

22 July 2014**Agenda Item: 5****REPORT OF THE SERVICE DIRECTOR FOR
ACCESS AND PUBLIC PROTECTION****UPDATE ON EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AND REGISTRATION SERVICES****Purpose of the Report**

1. To provide an update on recent key activities and events in the work of the Emergency Planning Team and of Registration and Celebratory Services.

Information and Advice**Emergency Management**Internal Audit of Emergency Planning

2. Over recent weeks the County Councils' Internal Auditors have completed an audit of emergency planning, assessing controls in place to decide levels of assurance provided regarding business objectives and mitigation of risks. The auditors' opinion is that there is "substantial assurance" regarding the arrangements, and that risk levels are low.
3. The audit examined the risk of failure to:
 - respond effectively to emergencies (thereby increasing the risk of loss of life, injury and damage to property)
 - deliver statutory services under relevant legislation (in particular, failure to comply with the Civil Contingencies Act 2004)
 - properly engage with and support partners (since major emergencies require a multi-agency response)
 - properly prepare or understand emergency plans (recognising that proper planning helps improve performance).
4. The audit report identified that controls are currently effective in the following areas:
 - The County Council has detailed plans to respond to emergencies.
 - Robust quality assurance procedures are in place for our emergency plans. Each is reviewed systematically before being approved, and in place are subject to focus days by the Emergency Planning Team to ensure procedures remain up to date and officers are familiar with them.

- All emergency responses are independently reviewed by an NCC officer not involved in the initial response or an emergency planning professional from a partner organisation.
 - Many of the statutory responsibilities are discharged through the Local Resilience Forum (LRF) which produces a community risk register, multi-agency emergency plans and provides opportunities to develop links with partners.
5. The auditors identified only two control weaknesses. The first was the potential risk that in future *“NCC may be unable to respond to emergencies as required”*. It was noted that current levels of trained specialist staff are sufficient to respond to emergencies; however future reductions in capacity may impact the Council’s ability to cope effectively with the effects of a prolonged emergency. In view of this, the auditors have recommended that additional managers, from different sections of the authority, are given training to increase resilience in key areas.
 6. The second control weakness identified was the potential risk that *“During an extended emergency NCC services may have reduced capacity to deliver and manage core services”*. The auditors noted that following reductions at Group Manager and Service Director level, the overall proportion of senior staff involved in responding to major emergencies has increased. Part of the lessons learned from the flooding in the south of England earlier this year includes the impact on a local authority’s other services when staff are diverted to emergency response work for an extended period of time. Consequently, the auditors have recommended that additional staff should be trained to carry out specific emergency response roles. This would help allow rotation of senior staff between response work and substantive posts during an extended emergency.

Flood Emergency Planning

7. Further developments in respect of flood emergency planning include reinforcement of the support available to schools and advice has been given to Elected Members about procedures to respond to flooding in their area.
8. With regard to support for schools, the Emergency Planning Team has long encouraged and supported schools wishing to prepare their own emergency and business continuity plans. In recent times, this has been achieved primarily by providing guidance on ‘Coping with a school emergency’, which is available to them on the ‘Wired’ website. The guidance was designed to help schools to develop and review an emergency plan, and it includes information on business continuity arrangements to help a school minimise disruption from an incident. If a school wishes to assess the implications of different types of business continuity incident (such as loss of premises, suppliers or personnel) they will find a Business Impact Analysis (BIA) template is available on the website. Schools are reminded of this guidance annually, most recently by means of a letter in January this year. The Emergency Planning Team can assist a school in developing or reviewing their business continuity arrangements on a chargeable basis as part of the County Council’s wider services to schools.
9. Finally in respect of flooding, the Emergency Planning Team has completed the action arising from the April Community Safety Committee Meeting, when they were asked to provide information to all Elected Members about the emergency plans in place to respond to flooding that might occur in their area. The letter to each Elected Member

also offered meetings to discuss any concerns Members may have, and the opportunity to visit the emergency centre at County Hall.

Community Resilience

10. Community Resilience is defined as: “Communities and individuals harnessing local resources and expertise to help themselves in an emergency, in a way that complements the response of the emergency services” (*Cabinet Office, Strategic National Framework on Community Resilience*). Local communities have a wide range of skills, knowledge and resources to contribute in times of emergency, and playing a part in the emergency response can help a community to cope with, and recover from, an emergency. Involving the community can also release valuable resources from responding agencies that can then be utilised elsewhere.
11. The Local Resilience Forum response to this was the creation of the current LRF Community Resilience Plan, led by the County Council Emergency Planning Team. This provides a guide for responding agencies on how to engage with communities at times of emergency, and complements other initiatives such as template Community Emergency Plans and guidance. However, as the date approached for the scheduled review of this plan, agencies considered that community resilience initiatives have developed significantly since the Plan was written, and therefore is no longer required. Developments include that appropriate references have been made in other LRF plans, more communities have developed their own Community Emergency Plans, and there have been significant improvements in engagement with communities at risk of flooding.
12. It is now considered that interactions with affected communities are best reflected by inclusion in all LRF plans, where such contact is appropriate. For example, floods response arrangements reflect the presence in communities of flood wardens, community flood signage schemes, community flood actions groups, local flood forums and so forth. Also, it is recognised that the ‘Roles and Responsibilities’ sections of plans make local authorities responsible for maintaining contact with affected communities. Accordingly, rather than having a Community Resilience Plan for activation in emergencies, it is better to replace the existing plan with guidelines for LRF sub groups.
13. The Emergency Planning Team has continued to encourage and support examples of community resilience across Nottinghamshire. The most ambitious of these is the work of the Southwell Flood Forum, whose recent activities on this front have included a community resilience event at Southwell Library, attended by sixty visitors, plus a survey of local residents to ask how resilience they are to the effects of emergencies. The emergency planning team is contributing to the development of a Community Emergency Plan for the town and the flooded road closure signage scheme.

Electricity Plan

14. Small-scale power cuts can occur on a daily basis, and Distribution Network Operators, such as Western Power Distribution and Northern Powergrid, have well-rehearsed arrangements for responding quickly to these. More wide-spread and longer-lasting disruptions of electricity supplies are very rare, and require more comprehensive contingency planning. These have been supplemented now with the ‘LRF critical infrastructure plan for disruption of electricity supplies’. This documents the robust

emergency planning arrangements already in place, by the electricity industry, and provides an overview of how LRF partners will support the response. Work on the plan was led by the County Council Emergency Planning Team as chair of the LRF Critical Infrastructure Group.

15. During 2014, the group is also planning to complete plans for responding to disruption of water supplies and for disruption of gas supplies.

Safety at Sports Grounds

16. With a forthcoming Test Match and One-Day International to follow later in the summer, a match-day inspection was completed at the Twenty20 fixture on 21 June 2014. As has traditionally been the case, the Cricket Club was able to demonstrate very high standard of safety management.
17. The Annual Safety Audit Inspection of Southwell Racecourse was completed on 26 June 2014. Generally very good standards of safety management were found, with only two issues highlighted for the racecourse to address. Neither of these presented an evident risk to public safety, and the racecourse acted immediately to consider if any remedial action was necessary. The first recommendation was for the racecourse to make changes to the documentation of their legionella records. Secondly, further reassurance was requested regarding the continued structural integrity of a component of the grandstand. The racecourse management responded positively to this request and commissioned an invasive inspection of the components concerned to determine if any work was required.
18. As previously reported to the committee, the former Eastwood Town Football Club has recently left the Coronation Park football ground in Eastwood, and the General Safety Certificate for the ground is no longer in place. Broxtowe Borough Council are currently seeking a new operator to take over and run the ground, recognising that a good deal of work will be required by a new club to satisfy the physical and safety management requirements to enable spectators to be admitted in to the regulated stands.
19. With regard to Hucknall Town Football Club, the scheduled pre-season safety inspection of the club's main stand was not required this year, as the club advised that the stand was to be dismantled and removed. The completion of this work will be confirmed through a visit to the ground before the start of the new season. There will then no longer be a stand at the ground that comes under the definition of a 'regulated stand' and a General Safety certificate will no longer be required.

Registration and Celebratory Services

Update of Registration Records Project and proposal for a new Copy Certificates service

20. The registration service is in the process of amalgamating the historic registration records from five previous main district offices (Bulwell, Retford, Mansfield, Newark and West Bridgford) into a central repository based with Nottinghamshire's Archives. Completion of this process awaits construction of an extension to the current Archives building and is now expected to be concluded in spring 2016. Once established, the new repository will contain several thousand registers and will be the hub for the production of all birth,

marriage and death certificates requested by the public. Access to service can be in person at the repository, by telephone, by post or by application online. Customers will also be able to order certificates at their local main registration office.

21. Until the Archive extension is completed, Basford Registration Office in Bulwell is providing the temporary home of all records from the previous registration districts of Basford, Newark and Rushcliffe. The records for Mansfield and Bassetlaw are still housed at the Mansfield and Retford offices respectively. In the period prior to the move to the County Archives, the service is in the process of electronically scanning the current manual indexes in order to reduce the requirement for storage space at the Archives.
22. Current development plans include relocation of records from Retford to Bulwell, to make best use of available space at Bulwell, and release staff time at Retford for their principal role. Also, in the near future, it is intended to introduce online application and payments system for copies of certificates, which is expected to account for a large proportion of future applications.

Conversion of Civil Partnership to Marriages

23. During June 2014, the Government Minister for Equalities announced that from 10th December this year couples in England and Wales who have entered into a Civil Partnership over the past decade will be free to convert this into a marriage. The process of conversion will involve an appointment at a Register Office to sign a declaration in front of the Superintendent Registrar, confirming that they both wish to convert their Civil Partnership to a marriage.
24. The actual conversion process will involve just the couple themselves, and does not include a ceremony. The couple must make an appointment with our Superintendent Registrar, or a deputy, at our Register Office in Worksop, bringing with them appropriate identification documents, their Civil Partnership certificate, and the appropriate fee (which is yet to be confirmed by the government). There is no notice period, and the process is completed with a conversion form on the RON (Registration On-Line) system.
25. In Nottinghamshire, couples who wish to do so will also be able to book a celebratory ceremony at which their families and friends will be able to join them in confirming their commitment to one another.

Conferences at the Gilstrap

26. Registration service managers are keen to make best use of the facilities available at registration offices, particularly in respect of the larger ceremony rooms. One avenue is to offer these as meeting rooms and for small conferences. Currently, one external event has been completed for a three day event for 12 people, at Newark Registration Office. The service provides access to facilities including furniture, equipment and refreshments, and income from this will contribute to the income targets of the service. Future bookings include meetings for senior County Council management team events.

Update on Registration Accommodation

27. There are currently two registration office moves in progress, each seeking to improve the facilities offered to the communities they serve.
28. In Eastwood, the service for birth and death registrations is currently offered from a small room off the entrance foyer to Eastwood Health Clinic. This is a NHS building that is expected to be replaced in the near future due to its age, condition and likely cost of repair. It was proposed that services would be accommodated in modular buildings in the current car park for a period of two to three years whilst a new building is built on the existing site. However, an opportunity has arisen to avoid the disruption involved with remaining at the current site by making a permanent move to an office within the nearby D H Lawrence Heritage Centre. This has the advantage of being a particularly dignified environment for the nature of the registration services, and is already a licenced venue for civil marriages. Accordingly, the proposed relocation is being progressed by Property colleagues and the Finance and Property Committee.
29. The second relocation is of the service in Hucknall, where the current office is provided from the 'Under One Roof' facility. Approval was gained from Property and Finance Committee on 16th December 2013 to move the office to Ashfield District Council offices on Watnall Road, Hucknall, which is a more suitable premise for service to the public.

Online appointments system

30. As part of the NCC channel shift programme, customers are now able to book their own appointments for birth and death registrations using the County Council's website. The customer simply clicks on the link and is taken through a series of screens to complete the booking process. There is the option to receive an email confirmation of their appointment details including what they need to bring with them and the office location and appointment time.

Other Options Considered

31. Not applicable to this report.

Reasons for Recommendation/s

32. To update the Committee on this area of work contained within its remit.

Statutory and Policy Implications

33. This report has been compiled after consideration of implications in respect of finance, public sector equality duty, human resources, crime and disorder, human rights, the safeguarding of children, sustainability and the environment and those using the service and where such implications are material they are described in the report.

Financial Implications

34. The introduction of a copy certificate service for people whose certificates are held elsewhere will contribute to the income generation targets of the service.

RECOMMENDATION/S

- 1) It is recommended that the Community Safety Committee notes the content of the report.

PAUL MCKAY

Service Director, Promoting Independence and Public Protection

For any enquiries about this report please contact:

Robert Fisher

Group Manager, Emergency Management and Registration

Tel: 0115 977 3681, Email: robert.fisher@nottsc.gov.uk

Constitutional Comments

35. Constitutional Comments are not required as the report is for noting only.

Financial Comments

36. There are no financial implications arising from this report.

Background Papers

Internal Audit Report on Emergency Planning, 2014.

Electoral Division(s) and Member(s) Affected

All.

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