

TITLE	Emergency Planning & Business Continuity Update
FOR CONSIDERATION BY	Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee – 11 January 2016
WARD	None Specific
DIRECTOR	Graham Ebers, Director of Finance and Resources

OUTCOME / BENEFITS TO THE COMMUNITY

Identifying emergency risks and business continuity planning prepares us to respond to severe disruption, how we will continue to deliver services and support the public in the event of an emergency.

RECOMMENDATION

That the recommended actions set out on Page 3 of the report are undertaken.

SUMMARY OF REPORT

Business Continuity Planning has undergone a recent internal audit at WBC and direction of travel is good. By the end of December all plans for critical services will have been updated and reviewed.

Planning for severe winter weather is an annual process. The Councils suite of severe weather emergency plans have either been prepared or are presently undergoing a review.

A Community Resilience project is underway within Wokingham Parishes to assist town and parish councils to develop their own risk specific emergency plans, and to help local communities prepare best for the geographic risks they are exposed to. Work to date has targeted the highest risk parishes.

A range of generic Emergency Plans are in place to manage the consequences of many emergencies (i.e. evacuations, contingency communications or communicating with the public), and these are complimented by some specific local plans such as our adverse weather plan and multiagency plans at Thames Valley (Local resilience Forum) level.

Background

The Council participates in an emergency risk assessment process at the Thames Valley Local Resilience Forum as part of our duties under the Civil Contingencies Act 2004. This identifies the emergency risks that the Council needs to prepare for.

Flooding, storms and Gales, Snow and Cold Weather and Pandemic Flu are the main emergency risks, although there are a wide range of other risks that also need to be considered.

The Council puts in place plans to respond to these risks via its Emergency Planning Team, in 3 ways :-

- 1) Specific Emergency Plans linked to that risk - flooding
- 2) Consequence based emergency plans covering several risks – evacuations/receiving evacuees
- 3) Multiagency Plans at Berkshire or Thames Valley level covering the tactical/strategic functions.

Communications with the public in an emergency are important and are managed as follows:

- 1) High visibility Officers at the scene of the emergency feedback information to the Councils Emergency Operations Centre.
- 2) Parish and Community Emergency Plans mentioned earlier in this report contain sections within them detailing the types of information that the Council requires and frequency at which they should be provided by local Community Emergency volunteers.
- 3) The Councils Communications Team maintain close links with the Emergency Planning Team within the Councils Emergency Operations Centre during emergencies. Key messages can then be sent using normal routes (website, social media, press releases, local radio etc) to keep the public informed of the Councils response.
- 4) Multiagency Communications are managed via a media cell set up at Thames Valley level for larger emergencies. This is usually led by the Police.

Analysis of Issues

Business Continuity

Overall the current BCP situation is one of continuing improvement in learning, understanding and planning for business continuity incidents. All of the critical service areas identified will have an updated plan in place by the end of December 2015 (Appendix 1). The Emergency Planning Team (EPT) works closely with all departments to make sure that robust plans are in place and reviewed regularly.

In 2016 continuing guidance and support will be provided to departments, in preparation to implement and activate plans when needed.

Emergency Planning

Flooding is the boroughs No 1 emergency risk, and the Council has responded to flooding many times in the past. Learning from those experiences has been gathered each time and work is scheduled to develop a flood response plan, including

identification of those areas most likely to flood.

Whilst accurate “flood prediction” maps exist from the Environment Agency, limited information exists on the extents of historic floods in all areas of the borough. Some good work has been undertaken by the Councils Highways Team to document flooding in some of the hotspot areas. EPT will continue to work with them to facilitate delivery of an actual flood extent map and make sure that it is available on the Councils GIS mapping system.

Recommended actions

- 1) To finalise a Business Continuity guidance document, outlining the process to be followed by departments preparing business continuity plans, the Business Continuity Planning Assumptions and clearly signpost to plan templates and the Business Continuity Team if further support is required – Due date end Q1 16/17 – Brett Dyson, Emergency Planning Officer
- 2) That the Emergency Planning Teams work plan for 16/17 should include additional engagement throughout the year to support managers across the Council in the development of Business Continuity Plans. Due Date Q1 16/17 – Brett Dyson, Emergency Planning Officer
- 3) That a Flood Response Plan is developed to document the extent of historic flooding in the borough and to match the Councils responses with the Environment Agencies Flood alert/warning system. – Due Date Q1 16/17 – Brett Dyson, Emergency Planning Officer

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE RECOMMENDATION

The Council faces severe financial challenges over the coming years as a result of the austerity measures implemented by the Government and subsequent reductions to public sector funding. It is estimated that Wokingham Borough Council will be required to make budget reductions in excess of £20m over the next three years and all Executive decisions should be made in this context.

	How much will it Cost/ (Save)	Is there sufficient funding – if not quantify the Shortfall	Revenue or Capital?
Current Financial Year (Year 1)	£0	N/A	N/A
Next Financial Year (Year 2)	£0	N/A	N/A
Following Financial Year (Year 3)	£0	N/A	N/A

Other financial information relevant to the Recommendation/Decision
None

Cross-Council Implications (how does this decision impact on other Council services, including properties and priorities?)

- EPT and Highways working together to develop the Flood Response Plan, and ensure that maps of historic flooding are added to the GIS mapping system.
- EPT working across the Council with all services to create business continuity plans that help to minimise the impact on service delivery, and support the public, in the event of an incident.

Reasons for considering the report in Part 2

None

List of Background Papers

None

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Date 31 December 2015	Version No. 1

APPENDIX 1

Critical Service Areas

- Adult social care: Vulnerable adults
- Systems and innovation: Framework-i
- Out of hours service for vulnerable adults and children
- Residential care of vulnerable children
- Children's social care: Triage and social work teams
- Cemetery and crematorium
- Income and payments (payroll)
- Benefits
- Customer Services operations
- Registrars
- ICT Operations
- Operational property
- Housing maintenance
- Contractors:
 - Forest care
 - Optalis
 - Veolia
 - RBC: Housing repairs

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