

Thursday, 22 February 2024

## Report of the Portfolio Holder for Environmental Health and Community Partnerships

### Emergency & Business Continuity Planning and Civil Contingencies Unit (CCU)

#### Exempt Information

Open

#### 1.0. Purpose

- 1.1 To set the current progress on the Councils preparedness' for Emergency and Business continuity planning; as required by Civil Contingencies legislation, regulations, and directions.

#### 2.0. Recommendations

Cabinet are recommended to: -

- 2.1. Acknowledge and Support the Emergency Planning & Business Continuity Improvement Plan – RAG rated and shown at Annex One
- 2.2. Endorse the Local Government Association's 2018 Guidance document titled 'A Councillor's Guide to civil emergencies' shown at Annex Two when dealing with major incidents and emergencies.
- 2.3. Delegate authority to the Portfolio Holder Environmental Health & Community Partnerships, in conjunction with Assistant Director Neighbourhoods, the development of member FAQs and communications guidance on handling emergency planning situations - supporting member seminar(s) and onward training material via the Councils memberzone.

#### 3.0. Executive Summary

- 3.1. The Civil Contingencies Act 2004 (CCA) sets out the statutory requirements placed on those agencies that are required to respond to a civil contingency emergency (as defined in the Act). The Council is part of the Staffordshire Resilience Partnership, hosted by the Civil Contingencies Unit and has dedicated support from the CCU on the design, implementation and development of all associated emergency & business continuity planning.

As a category 1 responders, Local Authorities, along with the Emergency Services and other government agencies, have a legal requirement to prepare for, and respond to these emergencies and aid in the recovery following the incident. For Local Authorities many of these responsibilities relate to the care and welfare of the public affected by the incident, both during and following an incident. This is known as Emergency Planning and Resilience and Tamworth Borough Council is required to produce plans to support both local incidents within the Borough's boundaries, and to understand and fulfil their roles within a larger, multi-agency response. The types of

plans required are determined using the Staffordshire Community Risk Register, and determines those types of incidents which, based on the likelihood and impact of occurrence, would have the greatest effect on the public if they occurred.

- 3.2. Another requirement of the CCA is that local authorities need to analyse the risks to their normal level of services to the public, and produce plans to reduce the impact of a disruption to these services by first mitigating any risks where possible, and then to have in place plans to return the service level to business as usual (BAU) with minimal disruption. This is known as Business Continuity (BC) Planning and each service within Tamworth Borough Council produces a BC plan to be used during disruption to individual services and is used to produce a wider Tamworth Borough Council BC plan to be used if an incident affects the several of the Council Service areas.
- 3.3. Emergency Planning and BC planning are part of a continual process of review and updating, therefore Tamworth Borough Council is required to establish a work programme which sets out this review cycle. Factors which can affect the review cycle include changes to the Community Risk Register, changes to the UK threat levels, and any lessons learnt or best practice following the response to an incident or exercise. Training staff on the roles and responsibilities of the Local authority during a response and exercising the plans to ensure they are fit for purpose is a further requirement of the CCA.

*The detailed work plan can be found in Annex A. A summary of the work recently completed and currently in progress can be found in section 8 Matters for consideration.*

- 3.4 The Local Government Association has produced a document for Councillors setting out guidance relating to their roles throughout the emergency planning cycle, and during a Civil Contingency emergency. The document, which can be found in full in annex 2, sets out the vital roles Councillors can play, in providing civic, community and political leadership. Although councillors are not physically involved in the operational response, they can play an important leadership role including:
- **Political leadership** – ensuring the council meets its obligations under the CCA by ensuring councils are equipped and resourced to plan for, respond to and recover from emergencies. Councillors will be involved in:
    - decisions regarding funding and strategic policies.
    - supporting council officers during a response, both in terms of enabling officers to defend key decisions therefore helping to minimise reputational risk to the authority, but also in supporting their welfare during potentially prolonged periods in emotionally difficult circumstances.
    - Making representation to Government during and emergency.
  - **Civic leadership** – providing a focal point for the local area during an emergency offering information, support, reassurance and comfort, standing alongside representatives from different local communities and organisations.
  - **Community leadership** – helping to increase community resilience, supporting communities through responses and the recovery process. Through their understanding of their local communities, local vulnerabilities, community networks, assets and business, councillors can help develop resilience within the community and can use this information to help support the response phase.
- 3.5 Media and communications are a critical enabler of the council's leadership roles in preparing for, responding to and recovering from an emergency. Recent high-profile incidents, such as the Grenfell Tower fire and the Manchester Arena attack, have highlighted how the use of camera phones and social media can facilitate the sharing of information and news during an emergency, however its use can also create challenges for councils and councillors. Therefore, it is imperative that Councillor's should work closely with their communications teams to:
- ensure familiarity with the internal and external communications process in an emergency,

- Agree and use key messages consistently across all communications (e.g. social media, council website, traditional print, public meetings)
- 3.6 Following a unified communication strategy is vital to provide the public with clear, concise and accurate information, which can also be used signpost where to go for further information, help and updates. In an emergency, senior council members are likely to be the public face of the council's response, so it is important to work with the media and communications team to avoid issuing contradictory or unconfirmed information to the media and public.
- 3.7 Councillors also have important roles in the recovery phase, including maintaining visible leadership in local communities and making the case for financial assistance if the emergency has created significant costs. Other roles include:
- ensuring that council services return to normal with minimum disruption,
  - ensuring the vulnerable members of the community receive the short-, medium- and long-term support once the incident is no longer front-page news,
  - ensuring agencies and resources are being effectively utilised, including ensuring local voluntary sector and community organisations are involved in the recovery.
  - Keeping local communities up to date with the recovery process
  - Ensuring lessons learnt are compiled, shared and acted upon including the update of plans and training.
- 3.8. **Should Cabinet embrace the member protocol then CCU in conjunction with the Councils communications team, will support member seminar briefings as well as post FAQs and useful information to the member info zone. The detail of this will be agreed with the Portfolio Holder Environmental Health and Community Partnerships.**

#### 4.0. Resource Implications

- 4.1. The current staffing of the Emergency Planning and Business Continuity role within Tamworth Borough Council is fulfilled with an equivalent 0.8 x FTE. The role is staffed via an embedded officer from the Staffordshire Civil Contingencies Unit (CCU).

#### 5.0. Legal/Risk Implications Background

- 5.1. The risks of non-compliance with the Civil Contingencies Act (2004) are universally accepted. Management of the associated Emergency and Business Continuity Plans is alive to these risks, and they are summarised below.

5.2.

Risk	Mitigation
Ability to not be able to respond to an incident – Generic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Plans are reviewed and updated as part of an ongoing work programme cycle.</li> <li>• Updated plans are exercised to ensure they are fit for purpose and any lessons identified/best practice is included in the plan review.</li> <li>• Staff are trained on the roles and responsibilities required to activate plans</li> </ul>
Ability to not be able to respond to an incident – multi-agency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Multi-agency plans available to TBC responders in event of this type of response.</li> <li>• Participation in multi-agency exercises to ensure response is affected for large, complex incidents.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Training TBC responders on principles and procedures used by other Category 1 responders to ensure effective communication, co-ordination, joint working.</li> </ul>
Change in risks	<p>Plans updated as part of a cycle of work however can be updated earlier if required. Factors which may lead to the requirement to update a plan before the scheduled review include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Changes to the UK threat level</li> <li>• Update to legislation</li> <li>• Changes to the National Security Risk Assessment (and Local Community Risk Register)</li> <li>• Updates to TBC policy/procedures/strategy</li> <li>• Lessons learnt/ best practice following an exercise or real-world incident</li> </ul>
Welfare and safety of public required in a medium/long term incident	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Plans include medium term shelter (reception centre) and longer term (rest Centre) provision.</li> <li>• Training of staff to support these centres is to be available to more TBC staff to enable a rota system of shifts should a centre be required for an extended period of time.</li> <li>• Mutual aid can be requested from neighbouring authorities – all training is given through the LRF therefore staff trained to same standard</li> </ul>

## 6.0. Equalities Implications

6.1. When developing and updating plans, consideration is paid to ensure that equality implications are mitigated as far as possible. For local authorities, whose biggest responsibility in a response is the welfare and safety of the public, this involves the recognition of the different requirements those involved in the incident following the identification of the different types of vulnerabilities within the affected groups. These vulnerabilities include:

- Physical vulnerabilities (disability, mobility, physical health and medical conditions)
- Mental health
- Socio and economic levels
- Access to health care

6.2. The plans should also consider those in the affected local community (age, religion, nationality etc) and look to ensure that plans contain where possible procedures to support all individuals.

## 7.0. Environment and Sustainability Implications (including climate change)

7.1. The local authority is responsible for some aspects of environmental health therefore these will be included as a result of the legislative requirements in both local and multi-agency response and recovery plans. Some aspects include:

- Dealing with any wastewater run off following fires (in collaboration with the Fire Service)
- Contamination of the ground following an incident

7.2 The effects of climate change are being felt with the increase in winter storms and summer heatwaves. Tamworth Borough Council have produced emergency plans to respond to the increase in these incidents, with a Severe weather Plan (snow and heatwave) and a tactical flood plan which can be used in response to a local incident but also to support any multi-agency response.

## **8.0. Matters for Consideration**

- 8.1. During this financial year several of TBC emergency plans have been reviewed and updated, including:
- The Incident Response Guide – a multi-purpose document which can be used to support response to a local or multi-agency incident,
  - The Evacuation and Shelter Plan – a document which sets out how to ensure the care and welfare of the public caught up in an incident, including establishment of Reception and Rest Centres,
  - The Local Transport Plan,
  - The Town Centre Evacuation Plan.
- 8.2 Several emergency plans are currently in draft including:
- High Rise incident response plan – A document bringing together information relating to the actions required following an incident in one of Tamworth's high-rise buildings,
  - Emergency communications plan – A plan setting out how internal and external communications with other services, contractors, agencies and the public are established and maintained during an incident,
  - Operation Bridge – An update to the plan activated upon the death of a senior member of the Royal family or significant public figure.
- 8.3 Another substantial piece of work currently in progress is the review and update of Tamworth Borough Council's Business Continuity (BC) plans. This involves the analysis of the impacts of different risks to individual services and determining ways to mitigate these risks, and setting out the steps within a BC plan which will facilitate a return to BAU service levels with the minimum amount of disruption.
- 8.4 Other plans due for review within the current two-year work plan (attached in Annex A) include those types of incidents which are highlighted in the Staffordshire Risk register as having the possibility of being high impact should they occur. These include:
- The Tactical Flooding Plan
  - Severe weather plan - (including snow and heatwave)
  - Pandemic illness plan
  - Cyber plan
- 8.5 Tamworth Borough Council is involved in several pieces of work within the Local Resilience Forum, a multi-agency group of partners who form a co-ordinated response to large incidents. TBC has been involved in:
- Large scale, multi-agency exercises, participating in both Strategic and Tactical decision making.
  - Multi-agency Flooding Assessment meetings to prepare for and respond to flooding following the recent Storms.
- Attending LRF planning meetings to provide Local authority representation during multi-agency plan reviews and providing feedback from these meetings back to the Council.

### **Report Author**

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