

**Cabinet – 14<sup>th</sup> June 2010**  
**Emergency Planning**  
**Annual Audit Commission Self-Assessment Tool 2009/10**

Agenda Item 10c

<b>Portfolio Area:</b>	Environment and Sustainability
<b>Report Presented by:</b>	Councillor Mitchell (Deputy)
<b>Background Papers:</b>	Audit Commission self-assessment tool for Local Authorities Emergency Planning and Business Continuity
<b>Corporate Implications:</b>	Yes
<b>Options:</b>	None
<b>Risks:</b>	Lack of preparedness in the areas Emergency Response and Recovery under the Civil Contingencies Act 2005 will have an adverse impact on the Authorities 'duty of care' to the Districts Communities, ability to deliver the 'business' of the Council and loss of reputation.

### **Executive Summary**

The purpose of the report is to inform Members of the state of preparedness for a major emergency and that appropriate Business Continuity arrangements are in place to meet the Council's 'duty of care'. Details of the action taken to improve emergency response following the recent flooding in the district are also highlighted within the report.

### **Audit Commissions Self assessment**

To ensure that the council has sufficient resources and procedures in place to respond to any form of emergency, it must annually assess itself against the Audit Commissions self-assessment framework. In doing so the council will identify areas for improvement and be confident that it has effective procedures in place to deal with any emergency situation.

The 2009/10 self-assessment shows that the Authority is ready in the area of preparedness to respond to an emergency situation and to implement the recovery process. However, there are always areas for improvement within the process as new guidance is issued and lessons identified from an emergency are used to review our procedures'. The Audit Insurance Manager and Risk Manager has reviewed the Business Impact Analysis during 2009/10 and the Stage 1 Recovery Plans for Services is in place.

The annual Business Continuity training exercise took place with Corporate Management Team and Senior Managers focusing on how the organisation would respond to an evacuation of Causeway House and loss of the building for 2 days

### **Responding to Emergency and Community Resilience**

Building on the lessons learnt from 2009 we were effective in responding to the prolonged severe weather we suffered at the beginning of 2010. Working with partners, schools and Parishes BDC enthusiastically supported the aims and objectives of Cabinet Offices Community Resilience programme which came out of the Pitt Report.

### **Decision**

Members are requested to note the self-assessment position statement for 2009/10 and action taken to ensure the emergency preparedness of Braintree District Council.

## **Emergency Planning Position Statement for 2009/10**

### **Self-assessment**

The Audit Commissions self-assessment tool for Local Authority Emergency Planning and Business continuity is an optional checklist which Braintree District Council have used since 2005/06 as a basis for reviewing the councils preparedness for a major emergency. It aims to provide a framework against which the Authority can review current level of preparedness and identify areas for improvement.

The tool has over 200 questions looking at the main duties for Local Authorities as outlined in the Civil Contingencies Act 2005 with the aim is to ensure that we maintain our current performance as 'green'.

The key improvement areas for 2009/10 were identified as:-

- Continue to develop secure systems for information sharing and data protection
  - Link the Braintree District Council risk register with Parish Plans
- Both improvement areas have been achieved.

Key issues for 2010/11

- Development of the Multi-Agency Flood Plan to a Parish level.
- Promoting Cabinet Offices Community Resilience Programme

### **Response to Emergencies**

There is no better way to test an emergency plan and procedures other than in a real emergency. During 2009/10 the Authority effectively responded to the

- Pandemic. Flu (Swine Flu)
- Severe Weather Snow and Flooding

### **Pandemic Flu**

The H1N1 flu pandemic was announced by the World Health Organisation on June 11 2009, after the strain first emerged in Mexico in March 2009.

Braintree District Council had prepared Pandemic Influenza Plans over the previous years and responded well to the announced Swine Influenza Pandemic. BDC Emergency Planning team worked in partnership with NHS Mid Essex Primary Care Trust (also lead PCT for Emergency Planning in Essex), Essex County Council, Regional and Cabinet Offices to ensure an effective flow of information. The daily bulletins, top line briefs and situation reports were communicated to the Authorities Emergency Response Team, Councillor's, staff and the public as directed by the Cabinet Office and NHS Mid Essex. Primary Care Trust. Whilst the Cabinet Office and Department of Health requested feedback from all Local Authorities on absenteeism rates and information on how their core business was affected due to Swine Flu.

Braintree Emergency Planning team offered support to NHS Mid Essex PCT from

- promoting their communication messages on the BDC web page and within BDC owned buildings to
- offering accommodation, telephone lines and computers for their Customer Services staff if required as part of their Business Continuity Plan.

- During the planning stage for a Pandemic identifying Anti-Viral Collection Points within the District where public could collect Tamiflu/anti-viral medication if the Pandemic escalated.

All departments were required to update their Business Continuity Plans to ensure their own resilience. Cleaning products were purchased by the Emergency Planning team for staff to clean their own areas to promote hygiene and the cleaning programme within Council owned buildings was increased during the 'peak' of the infection.

De-briefs with partners have taken place to discuss lessons learnt from the Pandemic and the BDC Pandemic Plan has been reviewed to reflect changes in the national guidance in areas for example on clinical attack rates, body storage prior to burial and collective graves.

## **Severe Weather**

The Extended Cold Weather ensured that the Emergency Planning team were involved in communicating information from the Cabinet and Regional Office in the form of Top line Briefings, to the Emergency Response team, Councillor's and staff. Information revolved around salt conservation to keep the national road network open, transport issues around rail and air travel, promoting community resilience particularly in helping neighbours and clearing paths within the community. Throughout this period Business Continuity Service Plans were activated to ensure that customers did not encounter a decline in Service delivery. Staff overcame their transport difficulties and caring responsibilities (school closures) whilst the waste collection service continued to operate despite the severe weather. The thawing of snow coupled with heavy rainfall inevitably lead to flooding with all our rivers on 'Flood Warning' during late February 2010 as river catchment areas were saturated. The Emergency Response team was placed on stand-by to respond to issues raised by members of the public in relation to river and surface water flooding.

## **Promoting Community Resilience**

As highlighted in the 2008/09 report a Parish 'Flood awareness' evening was held on the 12<sup>th</sup> September 2009 with speakers from the National Flood Forum and the Environment Agency. Flood protection exhibitors were invited to discuss flood protection products, floodgates, airbrick covers and floodsaxs. This integrates with the element of the duty of 'warning and Informing' the public under the Civil Contingencies Act 2004 and Braintree District Council's strategy of actively promoting community engagement and improving local response in an emergency.

## **Alec Hunter school project & Rest Centre Exercise**

BDC led the in working in partnership with Alec Hunter Humanities College in developing their response capability to set up as a Rest Centre in times of emergency, enabling them to help BDC support the Community.

Students at Alec Hunter Humanities College worked with the Emergency Planning team in researching and developing a comprehensive booklet detailing emergency contacts and resources available in times of need. The Local Government Association included this project in their Community Recognition Awards for 2008/09, interviewing the students and learning more about their understanding of Community Responsibility/Resilience.

Other selected schools are now being invited to follow this lead.

## Crowded Places Training-Project Argus

Following Home Office Guidance and working with Essex Police Special Branch Braintree District Council developed a project plan to raise awareness of the 'Crowded Places' agenda within the main business/retail centre in Braintree.

The 'Crowded Places' agenda explores the areas which could possibly be at risk from terrorist attacks. The sessions were provided by a Special Branch Officer who presented a specific interactive training package which focused on how to make decisions about what you, your staff and your business need to do in helping to prevent and survive a terrorist attack.

The successful awareness sessions with local business' and BDC Operation Managers were then presented to all 109 BDC operational staff. The sessions were specifically tailored by Essex Police Special Branch to increase hostile reconnaissance awareness within the Braintree District.

Braintree District Council were also the first Local Authority in the Eastern Region to hold a "Partnership" meeting to direct activity in this area, with the specific site manager, Essex police, Special Branch, Go East and BDC.

A Report on the implementation of the Governments strategy for increasing awareness of Crowded Places training has been completed and forwarded to the Home Office.

<b>Corporate Implications</b>			
<b>Financial:</b>	None		
<b>Legal:</b>	None		
<b>Equalities &amp; Diversity:</b>	None		
<b>Customer Impact:</b>	Liaison with Parishes and Partner Agencies to improve Community Resilience which links into the Cabinet Offices programme of promoting community resilience and self help during an emergency.		
<b>Environment &amp; Climate Change:</b>	None		
<b>Consultation/Community Engagement:</b>	Local Committees		Partners
	Public		Staff
<b>Key Decision:</b>	No		
<b>Public/Private Report:</b>	Public		
<b>Officer Contact:</b>	Kathy Brown		
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