

	Community Leadership Committee 9 March 2016
Title	Building Community Resilience for Emergencies
Report of	London Fire Brigade Borough Commander (Barnet)
Wards	All
Status	Public
Enclosures	None
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Summary

Under the Civil Contingencies Act 2004 (“the Act”) a local authority has a duty to maintain arrangements to warn the public and provide information and advice to the public if an emergency is likely to occur or has occurred. The council also has a statutory duty under the Act to work with multi-agency partners to assess local risks and produce plans to prepare for, respond to, and recover from emergencies.

Barnet fulfils this duty through the Barnet Borough Resilience Forum which has representatives from multi agency partners including the emergency services, local and regional health agencies, utilities companies, community, voluntary and faith partners amongst others and meets quarterly to prepare and plan for emergencies. Under the Act the Borough Resilience Forum must keep a Community Risk Register to help warn the public of local risks and inform and advise if an emergency is likely to occur or has occurred, therefore supporting the duty to maintain arrangements to warn, inform and advise the public in relation to local incidents.

The function of warning, informing and advising the public is to encourage them to prepare for emergencies and have the skills and resources to help themselves in the event of an emergency within their community. The ability of a community to support each other, draw on local knowledge, skills and resources to help themselves during an emergency is known as community resilience.

This report outlines the importance of building community resilience in the borough and gives an overview of the work that the Borough Resilience Forum has been carrying out to support this. The report asks that the Committee note the work completed to date, future actions planned and the need for local involvement. The report requests input from the Committee about ways in which officers can support Members in advocating community resilience within their respective wards.

Recommendation(s)

1. That the Committee note the work completed to date to support the building of community resilience
2. That the Committee note planned future actions to raise awareness of emergencies and encourage preparedness amongst individuals and communities to reduce long term dependence on the council
3. That the Committee comment on ways in which officers can support Members in advocating community resilience within their respective wards.

1 WHY THIS REPORT IS NEEDED

The Civil Contingencies Act (2004)

- 1.1 The council has a duty under the Civil Contingencies Act 2004 (“the Act”) to maintain arrangements to warn the public, and to provide information and advice to the public, if an emergency is likely to occur or has occurred.

- 1.2 An emergency is defined as:

An event or situation which threatens serious damage to human welfare in a place in the UK, the environment of a place in the UK, or war or terrorism which threatens serious damage to the security of the UK. The definition of “emergency” is concerned with consequences, rather than with cause or source. Therefore, an emergency inside or outside the UK is covered by the definition, provided it has consequences inside the UK. (*Emergency Preparedness – Guidance on part 1 of the Civil Contingencies Act 2004, its associated regulations and non-statutory arrangements, Cabinet Office (2012)*).

- 1.3 The Non Statutory Guidance accompanying the Civil Contingencies Act 2004 (2013) notes that “response agencies, particularly local authorities, should engage with their local community at all stages of planning for emergencies and take advantage of skills, resources and local knowledge communities may be able to contribute”. This sets the premise for building community resilience.
- 1.4 According to the Strategic National Framework on Community Resilience, community resilience can be 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”.

- 1.5 The government’s Guide for Communities (2011) outlines why we need community resilience: “emergency responders will always have to prioritise. It might be that you are affected by an emergency but your life is not in immediate danger. If this is the case, individuals and communities will have to rely on their own resources to cope with the emergency”.
- 1.6 The Guide for Communities (2011) also sets out what a community needs to become more resilient:
 - An awareness of local and national risks and how vulnerable their community is to such risks
 - Work in partnership with emergency responders
 - Use existing skills, knowledge and resources to prepare for, and deal with the consequences of emergencies.

Barnet Borough Resilience Forum

- 1.7 Under the Act, the council has a statutory duty to work with multi-agency partners to assess local risks and produce plans to prepare for, respond to, and recover from emergencies. This multi-agency team (the Barnet Borough Resilience Forum, chaired by the London Fire Brigade, Borough Commander for Barnet) meets quarterly to prepare and plan for emergency situations. The Act also mandates that this multi-agency team keeps a Community Risk Register to help warn the public of local risks and inform and advise if an emergency is likely to occur or has occurred.
- 1.8 The Barnet Borough Resilience Forum consists of representatives from the Metropolitan Police, London Ambulance Service, London Fire Brigade, the Environment Agency, British Red Cross, Public Health England, NHS England, Barnet Multi Faith Forum, Community Security Trust, and CommUNITY Barnet. Additional representatives from utility companies, voluntary sector or TfL/National Rail will attend if agenda items are particularly relevant to their area of expertise. The Barnet Emergency Planning Team provide secretariat for the group.
- 1.9 The Borough Resilience Forum is a good way for partners to share information and find new channels of engaging with residents and raising awareness of emergency response and what the community can do to support this. Regular multi agency exercises are organised to ensure the group are able to test and validate emergency plans.

Work completed to date

- 1.10 In summer 2014 a survey was sent out to the Citizens’ Panel to gauge what understanding residents and local businesses have of local emergency planning. Their responses will help to inform how the Borough Resilience Forum engage and communicate with residents and

businesses about local risks before, during and after an incident. The results will also be used to inform our approach to engaging the community in preparation for emergencies and in building community resilience.

- 1.11 There were 692 responses to the Citizens Panel Survey. The survey highlighted that although the vast majority of respondents would prefer information via email or text during an emergency, the 65 and over age group was more likely to ask for contact via the phone or door knocking. This highlights the need to ensure that there are alternative channels of information and advice for those who may not have or want digital skills, for example, the provision of hardcopy information or advice before an incident or face to face contact with residents during an incident to update them or gather information as appropriate.
- 1.12 Non web-based information or means of communication that does not rely on power, telephony or mobile networks is more resilient as it can be used during incidents such as power or network failures.
- 1.13 During this initial survey 91% of respondents did not have any emergency plans in place for themselves or their family in the case of a local incident and 86% of respondents were not aware of the council's designated web page for emergency planning. Again, this highlighted the need to engage the community through other means and raise awareness of planning for emergencies.
- 1.14 In December 2014 a diagrammatic article published in Barnet First, which is delivered to every household in the borough, highlighted the multi-agency response capabilities of the Borough Resilience Forum during the response and recovery phases of an emergency incident and showed how partnership working is effective in these situations.
- 1.15 Over the past few years there has been an increase in engagement from faith groups in the Borough Resilience Forum and Communities Together Network and in September 2015 the council and the Barnet Multi Faith Forum signed the Barnet Faith Covenant. This has led to the council accepting 50 Syrian refugees to Barnet and offering hospitality.
- 1.16 On 17 November 2015 the council hosted the 'Welcome the Stranger' event in partnership with the Barnet Multi Faith Forum. This was an opportunity for faith communities and residents in Barnet to come together to support the situation of those seeking refuge in the Barnet community.
- 1.17 In January 2016 the Muslim Leaders' Council held their inaugural meeting, which was attended by the Emergency Planning Manager who took the opportunity to encourage engagement from the Muslim Community in planning and preparing for emergencies. A large Mosque within Barnet has now offered its facilities to assist the council's Emergency Response Team with their duty to provide Rest Centre facilities for evacuees during an emergency incident.

Planned future actions

- 1.18 Following the development of a multi-agency information sharing protocol, due to be signed off at the Borough Resilience Forum in February, it will be possible for partners to identify more vulnerable residents during emergencies in the borough and share the information to ensure those needing our assistance are prioritised for help.
- 1.19 The local authority, as a Category 1 responder as defined in the Act, has a duty to assess risks, plan, prepare and respond to emergencies in co-ordination with and in support of the emergency services. This duty also includes the need to train and exercise together to test and validate plans.
- 1.20 Exercise Unified Response is a four day, EU funded exercise due to take place from 29th February – 3rd March 2016. The exercise simulates a realistic emergency scenario and is designed to test the capabilities of multi-agency working across London, the UK, and Europe. This is an opportunity to increase community resilience and representatives of the Borough Resilience Forum, including community and voluntary organisations and faith groups, have been actively encouraged to get involved in this exercise.
- 1.21 Exercise Unified Response is a 'once in a lifetime' situation and European funding is being monitored by the London Fire Emergency Planning Authority and audited by Brussels. Barnet will not receive any of this money directly and like all other agencies involved is contributing to the Exercise by providing staff resources as volunteers to take part in the scenario.
- 1.22 The Emergency Planning Team are currently working in partnership with CommUNITY Barnet and Barnet Borough Watch to deliver a community event later in 2016 to raise awareness of the role of the Borough Resilience Forum, what it does, and how residents can get involved in preparing for emergencies.
- 1.23 The Barnet Multi Faith Forum, represented at the Borough Resilience Forum by their Chair, are planning a Unity of Faith Festival over August Bank Holiday with the support of Barnet Resilience partners. The aim of this event is to encourage a more cohesive community and create strong links between faith and community groups. Although this event clashes with the Notting Hill Festival, capacity permitting, there will be representatives from emergency responders at this event in order to establish links with the community.
- 1.24 There are plans to carry out a further Citizen's Panel Survey in September 2016 to monitor any increase in awareness and understanding of emergency planning.

2 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 Under the Act the council has a statutory duty to warn the public, and to provide information and advice to the public regarding emergencies that are likely to happen or have already happened.
- 2.2 Through carrying out this duty the council has an opportunity to take advantage of local skills, resources and knowledge and ensure that the community are able to build resilience and rely more on their own resources to help themselves in an emergency and be therefore less dependent on the resources of the council.

3 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND NOT RECOMMENDED

- 3.1 The council could choose not to continue to engage with the community or with work to provide information and advice regarding emergencies that have already or may in the future affect the borough but then it would not be fulfilling its statutory duty under the Civil Contingencies Act 2004.

4 POST DECISION IMPLEMENTATION

- 4.1 The Emergency Planning Team and Borough Resilience Forum will continue to engage with the community through the various methods available to the partners to encourage the building of community resilience.

5 IMPLICATIONS OF DECISION

5.1 Corporate Priorities and Performance

- 5.1.□1 The work outlined in this report contributes to the 2020 vision outlined in the Corporate Plan 2015 - 2020 to gain more involved and resilient communities, with residents taking on greater responsibility for their local areas.
- 5.1.□2 By equipping the community to build resilience in order to help themselves during an emergency the work also supports the Corporate principal of responsibility where “the council will change its relationship with residents, who will take on more responsibility” and the strategic objective to ensure that Barnet is a place where people are helped to help themselves.

5.2 Resources (Finance & Value for Money, Procurement, Staffing, IT, Property, Sustainability)

- 5.2.□1 There will be no impact on resources as the council is already involved in undertaking work to engage with the public regarding emergencies as is its statutory responsibility to do so.

5.3 Social value

5.3.□1 There are no social value considerations as this paper does not relate to a service contract.

5.4 Legal and Constitutional References

5.4.□1 Under the Civil Contingencies Act 2004, the council has a statutory duty to maintain arrangements to warn the public, and to provide information and advice to the public, if an emergency is likely to occur or has occurred.

5.4.□2 Under the Council's Constitution (Responsibility for Functions – Annex A) the responsibilities of the Community Leadership Committee include:

- Grants to Voluntary Sector within the remit of the Committee
- Registration and Nationality Service
- Emergency Planning
- Civic events
- To maintain good community relations with Barnet's diverse communities ensuring that all communities have the opportunity to participate fully in the Borough's affairs
- To approve any non-statutory plan or strategy within the remit of the Committee that is not reserved to Full Council or Policy and Resources.

5.5 Risk Management

5.5.□1 There are no risks associated with the council acting to increase engagement and build resilience in the community with regards to emergencies.

5.6 Equalities and Diversity

5.6.□1 No negative differential impact on people with any characteristic protected under the Equality Act 2010 has been identified in relation to this report.

5.6.□2 The Equality Act 2010 outlines the provision of the Public Sector Equalities Duty which requires Public Bodies to have due regard to the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment, victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Equalities Act 2010, advance equality of opportunity between people from different groups and foster good relations from people with different groups. The relevant protected characteristics are age; disability; gender reassignment; pregnancy and maternity; race; religion or belief; sex and sexual orientation. Contingency planning must therefore take account of those who may be hard to reach, for example, people with disabilities and elderly people.

5.7 Consultation and Engagement

5.7.□1 In the summer of 2014 a survey was sent out to the Citizen's Panel on behalf of the Barnet Borough Resilience Forum. The aim of the survey was to gain insight into what level of understanding residents and local businesses have of local emergency planning and response. There were 692 responses. The results of the survey have been used to inform how we communicate with residents with regards to emergencies and to develop our approach to encouraging community resilience.

5.8 Insight

5.8.□1 The insight gained from the results of the Citizen's Panel survey in 2014 has been used to shape our methods of communication and community events designed to raise awareness of emergency preparedness and community resilience.

6 BACKGROUND PAPERS

6.1 There are no background papers relating to this report.