards.

Public Interest

2. The Council works with local communities and emergency responders to respond to, and recover from, emergencies as required by the Civil Contingencies Act 2004.

Recommendations

3. That Audit Committee notes the contents of this report.

Background

4. The Civil Contingencies Act and supporting regulations and guidance, establish a clear set of roles and responsibilities for those involved in emergency preparation and response at the local level.
5. The Council has maintained its approach with Civil Contingency capability and has a pool of trained officers from within the staff team to plan, prepare and respond to emergencies and business continuity matters. Out of hours calls are, largely, initially managed through the Deane Helpline call centre, who then redirect calls for emergency civil contingencies and/ or unsafe structures that present a risk to the safety and welfare of members of the public, through to the Strategic Duty Officer (SDO) who is on duty at that time.
6. There is a Strategic Duty Officer on call 24/7 on a weekly rotation. The Strategic Duty Officer is supported by an Operational Duty Officer (ODO) (from within the Leadership & Management Team) who are also available 24/7. This gives the Council the ability to quickly establish high level command and control 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.



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7. The Council 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 partnership work plan and the Joint Corporate Emergency Response & Recovery Plan (JCERRP).
8. The Partnership's staffed unit hosted a number of training activities over the last year to further support our duty officers and other staff who might also be called in to support major incidents. This has included virtual based induction for new duty officers, and, exercise sessions for all duty officers that involved planning through and role playing a real situation. An in-person familiarisation session was also hosted for some duty officers and other staff identified as potential rest centre managers to be better prepared for response in the event of an evacuation and a rest centre being set up. Loggist training was also completed by a number of case officers who would be asked to support the strategic management team upon activation of a major incident.
9. A number of duty officer call outs and major incidents occurred over the last year that required duty officers and the strategic management team to stand up. The first back in April 2021 with the sad passing of the Duke of Edinburgh, which activated the Death of a Senior Figure protocol. In addition, there were flooding incidents in the West of the District, in Chard and Ilminster and Somerset County Council as the Lead Local Flood Authority (LLFA) has Section 19 investigations ongoing for these incidents. In 2022, duty officers were once again stood up to plan and respond to the major incident concerning Storm Eunice which required liaison with partner agencies through the Avon and Somerset Local Resilience Forum (ASLRF).
10. A feedback and planning session was held earlier this year with a number of duty officers who had been involved in some of those call outs, to gain insight from their experiences and identify any opportunities to further improve efficiencies and procedures with our planning and response to emergencies.
11. Representatives of the Avon and Somerset Resilience Forum met as either a Strategic Management Group or a Tactical Awareness Group to respond to the challenges and requirements arising during Covid. An Officer Group of Emergency Planners and representatives continues to meet on a monthly basis to discuss civil contingencies matters arising, including potential fuel shortages, refugees, planned events and protests to continually share awareness across the partnership.

Duty Officer Resource Hub

12. The Council has over the last year developed an online resource hub to further support the duty officers with the planning, response and recovery with civil



contingencies, bringing together all documentation and logging records into one site and with ease of access.

Financial Implications

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

Council Plan Implications

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

Carbon Emissions and Climate Change Implications

15. None.

Equality and Diversity Implications

16. As this report is for information and no decisions are being asked from Members an equality impact assessment is not required.

Background Papers

17. None.