

Emergency Planning and Business Continuity – The Council’s plans and response arrangements

Strategy & Resources Committee Thursday, 30 November 2023

Report of: Emergency Planning and Resilience Specialist

Purpose: For information

Publication status: Unrestricted

Wards affected: All

Executive summary:

- Following an audit review in September 2022 it was agreed that Emergency Planning and Business Continuity arrangements would be discussed annually (April 2023 – March 2024) to give assurance that the Council has a robust Emergency plan in place in accordance with the statutory requirements.
- The report provides an update on the Councils preparedness to respond to an emergency and outlines the progress made following the Covid 19 Pandemic. It also provides information around how Emergency Planning is delivered in partnership with the Surrey Local Resilience Forum and the programmes of work to enhance our resilience and response arrangements.

This report supports the Council’s priority of:

Building a better Council / Creating the homes, infrastructure and environment we need / Supporting economic recovery in Tandridge

Contact officer Chris Hobbs Emergency Planning and Resilience Specialist
chobbs@tandridge.gov.uk

Recommendation to Committee:

That the Committee note the Council’s arrangements for responding to and planning for an emergency.

Reason for recommendation:

Local authorities have statutory duties when responding to and planning for an emergency. An annual review will provide assurance that these plans are in place and tested.

Introduction and background

What is Emergency Planning and why do we have to do it?

1. The Civil Contingencies Act 2004 sets out a framework for civil protection. It focuses on local arrangements and establishes roles and responsibilities for local responders.
2. Under the Act there are 2 Category levels of responder. Cat One are Public Services such as Police and Local Authorities, and Cat 2 are services for the public but run by agencies or private companies such as utilities and transport. As the Council is a Category 1 responder it is subject to the full set of civil protection duties, these include:
 - Assess the risk of emergencies occurring and use this to inform contingency planning.
 - Put in place emergency plans. (A list of these can be found at Appendix 'A' to the report).
 - Put in place Business Continuity Management arrangements.
 - Put in place arrangements to make information available to the public about civil protection matters and maintain arrangements to warn, inform and advise the public in the event of an emergency.
 - Share information with other local responders to enhance co-ordination.
 - Co-operate with other local responders to enhance co-ordination and efficiency; and
 - Provide advice and assistance to businesses and voluntary organisations about business continuity management.

The Local Resilience Forum

3. The Council is a member of, and works collaboratively with, Surrey's Local Resilience Forum (LRF). The LRF is a multi-agency partnership made up of 55 representative agencies from local public services, including the Emergency Services, Local Authorities, NHS England, and the Environment Agency. They are all Category One Responders under the Civil Contingencies Act 2004. The LRF is also supported by Category Two Responders, such as Highways England, rail, and utility companies.
4. The Surrey LRF brings together all agencies with a significant role to play in preparing for, responding to and recovery from the effects of emergencies. It aims to plan and prepare for local incidents and large-scale emergencies.

5. Each year the Surrey LRF publishes the Surrey Community Risk Register (see paragraph 7 below). It also delivers a programme of training and exercising for partners who are involved in preparing for and responding to incidents. It publishes the Surrey Emergency Response Plan and Recovery Protocol.

Governance structure

The Structure of the Surrey LRF



- Chaired by the Chief Fire Officer
- Made up of Executive reps from all the Category 1 responders from across the LRF
- Cat 2 reps are also invited/have a right to attend
- HM Government are represented by DLUHC and the Military are represented through the Joint Regional Liaison Officer (JRLO)



- Head of Emergency Management
- Made up of senior emergency planning representatives from all the Cat 1 responders from across the LRF
- Category Two responders are also invited to attend
- Sub-group Chairs are invited to this meeting



- Established to carry out either thematic (e.g. Risk), Liaison (e.g. Local Authorities) or Task and Finish projects e.g. Mass Evacuation
- They deal with the operational detail and the production of plans, polices and other arrangements

Specific responsibilities for Tandridge

- 6.0 Whilst large scale incidents in the District are extremely rare, in fact, since the 2004 Act, the Council have not had reason to open a rest centre in response to an incident. However, the Act expects Local Authorities to be prepared to respond when required. Specifically, this means the Council have to:-
 - Have the arrangement in place to respond to major and other incidents.
 - Being prepared for a 24 hour, 7 days a week availability for a continuous 14-day event. This means having access to a group of senior officers who would be able to provide a Strategic level Response.
- 6.1 The Council would also be expected to have access to a group of Officers 24/7 for a Tactical Level Response, activating and staffing the District Emergency Centre (DEC). This would support the management of the incident (similar to the control room set up for Covid 19).

- 6.2 To mitigate both strategic and tactical requirements, Extended Management Team Members are on a weekly duty rota to be the strategic Level lead. All EMT have received in-house training and some have attended LRF specialised training. At least one EMT has attended the Multi-Agency Gold Incident Command training and it is hoped more will be trained next year.
- 6.3 The roles and responsibilities, timelines and actions around the response to an incident are documented in the corporate business continuity plan. A copy of this is attached at Appendix 'B' to this report.
- 6.4 To provide Incident Liaison Officers (ILO's) who would be expected to be available on a rota to relay information to the control room from the scene. They would be the face of the Council at the incident and liaise with tactical Police/Fire Controllers. The Council has a small group of ILO's who have been trained.
- 6.5 A centralised repository has been created and is known as the Vulnerable people reporting System (VPRS). This is a centralised repository of known vulnerable people within our District. The Council upload daily to a server at Surrey County Council. This data is then collated with other agencies' data to form one, central database. The vulnerable people identified in an incident area are given special treatment by ground teams if they need to evacuate their properties or just need special assistance if they decide to stay in their homes.
- 6.6 Operational Services may be called to assist if clean-up was required. Humanitarian assistance could be delivered by the Council's mental health first aiders, the Wellbeing Team and those Officers who have been trained in Rest Centre response.
- 6.7 Southern Building Control would advise on dangerous building and structures and have an out of hours rota.

Identified risks in Surrey.

- 7.0 In August 2023 the government published the National Risk Register with the aim of building a shared understanding and increased preparedness for potential risks facing the UK.
- 7.1 Every LRF must publish a community risk register, giving information about hazards that exist in the local area and describing the measures in place to reduce their impacts.
- 7.3 The Surrey Community Risk Register 2022 to 2023 can be downloaded. A link to this is included at the end of the report The LRF Risk Assessment working group identified nine key risks that may affect people in Surrey.
- 7.5 The table below lists the nine main risks and threats (Cyber & Terrorism) with basic headline information for the public. It also includes a brief outline of the collaborative multi-agency responses to these threats.

Risk title	Detail	Surrey LRF & TDC response
Adverse Weather	Severe weather including storms, heatwaves, low temperatures, and heavy snow can all cause significant disruptions to normal life	<p>Surrey's Local Resilience Forum partners work together to produce plans to manage the impact of severe weather events. Weather forecasts are also monitored regularly by emergency planning teams and notifications of severe weather are shared with staff and flood action groups.</p> <p>“Healthy Surrey” has seasonal advice about how best to look after your health throughout summer and winter.</p> <p>A Winter Preparedness and communications plan is reviewed by service areas in October every year.</p>
Animal Disease	Some animal diseases may be highly contagious and pass from animal to animal, causing high fatality rates, or have the possibility of infecting humans.	Surrey's Local Resilience Forum partners work with other agencies to plan for, monitor and respond to animal disease outbreaks in Surrey. Information and guidance is also available from APHA - Animal Plant Health Agency
Cyber Attack	Online fraud or attacks that target computer systems and networks unfortunately happen all too frequently. Several million cases of fraud and computer misuse nationwide are reported to the police every year. Both businesses and individuals can be targets of this form of attack.	<p>Surrey Police and Buckinghamshire and Surrey Trading Standards are working hard to educate and protect against cyber-crime. Scam and Cyber Aware webinars and training courses have proved popular and free call blockers issued and fitted for eligible residents block up to 95% of nuisance calls.</p> <p>Surrey's Local Resilience Forum partners actively monitor the risk of cyber-attacks impacting organisations, businesses and residents and have robust plans in place to combat the risk of attacks to ensure the continuation of vital services.</p> <p>Tandridge have a robust IT Policy around safe use. There are firewalls, two-factor authentication, cloud storage and a constantly evolving Disaster Recovery Plan should any incident occur.</p>

Risk title	Detail	Surrey LRF & TDC response
Drought	Long periods of abnormally low rainfall can reduce water supplies and lead to restrictions on water use for businesses and households.	Surrey's Local Resilience Forum partners work together to respond to drought in Surrey. This includes understanding where there are vulnerable people who may need more assistance in the event of a drought. We also work with the Met Office and the Environment Agency to understand the early development of drought conditions and what actions may be needed to minimise impacts.
Flooding	Large amounts of rainfall can lead to surface, groundwater and river flooding causing risk to life and damage to properties and the environment. 2013/14 saw large areas of the county underwater and each year too many homes are devastated by floodwater.	<p><u>Surrey's Local Resilience Forum</u> partners work together to produce a flood plan for the county that identifies which areas could be affected by flood water and who is most at risk. Tandridge also have a localised flood plan for the district. Prevention is key and work is ongoing across Surrey and Tandridge on projects to reduce the likelihood of flooding. Recently, working with the Environment Agency and the flood team at SCC, FREE house level protection has been delivered in Caterham on the Hill and is being delivered early next year in Smallfield to identified properties that have been flood affected.</p> <p>Both towns have flood action groups which encourage local resilience. The council deploy sandbags to the Smallfield group to self-serve when needed urgently. We will protect council owned housing stock and property as a priority. Places known to flood should make best their own provisions by buying their own sandbags.</p>
Interruptions to utilities	Disruptions to water, gas, electricity supplies and telecommunication services. Sudden loss is likely to be caused by adverse weather or damage to the infrastructure. Loss can last a few minutes or much longer and could mean inability to heat homes, run	<p>Surrey's Local Resilience Forum partners work consistently with suppliers to plan and prepare for interruptions to utility supplies. Supporting households is a vital element of this and work is ongoing with all partners to ensure that those who would be most vulnerable, such as those running vital medical equipment, would receive appropriate and timely help.</p> <p>In the event of a utility's failure, local authorities are responsible for working with the company who brings the supply to your door and health services to identify and provide support to vulnerable people who are directly affected. Pre-identified locations have been relayed to utilities where water distribution sites could be established.</p>

Risk title	Detail	Surrey LRF & TDC response
	essential medical equipment or have access to clean water.	
Pandemic	A virus or bacteria has the potential to spread quickly where there is a lack of immunity in the population. Pandemics are rare, but as we have seen recently with COVID-19, they can have devastating and wide-reaching impacts.	We learned a lot from the COVID-19 pandemic. Surrey's Local Resilience Forum partners are reviewing and updating their plans to improve local processes and will include learning from the Public Inquiry as it becomes available. The LRF work closely with UK Health Security Agency to make sure the latest learning and understanding is shared.
Terrorism	Tandridge district is a very low risk for terrorist activity but it is still important to be alert to anyone who might want to put people in danger. Public are encouraged to report anything they see or hear as something suspicious.	<p>Working with other organisations, the police protect vulnerable people from being exploited by extremists through a Home Office programme called Prevent.</p> <p>Surrey's Local Resilience Forum members and partners continually prepare and practice for a range of possible terrorist scenarios. The current terror threat level in the UK is substantial. If this escalates two more levels to critical, then "Move to Critical" plans assist us in raising levels of awareness and outline safe working practices. The Critical level is often only achieved for a short amount of time.</p>
Wildfire	Surrey has many open spaces. Unfortunately, these can be at risk of wildfires, particularly in the drier months - posing a potential danger to lives, homes, businesses and wildlife. All too often these fires begin as a	<p>Surrey Fire and Rescue Service crews work throughout the year to minimise the chance of wildfires. They regularly visit heathland sites for familiarisation, training exercises, and wildfire patrols. They also work with Forestry Land Managers and the Ministry of Defence to prepare for emergencies and with schools to warn young people of the dangers of starting fires.</p> <p>Surrey Prepared also share the messaging to encourage more considered behaviour. The annual 'Burger Off' campaign seeks to deter</p>

Risk title	Detail	Surrey LRF & TDC response
	result of human behaviour.	the use of disposable BBQs which can have had a similarly devastating effect.

Risks for the Council

- 8.0 The nine identified risks above have specific plans and mitigations. If those who are involved in the response are appropriately trained and follow a structured approach the plans can be quickly adapted to respond to a specific incident. It is vital that relationships with other agencies are maintained, and responses tested.
- 9.0 A record of all training relevant to civil protection is kept and regularly updated. EMT are regularly encouraged to attend exercises run by other agencies including a Major Long Term Power Outage exercise – that formed part of a larger National exercise. They have also all attended in-house business continuity exercises, as have members of the Key Officer Forum.
- 10.0 Communications during and after an event are vital. Our Communications Team is fundamental to our planning for and response to a major incident. In larger multi-agency responses to a major incident, a communication cell is established and the information flow to and from that cell is key in sharing vital updates with public, business, staff and councillors.
- 11.0 The Council is responsible for providing emergency accommodation in a major incident. As we no longer run our own community centres, the Westway Centre in Caterham could be used if the need arose. There is also a Memorandum of Understanding with Lingfield Park Racecourse to be able to access some space if a larger incident demanded more space. This agreement will be reviewed again in 2024.
- 12.0 Identifying small venues locally to towns and villages is key and work continues with Parish and Community groups to put local resilience plans in place.

Resource and funding

- 13.0 The Council has one FTE officer responsible for Emergency Planning and business continuity who works closely with other partner agencies and Surrey County Council to ensure collaborative working.
- 14.0 The 23/24 budget for Emergency Planning response was approx. £10,000, this includes budget for the Surrey Local Resilience Partnership contribution as well as for equipment and training.

Achievements and activity

15.0 The past 18 months has been quite a busy period with a significant number of larger scale emergency responses required by the Council as outlined below:-

- Covid 19- command structures were in place for COVID until April 2022 when the Tactical Co-ordinating Group and Strategic Co-ordinating Group finally stood down. Arrangements are in place should the need arise to re-establish a multi-agency response as part of normal emergency planning procedures.
- Operation London Bridge September 2022 – the Council’s plan for the death of the monarch, along with the LRF plan, had to be invoked on 8th September 2022 and was used to co-ordinate the response during the mourning period.
- Liaising with Surrey’s Local Resilience Forum and West Sussex County Council partners to deliver the Afghan refugee response and assisting with the delivery of Afghan Bridging Hotels. Effingham Park, Copthorne and in collaboration with the Housing team, Department of Levelling Up Housing & Communities, Home Office and other third parties to find homes across the UK for the Afghan families.
- Liaising with partners to deliver Ukrainian evacuees, both guests and hosts. Employing (through funding) and managing a Ukrainian Community Support Officer to communicate and deliver assistance to those with no or little spoken or written English skills.
- Business Continuity - “Exercise Inferno” firstly delivered to the EMT to test their understanding of the response requirements to an incident. This exercise was then modified and delivered to the Key Officers Forum.
- Severe weather response including flooding in Caterham and Smallfield. The Council was a key player in liaising with LRF partners and the parish and community groups. This involved working with Surrey County Council Flood team and the Environment Agency to deliver house level protection to flood affected properties.
- Ensure all plans including the TDC Emergency Plan, Multi Agency Flood Plans, Vulnerable People Plan, Staff Welfare in an Incident Plan, The Emergency Assistance Centre Plan and the Adverse Weather Communications Plan are regularly updated.
- Encourage Parish Councils to have their own Community Emergency Plans. The report Officer has presented at the AGM of the Surrey Association of Local Councils to raise awareness of the benefits of working together with Community groups and Parish Councils to enhance community resilience.
- The report Officer has worked as part of the Surrey County Council alert notification project. The Everbridge system is now used to notify all affected partners in an incident and to organise strategic response.

- The report Officer Chairs the Tandridge Safety Advisory Group (SAG) – imparting key advice for event organisers to encourage safe, legal and successful events across the District. SAG meetings are not held for every event. They are considered when the event is for more than 1000 people, when a partner agency has raised concerns, or if it is potentially a high-risk event.

16.0 Internal Audit findings

Southern Internal Audit Partnership carried out an internal audit in September 2022. Limited assurance was given, and several actions were identified to address the concerns. These included: -

- Providing evidence of reporting to Members and EMT on the Emergency Planning & BCP arrangements.
- The leavers process at the Council did not include a checkout process that included identifying any officers with EP /BC responsibilities.
- Although there was evidence that training had taken place, the training log was not up to date.
- A Business Continuity exercise had not taken place in the last year.

All the above actions have now been completed.

In addition, the report highlighted that some service area plans were out of date and did not reflect the current structure. All Business Continuity plans are now being reviewed for each service area and will be completed in 2024.

Emergency Planning & Business Continuity future plans

- 17.0 A key focus for the next few months will be for EMT Members to review their Business Continuity plans now that the Future Tandridge Programme is embedded, and new teams have been formed, The Emergency Planning & Resilience Specialist has established a Key Officer working group and timeline for delivering a complete refresh of Business Impact Analysis for every team. This will then form part of each service level Business Continuity Plan and feed in to the Corporate Business Continuity Plan. This will be delivered by end of March 2024.
- 18.0 Plans are being considered to deliver a rest centre exercise incorporating a multi-agency approach and to invite the wider community (including local community groups such as Smallfield Flood Action group, Parish Councils, and staff and volunteers at the Westway and Centenary Hall) to be involved. This will ensure that the Council has more robust arrangements to accommodate displaced people in an incident. This will be in conjunction with developing local community emergency plans.
- 19.0 The Covid inquiry is likely to have some significant recommendations for emergency planning and preparedness arising when further reports are published and this may well include further training of Officers.

Key implications

Comments of the Chief Finance Officer

The costs noted in the report will be contained within the set budgets.

Comments of the Head of Legal Services

As the organisation faces resourcing challenges with a reducing workforce the engagement from services and EMT in planning for emergencies and business continuity becomes more and more limited as it is not seen as an immediate risk or challenge compared to everyday activity. This could result in the Council not being able to effectively respond to an emergency affecting the District or not being able to deliver critical services in the event of disruption. Also, failure to have in place effective emergency planning or business continuity arrangements may result in the Council not meeting its statutory requirements under the Civil Contingencies Act 2004.

Equality

There are no direct equality implications from this report. However, the service focuses on delivering a response that may affect the more vulnerable in our District than others. The aim of emergency planning and through the LRF partnership is to offer assistance and care where needed. This focus on our vulnerable persons means a positive outcome for those who would normally struggle without our assistance. This is a positive impact on those very young, very old and anyone who may have mental or physical challenges.

Climate change

There are no significant environmental / sustainability implications associated with this report. However, longer term working with partners and Planning may mean increased mitigation through building and planting resilience structures to mitigate flooding.

Appendices

Appendix 'A' – List of Emergency Plans

Appendix 'B' – Corporate business continuity plan

Background papers

LGA Guidance for Councillors –

<https://www.local.gov.uk/publications/councillors-guide-civil-emergencies>

GOV.UK Guidance on Emergency Preparedness -

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/emergency-preparedness>

SOLACE - Local Authorities' preparedness for civil emergencies: a good practice guide for Chief Executives.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/local-authorities-preparedness-for-civil-emergencies#Local%20authorities%E2%80%99%20preparedness%20for%20civil%20emergencies:%20a%20good%20practice%20guide%20for%20chief%20executives>

Surrey Community Risk register

https://www.surreycc.gov.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0003/317793/SLRF-Community-Risk-Register-2022-2023.pdf

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