

BUSINESS SUPPORT
OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
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MAJOR INCIDENT RESPONSE
UPDATE

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Summary

To update Members on the Council's preparedness for emergency situations including both the exceptional demands placed on the Council to support the emergency response (emergency planning) and the need to keep critical Council services running at all times (business continuity management).

1 Budget and Policy Framework

- 1.1 The responsibility for emergency planning and business continuity is a matter for Cabinet.

2 Background

- 2.1 The Council has in place response mechanisms to deal with major emergencies. This is in the form of Emergency Plans countywide and Medway Council specific plus Business Continuity plans at a Council level. There is a dedicated Emergency Planning team plus senior officers trained to take part at gold, silver and bronze response levels.
- 2.2 Following the recent tragic incidents at Shoreham Airshow, Grenfell Tower and the major fire at Holborough Lakes, Snodland, officers have been asked to brief Members on how the Council would respond in the event, should such an incident occur in Medway.

3 Introduction

- 3.1 Medway Council is a Category One Responder, being those agencies likely to be at the core of the response to most emergencies, under the

Civil Contingencies Act 2004 (CCA) and has statutory duties that require it to plan for a range of risks that could have an impact on people and the environment.

- 3.2 The Government has set out 18 National Capability Workstreams which aim to ensure that a robust infrastructure of response is in place to deal rapidly, effectively and flexibly with the consequences of civil devastation and widespread disaster inflicted as a result of conventional or non-conventional disruptive activity. The Workstreams fall into three groups:
- three workstreams which deal with government and partnership structures at national, regional and local levels to deliver robust response capabilities
 - five workstreams concerned with the maintenance of essential services: food and water; transport; health services; financial services; and utilities
 - ten functional workstreams dealing with the assessment of risks and consequences in the areas of: chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear (CBRN) resilience; site clearance; infectious diseases (human); infectious diseases (animal and plant); mass casualties; evacuation and shelter; warning and informing the public; mass fatalities; humanitarian assistance and flooding.
- 3.3 Medway Council has a Major Emergency Plan and a suite of Business Continuity Plans. The Council is also part of the countywide multi-agency Kent Resilience Forum (KRF) which has its own major incident plan as well as incident specific plans to address specific risks to address the national requirements to consider risk as part of the 'National Risk Assessment' process.
- 3.4 By definition an emergency threatens serious damage to human welfare, the environment and/or the security of a locality. However recent events demonstrate that civil emergencies are unpredictable in terms of their location, scale and nature. The Council's Major Emergency Plan (MEP) is designed to provide a flexible framework to handle any emergency incident within the Council's boundaries no matter how, where, or when it happens. It details the roles and responsibilities of all those services that may be required to respond to an emergency.
- 3.5 Whilst the MEP and associated functional plans set out the likely response to disasters, it is also crucial that the Council has the capacity to continue to deliver its critical services whilst responding to a major incident. The mechanisms for doing this, together with the services that are critical to the continued welfare and security of Medway's communities, are described in the Corporate Business Continuity Plan. The Corporate Business Continuity Plan is, in turn, underpinned by detailed Business Continuity Plans drawn up for individual services,

which include plans for loss of premises or denial of access to premises.

3.6 The Council's responsibilities, as a Category One Responder, in times of a major emergency, include:

- identifying vulnerable people
- opening rest centres
- traffic management
- warning and informing the public
- environmental issues
- public health advice

4 The Emergency Scheme

4.1 Any major emergency will require an integrated response from all emergency responders. When a major emergency is declared a multiagency Strategic Coordinating Group (Gold Control) is convened to direct the integrated deployment of responders' resources. This Group is usually chaired by Kent Police and the Council will be represented by a Strategic Director. Authority is invested in Gold Control to direct and manage multi-agency resources in the response phase of an incident. This is supported by tactical (silver) and operational, on-site (bronze) multi-agency teams.

4.2 In a major emergency requiring a significant response from the Council, the Council's tactical response will be coordinated through the Emergency Control Centre in Gun Wharf. The overall strategic command will lie with the Chief Executive and Corporate Management Team.

4.3 The MEP defines those roles and responsibilities necessary to ensure that a major incident can be properly managed. Scheme roles are contained at Appendix A.

4.4 The flow chart at Appendix B details the processes put in place once a major emergency has been declared.

5 The Role of Local Authorities

5.1 Local Authorities play a critical role in civil protection. They have a wide range of functions which are likely to be called upon in support of the emergency services during an emergency, including key statutory responsibilities such as environmental health, housing, social services and highways, and crucially, exercise a community leadership role.

5.2 The role of local authorities in relation to the initial response phase is to provide support for the people in their area. Resources of local authority departments will be utilised to mitigate the effects on people, property, and the environment and to co-ordinate the response from the voluntary sector.

- 5.3 Local authorities will provide, in liaison with the Police, Rest Centres for people who have been evacuated, arrangements for friends and relatives of people bereaved and seriously injured, and Survivor Reception Centres. In addition, the local authority will have responsibility for establishing, in liaison with H.M. Coroner and the Police, emergency mortuary capacity in emergencies that exceed existing mortuary provision.
- 5.4 The welfare of emergency response personnel is an important consideration in the case of a protracted emergency. This will include catering facilities, toilets and rest rooms. Depending on the circumstances and the available premises, the local authority may provide facilities for use by all agencies, in one place.
- 5.5 Local authorities have responsibility for off-site co-ordination of multi-agency planning in relation to nuclear sites (under the Radiation (Emergency Preparedness and Public Information) Regulations), certain chemical sites (under the Control of Major Accidents Hazard Regulations) and major pipelines (Pipeline Safety Regulations).
- 5.6 As the emphasis moves from response to recovery, the local authority will take the lead in facilitating the rehabilitation of the community and the restoration of the environment. It will play an enabling role in close collaboration with a wide range of bodies who are not routinely involved in emergency response, such as land owners. In particular, the local authority will work with partners to meet the longer-term welfare needs of survivors and the community; and facilitate the remediation and reoccupation of sites or areas affected by an emergency.

6 Member Engagement

- 6.1 In a major emergency, The Council Gold lead or Communications and Public Information Manager will brief the Leader and Deputy Leader. To ensure that communications to the public are co-ordinated and integrated, Members will receive regular updates during the events to let them know the media lines being taken.
- 6.2 Formal publicity and PR will be handled through multi-agency protocols to ensure messages to the public are coordinated across agencies and are designed to build public confidence in the response.
- 6.3 Once the immediate response phase has abated Ward Members will have a key role in the recovery phase, assisting the community to return to social and economic normality. This role will include:
- providing a focus for community concerns and identifying problems and vulnerabilities in their community
 - providing local knowledge about community leaders, personalities and resources
 - liaising with the local community and providing information and reassurance

- 6.4 Major incidents frequently have long-term implications that can include: a need for area regeneration; marking anniversaries; managing appeal funds and books of condolence; public inquiries and civil or criminal proceedings. Some of these may require Member involvement.

7 Learning from Recent Events

- 7.1 Very quickly putting some response out on social media can assist in managing the inevitable communications challenges.
- 7.2 Early visibility of senior leaders (both blue light and Council) is important to give public reassurance.
- 7.3 Central Government will want to be assured that a local response is capable of handling the event. If COBRA sits it will want regular updates from the Strategic Co-ordinating Group.

8 Medway Council Preparedness for a Major Incident

- 8.1 Business continuity (BC) is a statutory responsibility for the Council under the Civil Contingencies Act (2004), and the associated Regulations (2005). This places a duty on Medway Council to maintain BC plans and should underpin all aspects of Council work to ensure the Council deliver its priorities in the event of an emergency.
- 8.2 All Corporate Management Team and Service Managers have received Business Continuity training during 2016/17. All services after this training were asked to test their current BC plans and review their Business Continuity arrangements. A revised corporate plan is currently being developed.
- 8.3 Testing of the BC Plans were also carried out during the following real incidents:
- 3 January 2017 heating failure at Broadside
 - Between the 12th and 18th May Medway Council suffered some unexpected information technology service disruption due to a number of unrelated issues:
 - Ransomware attack on NHS services caused disruption to service Friday 12th – Monday 15th May 2017
 - Planned Firewall replacement caused some significant issues Monday 15th – Tuesday 16th May 2017
 - Virgin Media network fibre outage caused major disruption Wednesday 17th – Thursday 18th May 2017
 - Water failure due to essential water supply work next to Gun Wharf by Water Company
 - Power failure in Brompton

- Medway Council IT failure 20 September 2017
- 8.4 The Council belongs to the Kent Resilience Forum Business Continuity Group that meet quarterly which shares plans and best practice.
- 8.5 To raise the profile of BC the Council took part in a National Business Continuity awareness week which took place 15-19 May 2017. To assist this bespoke activity was carried out with staff and businesses across Medway.
- 8.6 A number of officers have attended or will attend the following Courses this financial year:
- Working within a Safety Advisory Group – 3 Officers, 10 May 2017
 - Medway Control Centre Training on Grain Village Siren and Emergency Message System – 21 June 2017
 - Public Safety at Mass Gatherings – 4 Officers, 5-7 July 2017
 - Resilience Direct (RD) 8 Sept 2017 – 1 officer
 - Public Warning and Informing 13 Sept 2017 – 1 officer
 - Log Keeper During Emergency Training – 16 Officers, 11 Oct 2017
 - Oil Pollution Officer, Beach Master – 4 Officers, 24-26 Oct 2017
 - Multi Agency Gold Incident Commanders Course (Magic) – 2 AD's 6-9 Nov 2017
 - Scientific & Technical Advice – 3 officers
 - Recovery Exercise 27 November 2017 – 10 officers
- 8.7 The following Exercises and Operations have been supported by Medway Council Staff this financial year:
- Operation London Bridge (Planning) starting 07 Apr 2017.
 - Operation Quantity (Workshop) 24 Apr 2017 (National Threat Level Change)
 - Ex Zeus (Hazardous Pipelines Exercise) 08 & 13 June 2017
 - Castle Concert Table top Exercise 22 June 2017
 - Exercise United (Mass Fatalities Exercise) 04 July 2017
- 8.8 Medway Council staff have been involved in the following incidents:
- Avian Flu Planning/Response throughout 2017

- Water Supply Issues to a number of Villages North of the River Medway, 15 Officers involved in Communications, organising Water Collection Points and Community Engagement
- Manchester Terror Attack – A number of Strategic Coordination and Recovery Group meetings were attended and communicated, 25 May 2017
- National Threat Level Change to Critical 25 May 2017
- London Terror Attacks – A number of Strategic Coordination and Recovery Group meetings were attended and communicated, 03 June 2017
- Grenfell Tower Fire – Strategic Coordination Group Meeting which included Housing, Emergency Planning and AD physical and cultural regeneration with a number of fact finding and assurance actions, 15 June 2017
- Level 3 Heatwave Alert, 19 June 2017
- Assistance to Medway Hospital (Exercise Ragdoll) 23 June 2017
- Parsons Green Tube attack (attack on Friday but level raised 16-18 September 2017) – Threat Level Raised
- Gillingham Football Exercise, Nov 2017

8.9 To date Medway Council has the following numbers of Emergency Trained Staff for the following Functions:

- Gold (Strategic) Commanders x 5
- Silver (Tactical Commanders x 7
- Initial Coordinators x 8
- Incident Liaison Officers x 15
- Bronze (Operational Officers) x 22
- Emergency Communications x 2
- Business Recovery Officers x 4
- Admin Support Officers x 6
- Emergency REST Centre Managers x 4
- Emergency REST Centre Key Worker x 6
- Oil Pollution Officers x 3

- Oil Pollution Beach Masters x 6
- Oil Pollution SCAT Officers x 6

9 Risk management

Risk	Description	Action to avoid or mitigate risk
Social media coverage outstrips a formal response	Risk that the Council is not offering early reassurance and information to a social media audience	Social media messaging in place to be used early in an incident and coordinated with other MAG responders.
Lack of visible political leadership	Risk that the event is unfolding without a visual response from a senior politician	Communications protocol that expects Leader/senior council representative to be on site soon and making a press statement at an early stage as part of a co-ordinated multi-agency response
The need to provide a rapid and appropriate response and to keep local Councillors informed	Councillors wanting to show community leadership locally and be sufficiently informed to assist residents.	Communications protocol to enable local councillors to be briefed regularly as part of the Council's response
The period of response and recovery is months and is effecting service delivery	Pressure is placed on the Council's key front-line services	Business Continuity Plans would be activated and consideration of seeking mutual aid
The long recovery period is putting financial strain on the Council's budget	Financial pressure	Bellwin scheme. Liaison with central government to seek financial assistance

10 Financial Implications

- 10.1 The Emergency Planning team is funded from revenue budgets. We contribute financially to the Kent Resilience Forum. There are financial arrangements in place between Medway Council and Kent County Council (KCC) in relation to the Coroners Service and the response to an emergency which results in a large number of deaths. The Bellwin

scheme would offer some funding to the Council in the event of a major emergency. The Bellwin scheme is a United Kingdom Government emergency financial assistance which "reimburses local authorities for costs incurred on, or in connection with, their immediate actions to safeguard life and property or to prevent suffering or severe inconvenience as a result of a disaster or emergency in their area".

- 10.2 The response to major emergency would take a significant amount of officers' time at all levels. The recovery after the incident would mean this involvement, to varying degrees would continue for months, senior officers and would give their time to support a response to a major incident. This could incur additional costs.
- 10.3 There would be a loss of revenue from Council facilities such as leisure centres used to temporarily accommodate those evacuated from their homes.

11 Legal Implications

- 11.1 The Civil Contingencies Act requires the Council as a first responder to have in place appropriate measures to plan train and respond.
- 11.2 The Council has a duty under health and safety legislation to employees responding to a major emergency which may have an impact on officers who have been involved in the response or recovery to the emergency.

12 Recommendations

- 12.1 The Committee are asked to note the arrangements for responding to a major emergency.

Background Papers:

None

Appendices:

Appendix A – Summary of Medway roles

Appendix B – Emergency response processes

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