HERTFORDSHIRE LOCAL RESILIENCE FORUM

To examine the effectiveness of the Hertfordshire Local Resilience Forum (LRF) in planning and responding to incidents affecting the communities of Hertfordshire

Report of the Topic Group

9 January 2019
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Glossary

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<tr>
<td>LRF</td>
<td>Local Resilience Forum</td>
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<tr>
<td>HCC</td>
<td>Hertfordshire County Council</td>
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<tr>
<td>MiS</td>
<td>Member’s Information System</td>
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<td>WHHT</td>
<td>West Herts Hospitals Trust</td>
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REPORT OF THE LOCAL RESILIENCE FORUM TOPIC GROUP

1.0 Purpose of Report

1.1 This is the report of the Hertfordshire Local Resilience Forum (LRF) Topic Group. The Group investigated the effectiveness of the LRF in planning and responding to incidents affecting the communities of Hertfordshire.

1.2 The scoping document can be seen at Appendix 1. Associated papers issued to Members can be found at: Resilience Scrutiny papers

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 That the Hertfordshire Local Resilience Forum (LRF) works with Category 1 responders, where there has been limited active engagement, as a matter of highest priority. The purpose of this is to encourage increased attendance and active engagement with LRF activities such as training events and planning meetings to ensure countywide resilience for major incidents. Increased activity from Category 1 members should be achieved by April 2019. (3.9, 3.10, 3.11, 3.12, 4.3, 4.4)

2.2 That the LRF works with Category 1 responders to take ownership of and formalise a group, whose membership should include all Members from all Local Authorities and be made up of senior practitioners who have the authority to make resource decisions. One of the main outcomes of this group should be preparation for succession planning. This group should be formed and have held a meeting, exercise or training event by June 2019. (3.13, 3.14, 4.5, 4.6)

2.3 That there is an increased training offer made available to county, district and borough councillors. Events should be delivered co-operatively between the LRF and the Hertfordshire local authorities. A programme of training should be developed with communications in the event of incidents as the immediate priority. Future training and engagement needs should include input from a member of the topic group. The first training event should be delivered by June 2019. (3.15, 3.16, 3.17, 4.7, 4.8)

3.0 Evidence

3.1 Central Government instigated a national requirement for Local Resilience Forums (LRF) to be set up through the implementation of the Civil Contingencies Act 2004. While the Act defines a series of duties that statutorily require LRFs to operate across the country, however the bodies themselves do not have any statutory powers.
3.2 All LRFs have a defined region which is mapped by police force areas. Across the country there are 38 LRFs with a number of different organisational structures. In Hertfordshire the Council has taken on the leading role for the LRF and as a result the LRF manager is based in the Council’s resilience team.

3.3 Although most LRFs have a different structure, the majority have the Chief Fire Officer acting as the Chair, which is the case for Hertfordshire. The LRF as a body is formed of Category 1 responders who are organisations within the LRF region that respond to an incident. However, because of the absence of any powers, the LRF is not able to demand forum members to take particular actions.

3.4 The LRF has a formal structure which has four key groups:

- **Executive group** – responsible for strategic leadership and direction
- **Management group** – responsible for the day to day running of the LRF
- **Response and Planning group** – responsible for putting robust plans in place to deal with incidents
- **People and Communities group** – responsible for taking into account the individual and community need when incidents occur

3.5 Category 1 responders and supporting organisations are represented on these four groups and most representatives have responsibilities within their own organisations for specific resilience actions outside of the LRF. The Hertfordshire LRF as a forum holds the risk register for the county and identifies priorities, capability gaps and opportunities for multi-agency work. This is drawn down from the National Risk Assessment and delivered based on local need.

3.6 It was re-iterated by the deputy Joint Regional Liaison Officer, as commented on in the background report, that while there were some areas for improvement, in their expert opinion that Hertfordshire’s LRF is well prepared to handle serious incidents within the county as well as in supporting neighbours.

3.7 It was also shared with topic group Members that when considering local need this does include the border regions within the county as well as how neighbouring LRFs themselves respond to incidents. There have been occasions where major incidents in one county have drawn in support from LRFs in other counties. Therefore cross LRF communications are key to good resilience. It was stated that while the Hertfordshire LRF does communicate with neighbours, this could be increased and will be raised in a series of regional events that the LRF Chair is attending in the near future.

3.8 To prepare for border and internal incidents the LRF conducts training exercises that put responders in realistic scenarios and allows them to
rehearse their responses in a multi-agency environment. However, as noted in the peer review active contributions are not consistent from all forum members. Ahead of this scrutiny, the Chairman of the Topic Group took part in a table-top training exercise run by the LRF.

3.9 Increasing the active engagement and contributions from all forum members is a challenge and the lack of power possessed by the LRF means that it is difficult to mandate any activities. Topic group Members were told that the Category 1 responders can perceive LRF activities as less important because of this lack of authority.

3.10 While it is not possible to have all Category 1 responders at every training event or meeting, there is still the possibility to share the learning. Officers stated that this could be achieved by a representative attending for a group of similar organisations such as districts and boroughs or voluntary organisations and then sharing the information at a later date. However, concerns were shared by officers that the LRF is not as high on the list of priorities for some forum members. Therefore, the LRF is not able to gain assurances that all representatives have heard the information and if they have that they respond accordingly.

3.11 While having a large number of Category 1 partners in the LRF can be challenging to accommodate, there is an expectation that they all actively engage so as to provide a reliable co-ordinated response in the event of an incident.

3.12 The peer review of the LRF was overwhelmingly positive, however it did identify improvements that could be made by having all members of the LRF be further involved rather than repeatedly sending the same lone representative.

3.13 To increase the engagement, understanding and ownership of responsibilities in an incident, officers identified an opportunity as well as a possible gap in the resilience of individuals involved in the LRF. Most members of the LRF are chief executives officers and so having alternative, accountable personnel involved will increase ownership of LRF involvement and resilience of available officers in an incident.

3.14 So that increased engagement and wider officer involvement provides a positive contribution it is necessary that these individuals would take part in training exercises so that they are prepared to make appropriate decisions with authority.

3.15 When discussing training opportunities for a more resilient network, officers acknowledged that the LRF had not appropriately considered how they could provide information and training in communication of incidents. As a result, officers made an offer to Members to the topic group that the County Council would develop a training programme for all county councillors.
3.16 Officers made an offer to Members that they could utilise a wide range of opportunities to deliver training such as Member development days in the form of classroom drop-in sessions. Members have had similar interactive workshop sessions with officers on cyber security. Further topics that Members were offered are on the use of social media in an incident and the use of the Member information System to access a wide range of important information. The next development days are 7 June and 8 May. Access to Member training information is currently stored on the Member Information System (MiS).

3.17 Additionally, officers of the LRF stated that it would also be beneficial to understand from county, district and borough councillors what support they could best gain from the LRF. Training on the use of ResilienceDirect, the national resilience information database, and what information would be most useful for members to access through it.

4.0 Conclusions

4.1 Members were pleased to hear that the Chair of the Hertfordshire LRF has engaged with neighbouring LRFs and has put forward a suggestion to have a regional strategic leads meeting, so that there is more consistent engagement with co-ordinators across county boundary lines.

4.2 Members were also pleased to note the view of the deputy Joint Regional Liaison Officer, who conducted the 2017/2018 peer review that Hertfordshire’s LRF is well prepared to handle a serious incident.

4.3 While the preparedness of the LRF was seen as a significant positive by Members, they were however deeply concerned that in the event of an incident that not all responders would be prepared. Members believed that all LRF members needed to understand their role in the countywide response by actively engaging with the LRF and the meetings and training events that it runs.

4.4 Members saw that it was imperative that those partners who have not actively engaged with the LRF should be targeted to improve their involvement and attendance at training events and meetings. Members believed that to have a fully responsive LRF, all parties need to maintain LRF involvement as high priority work and should be engaged by the LRF to be encouraged to make this change.

4.5 While there may not be capacity to have every LRF member at every meeting, Members supported the suggestion of introducing an additional group to the LRF. Topic group Members viewed this group as essential for long term resilience so that it was not solely reliant on one individual from each organisation.
4.6 However, it was seen as vital that all alternative representatives have suitable authority to make decisions in the event of an incident. Additionally, to make sure that all representatives are prepared to make decisions, they must attend LRF training and meetings and that the Chair of the LRF makes contact with relevant organisations so that the appropriate representatives are attending.

4.7 Members were encouraged by the continual resource given to training LRF partners and pleased that this should extend to councillors. Topic group Members welcomed the offer of developing an appropriate training and development resource from the County Council’s officers. It was agreed that this should be delivered in a number of ways such as workshops and should also be included in Member induction going forward.

4.8 To enable Councillors to counteract rumoured items that are shared within communities, topic group Members believed that they need to be appropriately prepared to respond to community and local media questions. This preparation should be supported by social media training as well as the use of ResilienceDirect, where general incident information and media statements can be uploaded to avoid confused messages.

4.9 Outside of the County Council offer, Members identified an opportunity to engage with LRF officers so that they could understand the benefit of utilising Members to share important information to the public about incidents. To this end LRF officers should meet with county and district/borough councillors to discuss how the LRF can best engage with them across the county.
Appendix 1

Members and Witnesses

Members of the Topic Group

Joshua Bennett-Lovell
Simon Bloxham
Barbara Gibson
Richard Smith (Chairman)
Jeff Jones

Other Members in Attendance

Witnesses

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<tr>
<th>Name</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gus Cuthbert</td>
<td>Assistant Chief Fire Officer Response and Resilience</td>
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<tr>
<td>Peter Davison</td>
<td>Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) Resilience &amp; Emergencies Division (RED) Advisor</td>
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<tr>
<td>Chris St. John Green</td>
<td>Deputy Joint Regional Liaison Officer (JRLO),</td>
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<tr>
<td>Darryl Keen</td>
<td>Chief Fire Officer and LRF Executive Chair</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nick Long</td>
<td>Executive Director (Public Protection, Planning &amp; Governance) Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council</td>
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<tr>
<td>James Mason</td>
<td>Head of Emergency Planning, West Herts Hospital Trust (WHHT)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Owen Tomlinson</td>
<td>LRF Manager Resilience Team Hertfordshire County Council (HCC)</td>
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<td>Andrew Hadfield</td>
<td>Head of Corporate Communications, HCC</td>
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Officers

Elaine Manzi         Democratic Services Officer
Charles Lambert     Scrutiny Officer
APPENDIX 2

SCOPE

OBJECTIVE:
To examine the effectiveness of the Hertfordshire Local Resilience Forum (LFR) in planning and responding to incidents affecting the communities of Hertfordshire

BACKGROUND:
Hertfordshire has experienced and effectively responded to a number of significant incidents in recent years (Buncefield, cyber-attacks, rail incident, severe weather). However, given the unpredictable nature of emergencies it is important to regularly scrutinise and seek reassurance on continued effectiveness. HCC provides the secretariat and executive chair for Hertfordshire’s LRF to ensure cooperation between multi-agency partners in dealing with major or significant incidents impacting on the community.

QUESTIONS TO BE ADDRESSED:
1. How well does Herts LRF comply with the Cabinet Office Resilience Standards?
2. Does the structure and governance of the LRF ensure effective cooperation and response to incidents?
3. How consistently does Herts LRF identify priorities from the community risk register in collaboration with multi-agency partners and implement effective plans?
4. Are members of the LRF appropriately engaged and represented to ensure an effective response in the event of an incident?

OUTCOME/S:
That elected members are confident that processes are in place to effectively and efficiently respond to a significant or major incident within Hertfordshire whilst meeting the requirements of the CCA (Civil Contingencies Act 2004).

CONSTRAINTS:
This scrutiny will look at the arrangements for delivering the Local Resilience Forum within Hertfordshire and does not include the internal resilience arrangements for multi-agency partners.

WITNESSES i.e. individuals | EVIDENCE i.e. organisations e.g. HCS
---|---
Darryl Keen | HFRS – Executive Chair
Gus Cuthbert | HFRS - ACO Response and Resilience
Mike Trotman | Herts Police Management Group Chair
Rob Bridge | Welwyn and Hatfield Chief Exec
Peter Davison | MHCLG RED Advisor
Chris ST John-Green | British Army JRLO - Peer Review
Darren Mclatchey | Head of Resilience
Owen Tomlinson | LRF Manager
Health representative/s tbc

METHOD: 1 day topic group  DATE: 9 January 2019
**MEMBERSHIP:** Joshua Bennett-Lovell, Simon Bloxham, Richard Smith (Chairman), Jeff Jones, Barbara Gibson

**SUPPORT:**
- **Scrutiny Officer:** Charles Lambert
- **Lead Officer:** Darren McLatchey
- **Democratic Services Officer:** Elaine Manzi

**HCC Priorities for Action: how this item helps deliver the Priorities**

| 1. Opportunity To Thrive | ✔ |
| 2. Opportunity To Prosper | ✔ |
| 3. Opportunity To Be Healthy And Safe | ✔ |
| 4. Opportunity To Take Part | |

**CfPS (Centre for Public Scrutiny) ACCOUNTABILITY OBJECTIVES:**

| 1. Transparent – opening up data, information and governance | ✔ |
| 2. Inclusive – listening, understanding and changing | ✔ |
| 3. Accountable – demonstrating credibility | ✔ |