

CORPORATE RESOURCES OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Date of Meeting	Thursday, 13 th January 2022
Report Subject	North Wales Councils Regional Emergency Planning Service (NWCREPS) - Annual Report 2020/21
Cabinet Member	Deputy Leader of the Council (Governance) and Cabinet Member for Corporate Management and Assets
Report Author	Chief Executive
Type of Report	Operational

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Council has duties for emergency planning and response under the Civil Contingencies Act 2004, the Control of Major Accident Hazards Regulations 2015 and the Pipeline Safety Regulations 1996.

The Council is a principal responder and meets its obligations by collaborating with the other North Wales local authorities through North Wales Councils Regional Emergency Planning Service (NWC-REPS), for which Flintshire is the host authority.

North Wales is the first region in Wales to form a fully integrated service to support all councils to fulfil their duties.

Within Flintshire, responsibilities for emergency planning and response are shared across portfolios and named lead officers within the Emergency Management Response Team structure.

This report covers both the regional arrangements for emergency planning and response, and those within Flintshire itself.

An Emergency Planning Service Update was last provided to the Committee in April 2017.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1	The Committee receives and is assured by the update.
2	The Committee receives future reports on the preparedness of the Council to plan for emergencies and specific follow-up reports to any major local or regional emergency events to which the Council has had to respond.

REPORT DETAILS

1.00	EXPLAINING THE BACKGROUND AND REGIONAL SERVICE UPDATE
1.01	<p>Since 2014, North Wales has had an integrated regional emergency planning service, led by Flintshire and supported by a Management Board of all six councils. This is underpinned by a Service Level Agreement and an Inter-Authority Agreement. The service is known as the North Wales Councils Regional Emergency Planning Service (NWC-REPS).</p>
1.02	<p>Whilst much progress has been made, work is underway to further consolidate how the activities provided by the service are undertaken, particularly by strengthening performance management and training delivery. This will enable the service to more effectively prioritise areas of work and resource allocation but also ensure that councils benefit fully from the range of expertise held within the service.</p>
1.03	<p>REGIONAL ACTIVITY SINCE LAST UPDATE</p> <p>NWC-REPS provides the primary link between the Council and North Wales Local Resilience Forum (LRF), with contributions from service staff being fundamental to multi-agency groups, events, processes and plans. Review and renewal of North Wales 4 x 4 Service Agreement. This is a formal agreement between the six authorities and the 4 x 4 Wales Service and describes the mechanisms to be followed should any authority need the support in delivering services. 4x4 Wales were pivotal in the evacuation of Bangor on Dee in the recent flooding.</p> <p>As the pandemic has restricted classroom based training, NWC-REPS have diversified in order to ensure staff continue to be competent in their emergency planning and incident response roles. NWC-REPS have designed and implemented a range of e-learning modules including, Strategic Management, Tactical Management and Rest Centre staff Training.</p> <p>NWC-REPS continues to provide out of hours support to the local authority and blue light services in response to queries and incidents 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. In order to test responses within local authorities NWC-REPS carry out Exercise Cooper on a quarterly basis to test both the contact details we hold and the out of hours availability of key staff.</p> <p>ACTIVITY WITHIN THE COUNCIL SINCE LAST UPDATE</p> <p>The Emergency Management Response Team (EMRT) structure within Flintshire facilitate activity in a number of specialist teams, each led at Chief Officer level. These teams cover Operations; Recovery; Humanitarian Response; Information; and Business Continuity Management.</p>

	<p>The EMRT provides a robust mechanism for delivery of planning and response functions. Teams meet regularly to review arrangements in place and identify future activities. Oversight is provided via the Chief Officers Team. This structure is considered to be 'Good Practice' by the Regional Emergency Planning Manager.</p> <p>A Regional Emergency Rest Centre Plan has been developed and embedded within the Council. Training of Rest Centre staff is being further supported by the addition of e-learning. This also supports mutual aid requests from other local authorities as the plan is now generic to all 6 North Wales Councils.</p> <p>Business Continuity Plans – At the beginning of the Pandemic Business Continuity Plans were implemented in order for the Council to identify the critical services and work to ensure these were maintained. At the mid-point NWC-REPS circulated a questionnaire in order to gain insight into the usage of the plans during the pandemic and also identify any improvements. Having Business Continuity plans in place is a statutory requirement of the Civil Contingencies Act 2004. A review of the plan template is underway and a task and finish group has been established to take this work forward.</p> <p>The statutory set of exercises were delivered in August and September 2020, to validate Flintshire County Council's external emergency plan for the Deeside based agricultural chemical manufacturer, FMC Ltd. NWC-REPS coordinated the multi-agency work required in order to maintain and test the off-site emergency plan on behalf of the authority, for it to remain compliant under the COMAH 2015 legislation.</p> <p>The statutory set of exercises to validate Flintshire County Council's external emergency plan for the Mold based chemical manufacturer, Synthite Ltd began in November 2020; NWC-REPS coordinated the multi-agency work required in order to maintain and test the off-site emergency plan on behalf of the authority, for it to remain compliant under the COMAH 2015 legislation. Exercise Aether was delivered virtually over three dates between March and May 2021.</p> <p>NWC-REPS have also worked closely with Great Bear following their change in regulation to become an Upper Tier COMAH site due to the increased demand for bleach products during the pandemic. An off-site plan has been completed and this will be followed by a full multi-agency exercise this year.</p>
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2.00	RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS
2.01	<p>The regional service continues to provide a cost effective and resilient model. From 2014 -2020, annual reductions in the Flintshire financial contributions to the service of 2% have been achieved as a result of smaller budget levels and amendments to the service structure. Further restructuring options have been agreed and implemented in order to streamline the service and deliver saving for the local authorities.</p>

3.00	IMPACT ASSESSMENT AND RISK MANAGEMENT
3.01	The purpose of the service is to reduce the risks that emergencies may pose to the area through preparation. The service also supports Business Continuity Management for Council services.
4.00	CONSULTATIONS REQUIRED/CARRIED OUT
4.01	None required.
5.00	APPENDICES
5.01	North Wales Councils Regional Emergency Planning Service (NWCREPS) - Annual Report 2020/21
6.00	LIST OF ACCESSIBLE BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS
6.01	None
7.00	CONTACT OFFICER DETAILS
7.01	Contact Officer: Helen Kilgannon Regional Manager Telephone: 01352 702125 E-mail: Helen.kilgannon@nwc-reps.org.uk
8.00	GLOSSARY OF TERMS
	<p>Emergency Management Response Team: comprises of individual teams working on the basis of integrating Emergency management activities to daily business in order to encourage a cohesive approach in the emergency response to any major emergency.</p> <p>Business Continuity Management (BCM): is a planned process aimed at managing the many varied operational risks inherent in the day to day activities involved in the delivery of service.</p> <p>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 2004.</p>