

DERBYSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

IMPROVEMENT AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – PLACES

29 Nov 2017

REPORT OF THE CHAIR OF THE IMPROVEMENT AND SCRUTINY

COMMITTEE – PLACES

REVIEW OF EMERGENCY PLANNING – PROGRESS REPORT

1) The Purpose of the Report

To inform the Committee of the progress made by the working group conducting the review of emergency planning.

2) Information and Analysis

This is the first progress report regarding the review of emergency planning. The Members of the working group are Cllrs Bull, Grooby, Athwal and Atkins.

The purpose of the review is to gain assurance that in the event of an emergency in Derbyshire, the response would be rapid, coordinated and effective. In particular the review is focusing on the following areas:

- Local Resilience Forum Work Programme,
- How the duties under the Civil Contingencies Act are being met,
- Derbyshire's capability and capacity of response.

To date the working group has met with Derbyshire County Council's Emergency Planning Division's Manager, a Derbyshire Emergency Volunteer and representatives from Derbyshire Constabulary and Derbyshire Fire and Rescue.

During the discussion with the Emergency Planning Manager the following points were made:

- Derbyshire County Council's Emergency Planning Division works with the emergency services, city/district/borough councils, health services and other agencies with the aim of ensuring a swift and effective response in the event of an emergency or major incident.

- Emergencies might include floods, chemical leaks and gas explosions through to comparatively minor incidents.
- The aim is to make arrangements to protect people and the environment in Derbyshire and reduce the impact of an emergency on them.
- There are detailed emergency plans in place to cope with the risks that are most likely to affect Derbyshire. These plans are designed to give guidance to local authorities, emergency services and other agencies so they can act quickly to provide support to those involved in a major incident in Derbyshire.
- The Community Risk Register – identifies the risks relevant to Derbyshire (based on risks on the national risk register). Priorities are based on local circumstances. Joint training and exercises are conducted throughout the year to test and enhance the emergency plans.
- The Derbyshire Local Resilience Forum (LRF) is responsible for the overall direction and policies of emergency planning, to ensure the duties under the Civil Contingencies Act are met.
- There are Service Level Agreements between Derbyshire County Council and all the Derbyshire local authorities. This establishes a collaborative way of working which is an effective way of utilising the resources available in the county. In effect this means there is a team of 10 (full time equivalent) emergency planning officers providing a “one stop shop”. At any one time there is a minimum of two emergency planning officers available to respond to an emergency within the county.
- Generic emergency and business continuity plans produced by the County Council and all the districts follow the same format. Having a standardised format makes it easier for partners (such as the blue light services) that work across district boundaries. Furthermore through a system known as “ResilienceDirect” the relevant personnel can access these plans online.
- The Emergency Planning Division works with partner agencies to produce local resilience forum multi-agency plans with relevant partners contributing to their development. The emergency services work alongside the emergency planning Division to assist in the development of plans.
- Derbyshire Emergency Volunteers have been established and provide a valuable resource. Approximately 95 volunteers are fully

trained to assist setting up and staffing rest centres and provide assistance during severe weather.

- The County Council also established a Crisis Support Team. This is made up of a core of 50+ people with specialist skills able to provide psychological support to victims, for example they may be social care professionals, police officers, counsellors or from the voluntary sector. Derbyshire believe this is a best practice model and is exploring how many other areas of the UK have adopted this approach.
- One of the keys to success is building community resilience. The Emergency Planning Division is preparing guidance on coordinating and managing community help. The aim is to use existing community infrastructure during major incidents to coordinate donations of clothing, toys, funds etc. The intention is to build up a support network in advance.
- When establishing rest centres the norm is that a third of those affected by the incident will need overnight accommodation (generally the other two thirds find their own accommodation with family and friends), although this is dependent on the demographics of the area affected. Rest centres are an emergency measure to cover the first 48 hours.

The Derbyshire Emergency Volunteer who met with the working group was an experienced team leader who provided an informative and positive account of the systems in place from a volunteer's perspective. The key points raised were as follows:

- As a consequence of the training and resources available, volunteers feel well prepared to carry out their role. Topics covered by the initial training session include national and local emergency planning arrangements, major risks, basic first aid, safeguarding and the role and responsibilities of a volunteer.
- Volunteers receive refresher training every two years and attend mock training exercises with LRF partners. After each incident a debriefing exercise is undertaken and support is available for volunteers if they would like to access it.
- The volunteer team leader is provided with a "grab bag" that contains resources. Included in the bag is everything that is required to set up a rest centre. For example, signs, information

sheets, numbered wrist bands, registration forms. In addition, if there is a call-out, one volunteer is allocated the task of purchasing a small amount of food so that refreshments can be provided. If the incident occurs out of hours pre-existing arrangements with supermarkets can be activated in order to obtain fresh food or meals.

- Non-perishable provisions (tea, coffee, sugar etc.) and bulky equipment such as crockery, blankets, camp beds are held in the emergency vehicle which is driven to the rest centre by one of the on duty emergency planning officers.
- There is a network of volunteers across the county. Some areas have fewer volunteers than others but as there is a pool of 95 volunteers this doesn't usually present a problem. Volunteers are unpaid but can claim out of pocket expenses.
- In the event of an emergency, volunteers are contacted by an area coordinator and advised that they are to be immediately deployed or placed on standby.
- Call outs are infrequent and volunteers are not on standby. If the call out is inconvenient for a volunteer they can decline and a suitable replacement volunteer is contacted.
- A minimum of five volunteers are required to effectively run a rest centre: Two for reception, one for registration and two to prepare and serve refreshments.
- Generally, volunteer teams operate for six hours and then are replaced by new volunteers. Therefore, at the 4 hour mark an assessment is made whether another team should be deployed or whether the current team are able to see the task through if proceedings are coming to a close.
- Depending on the circumstances different types of centres may be required.
- Survivor reception centres are for people who are uninjured (or have suffered minor injuries), are displaced as a result of the incident and/or have witnessed the incident.
- Family and friends centres provide a location where people, who were not directly caught up in the incident, can go for information and updates about people they believe may have been involved in the emergency.
- Humanitarian assistance centres act as a focal point for information and assistance to bereaved families and friends, families and friends

of those missing or injured as well as the wider community who have been affected by the incident.

- The steps needed to set up and run each type of centre are clearly documented in the humanitarian assistance plan.
- From a volunteer's perspective the procedures and logistical arrangements in place are excellent, well documented and easily accessible. It is difficult to identify what further improvements might be made to the current procedures and systems. More publicity to promote the role of volunteers and boost recruitment in underrepresented areas might be helpful as might a review of who is eligible to drive the emergency vehicle. Although generally not a problem, potentially the emergency volunteers could arrive ahead of the emergency vehicle and this could create a delay in setting up the rest centre.

During the discussion with representatives from Derbyshire Constabulary and Derbyshire Fire and Rescue the following key points were made:

- At both at an organisational and individual level there are good working relationships between the LRF partners. As a result there are strong and long established collaborative working arrangements.
- Partners are clear about each other's roles, responsibilities and capabilities and this knowledge is vital in ensuring that outcomes are delivered in a timely and effective manner.
- The excellent lines of communication means that when challenges arise they are resolved quickly and efficiently without duplication of effort.
- When emergency plans are being written or revised or when training exercises are evaluated contributors feel comfortable about suggesting changes and discussing new ways of working. As a result of this open and inclusive approach, the whole system benefits from the experience and knowledge of a wide range of contributors.
- There are clear protocols for communicating with the public that have been developed and are regularly reviewed by a multi-agency communications group. In the event of a major incident one partner is appointed as the communications lead and all alerts, tweets and public announcements are co-ordinated centrally.
- Careful pre-planning is vital to the success of an operation and scenarios are considered in detail. For example the emergency

services know in advance the impact of closing individual streets on traffic flow and can therefore ensure that the public are safely directed away from an incident whilst emergency personnel gain the necessary access.

- The emergency services feel well supported by the Emergency Planning Division and considers that the level of interaction between all the partners in the LRF is consistently of a high quality.
- In recent years there has been a reduction in the number of Emergency Planning Officers and working arrangements have been adapted to ensure that the available resources are utilised effectively, however any further reduction in the number of officers would potentially place a strain on the system.

a) Next Steps

It is proposed that further meetings will be held to gain the views of district councils and event organisers. A visit to the Council's emergency vehicle will also take place to provide the working group members with an opportunity to view the resources that are kept on board.

Considerations

The relevance of the following factors has been considered in preparing this report; Finance, Human Relations, Legal and Human Rights, Prevention of Crime and Disorder, Equality and Diversity, Environmental, Health, Property and Transport

3) **Recommendations**

The Improvement and Scrutiny Committee – Places is asked to;

- (1) Note the investigations undertaken by the review working group and evidence gathered so far.

Councillor Steve Bull

CHAIRMAN, IMPROVEMENT AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – PLACES