



Belfast City Council

Report to:	Strategic Policy & Resources
Subject:	Emergency Planning Update
Date:	22 nd November 2013
Reporting Officer:	Siobhan Toland, Head of Environmental Health Service, ext 3281
Contact Officer:	David Neill, Emergency coordination Officer, ext 3519

1	Relevant Background Information
1.1	Committee is requested to note the current position on emergency planning matters, especially with regard to the increase in the volume and the complexity of the work involved in delivering this valuable service. There has been a significant increase in the number of major operations and events requiring detailed planning, coordination and often response. Many of these operations and activations involve the rapid redeployment of Council resources, the use of the Emergency Coordination Centre and the setting up of Emergency Support Centres for people displaced from their homes.
1.2	The emergency planning and response activities of the Council have reached a level where it is now regarded as a leader in assisting the city to prepare for and respond to major disruption and emergencies. It also acts as key co-ordinator and responder, particularly in situations involving extreme flooding and other types of severe weather and also during prolonged emergency evacuations where, along with other agencies, it provides shelter, bedding, hygiene facilities and food for displaced residents and visitors.
1.3	Much has been achieved through partnership working both across Council departments and through the work of the Belfast Resilience Forum. This has enabled the Council to fulfil its requirements under the NI Civil Contingencies framework and offer a valuable civil protection service.

2	Key Issues
2.1	<p>Work Load In terms of proactive work this year there was a significant amount of planning and coordination required for the G8 Summit, the World Police and Fire Games and St Patrick's Day. In addition there was an increase in the reactive work, with</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ 50+ Security Alerts: the majority requiring the establishment of community support centers ➤ Civil Unrest: Multiple rioting incidents requiring recovery work by Cleansing staff (including a number with requests from PSNI Silver requiring co-ordination by ECO) ➤ 4 Flooding incidents: including one involving Westlink closure ➤ Severe Winter Weather/Spring Blizzard: requiring snow clearance and community support ➤ 2 Gas Leaks: requiring evacuation and establishment of support centers ➤ 1 Major Fire: requiring evacuation and community support ➤ Protests at City Hall: requiring combined ECC/Security operations
2.2	<p>Community Emergency Plans The community emergency plan for Knocknagoney was completed with flood risk being the main issue. The Emergency planning team is also working with the local community to complete the plan for Orangefield and will be developing plans in other areas in the south and west of the city, namely Sicily and Riverdale / Orchardville.</p>
2.3	<p>Flood Response Arrangements The sandbag protocol has now been regionalised and most councils have to sign up to it along with NI Water, Roads Service and Rivers Agency. Arrangements with Parks staff are working well. Staff delivered 355 sandbags to concerned residents over the summer period and there is agreement that Parks staff will help to support Rivers Agency during flooding responses. Temporary flood alleviation work on the Knock River system (enlarged culvert, excavated water holding area, Council ECO linked into warning telemetry, new temp flood barrier) has helped prevent flooding and will eventually solve flooding issues along this corridor. Disposal of sandbags continues to be an issue which needs addressed due to landfill charges. A possible sustainable solution would be for Parks staff to use the sand for spreading on park lands.</p>
2.4	<p>Flood Alleviation Improvement Project The flood alleviation improvement project has been awarded to Turner & Townsend with the consultants URS Scott-Wilson taking on the work locally. Work is at the early stage of data collection and analysis and the final report expected before the end of the year.</p>
2.5	<p>Emergency on-call arrangements Because of the significant increase in the volume of out of hours work in emergency planning the sustainability of existing emergency on call arrangements is becoming a concern. This duty has been covered over the years by the ECO on a 24/7 basis. The Head of Service is proposing to review the existing arrangements with a view to considering if there is a more effective way of responding to routine security alerts in the community that require evacuation.</p>
2.6	<p>Winter preparedness The Emergency Planning Team and Cleansing Services will be working to ensure</p>

	that the Council is prepared to report appropriately should there be severe weather over the winter period. We have a protocol with the Roads Service on gritting of key pavement in the city, have access to supplies of grit and have acquired equipment to assist in this process.
2.7	Members' Working Group An all party working group had been established a number of years ago to improve the Council's response to flooding. However, this was later stood down after action plans had been developed and were completed. There has now been a call through the Health and Environmental Services Committee for an Emergency Planning Members' Working Group to be re-established given the wider range of emergencies the Council is now dealing with.

3.	Resource Implications
3.1	HR Implications – None.
3.2	Financial implications Department of the Environment Local Government Policy Division provide grant aid for the EP (50% match-funded by BCC). The money received from DOE is agreed and allocated annually; which can make estimating and planning difficult. We aim to keep under review liaison and call out arrangements with the respective stakeholders and may bring further reports to Strategic Policy and Resources in respect of this.
3.3	Equipment Implications – None.

4	Equality and Good Relations Considerations
4.1	The Council's Emergency Plan was reviewed and updated in 2012, it was equality screened at that time.

5	Recommendation and decision
5.1	Note the significant increase in the volume of work and complexity of the emergency planning services.
5.2	Agree that the Members' Working Group on Emergency Planning be re-constituted.

6	Decision Tracking
6.1	Not required

Key to abbreviations

ECC – Emergency Coordination Centre
ECO – Emergency Coordination Officer
DOE – Department of the Environment

Documents attached

Emergency Planning Update Report – Oct 2013