

Audit and Standards Committee - Tuesday 19 September 2023

Annual Civil Contingencies Report (April 2022 – March 2023)

Recommendation(s)

I recommend that:

- a. Committee is requested to consider this report and the assurances provided within it, accepting that the emergency planning arrangements are fit for purpose, up to date, are routinely complied with, have been effectively communicated and are monitored.
- b. Committee Members are asked to provide feedback which will be used to inform the 2023/2024 workplan.

Local Member Interest:

N/A

Report of the Deputy Chief Executive & Director of Corporate Services

Report

Purpose

1. This report provides Audit & Standards Committee Members a better understanding of the challenges we have faced in the past year and the role of the Staffordshire Resilience Forum (SRF) and Staffordshire County Council Emergency Planning and Resilience Strategic Group (EPRSG) in emergency preparedness planning and incident response to support the Council to discharge its obligations as a Category 1 responder under the Civil Contingencies Act, 2004.

Background

2. 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, to deliver our civil protection duties. We deliver this capability as part of the SRF and commission dedicated support from the Civil Contingencies Unit (CCU).

3. The Civil Contingencies Act 2004 put in place a framework for the management of major incidents. This provides for command, coordination and communications at national, regional and local level.

National Level

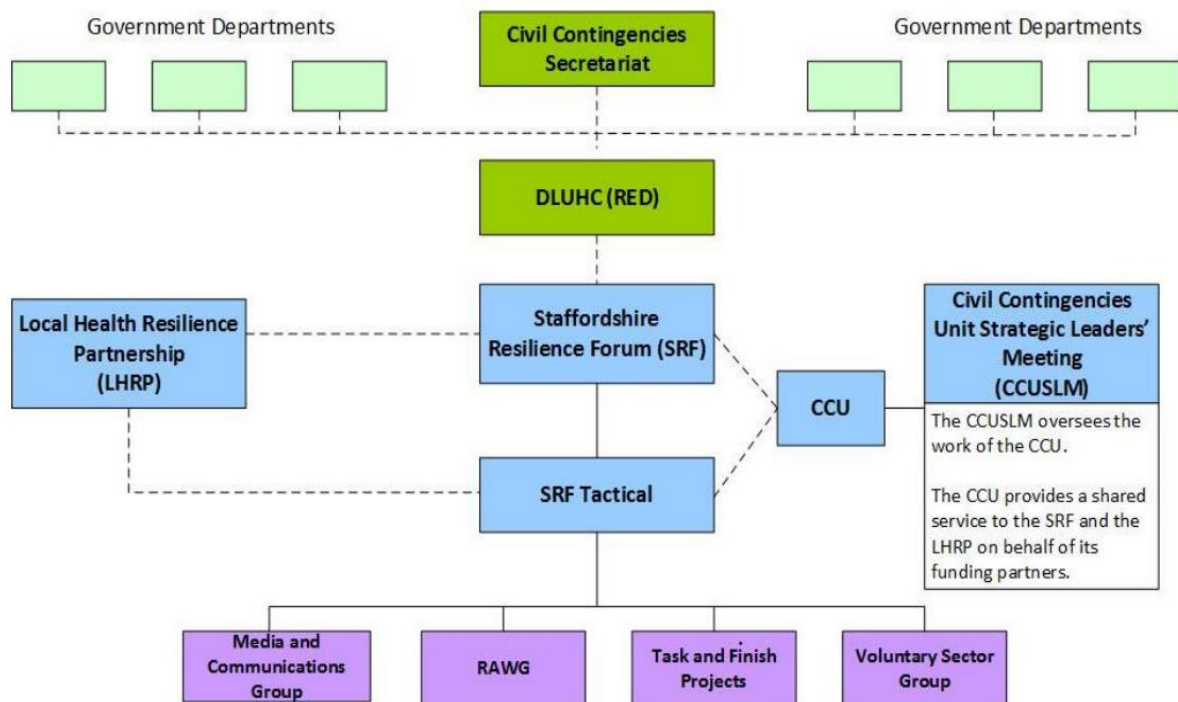
4. The lead government department (e.g.: Department of Health - Covid-19) co-ordinates the government's response via the Cabinet Office Briefing Room (COBRa).

Regional level

5. The Government Office of the Regions co-ordinate regional activity and The Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DHLUC) Resilience and Emergencies Division (RED) act as a conduit for information to and from central government.

Local level (Staffordshire & Stoke-on-Trent)

6. Local Resilience Forums (LRFs) are based on Police Force areas.
7. The Staffordshire Resilience Forum (SRF) is a partnership that includes the emergency services, local authorities (upper & lower tier), health authorities, Environment Agency, Highways Agency, military, utility companies, NHS organisations not covered by the CCA 2004, CCU and the voluntary sector.
8. 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.
9. 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. In an emergency, the representatives would form the Strategic Co-ordination group (SCG), initially chaired by the police.
10. The 'SRF partnership' is the term used to describe the mechanism through which routine Civil Contingencies activity is co-ordinated and delivered at a local level in Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent and the governance structure can be seen below.



11. The Council commits to support wider multi-agency working to promote a joined-up, partnership approach to resilience in Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent. It therefore supports the following meetings:
- Staffordshire Resilience Forum (SRF): Chief Executive or Lead Director (Deputy Chief Executive & Director of Corporate Services), or their representative deputy
 - SRF Tactical Meeting: Incident Management Team Chair, or other TCG chair
 - Local Health Resilience Partnership: Director of Public Health, or their representative deputy
 - Civil Contingencies Strategic Leads Meeting (SLM): Assistant Director for Corporate Operations
 - Risk Assessment Working Group (RAWG): Health & Safety Manager and Flood Risk Manager
 - Staffordshire Prepared Conference: Open invitation to all staff
 - Task & Finish Projects: Specialist staff to support on request of CCU and / or EPRSG
 - Strategic Assessment Meeting (SAM) / Strategic Coordinating Group (SCG)
 - Tactical Assessment Meeting (TAM) / Tactical Coordinating Group (TCG)
 - Recovery Coordinating Group (RCG) and Sub-Groups dependant on the nature and scope of an incident.
 - SRF Training and Exercising Group

12. Key priorities on the Partnership's work programme for 2022/2023 included: -

- Local implementation of the new [Protect Duty](#), identifying linkages with the Civil Contingencies Act.
- Working with the voluntary sector to improve engagement and support for civil resilience planning, response, and community recovery.
- Local approach to societal resilience and identification of priority communities requiring emergency support.
- Data sharing, reporting and use of local intel/data for the safe sharing and visualization of data to support the response to incidents.
- Continued development of a robust training and exercise strategy/programme including accreditation options covering strategic, tactical, and operational roles, loggist and business continuity management.
- Various risk assessments

Local Authority level (Staffordshire County Council)

13. CCU support Staffordshire County Council (SCC) as a Category 1 responder and the wider SRF in preparing for, responding to, and recovering from incidents and emergencies as defined under the Civil Contingencies Act 2004.

14. Staffordshire County Council therefore has wide ranging obligations under the Civil Contingencies Act, and as such has statutory requirements to ensure that certain arrangements, planning and policies are in place.

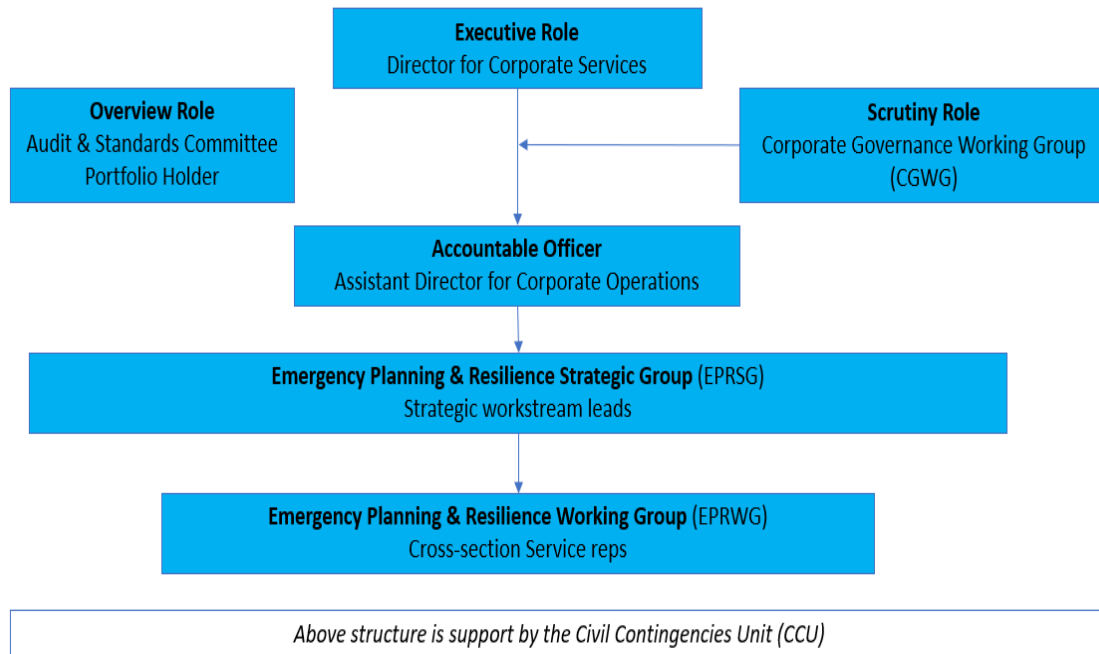
15. This report provides the details of the Council's resilience preparedness arrangements in order to meet the requirements of:-

- Civil Contingencies Act (2004)
- The Health and Safety at Work Act 1974
- The Flood and Water Management Act 2010
- Control of Major Accident Hazard Regulations 2015 (COMAH)
- Radiation Emergency Preparedness and Public Information Regulations 2019 (REPPIR)
- Safety of Sports Grounds Act 1975
- Fire Safety and Safety of Places of Sport Act 1987
- The Pipelines Safety Regulations 1996 (PSR)

Governance

16. Civil Contingencies within the council is delivered through a distributed model of responsibility rather than the sole responsibility of the Chief Executive, Director of Corporate Service and Assistant Director

for Corporate Operations. With key roles identified and assigned to ensure appropriate subject matter expert oversight and accountability, as shown in the structure chart below: -



17. Terms of reference for both the Emergency Planning & Resilience Strategic Group (EPRSG) and Emergency Planning & Resilience working Group (EPRWG) can be found on the intranet.

Strategic Level management and oversight

18. Key accountabilities for these groups can be seen in the figure below:-

Cabinet	SLT	Lead Director	EPRSG	EPRWG
Set and approve Civil Contingencies policy	Set strategy	Oversee delivery	Represent SCC at LRF groups.	Lead Tactical Delivery
Direct SLT	Agree resources	Provide Leadership	Review documents passed from EPRWG	Support delivery of Tactical Level policies via working groups as required.
	Ownership and accountability of risk	Maintain CCU Shared Services Service Level Agreement	Provide an avenue for escalation of issues from EPRWG.	Scrutiny and development of documents and Business Continuity Plans.
	Liaise with members	SCC representative at SRF Strategic / Strategic Co-ordinating Group.	Escalate issues to SLT as appropriate.	Provide an Incident Management Team (IMT)
		Attend Civil Contingencies Strategic Leads meeting		Monitoring, updating and escalating risk
				Identify and Maintain critical services.

19. The Council has an overarching Civil Contingencies Policy (CCP) accompanied by a comprehensive suite of specific policies to deal with civil emergencies and business continuity issues. These conform to the Civil Contingencies Act (2004). All plans are reviewed and updated along with new plans which are contained within the EPRSG/EPRWG work programme. A list of plans can be seen in **Appendix 1** and their review cycle and approval can be seen in **Appendix 2**.
20. This suite of plans is in turn, supported by service level business continuity plans, a full list of relevant documents can be found in the relevant policy. It is recognised that planning in this area is not as robust as it should be following Covid, and a programme to improve this is currently underway and to move us towards best practice.

Emergency Planning and Resilience

Response & Recovery

21. Staffordshire County Council has a statutory duty as a Category 1 responder to respond to, and recovery from, incidents that impact the county, as well as internal responses to issues impacting the delivery of critical services within SCC. The level of response will vary depending on the size and scale of the incident, but can include the following:
- SCC Incident Management Team (IMT)
 - Recovery Co-ordinating Group (Chaired by SCC)
 - Tactical Co-ordinating Group / Tactical Assessment Meeting (SCC representative, potential SCC chair)
 - Strategic Co-ordinating Group / Strategic Assessment Meeting (SCC representative)

The full response structure can be seen in **Appendix 3**.

22. The CCU assist the Council by independently monitoring internal compliance, informing and advising on Staffordshire County Council obligations, providing advice and guidance and raising awareness on emergency planning and civil protection matters.

Emergency Planning

23. Staffordshire County Council has wide ranging obligations for Emergency Planning under the legislation we are the Lead Flood Authority, and have responsibilities under COMAH, REPIR, and PSR legislation. As such the Council is involved with both internal and external emergency planning. Some of these responsibilities are covered by the SRF & CCU, however others fall to SCC to complete.
24. The Emergency Planning Policy has been updated to cover details of all planning, the cycle of review, and the accountability for delivery of

each. Alongside the external emergency planning, SCC also has a requirement to ensure that appropriate Internal Emergency Plans are in place for incidents and issues such as Cyber Attack, Supply Chain Failure, etc, these are also outlined within the Emergency Planning Policy and where appropriate specific plans produced.

Business Continuity

25. Under the Civil Contingencies Act (CCA) 2004, the Council, as a Category 1 responder, commits to undertake Business Continuity Management (BCM) to ensure continued operation of services during an emergency. BCM is a process by which the organisation or service area can prepare for a disruptive incident which is likely to create a gap in normal business provision.
26. Civil Contingencies, Business Continuity has a Strategic Level policy, and a Tactical level Business Continuity Programme. The BCI Good Practice Guidelines 2018 indicate that a Business Continuity Management policy should always be set and approved by top management, as such, the Policy document within SCC is a Strategic level document, with a Business Continuity Programme providing the fine detail of how Business Continuity will be implemented below this.
27. Currently SCC has 47 BCP's and it is recognised that our framework is no longer fit for purpose and therefore will be under review and updated during 2023/2024 to streamline both the process and documentation as well as working towards best practice.

Risk Assessment

28. The Civil Contingencies Act (2004) places a legal duty on responders to undertake risk assessments and publish risks in a Local Resilience Forum Community Risk Register, accountability is held at the SRF level. The purpose of the Community Risk Register is to reassure the community that the risk of potential hazards has been assessed, and that preparation arrangements are undertaken, and response plans exist. The Councils Emergency Planning & Resilience (EPP) risk register mirrors the risks identified on the Community Risk Register that impact our residents as well as additional internal risks solely the responsibility of the Local Authority.
29. Within the Council corporate risks involving emergencies and business continuity are included within the corporate risk register, where appropriate. The Assistant Director of Audit & Financial Services and her team works with departments to increase their awareness of emergency-related risk assessments within their departmental risk registers when carrying out audits.

Training and Awareness

30. It is a requirement that key staff within Staffordshire County Council are trained and experienced to a suitable level to carry out key response and recovery roles. It is the responsibility of Staffordshire County Council to track learning and experience of these staff, so that in the event of an incident, there is a clear audit trail of staff being appropriate for the role they undertake. It is recognised this is an area that requires improvement of tracking and is therefore on the workplan for 2023/2024.
31. Whenever possible, the Council strives to ensure that our testing is held in a multi-agency context. This is to provide familiarisation with other organisations and to assist with benchmarking our response with our partners. Exercises provide invaluable insight into the operationalisation of our plans and important information regarding the areas of the plans that require further development.
32. Some training is provided through the LRF, with other additional training being provided by SCC. Alongside this, SCC will participate in several LRF and National exercises to allow staff to gain experience in their roles. Additional internal exercises are also carried out to test internal arrangements, and business continuity.
33. 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.
34. Training was provided to 2 new directors before joining the director on-call rota and quarterly joint sessions with IMT chairs are provided to share best practice and carry out specific desktop exercises.
35. In addition to these, a rolling programme of service-level major incident and business continuity exercises have taken place. The need for improvement in the level of service-level training and exercising is recognised, and a programme to achieve this is being developed alongside the review of BCP framework.
36. Following live events and exercises, debriefs are undertaken to capture learning points. Lessons identified from live events and exercises are subsequently incorporated into major incident and business continuity plans and are shared with partner organisations,

where appropriate. Following live events and exercises, debriefs are undertaken to capture learning and identify measures which need to be introduced as a result. These are recorded by the CCU who assure the delivery of follow up actions and report on this to the EPRSG who assure the implementation of lessons identified.

37. We saw a busy summer in 2022, as public events re-launched after a two-year absence due to Covid restrictions, with events such as Jubilee celebrations, Ironman & Commonwealth Games activities. We also had to respond to the passing of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, Avian Influenza outbreaks, asylum seeker arrivals, industrial action planning and the winter-related risks such as power outage and cost of living crisis. As well as local events such as Whalley's Quarry, waste fire and severe weather and several people trapped in vehicles.

Future 2023 onwards

Enhancing Capacity

38. The Council bolstered its capacity and capabilities to respond to incidents across Staffordshire by expanding the number of Council officers available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week via an on-call rota at both DOC and IMT chair levels. Further work will take place to increase other areas within the council once training has happened.

SRF Training accreditation

39. The SRF has agreed a new strategy and modular approach to training and has been identified as being a trailblazer project which is in line with recent reviews by Cabinet Office and the National Preparedness Commissions. The SRF is investing further via external grant funding, to develop accreditation for the programme to provide further assurance of sector compliance and provide opportunity to share the product with other LRFs.

Critical Services List and Business Continuity Plan

40. 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. The Business Continuity framework will be reviewed considering changes of structure

within the Council, legislation and/or best practice and then a programme of testing on a regular basis produced.

Organisational Resilience (Supply chain)

41. 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 Council in anticipating future disruptions, capabilities to resist disruptions and capability to recover rapidly.

Gap Analysis

42. An independent gap analysis will be carried by The CCU 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, because this document has a very ambitious vision for Local Resilience Forums and all responders.

Awareness

43. 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.

Equalities Implications

44. There are no specific equalities implications arising out of this report. However, the Council's responsibilities under Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 are supported by UK GDPR/DPA2018, requiring that Special Category Data is afforded extra measures of security to protect that data, which may be used and shared during incidents.

Legal Implications

45. There are no specific legal implications arising out of the report. However, the Council's performance is subject to external scrutiny and failure to comply with legislation or legal requirements (i.e. Civil Contingencies Act 2004, Flood and Water Management Act 2010) can result in external censure, financial loss (including fines and compensation) and reputational damage.

Resource and Value for Money Implications

46. There are no specific financial implications resulting from the issues within this report although it is worth noting that the cost of any incident cannot always be planned for, both in relation to resources required to plan and respond and financial cost of rectification.
47. As covered under para 8 we form part of the CCU partnership model which give us the benefits of economies of scale, with a supplementary contract for the provision of additional support. We therefore don't have dedicated emergency planning officers within SCC.

Risk Implications

48. Any risks identified are subject to inclusion within the Emergency Planning risk register and are dealt with as a matter of priority accordingly and escalated for inclusion on the Corporate Risk Register as appropriate.
49. Team progress on developing and updating service continuity plans requires ongoing focus to achieve best practice. A programme to improve the plans is in place.
50. It is a key part of the Committee's role to give assurance to the Authority and the council taxpayers that the public resources invested in the Council are being properly managed. This report is one way by which that assurance can be given.

Climate Change Implications

51. There are no specific Climate Change implications arising out of the report.

List of Background Documents/Appendices:

Appendix 1 – Civil Contingencies Plans

Appendix 2 – Civil Contingencies Plans review cycle

Appendix 3 – Staffordshire Resilience Forum response structure

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