

**18 April 2024**

**Overview of Emergency Planning**

**Wards:** All

**Portfolio:** Leader of the Council

**1. Aim**

- 1.1. To ensure that the council are prepared to respond appropriately to a major emergency or a disaster that affects our capability to provide essential services.

**2. Recommendations**

- 2.1. The committee is asked to note the information provided in respect to the council's emergency planning function.

**3. Report detail – know**

- 3.1. Walsall Council Emergency Planning Unit are council's essential component of the civil protection framework, which works to the Civil Contingencies Act 2004. The Act outlines the responsibilities of local responders, dividing them into Category 1 and Category 2 organisations, each with specific duties to fulfil in emergency preparedness, response and recovery.
- 3.2. Category 1 responders are the main agencies, including emergency services, local authorities, and NHS bodies. They have a comprehensive set of duties, which include risk assessment, contingency planning, public information dissemination, and maintaining readiness to respond to emergencies.
- 3.3. Category 2 responders are 'co-operating bodies' like transport and utility companies, which may be less involved in planning but are crucial during incidents affecting their sectors. Their duties involve cooperating and sharing relevant information with Category 1 and other Category 2 responders.
- 3.4. Both categories come together to form Local Resilience Forums (LRFs), which facilitate coordination and cooperation at the local level. LRFs serve as platforms where responders can plan and prepare collectively, ensuring that all agencies are aligned and ready to act in a unified manner during emergencies. Walsall sits within the West Midlands Conurbation Local Resilience Forum.
- 3.5. The Local Resilience Forum are also required to share information and cooperate with other local responders to enhance coordination as well as producing a Community Risk Register which risks for the community and assesses how likely they are to lead to an emergency and the potential impact they would have. The register is created through a risk assessment, and the LRF uses the information to plan and prepare for emergencies that may occur.

- 3.6. The council's emergency planning unit provide an emergency call out function 24-hours a day, 365 days of the year. Additionally, the team coordinate the council's response to any incident or emergency requiring input from the local authority. Examples of incidents including large building, road and industrial fires; the Covid-19 pandemic and Operation London Bridge [the death of the monarch].
- 3.7. The unit work closely with internal services to ensure response plans and business continuity plans are in place and tested. The team arrange training and exercises to review readiness and capability and to learn lessons to inform a real-life response. Examples of exercises include Operation Acorn which tested Directors and Executive Directors plans in the event of a national power outage.
- 3.8. More widely, the team work closely with partners to ensure a coherent multi-agency response in the event of an incident. In addition to regular routine liaison, multi-agency exercises serve to test plans, develop common understanding and build strong relationships. For consistency, much of the public facing communication is issued at a regional level, including the example at **Appendix A**.

#### **4. Financial information**

- 4.1. The emergency planning service is revenue funded with a total budget of £256,910.

#### **5. Reducing Inequalities**

- 5.1. The council's emergency planning function tackles inequalities by identifying vulnerable communities, tailoring response plans, and distributing resources equitably. Community engagement and education empower residents, while partnerships with responders and voluntary organisations ensure inclusive responses.
- 5.2. Both planning and recovery aim to identify and address the root causes of vulnerability. Through these measures, local authorities promote equity by aiming to mitigate the disproportionate impacts of disasters on marginalised populations.

#### **6. Consultation**

- 6.1. Consultation during the development of local authority emergency plans is vital for effective response. Stakeholders including other category 1 responders, community groups, healthcare providers, and local businesses offer diverse perspectives and expertise.
- 6.2. This process ensures that plans are comprehensive, address specific community needs, and secure support from key agencies. Community input helps identify vulnerable groups, assess risks, and tailor strategies accordingly.
- 6.3. Through inclusive consultation, local authorities build stronger, more resilient communities better prepared to face emergencies.

#### **7. Decide**

- 7.1. The committee is asked to note the detail provided in this report.

## **8. Respond**

- 8.1. The emergency planning team are currently drafting the latest iteration of council's emergency plan. This document will be presented to cabinet for approval later in the year.

## **9. Review**

- 9.1. The emergency planning team review council wide plans on a regular basis.
- 9.2. Business continuity plans are reviewed by service managers annually.

## **10. Appendices**

- 10.1. **Appendix A** - Preparing the West Midlands for Emergencies.

## **Background Papers**

None.

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