

**HEALTH AND PUBLIC PROTECTION SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
16TH MARCH 2004**

Report of the Chief Executive

ITEM 6 Review of Emergency Planning in Charnwood

Purpose of the report

To update members on emergency planning in Charnwood.

Background

The Chief Executive is the emergency planning officer for the Borough, and the previous Chief Executive had intended some manner of review in this year, although the details do not appear to have been specified.

The Borough fits into the wider emergency planning arrangements in the county essentially as a provider of resources. Primary emergency planning responsibilities rest with the County Council who also provide a measure of support for the Borough in its planning arrangements. County wide resources have been stretched over the past year, although the effects have been felt more in other districts than in Charnwood.

When considering what is covered by an emergency plan, there are special considerations around flooding. Flooding is a common feature in Charnwood, and is usually dealt with within the 'normal' range of activity of the Land Drainage section which utilises many of the communications channels of the main emergency response system. In the event of serious flooding the duty officer in land drainage will escalate the handling of the situation with the emergency planning officer for the Borough.

Response to emergencies by the Borough is governed by the emergency plan. The aim of the plan is to set out those arrangements which will enable a rapid and effective response to be made in alleviating distress and disruption caused by any given emergency. The emergency plan also sets out roles and responsibilities in the event of an emergency.

The emergency plan was reviewed by the Chief Executive's Team on 18th February in light of recent organisational changes, and to provide a desktop evaluation of its general fitness for purpose. The land drainage section was also present at that meeting.

The previous Director of Performance Improvement was the Emergency Co-ordinator, the principal emergency planning officer after the Chief Executive. As a consequence of the review, the principal emergency planning officers are now:

Emergency Appointment	Officer Nominated	Deputy
Emergency Co-ordinator	Deputy Chief Executive (Howard Needham pro tem)	Allan Barber
Emergency Information Officer	Jonathan Hale	Steve Phipps
Emergency Communications Officer	Steve Horner	Tba

A number of other minor modifications concerning the plan were agreed, principally:

- Establishment of a ‘duty’ emergency planning officer role in the event that the Chief Executive is uncontactable through leave etc.
- Clarification that the Lifeline was the primary emergency contact point out of hours, and the Chief Executive’s PA as the primary contact within office hours.
- Use of the Customer Contact Centre Building as the Emergency Control Centre
- Minor modifications to other responsibilities.

Telephone numbers in the emergency plan had been updated in September and these other minor modifications will be made by the end of April.

Although possible improvements were also discussed, generally the plan was considered fit for purpose. It is, however, intended to test the plan in a major emergency exercise in the near future and debriefing from that exercise may indicate further required changes, and provide a suitable opportunity for these other possible improvements.

These exercises are organised by the County Emergency Management Team, and they have agreed to arrange an exercise in the period September to November.

Another imminent development which will be a principal consideration in any forthcoming major review of the emergency plan is the new Civil Contingencies Bill, published in January. Following a review of existing legislation, the government concluded that this legislation, which was introduced after the Second World War and focused primarily on arrangements for dealing with hostile attack, no longer provides an adequate framework for emergency planning. The new legislation has been the subject of extensive consultation and scrutiny and has wide support although there is concern within the Local Government community over whether additional financial support will be forthcoming for its provisions.

The key aspects of the bill include a broadening of the definition of emergency, classification of responders and their responsibilities, greater powers for emergency services, and the inclusion of modern approaches to risk management and business continuity.

Although not strictly covered by the emergency planning review to date, business continuity has been identified in the draft high level risk register as an area which needs strengthening in Charnwood. Although there are basic IT recovery and resilience practices in place, this falls short of the requirements of a full business continuity plan. The development of such a plan will form part of the work of the Deputy Chief Executive in 2004/5.

Background Papers: Emergency Plan pages 1 to 39

Officer to Contact: Brian Hayes
(01509) 634600
Brian.Hayes@charnwoodbc.gov.uk