



## 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 1<sup>st</sup> April 2022 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 the 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. The Council continues to have a robust arrangement in place for a Strategic Duty Officer who is 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 is 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.

## Civil Contingency Update

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 training activities to further support our duty officers and other staff who might also be called in to support major incidents. This included:
  - A joint rest centre exercise for SSDC and Mendip was held in October 2022. This event involved staff from SSDC, Mendip, the CCU and additional volunteers including the Rotary Club, Wessex 4x4 and others. The exercise was held in the Caryford Hall in Castle Cary. There was an opportunity for SSDC rest centre staff to test run the rest centre and familiarise themselves with action cards and kit bags, shadowed by Mendip staff and vice versa.
  - A Strategic and Operational Duty Officer training session was held in December. Four SSDC officers attended these events split over two days.
9. The on-call Duty Officers dealt with a number of minor calls during the period. A major flooding incident was declared in January 2022 on the Somerset Levels and Moors that affected a small part of South Somerset and appropriate action was taken. The Lead Local Flooding Authority (LLFA) reported the triggers for a Section 19 flooding investigation had not been met for this particular incident. A Recovery Co-ordination Group has convened with representation from the Local Authorities, Environment Agency and other stakeholders to ensure there is a joined-up approach to the recovery process.
10. Strategic Duty Officers attended meetings with partner agencies through the Avon and Somerset Local Resilience Forum (ASLRF) in cases where liaison was required.
11. Representatives of the Avon and Somerset Local Resilience Forum continued to meet as either a Strategic Management Group or a Tactical Awareness Group to respond to the challenges and requirements of emergency planning and share awareness of issues arising.

## Operation London Bridge

12. Operation London Bridge (death of a senior royal figure) was activated in September 2022, due to the sad passing of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II.
13. The Operation London Bridge team followed the Somerset protocol and associated local plans. The team worked with the Somerset Lieutenancy, Civil Contingencies Unit at Somerset County Council, the Police, and other Local Authorities to achieve a consistent approach across Somerset.



14. In accordance with the South Somerset Operation London Bridge protocol, a local Proclamation was held at Yeovil Country Park working closely with Yeovil Town Council. This event was well attended by local Somerset leaders, politicians, religious leaders, businesses, Royal Naval Air Service Yeovilton, local organisations including the Scouts and members of the public.
15. A post-activation workshop took place across the ASLRF group and a rewrite of the Operation London Bridge protocol to reflect the new Monarch and lessons learnt from September has been completed.

### **Duty Officer Resource Hub**

16. The Council has continued to refine the online Civil Contingencies resource hub developed late in 2021 to order to support the duty officers with the planning, response and recovery to incidents arising. New additions include onboarding check-lists and resource guidance for new duty officers. New weather and flooding alert automations were also set up to notify duty officers in real time.

### **Audit**

17. South West Audit Partnership (SWAP) undertook an audit of the Civil Contingencies process and preparedness in the Autumn of 2022 with a good assurance result provided early in 2023.

### **Somerset Council**

18. Arrangements have been made for the emergency planning and business continuity process from Vesting Day for the new Somerset Council. The LGR EP and BC workstream leads have presented options for the new council to the Programme Board. The duty rota for SSSDC will cease in its current form as of 1<sup>st</sup> April 2023. The Directors and staff from the Civil Contingencies Unit will staff the new rota until other members of the management team are onboarded.

### **Financial Implications**

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

### **Council Plan Implications**

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

### **Carbon Emissions and Climate Change Implications**

21. None.



## **Equality and Diversity Implications**

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

## **Background Papers**

23. None.
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