

Information Briefing

Report from:
Report to:

Michael Enderby
Co-ordinating O&S Committee

Date: 15 March 2019

Overview of Emergency Planning

1. SUMMARY

Birmingham City Council is currently modernising and enhancing its emergency arrangements to ensure the council is better able to support its communities and respond effectively to any emergency within Birmingham.

This programme has been underway from mid-2018 and is seeing all areas of the council's arrangements undergoing some form of change, improvement and modernisation to ensure the council has an integrated approach to emergency management – this programme includes training and exercising.

2. Introduction

Birmingham City Council is a Category 1 responder under the Civil Contingencies Act, carrying the same responsibilities as Police, Fire, Ambulance and other key partners, with a number of additional duties and the responsibility for arrangements for Birmingham as an area. We are required to Plan for and Respond to major incidents impacting Birmingham.

The City Council has a significant leadership role to play in ensuring both our communities and Birmingham more generally are prepared for, can respond to and recover from emergencies.

In addition to the Civil Contingencies Act there are a number of other pieces of legislation that set out the requirements on the city to deliver effective “emergency management” or “resilience” – however the primary legislation is the Civil Contingencies Act.

In 2018, following a number of internal changes, a review of the council's emergency arrangements began, although covering a wide range of resilience activities, the primary focus was on an interim Emergency Plan ahead of the launch of the new Council Emergency Plan expected at the end of February/early March 2019, this together with improved incident response and development of our emergency centre capability.

A fundamental shift, across all these arrangements was to unify the Council's response and be more proactive in our response.

3. Resilience – the Emergency Planning Programme

The Resilience arrangements of the council and its statutory responsibilities are delivered by the Resilience Team. Across 2018 work has been done to strengthen the involvement and enhance the work of the team.

An overview of that work is outlined in this report. However, work is still ongoing to develop and enhance all of our arrangements, commencing in the core documents (Emergency Plan, Rest Centres, Incident Response etc) but will move across everything we do.

The resilience team undertake the full civil contingencies programme (Preparing, Planning, Responding and Recovering from Emergencies). The team engage in both formal and informal activities to deliver the resilience agenda ensuring the 7 statutory duties (Emergency Planning, Business Continuity, Training & Exercising, Information Sharing, Cooperation (Response), Business Continuity Promotion) in the primary legislation is delivered, together with various supporting statutory pieces of legislation.

Multi-agency working is important – the resilience team engage in a number of structures (eg LRF), directly running a number of structures in Birmingham (eg Birmingham Resilience Group) and participate in Regional and National groups to ensure BCC is adequately linked in with these wider programme.

4. The Emergency Plan

The Council now has a single, thematic all risk Emergency Plan – following a recognised command and control structure, Strategic (Gold), Tactical (Silver) and Operational (Bronze) – fully integrating with multi-agency structures.

The Emergency Plan is an enabling document, identifying core commanders and empowering them to deliver the response through the recognised command structure. The Emergency response will be delivered by this plan – with all areas of the council following and supporting this command and control structure (previously response was done at service/directorate level and only coordinated strategically only). Following national best practice, the response will be delivered by the Tactical Team, which has 5 thematic cells making the structure – Communications, Environment, Facilities, Health and Welfare and Information Processing. There remains a Strategic Team, to set strategic direction and priorities, the plan also identifies 4 key commanders – Gold Commander and Deputy (Dawn Baxendale, Jonathan Tew) Silver Commander and Deputy (Chris Neville and Kevin Hicks)

Further work will continue to both enhance, train, exercise and develop these cells and the emergency plan structure as a whole.

Meanwhile a host of supporting arrangements and other stand-alone plans are being developed and reviewed in priority order.

5. Incident Response

The council's response to an incident has been reviewed and simplified. The Resilience Duty Officer has been split from several roles and identified with a clear brief. The Duty Officer has a more proactive approach to response (noting some thresholds of when an incident moves from Business as Usual into an emergency).

Upon notification, the duty officer plays a significant role and will constantly assess the situation – they operate on the principle of attendance and provide a range of activities from support and guidance through to taking charge at the scene and ultimately activating the emergency plan.

Promotion of when to contact the team both internally and externally is also part of the new response process and is an ongoing priority, both internally and with our partners – without timely notification the council's the response and the support that can be offered fails.

6. Training and Development of key roles in an Emergency

A significant part of an effective set of emergency arrangements are the people who are relied upon to deliver the response.

The new emergency plan has seen the identification of core roles, from which key officers have been identified and assigned. Formal, accredited Strategic and Tactical level training has been delivered to those named individuals – over 95% of key named commanders have been trained, in a programme that will continue as a core element of our preparedness

Another strand of the development programme was to look at the training offered to elected members, explaining how the arrangements work and the role of members, including what to do and not to do in an emergency. A quick guide, in the form of an elected member "Z-Card" was produced and issued to all members, in addition a formal training programme, on members roles, has been developed, with the first session taking place on 5th March 2019.

Further work has been done to develop our staff volunteers and ensure a robust cohort of staff are available to undertake specialist resilience roles, with full training and support – these roles are vital in response and investment in them critical. This work is nearing formal roll out, as the final HR elements are worked through.

Continuing to invest in the training of our core commanders and volunteers remains a focus and priority.

7. Conclusion/Next Steps

There remains significant development ongoing in our resilience arrangements and support is always appreciated, however, for the first time in a number of years Birmingham City Council has a signed off Emergency Plan, identifying key roles, who have been trained and commits to being proactive and coordinated in our response.

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