

Report to: Scrutiny Committee



Date of Meeting 13 June 2024

Document classification: Part A Public Document

Exemption applied: None

Review date for release N/A

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## Review of Emergency Responses in 2023/4 by East Devon District Council

### Report summary:

To outline the Emergency Planning and Response work undertaken in the year 2023/24 with particular reference to the floods in May and September 2023 and subsequent work based on lessons learned.

### Is the proposed decision in accordance with:

Budget Yes  No

Policy Framework Yes  No

### Recommendation:

1. That Scrutiny Committee note the Emergency Planning work undertaken in the year 2023/24

### Reason for recommendation:

Report is an update and does not require any decision

Officer: David Whelan

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### Portfolio(s) (check which apply):

- Climate Action and Emergency Response
- Coast, Country and Environment
- Council and Corporate Co-ordination
- Communications and Democracy
- Economy
- Finance and Assets
- Strategic Planning
- Sustainable Homes and Communities
- Culture, Leisure, Sport and Tourism

**Equalities impact** Low Impact

**Climate change** Low Impact but climate change is having a significant impact on how we plan for emergencies.

**Risk:** Low Risk; However failure to have adequate procedures for dealing with emergencies is a risk.

**Links to background information**

## [Link to Council Plan](#)

Priorities (check which apply)

- Better homes and communities for all
  - A greener East Devon
  - A resilient economy
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## Report in full

### Introduction

East Devon District Council (EDDC) is defined in the Civil Contingencies Act 2004 as a 'Category 1' responder to emergencies. This places responsibilities on the Council in relation to the response to, management of and recovery from emergencies. Other Category 1 responders include the Police, Fire Service and County Council. EDDC is an active partner in the Devon, Cornwall and Isles of Scilly Local resilience Forum (DCIOS LRF) which brings together these partners together to ensure a common approach to emergency response. EDDC is also a member of the Devon Emergency Planning Partnership with the County and other districts.

For this reason, the Council employs an Emergency Planning Officer based in the Environmental Health Service, whose responsibility is to ensure that the Council is meeting its obligations as a Category 1 responder.

2023/24 saw a number of changes to how we manage the emergency planning function and also a number of significant incidents that required a response. This report provides Scrutiny Committee with a review of this work, with a particular focus on the response to the Otter Valley floods in May 2023.

### Overview of 2023/24 Work

Weather related risks have dominated the last 18 months with the following requirements for response to incidents such as ;

- Flooding
- Severe rain
- Storms
- Wind
- Thunderstorms
- Snow
- Heat Health Warnings
- Cold Health Warnings

But there have also been Emergency Responses to:

- Avian Flu
- Plymouth Unexploded Ordnance
- Covid19
- Drought
- Industrial Action
- Fires such as The Knowle/Seaton Heights/Poltimore House
- Pollution considerations/awareness (Budleigh fishing boat),
- Cliff falls
- Death of Royals,
- Forest Fire Severity impacts – Dartmoor/Exmoor/Woodbury

## **Weather Events**

England saw the highest level of rainfall over any 18-month period since Met Office data began back in 1836. According to provisional figures from the Met Office, **1,695.9mm** of rain fell from October 2022 to March 2024. It surpassed the previous record of **1,680.2mm** - which had only been set the month before, covering September 2022 to February 2024. The third-highest figure on record, **1,668.4mm**, was set in the 18 months up to January 2021.

## **Warnings**

As Emergency responders, East Devon District Council monitors numerous warnings generated by the Met Office, Environment Agency and the Joint Flood Forecasting Centre.

The Met Office Weather Warnings UK weather warnings for rain, wind, snow, ice, fog, thunderstorm, lightning and extreme heat and can include the naming of storms. Yellow low-level impacts, Amber severe weather with disruptive impacts and Red means dangerous weather is expected with a likely risk to life.

The Met Office working with the UK Health Security Agency generate Health warnings for Hot & Cold Weather to direct how vulnerable individuals are supported

The Environment Agency generate Flood Alerts, Warnings and Severe warnings for Rivers & Sea Alert- Prepare, Warning- Act, Severe Flood warning- Respond to Emergency Service direction prepare to evacuate etc

River flooding affects the whole of East Devon whether it is along the Rivers Clyst & Culm or the Rivers Otter, Sid & Exmouth, aspects of the River Axe, Or Yarty or one of its numerous brooks and even crossing into the Dorset Rivers for the River Lim impacting on Uplyme and the tidal warnings along the coast due to the combined effects of winds, tides and river flows.

There is currently no specific warning for surface water flooding only indications from Met office severe weather warnings.

## **Emergency Planning/Response Work**

In 2023/2024 We received approximately 400 weather messages/warnings from which we provide messaging internally to reinforce existing awareness. These can be Triggers for both internal and external messaging based on the interpretation of some Yellow Met office messages, Amber warnings and Flood Warnings.

These warnings provide notification for the following areas of EDDC;

- Senior Leadership Team; for department shared awareness and safe working;
- StreetScene; Coastal Flood gates, Street clearance, Salt Work, Events.
- Waste Collection; recycling for collection considerations of safe working
- Housing; Home safeguard, Mobile support Officers, for our adults at risk and homeless provision.
- Human Resources; for internal welfare considerations
- Environmental Health; for Health & Safety and Safety Advisory Group considerations
- Building Control; for awareness of dangerous structures
- Communications: Who now send out all warnings and EA notifications to our social media subscribers

Messages now go out to Parish Clerks and identified Community members as part of our Community Resilience Network for all Amber warnings, and EA Flood warnings but also some specific Met Office severe weather warning especially if they are issued a number of days out from a weather event.

In 2023/4 we have seen an unprecedented number of weather events which we responded to or monitored and shared information locally.

## **May 2023 (more detailed review below)**

On Tues 9<sup>th</sup> May East Devon experienced highly localised thunderstorms and heavy rain leading to flash floods centred around the Otter Valley area of Newton Poppleford, Venn Ottery, Tipton St John, Colaton Raleigh and others, resulting in a multi-agency response to the incident with recovery being led by EDDC. Between 70-95mm of rainfall fell in a 2 hour period and 109 properties flooded internally in East Devon (out of 126 in total for Devon).

## **September 2023**

4<sup>th</sup>-10<sup>th</sup> September Heatwave temps across the South Coast of England with temperatures exceeding 30 Deg C. Heat Health warnings issued.

17<sup>th</sup> Sep Amber Thunder storm warning resulting in some flooded properties across Devon including Dulford, Knowle Village, and Clyst St Mary, recovery was coordinated by Devon County Council.

## **October 2023**

19<sup>th</sup> Oct Withycombe village flooding from the brook

27-30<sup>th</sup> Oct seasonal tide floodings Cornwall approx. 100 properties flooded but also impacts of tides for the South Coast Estuaries . Exmouth on the peripheries

## **November 2023**

Wed 1st Nov 2<sup>nd</sup> Nov Storm Ciaran - Amber Warning of winds use of Community network to feed back to Flood Authority. Cancellation of Waste collections'

Storm damage to the Seawall at Exmouth through the September and October storms and further impact during Storm Ciaran resulting in extensive emergency heavy engineering mobilisation to protect Sideshore and the road.

## **December 2023**

Mon 4<sup>th</sup> – Fri 8<sup>th</sup> Dec flood warning for the river Axe

Mon 4<sup>th</sup> Dec flooding on the River Axe Weycroft

Tue 5<sup>th</sup> from EA Visit reach out with Private Sector Housing (PSH) to Weycroft area / sandbag supply to All Saints PC

Thu 7<sup>th</sup> Dec floods River Axe Stoney Bridges area

Fri 08<sup>th</sup> Dec welfare checks from PSH

We facilitated flood info from the Community Network into DCC who are the local flood authority both with regards to Highway's and specifically as the flood local authority and the Environment Agency as the flood authority for rivers & reservoirs.

## **January 2024**

2<sup>nd</sup> January Storm Henk Amber wind warnings which caused Damage to Ocean and Queens Drive Space closed as a result

21-24<sup>th</sup> January Storm Isha impacted Exmouth Seafront

## **March 2024**

28<sup>th</sup> March Storm Nelson - damage to beach huts Seaton/Budleigh

## **Otter Valley Floods May 2023**

On Tuesday 9<sup>th</sup> May 2023 at 1830hrs The Local Resilience Forum (LRF) held a multi-agency meeting to help respond to flash floods in East Devon, this was called by the fire service linked to the police who had received calls to 19 houses being flooded in the locality.

Earlier in the day The Met office had issued a Yellow warning of thunderstorms and heavy showers issued for Southern and Central areas between 1100 and 2200 with no greater detail at that time and at approx. 1500 the Environment Agency issued a flood alert for the Rivers Otter, Sid and Exmouth Area.

The culmination of two converging thunderstorms caused the flash floods that we saw in East Devon and later that evening in East Somerset. These are real examples of the impacts of Climate Change and the events are occurring more frequently and are projected to increase.

The event was so acute that the response phase lasted approx. 24 hours, when the emergency services stepped back. On 10<sup>th</sup> May Assistant Director – StreetScene represented the authority at a DCC flood incident review. The purpose of the meeting was to agree which agency should lead the recovery process. According to the DEPP (Devon Emergency Planning Partnership) emergency plan, recovery is led by the District affected, unless multiple areas are affected, when County will lead the recovery. We agreed we should lead the recovery, following the adopted plan. EDDC from this point forward led on recovery into community resilience, coordinating and monitoring the actions and deliverables from all agencies. This incident was one week after the District Elections on Thursday 4<sup>th</sup> May 2023 with an influx of New Councillors and development of new structures for operating with the Councillors.

### **Wednesday 10<sup>th</sup> May onwards Flood recovery work in East Devon led by EDDC**

EDDC held five virtual recovery coordination meetings on the 11<sup>th</sup> May, 15<sup>th</sup> May, 22<sup>nd</sup> May, 1<sup>st</sup> June and 24<sup>th</sup> July. The meetings were chaired by Matt Blythe as the recovery lead and were made up of representatives from EDDC Comms, Benefits Team, Street Scene, EA recovery manager, DCC Flood risk manager, DCC Highways, District Cllrs, County Cllrs, Town and Parish Cllrs & Clerks, Local Police, Local Fire, National Farmers Union, Tipton St John School Exec Head and EDDC Emergency Planning.

Street scene cleared 8 tons of mud from the area, Street scene had planned to deploy skips to three locations but a delay in availability of skips meant they dynamically reacted to clear flood damaged property filling up 19 caged trailers with white goods and water damaged property providing 4 weeks of support:

**Week 1** Under the directive from DCC to stay away from Newton Poppleford and Tipton St John, they started work on clearing mud/silt from Venn Ottery. Cleared mud and detritus clearance at Meadow Lane /Larkrise using tractors/trucks etc. They then followed into Newton Pop and Tipton when DCC had finished what they could do in the area to do some finer tuning cleaning.

**Week 2** Started on Burrow lane clearing mud and collecting household damaged items Working on ad hoc requests from residents for removal of household waste.

**Week 3** Going round affected areas checking for household items that have been left out, responding to more ad hoc requests for removal of household items

**Week 4** As a result of resident drop-in sessions at Newton Poppleford and Colaton Raleigh, several residents requested individual assistance to remove damaged goods which were collected. A request for our road sweeper to re-sweep Hazel Close.

The local Parish Councils had provided sandbags, so StreetScene resupplied these

The Financial Resilience team handled 10 requests for funding support/hardship funds.

The Housing Service were on standby for support of displaced residents but there were no requests for temp housing, housing supported individuals where insurance companies weren't providing accommodation in a liaison capacity.

Private Sector Housing/Environmental Protection Team conducted visits to each flooded property in Newton Poppleford and other areas during the first week after the flooding and identified safeguarding concerns, hardship concerns or clearance needs and then signposted the individuals

to the appropriate agency or raised a concern with an agency if there was a need for this level of support.

### **East Devon Recovery Public Drop in events**

EDDC arranged three public drop-in events for each area and these events had links to representatives from the EA, DCC Highways and Flood Team, EDDC Private Sector Housing Team, EDDC Street Scene, EDDC Housing, EDDC Financial Resilience Team.

- Tue 23<sup>rd</sup> May Newton Poppleford 120+ attendees,
- Fri 26<sup>th</sup> May Colaton Raleigh 30+ attendees,
- Wed 7<sup>th</sup> Jun, Tipton St John 20+ attendees

The recovery phase was officially brought to an end at the meeting of 24 July 2023, when it was agreed that any outstanding work was ‘business as usual’.

### **DCC Section 19 FWMA Act 2010 report**

On Thurs 19<sup>th</sup> Oct DCC release their report into the floods as required by Section 19 of the Flood & Water Management Act 2010, when 5 or more properties are flooded internally. The Flood Report outlines 126 flooded properties across Devon and the flooding event as between a 1 in 100 year and a 1in 150-year flood event with 70-95mm of rain falling in a 2-hour period.

### **Newton Poppleford Community Resilience Event**

We met with the local parish council as the main impacted area and worked with them to develop their updated Community Emergency Plan working with a number of Parish Councillors to shape the plan. On the back of this it was felt there was a need to attract local volunteers to help with the plan so an event was arranged to give a local context of the flooding, plan delivery and highlight the good work that can be delivered by a well-structured plan and a well organised set of volunteers (Lypstone PC).

Mon 23<sup>rd</sup> Oct East Devon Community Resilience Event working with the EA, Devon Communities together and Newton Poppleford Parish Council;

65+ attendees, 22 local residents, 30+ local councillors, DCC Rep, EA reps, Devon Communities Together, EDDC Climate Change and Recovery Lead, Emergency Planning Officer

### **Development of Community Network**

As a result of the network event, we have made contact with all the individuals and parishes who attended or signed up as well as existing community contacts and have engaged with the following. Contact can be from being part of the EDDC network to development of full plans working with the Environment Agency, Devon Communities Together, local volunteers and businesses.

<b>Axminster</b>	<b>Sidmouth</b>	<b>Honiton</b>
All Saints	Newton Poppleford	Bishop’s Clyst
Woodbury	Clyst St Lawrence	West Hill
Northleigh	Colaton Raleigh	Stoke Canon
Beer	Exton	Broadhembury
<b>Seaton</b>	<b>Exmouth</b>	<b>Ottery St. Mary</b>
East Budleigh	Chardstock	Colyford
Lypstone	Broadclyst	Widworthy
Plymtree	WestHill	Yarcombe
Whimble	Colaton Raleigh	Feniton

Colyton	Uplyme	
Membury	Sidbury	

Further community events are being planned between EDDC, EA and Devon Communities Together. The Emergency Planning Officer (EPO) will be focussing on Towns and areas with an increased flood risk, as well as those individuals who make direct contact.

Since September 2023 the EPO has attended the following community/planning events;

- Sep 18<sup>th</sup> 2023 Membury, Hawkchurch etc
- Oct 23<sup>rd</sup> 2023 Newton Poppleford Community event
- Nov 20<sup>th</sup> 2023 West Hill PC
- Nov 27<sup>th</sup> 2023 Otterton PC
- Nov 29<sup>th</sup> 2023 Colyford PC
- Jan 8<sup>th</sup> & 14<sup>th</sup> 2024 Tipton St John / Ottery St Mary TC
- Jan 18<sup>th</sup> 2024 Stoke Canon PC
- Jan 31<sup>st</sup> 2024 Exton PC
- Feb 7<sup>th</sup> 2024 All Saints PC
- Feb 20<sup>th</sup> 2024 Sidmouth TC
- March 4<sup>th</sup> 2024 Axminster TC
- March 18<sup>th</sup> 2024 Northleigh Parish Member

### **Senior Leadership Team/Emergency Duty Officers**

With the greater impacts of climate change being felt and retirement of the previous Chief Executive/Director of Housing Health and Environment, it was apparent that the Council's approach to dealing with 'out of hours' emergencies needed a review to ensure continued resilience. For this reason, it was agreed that members of the Senior Leadership Team would voluntarily take on the role of Emergency Duty Officer on a weekly rota. The role was to ensure that the Council was appropriately represented in any out of hours responses to emergencies, ensuring attendance at Pre-event Telephone Conferences, Strategic and Tactical Coordinating Groups. They will also lead any 'non-LRF' emergencies if required and are receiving training to support them in doing this. Home Safeguard ensure messages are appropriately distributed. The role was introduced in September 2023 and has been running well in conjunction with a managers' WhatsApp group. However, the role is not designed to deal with out of hours 'business as usual' requests. Separate work is taking place to review the Council's out of hours policy which will be reflected in the emergency planning approach, once agreed.

### **National Power Outage Exercise**

In November 2023 the DCIOS LRF ran a local National Power Outage exercise which is a key risk from the Governments National Risk Register, covering emergency response and business continuity delivery. We attended this exercise and as we review our business continuity plan we are incorporating learning that has come from the exercise into the plan.

### **Current focus for Emergency Planning**

#### Communications

- Internal & External Crisis Comms

#### Housing

Rest centre development

- Honiton

- Exmouth
- West Point

All of our community centres held as Evacuation assembly points

- Home Safeguard are the out of hours point of contact for the Local Resilience Forum and related Emergency messaging.

#### Street Scene

- Street clearance
- Coastal pollution
- Flood gate closure with EA
- Cliff Falls
- Waste disposal
- Engineering support

#### Building Control

- Dangerous structures

#### Environmental Health

- Diseases – Animal/People
- Asbestos
- House to House recovery

#### Benefits

- Financial Resilience/ Hardship funds

### **Conclusion**

The Council has faced and overcome a number of emergency planning challenges in 2023/24, with and in support of our LRF partners. The Emergency Planning Officer has been very active in building on this experience, forging strong links with a number of town and parish Councils with a view to building Community Resilience that ensures any future emergencies are effectively dealt with at all levels. Emergency events such as those listed in this report take our operations teams away from their regular work and put pressure on service delivery elsewhere. As we are seeing increasing regularity of such events, it is worth noting that we will need to consider in the near future how we resource teams appropriately to correspond with climate related increases in demand.

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### **Financial implications:**

There are no financial implication arising from the report

### **Legal implications:**

There are no substantive legal issues to be added to this report

ELT – for reports to be for discussing and debating moving forward rather than for noting when going to scrutiny