

28th January 2014**Agenda Item:10****REPORT OF THE SERVICE DIRECTOR FOR PROMOTING INDEPENDENCE
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**Gales and Tidal Surge – December 2013

2. Personnel from across the County Council were involved in the response to the storms and east coast tidal surge that affected the UK on Thursday 5 December. The emergency planning team worked with the police, Environment Agency, district and borough councils and other partners to ensure we were prepared should the tidal surge affect villages in north Nottinghamshire. An emergency planning officer joined police officers in West Stockwith in readiness to support the local community in case of flooding there.
3. Gale force winds caused problems for Highways colleagues with trees blown down on roads and County Hall was affected by a falling tree. At the same time the County Council was asked to be ready to provide mutual aid to Lincolnshire, should it become necessary to evacuate householders from Boston. The Council received the initial call from Lincolnshire with good notice, the request was clear and a point of contact for updates was provided. The emergency planning team arranged for three leisure centres to be put on standby to act as rest centres, and trained staff from the Adult Social Care, Health and Public Protection department and the voluntary agencies including the Red Cross, St John Ambulance and Royal Voluntary Service were ready to open these to receive evacuees. Nottinghamshire County Council also worked closely with Nottingham City Council, who arranged for transport to be on standby to collect any evacuees, and had sourced bedding and other supplies to ensure that the evacuees would be comfortable.
4. In the event, the east coast flooding was less severe than had been feared, and Lincolnshire County Council was able to provide sufficient local accommodation to

care for evacuees. Consequently, the support available from Nottinghamshire was stood down shortly after 10pm that evening.

5. The incident served to emphasise the importance of having trained staff available to respond when required. It also provided an opportunity to test the call-out aspects of emergency plans for Accommodation and for Mass Evacuation and Shelter.

Christmas and New Year storms and flooding across the UK

6. Although Nottinghamshire escaped the worst of the severe weather over the Christmas and New Year period this year, it is appropriate to note the impact elsewhere and the role of emergency management arrangements. In some parts of the UK high winds and heavy rainfall caused localised flooding and disrupted energy supplies. Approximately 300,000 homes suffered blackouts; and 50,000 spent Christmas Day without electricity. As part of the government's response to the effects of the bad weather, the Prime Minister asked the Department for Communities and Local Government to ensure that all councils have robust contingency plans in place for responding to bad weather and flooding.
7. In Nottinghamshire, planning continues throughout the year to have emergency plans in place to cope with bad weather, and to have arrangements in place to act promptly to put these into action when required. Pre-emptive actions when bad weather is anticipated include clearing the roads and checking in on vulnerable residents, and being prepared to divert staff from normal duties and place additional employees on standby to work with the emergency services to provide help to people who need it. These plans aim to ensure vulnerable people are not at risk and can access the council services they rely on.

Local incidents over Christmas and New Year

8. The emergency planning team maintains a 24 hour Duty Officer system 365 days each year, including all Bank Holidays. During the festive season this year there were only a small number of calls to this service, and although these were serious for the people involved, none related to a major incident. The most notable incident involved the temporary loss of water supply for customers of Severn Trent Water in the Loughborough area following a burst water main. The majority of people affected were in Leicestershire; however there was also disruption of supply to nearby Nottinghamshire communities.
9. The emergency planning team received notification of this incident from colleagues in the Leicestershire Local Resilience Forum, and details were passed on to the chairman of the Community Safety Committee, the Elected Member for the area affected and Rushcliffe Borough Council. Contact was established with Severn Trent Water, and assistance in accordance with existing emergency plans would have been provided to them had this been required.

Risk of Space Weather

10. Members may have seen recent media coverage that, from spring 2014, the Met Office will be offering regular forecasts of the weather in space. These forecasts are intended to enable public services and businesses to take action to ensure their operations are not unduly affected in the event of adverse space weather.
11. Associated with this, under the terms of the Civil Contingencies Act, the County Council (in concert with local partners) has a duty to assess the risk of any major emergency affecting Nottinghamshire. Where significant risk exists, the Act requires the preparation of effective emergency plans to mitigate the effects on the local community. Accordingly, a local risk assessment has been completed in respect of 'Severe Space Weather'.
12. Space weather is made up of various different types of solar phenomena, including coronal mass ejections, solar radiation storms, solar flares and solar radio bursts. Their size and interaction with the Earth can vary but all can potentially disrupt satellites, radio communications and power grids on earth. In 1989, space weather caused a loss of power in Quebec for 9 hours, and in 2003 a solar storm interrupted 47 satellites. The reasonable worst-case scenario for emergency planning in the UK is based upon space weather of approximately the same magnitude as the 'Carrington Event' of 1859 (which was the largest solar storm event ever recorded), lasting for 1-2 weeks. The effects of solar activity of this magnitude are likely to be felt globally, although the severity of impact will vary with location. Disruption of electricity supply is possible, until the local Distribution Network Operators and National Grid could arrange for alternative supplies such as interconnection to other substations, or deployment of mobile electricity generation. Also, intermittent interruptions to mobile telephones is possible. Disruptions to satellite services, including interruptions and degradations of GPS signals is likely to cause difficulties for emergency services as GPS is an integral component of modern automated dispatch systems.
13. Taking account of these factors, the overall risk of 'Severe Space Weather' affecting Nottinghamshire is assessed as High. As a natural phenomenon, it is likely to occur at some time, and when it does the disruption could be significant. However, this risk is mitigated by the existing business continuity plans of local organisations, plus specific communications emergency plans, and the generic Major Incident Response Plan of the Local Resilience Forum.

Effusive Volcanoes

14. Also in the news recently, there have been significant eruptions of active volcanoes around the world. One at the south-east crater of Mount Etna in Italy and another at Mount Sinabung in Indonesia, where eleven deaths have been attributed to toxic fallout. In accordance with the requirements of the Civil Contingencies Act, the risk of effects in Nottinghamshire of severe effusive (gas rich) volcanic eruption overseas has been evaluated and is included in the local Community Risk Register.
15. In April 2010, the Icelandic volcano Eyjafjallajökull erupted, creating a cloud of ash over much of Northern Europe. Fears that this may damage aircraft engines led to the closure of much of the airspace over the UK by the Civil Aviation

Authority. In May 2011, another Icelandic volcano, Grímsvötn, erupted, and disruption to air travel was experienced again. Although the impact of both these recent eruptions was minor in Nottinghamshire, neither was of the magnitude of the largest reasonable event that can be anticipated.

16. The reasonable worst case scenario involves a volcanic eruption generating large volumes of gas and ash over a five month period affecting the UK and Northern Europe. An eruption of this type could generate significant amounts of acid rain and fine ash particles. These could be problematic for asthma sufferers and worsen the clinical condition of patients with other chronic respiratory disease. The prolonged shutdown of UK airspace would lead to total cessation of the UK aviation industry, and wider impact on the economy due to the lack of air transport, possibly leading to the closure of a significant number of local businesses, as well as redundancies in the affected sectors. In Nottinghamshire, Sherwood Forest and other important areas of forest may be affected by acid rain and local tourism would be affected. Increased demand for social care due to pressure on the NHS may also occur. Some residents of the UK may be stranded abroad and unable to return home for some weeks. This may in turn cause some business continuity issues for organisations with key staff absent. There may be an impact on schools due to teachers stranded abroad, and also loss of school days due to illness of pupils and staff with respiratory conditions. Further social impacts will follow on from economic impacts.
17. In view of the factors outlined above, the overall risk of a 'severe effusive volcanic eruption overseas' affecting Nottinghamshire is assessed as High. The risk is mitigated by existing business continuity plans of local organisations and the generic Major Incident Response Plan of the Local Resilience Forum. The transportation impacts and economic effects are also mitigated by good rail connections in the area. Resilience will also be improved in the near future by the upgrading of the A453 improving road transport links.

Safety of Sports Grounds

18. A match-day safety inspection was completed for the FA Cup match between Nottingham Forest and West Ham United, and the inspector was able to report that exemplary safety management practice was displayed by the club's Safety Officer and his team. The high standard of safety management for this high-profile televised fixture gives confidence that, from a crowd safety perspective, the club is well placed to enter the premiership if promoted this season.
19. Similarly, there are no major safety-related concerns in relation to Mansfield Town Football Club at present. The most recent match-day inspection report for the club notes very good safety management overall and that the stadium is in good condition.
20. Inspections have also been completed at Hucknall Town and Eastwood Town, where safety management is sufficient for the modest numbers of spectators attending. Hucknall Town's progress towards a possible new stadium is being followed to ensure that any plans conform to Safety of Sports Grounds requirements.

Registration and Celebratory Services

Nationality Checking Service

21. In November, the Registration Service commenced the new Nationality Checking Service (NCS) for people who are applying for British Citizenship. This assists applicants to make a good quality and complete application, which the Home Office Nationality Group will be able to process quickly. Using this service means that citizenship application forms are checked by Registrars who have been trained by the Home Office and are registered with the Office of the Immigration Services Commissioner. The benefits of the service include that people do not need to send away original documents (such as their passport).
22. This provides the County Council with the opportunity to assist applicants at the outset of the citizenship process, as well as at its conclusion, when they attend one of the Council's citizenship ceremonies.
23. Appointments are currently being offered at the registration offices in Newark, Retford, Carlton and Mansfield. Appointments are booked through the Business Support team for the registration service at County Hall, where a dedicated Citizenship and Nationality Checking Service telephone number has been created and publicised. Publicity has also been sent to relevant voluntary sector groups and local colleges, and is featured on the County Council's website news pages.

Same sex marriages

24. The Marriage (Same Sex Couples) Act 2013 received Royal Assent in July last year, and included provisions enabling same sex couples to marry in a civil ceremony and for civil partners to convert their partnership into a marriage, should they wish to do so. As part of implementation of the Act, the Government has now announced the timetable for the Act, in particular that the first notices of marriage can be taken from Thursday 13 March 2014, with the first marriages taking place from Saturday 29 March. Same sex couples can already make a booking for a ceremony even though they cannot yet give notice.
25. Unfortunately, there is no confirmed timetable as yet for couples who wish to convert an existing civil partnership into a marriage. The government has announced that, for this, the relevant provisions will be implemented separately before the end of 2014. They advise that this is due to the need to develop new procedures, design new forms, change IT systems, provide training and make necessary legislative changes. It will then be unnecessary for a civil partnership to be dissolved before conversion to a marriage.
26. Registrars are currently awaiting government advice on the legal wording for future marriage ceremonies. At present, registrars explain, at the outset of a civil marriage ceremony that "marriage, according to the law of this country, is the union of one man with one woman." The government has said this will now be changed as part of the work of implementing the provisions of the Act.

27. Premises the County Council has approved for hosting marriages and civil partnerships, such as stately homes, large hotels and sports grounds are all automatically approved for holding of marriages of same sex couples.

Medical Examiners Proposals

28. Members will recall from earlier reports that the Department of Health is currently developing proposals to simplify and strengthen the process of death certification as part of its response to the recommendations of the Shipman Inquiry. It is expected that the changes will require the certified cause of all deaths that are not investigated by a coroner to be independently scrutinized and confirmed by a locally appointed 'Medical Examiner'. The Shipman Inquiry was an independent public inquiry into the issues surrounding the case of the GP Harold Shipman, who was convicted of murdering 15 patients during his time as a General Practitioner. The inquiry subsequently established that he committed some 250 murders.
29. Although there has been slippage in the timetable for consultation on specific proposals, the Government has announced that it remains firmly committed to reform of the death certification system, in particular the introduction of the role of medical examiner to ensure that every death receives an appropriate level of scrutiny. They advise work is continuing to develop proposals for the financial arrangements accompanying the new service, and that a consultation document will be issued as soon as proposals are finalised. There will then be a 12 week consultation period, ahead of implementation of the reforms in October 2014.
30. It is anticipated that central government will fund set-up costs, under the 'new burdens' doctrine. Thereafter it will be self-funding based on fees paid by the public. The likely changes will require coroners to carry out more inquests than currently, and the cost of this will fall to local authorities. It is also expected that the new arrangements will necessitate changes in the procedures registrars follow for registering a death.

Statutory and Policy Implications

31. This report has been compiled after consideration of implications in respect of crime and disorder, finance, human resources, human rights, the public sector equality duty, safeguarding of children and vulnerable adults, service users, sustainability and the environment and ways of working and where such implications are material they are described below. Appropriate consultation has been undertaken and advice sought on these issues as required.

RECOMMENDATION/S

- 1) It is recommended that the Community Safety Committee notes the Emergency Planning Team's response to recent incidents and risks affecting

Nottinghamshire, and notes the timetable for delivery of same sex marriages by the Registration Service.

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Constitutional Comments

32. As this report is for noting only, no constitutional comments are required.

Financial Comments (KAS 15/01/2014)

33. There are no financial implications contained within this report.

Background Papers

Except for previously published documents, which will be available elsewhere, the documents listed here will be available for inspection in accordance with Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972.

None.

Electoral Division(s) and Member(s) Affected

All.

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