

## **Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee - Tuesday 11 April 2023**

### **Civil Contingencies Update**

#### **Recommendations**

I recommend that the Committee:

- a. Review the Civil Contingencies Update Report, noting the progress that has been made.
- b. Provide comments and feedback on the emerging priorities for 2023/24 contained within the report and make any recommendations which can be considered for next year's workplan.
- c. Advise if an annual report would be beneficial to Audit and Standards committee and recommend areas to be included.

#### **Local Member Interest:**

N/A

### **Report of Cllr Alan White, Leader of the Council**

#### **Summary**

#### **What is the Overview and Scrutiny Committee being asked to do and why?**

1. This report provides Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee Members a better understanding of the challenges we have faced in the past year and the role of the Emergency Planning and Resilience Strategic Group (EPRSG) and Staffordshire Resilience Forum (SRF) in emergency preparedness planning and incident response to support the authority to discharge its obligations as a Category 1 responder under the Civil Contingencies Act, 2004.
2. Committee Members are asked to provide feedback which will be used to inform the 2023/2024 workplan before it is approved via the Emergency Planning Strategic Working Group and Corporate Governance Working Group. Although it should be noted that it is subject to quarterly review to ensure that it stays relevant to changes in both technologies and events.

3. Committee Members are asked whether it would be beneficial for Audit and Standards committee to receive an annual report for Civil Contingencies and recommend areas they would wish to see covered within the report.

## **Report**

### **Background**

4. This report provides an update to the Committee on our preparedness regarding civil contingencies, especially actions taken to support our preparedness for Winter as requested.
5. The Civil Contingencies Act 2004 identifies Local Authorities as Category 1 responders and so we have a statutory responsibility to maintain an emergency response capability. We deliver this capability as part of the Staffordshire Resilience Forum (SRF) and commission dedicated support from the Civil Contingency Unit (CCU). This gives us the benefits of economies of scale and a mechanism for multi-agency response and planning as well as training and exercising with other Local Authorities and responders. Funding for the CCU is based on a partnership model for core services, with supplementary contracts for the provision of additional support.
6. The Partnership, which is hosted by Staffordshire Fire and Rescue service, meet regularly, and have a combined plan and response protocols in the event of an emergency. CCU support Staffordshire County Council (SCC) and the wider SRF in preparing for, responding to, and recovering from incidents and emergencies as defined under the Civil Contingencies Act 2004. 2022 saw the Government engage in consultation around amendments to the Civil Contingencies Act and the development of the UK National Resilience Strategy and we look forward to seeing how the resulting changes to legislation inform the future activity of responders.
7. Key priorities on the Partnership's work programme includes: -
  - a. Local implementation of the new [Protect Duty](#), identifying linkages with the Civil Contingencies Act.
  - b. Working with the voluntary sector to improve engagement and support for civil resilience planning, response, and community recovery.
  - c. Local approach to societal resilience and identification of priority communities requiring emergency support.
  - d. Data sharing, reporting and use of local intel/data for the safe sharing and visualization of data to support the response to incidents.

- e. Continued development of a robust training and exercise strategy/programme including accreditation options covering strategic, tactical, and operational roles, loggist and business continuity management.
  - f. Various risk assessments as described below (See Section 12)
8. Whilst getting back to the new 'norm' following the Covid-19 pandemic, SCC have also had to respond alongside partners to the death of the Queen, emergency evacuation and resettlement of Afghan and Ukrainian refugees, unprecedented levels of supply chain disruption across the UK, more recently national strikes as well as several local incidents.
  9. Over the past 12 months, training, exercises, and other events designed to capture learning and enable continuous learning (e.g., workshops, debriefs etc..) have started to recommence following Covid-19. These include training for specialist roles such as Strategic Leadership command and control, Incident Management chairs, Tactical co-ordinating representative and chairs, multi-agency loggists. As a partnership we have adopted the Joint Emergency Services Interoperability Programme (JESIP) Doctrine which lays out how the emergency services should work together around major incidents. Therefore, we have developed a wide training and development programme to maintain a high state of preparedness.
  10. Staffordshire County Council staff have joined the multi-agency exercises which have taken place over the past 6-9 months, such as: -
    - a. Test and validate contingency plans and procedures for managing a **wide scale flooding** event and dealing with local consequences, as well as identifying any instances of duplication, gaps, or lack of clarity in plans or processes and provide the SRF with data to develop secondary actions to resolve these in future planning.
    - b. To build a shared understanding of the implications for local multi-agency partner organisations in responding to a failure of the National Electricity Transmission system, leading to a "**national**" power outage (NPO).
    - c. To explore the health response to multiple, concurrent operational and **winter pressures** and the interfaces with the local resilience forum partners in responding to these pressures.
    - d. Following advice from national partners, provide a potential model for a local response to **fuel disruption**; workshops were held to walk through this with the partnership and discuss vulnerabilities. The Staffordshire fuel plan has duly been updated and SCC's fuel plan/processes are in the final stages of completion.

- e. To build a shared understanding of the implications for local multi-agency partner organisations in responding to **energy shortages** in the UK which conform to the Government's Reasonable Worst-Case Scenario for Winter – local impact – rolling outages.
11. The learning from these exercises will be built into relevant plans/documentation, including the recent update to our Civil Contingencies Policy (See Appendix 1).
12. Other risk areas being considered by Staffordshire County Council and the multi-agency risk assessment working group (in no particular order):-
- a. *Food supply/contamination* - A major contamination incident in the food chain causing illness, and possible fatalities during the time taken to identify it.
  - b. *Major social care provider failure* - Large company with regional or national footprint providing domiciliary care fails, during the winter period.
  - c. *Water infrastructure failure or loss of drinking water* - Loss of drinking water which could last between 24 hours and 2 weeks.
  - d. *Gas supply failure* - A technical failure resulting in the loss of gas supply to some of UK.
  - e. *Industrial action (fuel supply)* - Actual or threatened disruption to the distribution of fuel by road, by fuel tanker drivers would result in some fuel shortages, e.g., at petrol filling stations. Potential for panic buying to exacerbate the situation.

### **Emerging priorities 2023/2024**

13. *Critical Services List and Business Continuity Plan (annual review)* - The Council identifies and maintains a schedule of Critical Services to ensure that each one is covered by an effective Business Continuity Plan (BCP). The Council's definition of a Critical Service is one which: 1. Provides a vital life-saving and / or health function; and / or: 2. Is provided as a legal / regulatory requirement, and / or is vital in maintaining the financial stability of the County Council, and / or is vital in maintaining the County Council's reputation (public perception), and / or is vital to maintaining the delivery of core services. Critical Services are also deemed to include those corporate support services, which are essential to the maintenance of other Critical Services, this includes, but is not limited to, property, staffing, ICT and supplies. Business Continuity Plans will be reviewed considering changes of structure within the Council, legislation and/or best practice and then tested on a regular basis.

14. *Organisational Resilience (Supply chain)* The COVID-19 pandemic has exposed the underlying complexities and vulnerabilities of supply chains and demonstrated the importance of a well-functioning supply chain. Therefore, Staffordshire County Council will develop a supply chain resilience framework including governance structure to support the Authority in anticipating future disruptions, capabilities to resist disruptions and capability to recover rapidly.
15. Gap Analysis – An independent gap analysis will be carried by The Civil Contingencies Unit to map Staffordshire County Councils compliance against the various legislation, standards, and best practice. With a high-level action plan produced to include the review of policies, guidance, and documentation. Including implications of the [UK Government resilience framework](#) recently published (December 2022).
16. It is acknowledged that more could be done to strengthen the Council's approach to Emergency Preparedness and resilience. Once documentation is refreshed, we will work with the communications team to develop a communication plan to help raise awareness of refreshed policies and procedures; train staff and engage all staff and members not just those who hold a role within Civil Contingencies to better understand the responsibilities the Authority holds as a Cat1 responder.

### **Link to Strategic Plan**

17. The information in this report has a link to the Council's Strategic Plan, "*Encourage good health and wellbeing, resilience and independence*" is one of the 5 priorities, how we "*encourage our communities to help themselves and each other*" is a core part of our Strategic Plan and both help shape all that we do.

### **Link to Other Overview and Scrutiny Activity**

18. As Civil Contingencies runs through all the Council's operations and activities this is a matter that is likely to be of increasing interest to Audit and Standards as part of the assurance and compliance work.

### **Community Impact**

N/A

## **List of Background Documents/Appendices:**

Appendix 1 - Civil Contingencies Policy

### **Contact Details**

**Assistant Director:** Tracy Thorley, Assistant Director for Corporate Operations

**Report Author:** Tracy Thorley  
**Job Title:** Assistant Director for Corporate Operations  
**Telephone No.:** via MS Teams  
**E-Mail Address:** [tracy.thorley@staffordshire.gov.uk](mailto:tracy.thorley@staffordshire.gov.uk)

