

Report to: Scrutiny Committee



Date of Meeting 04/09/2025

Document classification: Part A Public Document

Exemption applied: None

Review date for release N/A

Review of Emergency Planning & Responses in 2024/5 by East Devon District Council

Report summary:

To outline the Emergency Planning and Response work undertaken in the year 2024/25.

Is the proposed decision in accordance with:

Budget Yes ☒ No ☐

Policy Framework Yes ☒ No ☐

Recommendation:

That Scrutiny Committee note the activity that has been taken with regards to Emergency Planning and response delivery for 2024/25

Reason for recommendation:

No decisions are required, and the report is for informational purposes

Officer: David Whelan Emergency Planning and Business Continuity Officer

Portfolio(s) (check which apply):

- ☐ Assets and Economy
- ☐ Communications and Democracy
- ☐ Council, Corporate and External Engagement
- ☐ Culture, Leisure, Sport and Tourism
- ☒ Environment - Nature and Climate
- ☒ Environment - Operational
- ☐ Finance
- ☐ Place, Infrastructure and Strategic Planning
- ☐ Sustainable Homes and Communities

Equalities impact Low Impact

Climate change Low Impact

Risk: Low Risk; Risk related to this report is low, 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)

- ☒ A supported and engaged community
 - ☐ Carbon neutrality and ecological recovery
 - ☐ Resilient economy that supports local business
 - ☐ Financially secure and improving quality of services
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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 to ensure a common approach to emergency response. EDDC is also a member of the Devon Emergency Planning Partnership (DEPP) with the County and other district Emergency planners.

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. It has been recognised that having a single role can be considered a 'single point of failure' and structures are being reviewed to ensure there is resilience within the emergency planning service.

During 2024/25 we built on the changes to how we manage the emergency planning and response function within the council and there were also a number of significant incidents that required a response. This report provides Scrutiny Committee with a review of this work.

Overview of 2024/25 Work

Weather related risks have dominated the last 12 months with the following requirements for response to incidents such as;

- Flooding; River Axe/Coly Weycroft & Whitford
- Severe rain
- Storms: Ex Hurricane Kirk, Ashley, Bert, Darragh, Eowyn, Hermione
- Wind
- Thunderstorms (Spring & Summer months)
- Snow & Ice impacts: 21st Nov 2024 - 98 children held out of school by rail provider. Also 8th Jan 2025.
- Heat Health Warnings (weekly updates)
- Cold Health Warnings (weekly updates)

But there have also been Emergency Responses to:

- Avian Flu - confirmed local cases in wild birds
- Blue Tongue - extended zone across the uk currently but was localised earlier this year
- Industrial Action – many organisations but health and Doctors most impactful for EDDC
- Cliff falls – Sidmouth & Budleigh
- Aircraft incidents standbys - Exeter airport
- Unexploded ordinance – Sidmouth
- Protests Plymouth, Exeter and local– Immigration targets

The Local Resilience Forum have generated and brought the partnership together for 15 response activations in 24/25 across the local Resilience Forum and a further 3 notifications of incidents for awareness. In addition to the incidents mentioned above they range from, Cryptosporidium outbreak in South Devon, Barnstaple drug deaths, fires linked to waste and recycling, Prison capacity & early release and wildfires on Bodmin Moor.

Weather Events

"The latest assessment of the UK's climate shows how baselines are shifting, records are becoming more frequent, and that temperature and rainfall extremes are becoming the norm. The UK's climate has warmed steadily from the 1980s onwards, with the greatest implications from the increasing frequency and intensity of daily temperature extremes.

- The UK is warming: Since the 1980s the UK climate has been warming at a rate of approximately 0.25°C per decade. The last three years have all been in the UK's top five warmest on record.
- Extremes are increasing: Over recent decades, temperature extremes have increased, becoming more frequent and more intense. For example, the hottest summer days have warmed around twice as much as average summer days in some UK areas when comparing the latest decade to 1961-1990.
- Sea level rise is accelerating: UK sea levels have risen 19.5cm since 1901 with the last three years the three highest on record for annual mean sea level.
- Winters are getting wetter: October 2023 to March 2024 was the wettest winter half-year on record. In a series from 1767, six of the ten wettest winter half-years (October to March) for England and Wales have been in the 21st Century so far.

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 number of warnings is increasing year on year.

The Met Office Weather Warnings UK have weather warnings for rain, wind, snow, ice, fog, thunderstorm, lightning and extreme heat and can include the naming of storms. These include 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 impacts 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 national specific warning for surface water flooding only indications from Met office severe weather warnings and the ongoing trial of the Rapid Flood Guidance warnings Met Office/EA.

To close this gap in our information locally East Devon District Council have signed up to Previsico surface water flood data (provided by our Insurers) and use this as an indicator alongside the national warnings to consider the sharing of specific localised information around our insured buildings.

Emergency Planning/Response Work

In 2024/25 We received a significant number of weather messages/warnings, generally there are a number of warnings a week, these include Heat and cold health warnings, flood warnings, wild fire indications as well as the recognisable Weather warnings from the Met office. From these warnings we provide messaging internally to reinforce existing awareness. Where the warnings impacts are a medium level or are out of the normal we use these as triggers for both internal and external messaging based generally 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 continue to send out all warnings and EA notifications to our social media subscribers
- Place for awareness of their estate

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

In 2024/25 we have seen a large number of weather events which we responded to or monitored and shared information locally similar to the levels we saw in 2023/24.

Since the last report we have also seen In Devon & Cornwall & the Isles of Scilly LRF region a couple of the Government's Emergency Alert activations, one linked to the red warning for wind in the wider Devon area in December 2024 and one linked to the Plymouth WW2 bomb in February 2024.

The Government will be doing a test of the Emergency Alerts system at 3pm on Sunday 7th September 2025.

Senior Leadership Team/Emergency Duty Officers

The Emergency Duty Officer role which is key to our Tactical delivery of Emergency Response is staffed voluntarily by 13 of the Senior Leadership Team. A review of its delivery was conducted in February 2025 and its delivery was felt to be appropriate for managing EDDC's response to incidents.

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 ongoing training to support them in doing this. Home Safeguard ensure messages are appropriately distributed by way of the out of hours call out system. 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.

Other key outputs:

- Development of an Emergency Duty Officer manual
- Development of logs and a recording system for use in an Emergency Response or Recovery
- Monitor and work with the Home Safeguard team to maintain out of hours manual/call out lists
- We have delivered a half day Tactical Training Course working with Devon County Council

The EDO role will be impacted by the Corporate Out of Hours review that is currently being undertaken.

Development of Community Network

As a result of the Community Resilience work in Newton Poppleford at the end of 2023, we have continued to maintain and expand our Community Resilience Network. Contact can be in many forms from basic awareness to development of full community plans working with the Environment Agency, Devon Communities Together, local volunteers and businesses.

We have run a number of public meetings including:

- Axminster public drop in Feb 2025 where we had over 100 people in attendance including other community partners. This provided a space for the public to raise their concerns. The main focus was the flood team and the EA who are still working through the concerns raised. Partners included Environment Agency, Devon County Council Flood risk team, Fire service community team, Police, Devon Communities Together and the East Devon Emergency Planning Officer
- Newton Poppleford/Otter Valley public meeting In May 2025. We revisited the locality of Newton Poppleford and held a public meeting with approx. 40 attendees. Partners discussed aspects of recovery two years on from the floods and other community resilience aspects. Partners included the Environment Agency, DCC Highways, DCC Flood Risk Team, Devon Communities Together, Clinton Estates, West Country Rivers, East Devon District Council Climate Change, East Devon Emergency Planning Officer.

Current focus for Emergency Planning

Local Resilience Forum (LRF) work

The LRF is a partnership of Category 1 and 2 responders across the wider Devon, Cornwall and Isles of Scilly region. It includes blue light services, all Councils and the Environment Agency. We recognise the importance of working as part of the wider partnership and take an active part in discussions and supporting some of the sub-groups.

- Attendance at the Monthly LRF operational update meeting
- Attendance at the Quarterly LRF Chief Officer Executive Board
- An active member of the following groups which work to develop capabilities for the LRF;
 - Risk Analysis Working Group review risks and monitoring of the LRF Community Risk register

- Analysis and Development – Horizon scanning
- Whole Societal Resilience and Vulnerable Person Group
- Community Emergency Hubs Working group work to support development of locally community managed hubs
- LRF Cyber working group which also includes Strata representation
- Severe Weather Group
- Communications provision: Digital changeover
- Chair of the Exeter and East & Mid Devon Responders Forum which meets three times a year to discuss and maintain that local contact.

Devon Emergency Planning Partnership (DEPP)

DEPP is a partnership between Devon County Council and Devon Districts. The Districts can benefit from DCC's greater resources in this area. Partnership agrees consistent policies and procedures across the partnership area and improves communication and joint working. Some of the areas covered in the past year are:

- Humanitarian Assistance Centres
- Recovery Plans and support
- Response Plans
- Counter Coastal Pollution Plans and support work

Protect - Martyn's Law

With Martyn's Law now enacted as the Terrorism (Protection of Premises) Act 2025 at the start of 2025 we have been sharing information to the likely affected areas, Licensing; Place, Safety Advisory Group for the council, with a view to full implementation by April 2027. We held an early workshop with Street scene and the Events team to discuss the future impacts of this new piece of legislation for public spaces and public events. Ongoing work will be required to understand how our public buildings will be affected by the legislation and its future enforcement by SIA. We will be building this work into the Directorate Plan for 2026/7.

Development and delivery of localised training

- Strategic Course delivery for LRF. EDDC specific input around recovery based on our experience in The Otter Valley Floods
- DEPP Recovery training
- DEPP Tactical Training and Tactical Response Team input for EDDC
- Loggist training for EDDC staff to ensure that accurate logs of information are kept in the event of an emergency.

Emergency Planner Training

- Risk awareness course
- Creating Exercises for crisis situations
- MCGA (Marine Coastguard Agency) National training LA01

- MCGA Beach supervisors' course LA02 set for delivery Nov 24 with Dorset but due to a cliff collapse at Lyme Regis the event was postponed. Now delivering with the MCGA in Budleigh/Honiton on 7th & 8th October 2025.

Exercises

- Helios – Heat Health climate change considerations
- EA Counter Coastal Pollution – Local Authority support to the Environment Agency

Examples of Service inputs as part of Emergency Planning and Response for EDDC

Communications

- Internal & External Crisis Comms

Housing

Humanitarian Assistance Centres working with Devon County Council

- 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 – local plan meetings with MCGA
- Flood gate closure with EA
- Cliff Falls
- Waste disposal
- Engineering support
- Fleet Management
- Events- updates to event organisers around weather impacts such as Heat and Storms

Building Control

- Dangerous structures

Environmental Health

- Infectious diseases – Animal/People
- Asbestos
- House to House recovery
- Dangerous Animals work with Zoo licensing
- Business Continuity and how this is managed in a context of a concurrent Emergency Response: main corporate plan and 20 individual Service Plans maintained. All service

plans were all subject to individual development with one-to-one meetings and discussion-based exercising for the plan, their leads and deputies.

Benefits

- Financial Resilience/ Hardship funds

Conclusion

The Council has faced and overcome a number of emergency planning challenges in 2024/25, with and in support of our LRF partners. The Emergency Planning Officer has been very active in building on this experience, forging further links with a number of Town and Parish Councils maintaining a wider Community Resilience. This 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 ensuring we need to have business continuity considerations in place. 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.

Financial implications:

Resource pressure is noted but there are no direct financial implications arising from the report at this stage.

Legal implications:

The legal issues are dealt with in the body of the report.