

Civil Contingencies Report

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| Summary: | Annual report from the Resilience Manager on Civil Contingencies. |
| Options considered: | This is a briefing report only. |
| Conclusions: | Not applicable. |
| Recommendations | To note the report and the council's contributions to the Norfolk Resilience Forum and the British Red Cross. |
| Reasons for Recommendations: | A better understanding of the challenges in the past year and the role of the Norfolk Resilience Forum and British Red Cross in emergency preparedness planning and incident response will help to discharge our obligations under the Civil Contingencies Act, 2004. |

LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS AS REQUIRED BY LAW

(Papers relied on to write the report, which do not contain exempt information and which are not published elsewhere)

N/A

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| Cabinet Member(s) | Ward(s) affected |
| Nigel Lloyd | All |

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1. Introduction

- 1.1 The last 12 months have been exceptionally busy for the Civil Contingencies Team, at times dealing with multiple concurrent incidents on top of the ongoing Covid-19 response and EU Exit Transition reporting requirements. The North Norfolk Safety Advisory Group has had fewer events to deal with than usual, mainly due to cancellation re Covid-19, but those going ahead have required enhanced support.

2. Emergency Planning and Incidents

- 2.1 The Civil Contingencies Act, 2004 sets out a number of duties around emergency preparedness and response. As a Category 1 Responder under the Act the council has a duty to assess risk, put emergency plans in place and to share information and cooperate with other local responders. In respect of emergency preparedness planning this is generally achieved through the Norfolk Resilience Forum (NRF) with an annual programme of multi-agency group meetings progressing work streams and reviewing plans. North Norfolk District Council pays an annual contribution to the NRF towards administration costs and the training and exercising programme. This year, as last, the council's contribution is £2,386.

North Norfolk District Council hosted the quarterly Norfolk Local Authority Resilience Partnership Meeting on 6 March 2020. Shortly after this the annual programme of meetings was put on hold by the NRF due to Covid-19 response and the standing up of Command and Control structures.

The pre-planning work has recently resumed with a pool of emergency planners across Norfolk, including the NNDC Resilience Manager, working together virtually two afternoons a week to review and revise the multi-agency, countywide plans; including updating those for shelter and evacuation in light of Covid-19 and revisiting the Mutual Aid Agreement. This close collaboration is intended to improve the resilience across the County and simplify mutual aid when it is required.

- 2.2 The national 'CoastEx 2020' exercise, planned for 6-8 October, was postponed due to Covid-19. This was designed to exercise national and county response, information exchange and mutual aid during a major flooding incident along the East Coast from Northumbria to Kent. It has been rescheduled to 12-14 October 2021 when it is anticipated that NNDC will take the opportunity to test local response.
- 2.3 In respect of single agency plans, the Council's Operational Flood Plan has been updated and the Rest Centre plans have been reviewed.
- 2.4 The Norfolk Civil Protection Volunteer group disbanded at the end of 2019. As a result of this, the NNDC rest centre equipment (bed frames, bedding, welfare packs etc), which was previously stored in the NCPV premises at Aylsham, has been moved to North Walsham Police Station.

The council has a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the British Red Cross (BRC) re support at rest centres to supplement the numbers of council staff. This costs £1200 per year and is particularly important during the concurrent pandemic as additional rest centre staffing will be required. A new 'Emergency Response Cooperation Agreement' has been drawn up to replace the existing MoU with the same £1200 contribution. Five members of NNDC staff attended the BRC's Rest Centre Manager Refresher training sessions in November 2020.

- 2.5 A new Senior Flood Warden and reinvigorated flood warden group for Sea Palling has been supported this summer to improve community resilience. A virtual meeting of the Senior Flood Warden Liaison Group was held in November. The Environment Agency acknowledged that the intelligence, pictures and videos from the council and coastal and river flood wardens had been very useful to them; they will be reviewing alert levels and their wording as a result. This should help to fine-tune the alerts creating more confidence in the system.
- 2.6 Following the NNDC Resilience Manager's discussions at the beginning of October with the Project Engineer from the Water Management Alliance (WMA) about river flooding and rainfall issues, the WMA is now invited to attend the NRF Severe Weather & Flood Risk meetings. It is hoped that the inclusion of the WMA in these meetings will increase resilience.
- 2.7 **EU Exit Transition** - The council has been working with our partners in the NRF to help plan for the UK's exit from the European Union. The Government's Reasonable Worst Case planning assumptions have been

reviewed and responses from departments have been collated and submitted to the NRF on behalf of the EU Transition Lead Officer for NNDC, the Head of Economic & Community Development, who will now lead this work going forward.

- 2.8 **Covid-19** - Planning for, response to and reporting around the Coronavirus pandemic have, understandably, taken up the majority of the Civil Contingencies Team's time since January. The early set up of command and control structures within the council, with regular reporting, analysis and Silver and Gold Group meetings being held at least weekly throughout the emergency, has helped to ensure a timely response to fast-moving situation and, at times, seven-day a week working.

The inclusion of the Leader of the Council on the Gold Group has ensured a member-perspective; something other districts have not had. The council's reporting structures have helped to inform both internal decision-making and external shared situational awareness with partner agencies in the NRF and the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, sometimes at very short notice.

The breadth and depth of the response to Covid-19 has largely been covered in the report by the Chief Executive to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 22 July 2020 so will not be repeated here. There is ongoing attendance at Tactical and Strategic Coordination Groups and with internal and external Cells, currently including both Mass Vaccination and Mass Testing Cells and ongoing daily reporting and analysis.

- 2.9 **Other incidents in the past 12 months** – The Environment Agency has issued coastal flood alerts from Old Hunstanton to Cley on 12 occasions, from East Cley to Salthouse on 14 occasions and from Bacton to Ostend including Walcott on 5 occasions. They issued three flood warnings in November; for Wells Quay, Salthouse and East Cley and for Bacton to Ostend including Walcott. Alerts have been in place on the Broads rivers in December from the End of September to the middle of October and again rivers were reduced due to Covid-19 but have been reinstated Each occurrence requires a minimum of notification and coordination and follow up and, depending upon the severity, physical response.

Since the last annual report to the Governance Risk and Audit Committee the following incidents have required a response:

- 22 Dec 2019 - Response to Flooding of Lathams in Potter Heigham. Subsequently chaired a follow-up meeting in January with businesses, the Environment Agency and the Broads Authority to consider notification and operational issues.
- 6-7 Jan and 16 Jan 2020 - Coordination of response to Trimmingham House Caravan Park cliff falls plus several subsequent monitoring/reassurance visits. The Head of Coastal Partnership East noted that this worked well; asked to share learning with people developing the Suffolk Erosion Plan.
- 16 Jan - Coordination of response to Flood Warning on the River Wensum in Fakenham. Environmental Health rangers deployed to speak with

businesses and residents while Resilience Manager attended Trimmingham House Caravan Park and at-risk properties.

- 16 Jan – Flooding issue re the River Glaven at Cley (nearly property-level flooding due to a damaged sluice, over-pumping required). As requested, the Environment Agency installed temporary telemetry to check on the water level at Cley Glaven outfall in order to better understand the tide locking issue and gather data to inform future discussions re improving flood warning information in the area. The sluice has been repaired.
- 2 Feb - Gas Leak at Cromer offices. Power outage in Cromer and surrounding area. Utilities issue debriefed.
- 9 -10 Feb - Storm Ciara, Amber Wind Warning, Flood Alert, flood gates closed at Bacton and Walcott following consultation with the Environment Agency Flood Warning Duty Officer
- 15 Feb - Storm Dennis. Wind Warning, flood alerts on parts of coast and the Broads.
- 22 Feb Liaison re continuing high river levels at Ludham Bridge boat yard.
- 10 May- 11 May - High Tides and flood alerts, flood gates closed at Bacton and Walcott.
- 2 Jul – Pollution Report 60 nautical miles off Cromer coast, no action required.
- 22 Jul - Suspected unexploded ordinance on Cromer Pier. Tested readiness to set up a rest centre if required; would have been able to do so within an hour and a half.
- 16 Aug - Sheringham surface water flooding. Set up Local Coordination Group in the office, internal and multi-agency debriefs.
- 27 Aug - Thunderstorm warnings and high winds re Storm Francis.
- 18-20 Sep - Liaison re high astronomical tides and coastal flood alerts for Old Hunstanton to Cley. Advised 12 camper vans parked on beach roads at Cley and Salthouse to move out early before the following day's high tide.
- 25-27 Sep - Severe weather (rain and high winds) – flood alerts on rivers/some overtopping in Horning, Ludham and Potter Heigham, surface water flooding in Fakenham, wind-blown sand issue at Bacton and Walcott, highways issues with downed trees and power outages (coordination of response and internal debrief, input to multi-agency debrief).
- 2-6 Oct - Mini Spring Tide and rainfall alerts. Coordination with partner agencies and Water Management Alliance. Visits to Ludham Bridge, Potter Heigham and Horning post river flooding. Noted drains issues at Ferry Road in Horning and passed to Environmental Protection Manager and Anglian Water for action. Attended subsequent virtual meeting re flooding at Horning Ferry Road.

- 17-19 Oct - Spring tides, Flood Alerts on western parts of the North Norfolk coast, flood gates closed at Bacton and Walcott for community reassurance after liaison with Environment Agency Flood Warning Duty Officer, Parish Council and Coastguard.
- 4 Nov - river overtopping at Potter Heigham and Ludham Bridge.
- 19 Nov - Spring tides; Flood Alerts along whole coast, Flood Warnings in three locations, flood gates closed. Attended site and arranged for Police and Coastguard presence at Walcott re public safety concerns over the Coast Road.

3. Business Continuity

- 2.1 The number of emergency planning incidents has resulted in some of the planned Business Continuity Management work being de-prioritised; the revised business continuity plan template has not been rolled out yet, and the Corporate Business Continuity plan has not yet been revised as the existing plans are all fit for purpose. However, the new Business Impact Analysis documentation was introduced as planned, the BIAs were completed and the Critical Activities were reviewed by the Gold group in March as part of the response to Covid-19.
- 2.2 The council has continued to maintain all its critical activities, and to maintain service to our customers throughout the Covid-19 emergency and lockdown periods. Put simply, the council's business continuity management arrangements have been tested and work.
- 2.3 There are currently 28 business continuity plans, of which 14 are for teams undertaking NNDC-Critical activities. An NNDC-critical activity has a Recovery Time Objective of 48 hours or less. Plans are considered current when they have been reviewed within 12 months.

The target for current critical plans is 85%; 100% are up to date.

There is no target for non-critical plans; overall, 79% are up to date.

The Management Restructure will result in some changes which will be reflected in the business continuity plans so it is anticipated that the overall percentage of current plans will increase in the next few months.

4. Conclusion

The Civil Contingencies Team and the wider council has continued to discharge its responsibilities under the Civil Contingencies Act, 2004.

5. Implications and Risks

It is acknowledged that the ongoing response to Covid-19 and upcoming EU Transition means that additional concurrent severe weather incidents etc will be a stretch.

6. Financial Implications and Risks

There are no financial implications and risks directly arising from this report.

7. Sustainability N/A

There are no sustainability implications directly arising from this report.

8. Equality and Diversity

There are no equality and diversity implications directly arising from this report.

9. Section 17 Crime and Disorder considerations

There are no Section 17 Crime and Disorder implications directly arising from this report.