

HERTFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

WEDNESDAY 9 JANUARY 2019 10.00AM

BACKGROUND PAPER FOR HERTFORDSHIRE LOCAL RESILIENCE FORUM (LRF) TOPIC GROUP

Author/s: Darren Mclatchey – Station Commander Resilience
Author's telephone number: 01992 556092
Owen Tomlinson – LRF Manager
Author's telephone number: 01992 555959

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1.1 To respond to the questions posed as part of Hertfordshire County Council's Overview & Scrutiny Committee (OSC) examination of the Hertfordshire Local Resilience Forum (LRF) and the effectiveness of the multi-agency response to major incidents in Hertfordshire.

2. BACKGROUND

2.1 In December 2017 an OSC topic group looked at the business continuity arrangements within Hertfordshire County Council during a major incident. During the discussions it became clear that a further topic group should be convened to look at the multi-agency response to major incidents.

2.2 Members were also given an opportunity to observe a multi-agency live exercise in June 2018 and a multi-agency tabletop exercise in December 2018 as part of the process.

2.2 Terms of the scrutiny were agreed by OSC on 8 November 2018. The objective is to examine the effectiveness of the LRF in preparing and planning for major incidents across Hertfordshire.

2.2 This report provides Members with further information in response to the questions listed on the scoping document as detailed at Item 3 on the agenda.

2.4 The topic group will hear evidence from a number of multi-agency partners as well as members of CPD (Community Protection Directorate) to help identify how multi-agency preparation and planning is undertaken in order to ensure an effective multi-agency response to a major incident.

3. How well does Herts LRF comply with the Cabinet Office Resilience Standards?

3.1 The first 12 National Resilience Standards were published by the Cabinet Office in July 2018. The National Resilience Standards establish a consistent means for LRF's and the constituent local responder organisations to assure capability and overall level of readiness, and guide continuous improvement

against mandatory requirements, good and leading practice, as set out under the Civil Contingencies Act (2004) and other relevant legislation.

3.2 The first 12 standards cover the following subjects:

- LRF governance and support arrangements;
- Local risk assessment;
- Communicating risks to the public;
- Emergency planning;
- Interoperability;
- Training;
- Exercising;
- Business continuity management;
- Business continuity promotion;
- Strategic Co-ordination Centre (SCC): preparation and operation;
- Strategic Co-ordinating Groups (SCG): preparation and activation;
- Local recovery management.

3.3 Each standard outlines a desired outcome, a summary of legal duties, examples of how to achieve good and leading practice plus details of further guidance and supporting documentation.

3.4 The standards complement existing Civil Contingencies Act (2004) guidance (i.e. Emergency Preparedness, Emergency Response & Recovery). At present there is no Cabinet Office compliance or inspection regime and LRFs are encouraged to use the standards as either a self-assessment/peer review tool or as guidance.

3.5 The LRF has submitted constructive feedback and comments on all 16 draft standards that were released for consultation. The challenging and unrealistic Cabinet Office deadlines being one of the issues being fed back.

3.6 A key theme throughout the LRF's feedback was the apparent imbalance between the expectations of LRFs, a partnership arrangement with no power to direct its members, and the mandatory duties of individual Category 1 and 2 responders under the Civil Contingencies Act (2004).

3.7 The LRF's response to publication of the first 12 standards was discussed at the Executive Group on 5 October. Conscious of the need to take a pragmatic and proportionate approach it was agreed that the LRF should undertake a two-stage gap analysis. Stage one to identify any urgent issues requiring immediate attention. Stage two to be more thorough consideration and asking questions such as what exactly is required, does the LRF already do it and are there any areas for improvement?

3.8 At the time of writing the LRF had completed stage one, although the findings are still to be reported back to the Executive Group.

4. Does the structure and governance of the LRF ensure effective cooperation and response to incidents?

- 4.1 The LRF constitutes the principal mechanism for multi-agency co-operation under the Civil Contingencies Act (2004). It provides a structure within which multi-agency emergency responders can effectively co-operate with each other. It is not a statutory body, nor does it have powers to direct its members.
- 4.2 The Cabinet Office document - The role of Local Resilience Forums: A reference guide outlines the purpose of LRFs in more detail.
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-role-of-local-resilience-forums-a-reference-document>
- 4.3 Chaired by Hertfordshire County Council, the LRF places a strong emphasis on establishing and maintaining relationships and on working in a multi-agency environment in its widest sense. The LRF prides itself on having a relatively streamlined (both in terms of size and budget) yet effective and efficient structure.
- 4.4 The LRF's Strategic Business Plan is produced annually and provides an overarching framework for multi-agency co-operation and co-operation in the event of a major incident in Hertfordshire.
- 4.5 The Strategic Business Plan outlines membership, group structure, budget details and three yearly strategic and annual key objectives. It also outlines the LRF's approach to risk assessment, multi-agency emergency plans, learning and development, community resilience and performance monitoring.
- 4.6 The LRF consists of four groups:
- **Executive Group** – provides strategic leadership and direction to the LRF;
 - **Management Group** – manages the efficient and effective running of the LRF on a day-to-day basis;
 - **Response & Planning Group** – ensures the LRF has robust plans and arrangements in place to deal with a wide range of emergencies.
 - **People & Communities Group** – ensures that the needs of individuals and various communities are central to multi-agency response arrangements and to encourage greater resilience and preparedness.
- 4.7 The LRF also produces an annual performance report which outlines organisations engagement with the LRF, any current concerns and a summary of activities against the annual key objectives.
- 4.8 During 2017/18 the LRF was subject to an independent peer review. The review found that the LRF is fulfilling its duties in accordance with the Civil Contingencies Act (2004), working to best practice, had the support of members in terms of the way it is managed and demonstrated that the planning work it does fully supports an effective multi-agency response.

- 4.9 Whilst the peer review identified no immediate areas of concern it did identify room for improvement in terms of wider cross-border and regional collaboration, engagement with district/borough councils and in maintaining robust evidence and audit trails.
- 4.10 At the beginning of 2018 the LRF's Executive Group also started to consider potential improvements to the way the LRF operated. As well as signalling a move towards a greater assurance role it was also an opportunity to draw together continuous improvements and processes that had evolved in recent years, to formally address ongoing engagement concerns, to improve training and exercising and to ensure that all LRF activities are driven by risk priorities. A change of key LRF personnel in the summer of 2018 and the introduction of fresh eyes enhanced this process even further.

5. How consistently does Herts LRF identify priorities from the community risk register in collaboration with multi-agency partners and implement effective plans?

- 5.1 Multi-agency co-operation in maintaining a Community Risk Register is a statutory duty under the Civil Contingencies Act (2004) and the LRF produces a Hertfordshire Risk Register.
- 5.2 The Hertfordshire Risk Register is maintained by the LRF's Response & Planning Group whilst responsibility for overseeing the process and for ensuring that high and very high risks are addressed sits with the LRF's Executive Group.
- 5.3 The LRF also produces a simplified public version of the Hertfordshire Risk Register in line with Civil Contingencies Act (2004) requirements.
- 5.4 The Hertfordshire Risk Register draws upon those hazards and threats identified in the National Risk Assessment that are considered to be relevant to the Hertfordshire context.
- 5.5 Each entry on the Hertfordshire Risk Register identifies a specific hazard or threat and assigns an overall risk rating based on likelihood and impact scoring. Also included are details of multi-agency mitigation measures and a revised rating.
- 5.6 In recent years the LRF has made a conscious effort to ensure that multi-agency activities including the development of plans as well as training and exercising are prioritised according to the highest risks on the Hertfordshire Risk Register.
- 5.7 This process is undertaken on an ongoing basis by the LRF's Management Group who maintain the plan review and exercise monitor. The monitor maps multi-agency emergency plans to specific hazards and risks and is used to set priorities particularly in relation to future plan reviews and testing.
- 5.8 It is worth noting that the LRF maintains a small number of generic multi-agency emergency plans that are not directly linked to risk or plans that are required by legislation other than the Civil Contingencies Act (2004).

5.9 The reactive nature of responding to incidents and other emerging situations or risks means that the LRF also needs to maintain a flexible and agile approach to prioritisation.

6. Are members of the LRF appropriately engaged and represented to ensure an effective response in the event of an incident?

6.1 The LRF is a multi-agency partnership comprising organisations from a wide range of different sectors that may have a role to play in responding to a major incident:

- Emergency services;
- Local authorities;
- Health organisations;
- Utility, transport and telecommunications companies;
- Voluntary organisations and community groups;
- Local business community;
- Central government, military and government agencies.

6.2 At the Executive and Management Group level formal arrangements are in place to ensure that all Category 1 responders are appropriately represented. In addition there is also representation from the voluntary and community sector, local business, Government and the armed forces.

6.3 The effectiveness of the LRF to a certain extent depends on continuity and consistency at the Executive and Management Group levels. Coping with increasing pressure on multi-agency resources and regular changing of roles, particularly within the emergency services can be challenging at times.

6.4 Membership of the LRF's Response & Planning Group or People & Communities Group is open to all LRF organisations although each group has a core membership of Category 1 responders.

6.5 The Executive Group applies the right to invite, right to attend principle with regards to Category 2 responder engagement. However a small number of Category 2 responders sit on the LRF's Response & Planning Group in their own right.

6.6 The LRF's annual performance report records attendance and engagement. This has remained relatively consistent in recent years with well attended meetings and a healthy attendance rate particularly at the Executive and Management Group levels.

6.7 In recent years the LRF's annual performance report has also highlighted concerns around engagement from two sectors in particular, health and district/borough councils. Concerns regarding health largely arose due to restructuring and changes of key personnel whilst district/borough council concerns are based on a more general apathy and lack of appetite to engage pro-actively with the LRF amongst some district/borough councils.

- 6.8 Concerns regarding the level of district/borough council were highlighted in the 2016/17 performance report and despite efforts to address the situation via the County Chief Executive's Group concerns were again expressed in the 2017/18 performance report in relation to a lack of effective district/borough council engagement and representation.
- 6.9 One of the key findings from the independent peer review of the LRF undertaken in 2017/18 was that more could be done to maximise engagement with all district/borough councils whether through direct involvement or more effective representation arrangements.
- 6.10 One of the drivers for seeking to improve the way the LRF operates is awareness on the part of both the Executive and Management Group of the current limitations of representative arrangements within a number of sectors. By revisiting these arrangements it is hoped to strengthen and improve the effectiveness of LRF representation and engagement.
- 6.11 In terms of an effective response to major incidents there needs to be a distinction made between the day-to-day work of the LRF and response arrangements. The attendees of regular LRF meetings are not necessarily the same people who would be representing their organisations at a Tactical or Strategic Co-ordinating Group.
- 6.12 This puts an onus on individual organisations to identify suitably empowered representatives, to ensure they are trained and competent and to ensure that LRF related business and awareness is cascaded internally as appropriate.

Glossary of Terms

Category 1 responder – a person or body listed in Part 1 of Schedule 1 to the Civil Contingencies Act. These bodies are likely to be at the core of the response to most emergencies. As such, they are subject to the full range of civil protection duties in the Act.

Category 2 responder – a person or body listed in Part 3 of Schedule 1 to the Civil Contingencies Act. These are co-operating responders who are less likely to be involved in the heart of multi-agency planning work, but will be heavily involved in preparing for incidents affecting their sectors. The Act requires them to co-operate and share information with other Category 1 and 2 responders.

Civil Contingencies Act (2004) – Act of 2004 which established a single framework for Civil Protection in the United Kingdom. Part 1 of the Act establishes a clear set of roles and responsibilities for Local Responders; Part 2 of the Act establishes emergency powers.

<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2004/36/contents>

Community Risk Register – a register communicating the assessment of risks within a Local Resilience Area which is developed and published as a basis for informing local communities and directing civil protection workstreams.

Hazard – accidental or naturally occurring (i.e., non-malicious) event or situation with the potential to cause death or physical or psychological harm, damage or losses to property, and/or disruption to the environment and/or to economic, social and political structures.

Local Resilience Forum – process for bringing together all the category 1 and 2 responders within a police force area for the purpose of facilitating co-operation in fulfilment of their duties under the Civil Contingencies Act.

National Risk Assessment – the full and classified assessment of the likelihood and potential impact of a range of different risks that might directly affect the UK.

Risk – measure of the significance of a potential emergency in terms of its assessed likelihood and impact.

Strategic Co-ordination Centre – the location at which the Strategic Co-ordinating Group meets.

Strategic Co-ordinating Group – multi-agency body responsible for co-ordinating the joint response to an emergency at the local strategic level.

Tactical Co-ordinating Group – a multi-agency group of tactical commanders that meets to determine, co-ordinate and deliver the tactical response to an emergency.

Threat – intent and capacity to cause loss of life or create adverse consequences to human welfare (including property and the supply of essential services and commodities), the environment or security.