



Leeds
CITY COUNCIL

scrutiny



**Strategy and
Resources**

Scrutiny Statement Resilience and Emergency Planning



leeds.gov.uk/scrutiny



@ScrutinyLeeds



Scrutiny Board (Strategy and Resources) Resilience and Emergency Planning.

Introduction

1. The Council's city-wide resilience and emergency planning functions fall within the remit of the Council's Strategy and Resources Scrutiny Board. As such, it has been common practice for this particular Scrutiny Board to receive and consider the Council's Annual Corporate Risk Assessment Report. However, this year, we also agreed to undertake further scrutiny of current resilience and emergency planning arrangements in Leeds, particularly in light of good practice and learning stemming from local incidents and emergencies, but also in the context of other national major incidents and events.
2. We agreed to undertake this short review via a working group meeting. This took place on 28th February 2019, with an invitation extended to all Board Members. The Council's Chief Officer for Strategy and Improvement and the Principal Officer within the Resilience and Emergencies Team took the lead in providing key background information and also attended the working group meeting, along with the Council's Deputy Leader and Executive Member for Resources and Sustainability, to address Members' questions.

Evidence and Information Considered

3. Particular attention was given to how the Council is meeting the duties of the Civil Contingencies Act 2004 (CCA 2004). The Act contains a range of chapters covering the main civil protection duties, which are summarised below:

- *Emergency preparedness* - acknowledging the role of Local Authorities as defined Category 1 responders – at the core of the response to most emergencies.
- *Co-operation* – reflecting the obligation between responders and organisations engaged in response in the same local resilience area.
- *Information sharing* – reflecting the duty to share information with other responders and communicate with the public.
- *Risk assessment* – reflecting the duty placed upon Category 1 responders to undertake a risk assessment as the first step in emergency and business continuity planning and to maintain those plans to ensure functions can continue to be delivered.
- *Emergency planning*- with the requirement for a Category 1 responder to maintain plans for preventing emergencies, controlling or mitigating the effect of an emergency and taking appropriate action in the event of an emergency.
- *Advice and assistance* – reflecting the duty to provide advice and assistance to commercial and voluntary organisations.



Scrutiny Board (Strategy and Resources) Resilience and Emergency Planning.

Deliberations and Conclusions

Building resilience in collaboration with partners.

4. Within the Civil Contingencies Act 2004, Local Authorities are defined as Category 1 responders in terms of being at the core of the response to most emergencies. Other Category 1 responders include Police, Fire & Rescue, NHS, Health Protection Agency, Ambulance Service, Environment Agency, Port Health Authorities, and the Maritime & Coastguard Agency. Category 2 responders are cooperating responders who are less likely to be involved in the heart of multi-agency planning work, but will be heavily involved in preparing for incidents affecting their sectors. These can include; electricity, gas and water distributors, telephony providers, railway and airport operators, ports, highways agency etc.
5. Linked to the above, the Act also references Local Resilience Forums, which is a process for bringing together all the Category 1 and 2 responders within a local police area for the purpose of facilitating co-operation in fulfilment of their duties under the Act.
6. Regionally, we acknowledge that such co-operation is enabled through the West Yorkshire Resilience Forum (WYRF). The WYRF comprises representatives from the emergency services, the 5 West Yorkshire local authorities and other (Category 1 & 2) responders and voluntary and faith organisations. The WYRF is the process by which the organisations, on which the duties of the Civil Contingencies Act 2004 fall, co-operate with each other in peacetime (planning and exercising) and during response and recovery phases to an emergency. We understand that the WYRF has developed and continues to maintain robust plans and arrangements for an effective multi-agency response to emergencies, underpinned by the sharing of information, resources and regular training and exercising.
7. Linked to this, we note that 'Resilience Direct' is the government preferred system for sharing information between Category 1 & 2 responders to enable effective sharing of information during incidents such as situation reporting and mapping. We also recognise that being able to access the same information will provide a common picture/shared situational awareness – one version of the facts for all responding organisations. We were therefore pleased to learn that the Council's Resilience and Emergencies Team have been instrumental in supporting the roll-out of Resilience Direct through on-going review and testing of the product in development and providing briefing and training sessions.
8. Whilst the Council plays a lead role in shaping and driving plans of the WYRF, at a more local level we also welcome the key role of the Council in hosting Leeds Resilience Group Meetings. These involve local Category 1 and 2 responders along with other partner organisations that fall outside of the WYRF catchment, such as representatives from the universities, transport and utilities companies. Such meetings provide an opportunity for partners to receive information relating to developments, events and incidents



Scrutiny Board (Strategy and Resources) Resilience and Emergency Planning.

in the Leeds area, to support learning, share each other's experiences and support campaigns and exercises.

Sharing information and advice to identify and manage risks.

9. The National Risk Assessment (NRA) provides an evidence base of all risks which the UK faces. The NRA is revised and republished every three years and used by the West Yorkshire Resilience Forum to identify the risks specific to West Yorkshire. The risks identified are included in the West Yorkshire Community Risk Register, which is publicly accessible from the West Yorkshire Police Website. We also noted that the key risks facing West Yorkshire are being developed into an interactive e-Book from which the public can access further information and advice on risk mitigation by simply clicking on a link which can be embedded in partner websites and electronic documentation (bit.ly/wyrisks2019).

Engaging effectively with the public.

10. As well as engaging with key partners, we also recognise the importance of ensuring that the public are being engaged effectively in this agenda too, particularly in terms of identifying and managing potential risks. Linked to this, particular reference was made to the success of the ongoing *Project Servator* operation by West Yorkshire Police which aims to disrupt a range of criminal activity, including terrorism, while providing a reassuring presence for the public. To achieve this, the police are working closely with partners, businesses and the public to encourage the reporting of suspicious behaviour as

such local intelligence can then be used towards making West Yorkshire a difficult place for criminals and terrorists to operate.

11. Whilst already acknowledging that the public have access to information via the West Yorkshire Community Risk Register, we understand that the Resilience and Emergencies Team also have public facing pages on the Council's website (LEEDS.GOV.UK) including a link to the 'Emergency Planning Information Brochure' which provides information guidance and checklists including 'home emergency kit', 'preparing your household' and 'useful contacts'.
12. As well as being able to access such information online, we identified a need to explore other additional ways of disseminating key information more widely to residents. Linked to this, we recognise potential opportunities to maximise the use of existing systems and processes within the Council, such as the Council Tax notification process, in terms of capturing the attention of all households in Leeds.

Recommendation 1

That the Director of Resources and Housing takes the lead in exploring additional ways of proactively disseminating key information and guidance, such as the 'home emergency kit', 'preparing your household' and 'useful contacts' more widely to local residents. Linked to this, particular consideration should be given towards potentially maximising existing systems and processes within the Council, such as the Council Tax notification process.



Scrutiny Board (Strategy and Resources) Resilience and Emergency Planning.

13. In terms of communicating messages linked to incidents and events, we acknowledge the use of the current Leeds Alert 'warning and informing' system. This is a joint initiative between West Yorkshire Police and the Council and is used for issuing warnings and information relating to incidents and events in the Leeds area. Though primarily focussed on businesses, Leeds Alert also has a public social media presence via the Leeds Alert Twitter account, which currently has in the region of 8000 followers.
14. We also understand that general public awareness, warning and information sharing in the event of an emergency is led by the Council's Press and Marketing/Communications Team using the Emergency Communications Plan and various methods including the Corporate Facebook/Twitter accounts.
15. In welcoming the use of various social media platforms to communicate widely with businesses and the public in 'real time', we acknowledge that some of the terminology that is often used in warning messages, such as "yellow alert", is devised and owned by relevant national agencies over which the Council has no control i.e. Environment Agency, Met Office etc.
16. We would expect that such agencies will have worked, through consultation, to make sure that its messages are being easily understood and are presented in the best way/format for the intended audience. We therefore appreciate the reluctance of the Council to deviate or try to re-word their warning messages and instead will act as a key conduit to share such messages as widely as possible using its own social media platforms.
17. We acknowledge that such warning messages will often also contain additional advice on how best to act upon the information that has been provided. We therefore accept that a responsibility is also placed upon the receiver to ensure that they do fully understand the implications of the information being shared and act in accordance with the advice provided.
- Raising awareness and sharing information with Councillors.
18. We recognise that Councillors also play a key leadership role that includes political leadership (ensuring that the Council is meeting its obligations under the Civil Contingencies Act 2004), civic leadership (providing a focal point for the local area during an emergency) and, community leadership (helping to increase community resilience and supporting communities' emergency responses including through the recovery period).
19. In November 2018, the Local Government Association also acknowledged the important role of Councillors and published 'A councillor's guide to civil emergencies' (<https://www.local.gov.uk/councillors-guide-civil-emergencies>), which sets out the role of Councillors in terms of preparedness and resilience, response, and recovery.
20. Linked to this, we support the need to generate greater awareness and understanding of the existing resilience and emergency planning arrangements amongst local Councillors in order to



Scrutiny Board (Strategy and Resources) Resilience and Emergency Planning.

raise the profile of this agenda and equip them with the necessary knowledge needed to undertake their role effectively.

21. Whilst we welcomed proposals for the Council's Resilience and Emergencies Team to hold a dedicated Councillor briefing/seminar in this regard, we would also advocate proactive working with Councillors via the Community Committee network.

Recommendation 2

That the Director of Resources and Housing works closely with the Director of Communities and Environment in utilising the Community Committee network to engage proactively with all Councillors in generating greater awareness and understanding of the existing local resilience and emergency planning arrangements and the implications and effectiveness of their own role in this regard.

22. As emergencies do unfold, the accuracy and expediency of information being shared with Councillors is also a fundamental factor in enabling them to undertake their role effectively.
23. In terms of the accuracy of information, we appreciate that initial information may be limited as further investigations are made to establish the full facts and implications of an incident. In view of this, we recognise the need for information to be communicated in 'real time' to Councillors. In this respect, we appreciate that the Resilience and Emergencies Team will evaluate the merits of existing communication

mechanisms and act accordingly to ensure that all Councillors receive accurate and timely information surrounding an emergency incident. Linked to this, we understand that the team will make use of the Leeds Alert text facility to convey very urgent messages and use email to send information that includes reports and maps, as such information cannot be conveyed via text. This particular method of communication also offers a more secure means of sharing information.

24. As reflected in our earlier comments, we accept that there is also a responsibility placed upon Councillors to ensure that they fully understand the implications of the information being shared with them and to act in accordance with the advice and training that they have received.

Embracing the ongoing development of plans and capabilities

25. As a Council, it is evident that we have a suite of specific plans covering a range of emergencies including: City Centre Evacuation, Flooding, Fuel Crisis, Outbreak Plan, Reception Centres, Recovery Plan, Severe Weather and Mass Fatalities. However, we were particularly keen to understand how learning from incidents and emergencies, both local and national, have been used to inform the ongoing development of such plans and capabilities.
26. Particular references were made to developments stemming from Grenfell; Storm Eva and other formal reviews and reports, such as the Kerslake Report in relation to the Manchester Arena attack, where general learning points had been



Scrutiny Board (Strategy and Resources) Resilience and Emergency Planning.

clearly identified for both Category 1 and 2 responders.

regularly reviewed, revised and exercised.

27. In relation to Grenfell, the key learning for local authorities was the need to quickly have a presence visible at an incident. For the Council, this is addressed by use of the Emergency Coordination Vehicle (ECV) which can be quickly deployed to the scene and forms a focal point for responding council services, the public and other emergency services.
28. Developments identified from Storm Eva included; (1) a complete revision of the Emergency Handbook into the Emergency Management Plan which is now inclusive of a multi-agency response; (2) the development of a Situation Report which can be emailed to a predetermined circulation list (including all Councillors) which provides an overview of an incident describing the key elements of the Council's response; (3) the Resilience and Emergencies Team working with voluntary organisations to undertake research and development of guidance relating to spontaneous volunteers. This has resulted in the development of a Spontaneous Volunteers Toolkit jointly owned with the voluntary sector.
29. We were also pleased to note that the Council has progressed and implemented the 3 key actions identified from the Kerslake Report, which included; (1) implementation of GovRoam capability (2) installation of Videoconferencing (3) use of Resilience Direct.
30. Moving forward, we recognise the importance of ensuring that all plans are

Business Continuity Management

31. We are pleased to acknowledge that business continuity is well embedded within the Council, with 79 services identified as being key or critical, each having a Business Continuity Plan implemented. As a minimum, we understand that each Business Continuity Plan is subjected to an annual review, though plans are revised each time a change to the service is implemented or findings from incidents and exercises inform further development. In addition to this, an Annual Business Continuity Report has been produced since 2003 and is formally considered by the Council's Corporate Governance and Audit Committee.
32. We understand that Emergency and Business Continuity planning within each of the Council's directorates is overseen by each Directorate Resilience Group (DRG). Chaired by a Chief Officer, the DRG's have a key role in providing assurance to the Director that the resilience arrangements and response capabilities of the directorate are implemented, maintained and developed in line with changing risks.
33. Linked to the above, we also welcome the role of the Resilience and Emergencies Team in giving support to the Council's critical services and functions with devising and delivery of exercises to test Business Continuity Plans. These are desk-top based, and provide the opportunity to test and challenge managers and teams (in a safe environment) with their



Scrutiny Board (Strategy and Resources) Resilience and Emergency Planning.

arrangements and decision making during a range of incident scenarios.

34. At the time of our review, we particularly acknowledged that the potential impact of a no-deal EU-Exit had triggered an additional review of all Business Continuity Plans. We also noted that particular progress had already been made in planning for a potential no-deal EU-Exit (BREXIT) through the facilitation of a series of risk workshops (Infrastructure & Supplies; Economic Development; and Community Impact) that would inform the development of a Strategic City Response Plan. We also noted that a regional exercise had been held in January 2019, bringing together resilience forum representatives from North, South and West Yorkshire plus the Humber to play through a series of scenarios over three phases; prior to, during and post a no-deal exit. Those attending shared their own concerns as well as progress with planning and preparation.

Council Building Security

35. Terrorist attacks can result in a rise to the National Threat Level and arrangements have been developed for the Council to be able to quickly respond to a rise from 'severe' to 'critical' in the event of a terrorist attack occurring. Such developments include a 'LCC Building Security Policy' which sets out additional security arrangements at council buildings in the event of a rise to critical including measures such as bag searches and photo ID required for visitors.
36. However, as part of our review, we discussed more generally the intelligence gathering and risk

assessment process that is undertaken to help inform the security policy for each Council owned property, particularly those where the public may attend. Linked to this, we accept that accessibility for the public needs to be a key consideration as part of this process, whilst maintaining a proportionate response to any perceived threat. A security presence can act as a deterrent and provide reassurance to members of the public, but over-provision could also be perceived as a threat and a barrier to the public engaging with the Council.

37. Whilst acknowledging that each Council owned building would require a bespoke evacuation approach in the event of an emergency, we did discuss the potential merits of adopting a universal emergency warning system within all Council owned buildings. Emergency alarms, such as a fire alarm or an alarm indicating a lock-down of a building, might be instantly recognised by employees based at such building (through regular training and testing regimes), but not to staff working away from their usual place of work or other users of the building including visitors and members of the public. A universal emergency warning system would enable all staff, regardless of their usual place of work, and other users of Council owned buildings to be able to instantly recognise and respond accordingly to a particular emergency alert. We therefore suggest that further work is undertaken to explore the feasibility of this approach.



Scrutiny Board (Strategy and Resources) Resilience and Emergency Planning.

Recommendation 3

That the Director of Resources and Housing leads on exploring the feasibility of adopting a universal emergency warning system within all Council owned buildings aimed at enabling all staff, regardless of their usual place of work, and other users of Council owned buildings to be able to instantly recognise and respond accordingly to a particular emergency alert.

that the views of Scrutiny are also being embraced in this respect too.

Resilience is everyone's business.

38. We are fully supportive of the need to actively promote the message that 'resilience is everyone's business' as the Council cannot work in isolation to meet the high expectations placed on it by the public and government to be able to effectively respond to and recover from a major emergency in the Leeds and West Yorkshire area.
39. In undertaking this short review, we have been assured that there are appropriate resilience and emergency planning processes in place, underpinned by positive collaborative working.
40. In addition to this, we also take comfort in the knowledge that the Council will never be complacent with regard to this agenda. This has been evidenced by the robust risk awareness and horizon scanning arrangements that are also in place to identify and manage new risks, as well as being committed to evolve existing plans and processes based on learning from past experiences; exercising/testing outcomes; and learning from incidents both locally and nationally. Linked to this, we welcome

**Scrutiny Board (Strategy and Resources)
Resilience and Emergency Planning
April 2019**