

To: Communities Policy and Overview Scrutiny Committee

By: Mike Hill, Cabinet Member, Community Services; Amanda Honey, Managing Director, Communities

Date: 11th January 2011

Subject: Winter Weather Emergency Planning and Response

Summary: This report sets out the current position with regards to snow and winter weather emergency planning and business continuity management across KCC, and provides a case study to demonstrate an overview of the dynamics of a response when such an event occurs.

FOR INFORMATION AND COMMENT

1. Background

1.1 The Civil Contingencies Act 2004 commits Kent County Council to a broad range of emergency planning and business continuity management capability, so the authority can respond to emergencies in a smooth, coordinated and effective manner.

1.2 Part of the process of preparation is the identification by the multi-agency community of the risks that may affect the County, and their associated likelihood and impact. At the high end of this assessment is the hazard of snow and its effects.

1.3 The KCC Emergency Planning team, which is based in the Communities Directorate, works with all directorates and multi-agency partners, to keep the required preparation measures for such an event in terms of both emergency response activities under continuous review. It also reviews activities that must be maintained, regardless of the weather and its effects.

1.4 Key to this preparation has been the development of emergency response and business continuity analysis that has greatly contributed to KCC's overall capability in this area. Of particular note has been the new County Emergency Centre (CEC), which has been deployed for a number a high profile events to ensure that KCC undertakes and manages a smooth, coordinated response.

1.5 Additionally, considerable work has been undertaken to identify and enhance the resilience of critical functions associated with authority operation. This has involved a detailed functional analysis of the authority and its associated interdependencies, critical supply chain and resource needs. These requirements have lead to a range of work to fully integrate pertinent emergency response strategies, as well as encouragement of resilience measures to protect these interdependencies as part of our business as normal activities.

1.6 The recent significant cold spell has highlighted a continual need to monitor and develop this capability so that the best interests of our clients, the community and the authority in a time of crisis are best preserved.

2. Case Study – Significant Severe Weather Period - early December 2010

2.1 KCC regularly receives early intelligence on the possibility of severe weather affecting the county, and takes a lead role in activating a broader, multi-agency response to ensure that this threat is dealt with effectively. Such warnings were received and acted upon in the last few days in November 2010, which subsequently lead to a full activation of the multi-agency response, chaired by the Police, from Tuesday 30th November until Saturday 4th December 2010.

2.2 The operational response of major services such as Highways that have a significant emergency role in these circumstances is primarily the responsibility of the relevant Cabinet members and POSCs. The following section highlights specifically the leadership and co-ordination activities that were carried out by the KCC Emergency Planning team, based in the Communities Directorate, during this period:

(i) Attendance and contribution to all multi-agency Severe Weather Advisory Groups and subsequent Strategic Coordination Group meetings by teleconference, representing the interests of KCC and providing technical advice on all emergency planning issues.

(ii) The mobilisation and management of all 4x4 resources, including those from the voluntary sector, the MCA, the EA and district councils. This capability supported a broad range of health and social care activities, including home visits, health logistical support and KCC/NHS business continuity activities.

(iii) The chairing of KCC Silver teleconference meetings, to ensure that key KCC responders were fully informed of issues and status, as well as to provide an opportunity for joint feedback on activities.

(iv) The provision of information and tactical management for KCC emergency response activities and briefings for CMT and cabinet members, which included distribution to all KCC senior staff, district council emergency planners and district council Chief Executives.

(v) The deployment of other emergency response measures such as rest centre provision, in response to specific events such as power failures.

(vi) The coordination and monitoring of community warden resources, receiving valuable feedback and Intel on a range of issues and problems. It should be noted that their deployment was self initiated, with excellent levels of support provided to the community and to vulnerable individuals.

(vii) Assistance and brokering of highways requests for gritting and traffic management support, and assistance for Bluewater Christmas shopping

traffic management activities. KHS representation was vital at all SCG and KCC Silver meetings and greatly valued.

(viii) The development and monitoring of suitable media and staff messaging, integrating with the broader response community.

(ix) The monitoring and support of business continuity measures, information and supporting activities, to ensure that we retained critical function activity as much as possible. This included close liaison with KFM and the Contact Centre.

(x) Requesting and coordinating a formal approach to the Army for specific 4x4 support for all East Kent Hospitals. This required Police Gold Commander support as well as ministerial approval.

3. Conclusion

3.1 Feedback from partners indicates that the deployment of the Major Emergency Plan and its supporting arrangements was successfully achieved during this period. Although there will be lessons learnt from this event, the considerable amount of preparation work in the past 2 years was fundamental in achieving a broadly successful outcome. A de-brief process is underway and the Head of Emergency Planning will welcome any comment or critique from Members that may be pertinent to this – taking account also of the snow and ice conditions later in December that were 'live' at the time of this report being written.

4. Recommendation

4.1 Members are asked to NOTE and COMMENT on this report

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