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To: Cabinet - 4 April 2011

Subject: A Community Emergency Plan

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Summary: To brief Members on the introduction of a community emergency plan template (and associated guidance) designed to assist Parish Councils and community groups in dealing with a range of emergencies and crises.

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## **Background**

1. The capability of a community to deal with a range of emergencies and crises is becoming more important in an ever-developing civil protection agenda. Emergency events in Kent (such as the significant severe weather and flooding) have highlighted the need for better methods to encourage communities to be better prepared and to help themselves.
2. Indeed, research shows that if a community is better prepared and has greater awareness of the hazards it could face, it is more resilient during the emergency and the subsequent recovery period.
3. As community leaders with formal emergency planning duties, KCC Emergency Planning Group and the District Council emergency planning community provide leadership in this area as part of the broader civil protection agenda, thus enhancing resilience at all levels within our communities.
4. A cornerstone of this approach is encouraging parish councils and community groups to consider the development of some simple emergency preparedness measures that may be deployed during an emergency period. This could be particularly useful if severe weather conditions prevent the emergency services or other public services reaching rural communities, thus enabling them to be better prepared for such an eventuality. The plan template and associated guidance are designed to provide a useful tool in which to fulfil this aspiration.
5. An integral part of this approach must include political support and leadership, promoting the values of awareness and preparedness to local communities and the broader public.

## **Related Issues**

1. The government alone cannot protect people from all the consequences of disasters. Resilience, often at community level, is crucial to ensuring future security and well-being as communities and individuals harness local resources and expertise to help themselves. This kind of community resilience is already organised in some parts of the UK and needs to be supported and extended with local community leaders at the heart of activity.

2. Additionally, it should be stressed that any strategy that supports the building of capability within a community to deal more effectively with major emergencies is complementary and does not replace any major emergency arrangements in place with the resilience community, including those delivered by KCC and District Council partners.
3. The guidance document is self explanatory, however, officer support is always available from the KCC Emergency Planning team and district council emergency planning colleagues.
4. Members will also be interested to know that the Kent Resilience Forum, strongly supported by KCC Emergency Planning, will be launching a new website designed to provide the public with access to a broad range of information about emergency preparedness and self help. It is intended that the Community Emergency plan template and guidance will be available via this medium. The weblink will be [www.kentprepared.org.uk](http://www.kentprepared.org.uk).
5. Further measures are also being pursued to support this work including the opening of a dialogue with Rural Kent to foster support for this approach, engagement with the Kent Forum, utilising communication routes using the Parish Portal, as well as looking at enhancements to Community Warden capability to support emergency planning and response activities.
6. It is also felt that this approach chimes well with the current government focus of promoting “the big society” and its associated values.

### **Recommendations**

1. It is recommended that all Members support this initiative and actively promote it within their constituency.

### **Background Documents**

None

#### *Contact*

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