

THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

21 JANUARY 2013

EMERGENCY PLANNING – UPDATE ON SCRUTINY REVIEW

REPORT OF PORTFOLIO HOLDER FOR COMMUNITIES, CULTURE & SPORT

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RECENT REFERENCES:

EN100 – Environment Scrutiny Panel – 20 July 2010 – Emergency Planning Informal Scrutiny Group – Final Report

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

This Report provides an update on the progress made against the actions that were identified by the Emergency Planning Informal Scrutiny Group, which reported to the Environment Scrutiny Panel on 20 July 2010. The recommendations were subsequently approved in principle as set out at the meeting of Cabinet held on 15 September 2010, with the detail of implementation delegated to the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Communities.

Attached as Appendix 1 is the final report of the Informal Scrutiny Group (Report EN100 refers).

RECOMMENDATION:

That The Overview and Scrutiny Committee raises with the relevant Portfolio Holder any issues arising from the information in this Report and considers whether any items of significance be drawn to the attention of Cabinet.

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REPORT OF THE PORTFOLIO HOLDER FOR COMMUNITIES, CULTURE & SPORT

1. Introduction

1.1 In 2009 the Environment Scrutiny Panel established an Emergency Planning Informal Scrutiny Group with the following terms of reference:

1. To review WCC and HCC procedures and plans that are in place to involve local communities in preparing for and reacting to civil emergencies.
2. To assess the extent to which there are emergency plans and procedures in place at the parish (or Winchester Town level).
3. To review the effectiveness of communications with the public and Parish Councils on arrangements to be followed in the event of a civil emergency (to include a review of work being undertaken by the Local Resilience Forum Warning and Informing Group).
4. To assess the extent to which local communities are involved in planning for civil emergencies.
5. To take oral evidence in pursuance of 2 to 4 above.
6. That the conclusions of the Panel be reported to Cabinet.

Members serving on the Group were councillors Busher, Howell, Mather and Spender and the chairman was Councillor Lipscomb.

1.2 Following extensive consultation and interviews with key witnesses, the following recommendations were submitted to the Environment Scrutiny Panel at its meeting held on 20 July 2010 and were supported. The recommendations were subsequently approved, in principle, as set out at the meeting of Cabinet held on 15 September 2010, with the detail of implementation delegated to the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Communities. The opportunity has been taken to provide an update to The Overview and Scrutiny Committee as set out in italics under each recommendation.

**1. That in respect of the vulnerable:**

**1.1 That Hampshire County Council be aware of the need to provide assistance to the vulnerable, not already on at risk register, living in rural communities in the event of a loss of electricity or a pandemic situation.**

*Hampshire County Council has a duty of care to the vulnerable members of the community, and first and foremost those that are on their database as receiving care from Children's or Adult Services, for example those being provided with care such as 'meals on wheels'. In times of emergency, all residents of an area will be considered and it is an important role of town and parish councils and flood action groups to ask people in the pre-planning stage to identify themselves if they are vulnerable and to share information. This forms part of the Community Plan – Hambledon Flood Action Group have carried this out recently. Utility companies also have list of vulnerable persons that have "self identified" themselves in the event of a power outage for example.*

## **2. That in respect of communications:**

### **2.1 That within Councillor Lipscomb's letter the Parish Councils and community groups be encouraged to identify a person to champion and lead on emergency planning and provide a second individual to provide administrative support and to store and update emergency planning documentation.**

*This letter was subsequently sent to all Town and Parish Clerks on 18 November 2010. To date the Council has had notification that Parish Plans have been prepared for Denmead, Littleton and Harestock; Hambledon, Otterbourne and Swanmore. The County hold 30 Community plans in total. In addition, in October 2012 the County Council held an awareness event for Town and Parish Councils on their roles in an emergency and putting together a simple emergency plan. Communities need to provide a champion to help put a plan together.*

### **2.2 That in the event of an incident, such as severe weather, frequent updates on the situation be circulated by the Head of Communications to all Members.**

*The Head of Corporate Communications is part of the Local Resilience Forum Emergency Planning Media Plan and takes part in exercises which are held annually to test the emergency plan. The Democratic Services Update (DSU) is used to communicate to all Members and should the need arise an all Member email would be used. Regular articles are published in the DSU in the run up to winter relating to severe weather planning and flood prevention. In addition, the County Council publish a newsletter of emergency planning activity which is distributed to Members by the DSU.*

### **2.3 That further consideration be given by Hampshire County Council to publicising the opening of Prepared Rest Centres and Parish Community Halls when opened, to include signage and the use of Parish Notice Boards, in order that the public are directed to safe areas.**

*Since the meeting of the ISG an additional Prepared Rest Centre in Alresford has been added to the list.*

*When Rest Centres are opened, signage is placed outside of the Rest Centre to advertise its location and transport will be provided by the County Council to the rest centre itself. For those who may transport themselves to the rest centre, directions and information will be provided by Police, City Council Incident Liaison Officers and additionally via local radio stations.*

**2.4 That resilient communication channels be established between City Council's Emergency Planning Officer and Parish Councils and other Community Groups with Emergency Plans and an incident control point, such as through Hants Direct or Winchester City Council's out-of-hours service (though this would need enhancing for the purpose).**

*This is noted. In the event of an emergency that involved the City Council in a response at tactical level, a District Incident Liaison Officer would be sent to the incident on the instruction of the incident Controller (usually the Chief Executive). The Incident Liaison Officer would have direct contact with the City Council's Emergency Control Centre and would act as a point of liaison at the scene with the Emergency Services. The purpose of Parish / Community Plans is that in the event of an emergency affecting a large part of the community, that Parish Councils or Community Group can assist with co-ordination and provide a local point of contact for the City Council (as in the case of Hambledon Flood Action Group). Most importantly they can also inform us where there may be vulnerable people within the community that are not already known to HCC. Outside of an incident all Town and Parish Council's have been provided with details of the Council's Emergency Planning Officer as a point of contact. The City Councils day time and out of hours number is published in the Councillors Guide to flooding. In times of emergency, alerting and notification will be prioritised to those Members who may have an operational role (such as media spokesperson or Flood Action Groups for example). The City Council will as a matter of course inform Lead Members of potentially serious incidents that attract media interest.*

**2.5 That Hampshire County Council increase public awareness of the need to tune into local radio stations and websites.**

*This is done as a matter of course in accordance with the Hampshire and Isle of Wight LRF Multi agency Media Plan. Radio Solent's "communicating in a crisis" will cut into programmes every 15 minutes to inform people of an incident. The County website is updated to reflect the latest relevant information and acts as a lead for the update the City's website.*

**2.6 That Hampshire County Council in consultation with City Council's Emergency Planning Officer provide information on the provision of grit bins, their location, their replenishment and responsibilities for spreading grit in the event of adverse weather.**

*The County's website contains a map of the location of grit bins and is interactive for reporting damage to bins and refilling. Parish Councils can use this facility for reporting grit bin issues in their area. There are currently 3,000 grit bins across the County.*

**2.7 That information be provided by the Head of Access and Infrastructure in consultation with City Council's Emergency Planning Officer on the availability, distribution and effective use of the provision of sandbags.**

*Details on sandbags is contained on the City Council website and is contained in the publication "Councillor's guide to flooding". The message is one of self help for individual homeowners, but the Council will assist where it can – the priority is to protect the public at large.*

*With ongoing issues around flooding the City Council has this winter purchased 400 additional sandbags to assist in its response. The County will always supplement through mutual aid where it can, although sandbag use for highways remains a priority.*

**2.8 That a clear and positive message be given by the City Council's Emergency Planning Officer on the legal liabilities of homeowners clearing pathways of snow and ice outside of their properties.**

*This message would be published on the Council's website in the event of severe winter weather. HCC advise as follows:*

*Having a supply of salt for your own drive and a snow shovel, which can be bought from most hardware stores, will prepare you for bouts of severe weather.*

*Do not be tempted to use hot water to melt snow or ice on your drive, as this can lead to new ice forming as the water runs off onto the roads and pavements. There's no law stopping you from clearing snow and ice on the pavement*

*Outside your home or from public spaces. It's unlikely you'll be held legally responsible for any injuries on the path if you have cleared it carefully. Follow the snow code when clearing snow and ice safely*

### **3. That in respect of Community Plans:**

#### **3.1 That Parish Council plans include details of plant and machinery that can be called upon to assist in the event of an incident.**

*The Parish Council and Community Plan template contains the inclusion of plant and machinery as a standard section. Hambledon's Community Plan contains this information and is considered "good practice".*

#### **3.2 That identified high risks, such as flooding, be planned for in advance by Hampshire County Council in consultation with City Council's Emergency Planning Officer.**

*Emergency Planning in Hampshire is driven by the LRF Community Risk Register (CRR). This document is available to view on the HCC Website (Emergency Planning / Community Risk Register). It details wide area risks such as flooding, pandemic flu and telecoms failure – all of which have multi agency plans in place to mitigate. In addition to this, HCC Emergency Planning Team carry out an extensive local risk assessment of the Winchester District to identify high risks that may require local authority support in the event of an emergency. The assessment is carried out by multi agency partners with the purpose of identifying any additional risks to those listed in the CRR that we may not have pre-planned for. Fortunately for our District none have been identified. Where serious flooding has occurred in the past pre planning work has taken place to prevent or mitigate its reoccurrence. A leading example is Hambledon where a multiagency response has been prepared and the Ward Member, Parish Council and Hambledon Flood Action Group have been heavily involved in flood planning.*

#### **3.3 That Hampshire County Council in consultation with City Council's Emergency Planning Officer give special consideration to the needs of Whiteley (including the participation of the Whiteley Business Forum) and Winchester Town and that the final report be taken to the Winchester Town Forum.**

*The final Report was taken to Winchester Town Forum on 24 November 2010.*

*The needs of Whiteley are being progressed. Following the severe weather that affected Whiteley (along with many other areas of the County) in 2009, an assessment of the roads around Whiteley in accordance with the salt route map was carried out and this led to a meeting with local business (Zurich and NATS) where a request was made to add The Parkway to HCC highways salting routes. The importance of NATS and the sheer volume of traffic in that area, which is reliant on the Parkway, has resulted that since winter 2010 the Parkway is*

*now included in the main salting routes. There is also the Hampshire HCC Emergency Traffic Plan for Whiteley to control the bollards on Yew Tree Drive in the event of an incident, which is managed by Hampshire Highways Fareham Office. The County Council Emergency Planning Team has also worked with Whiteley Primary School and the nursery / pre-school communities to produce a "Gull Coppice Community Evacuation Plan" following a hoax bomb alert to the school in May 2012. .*

**3.4 That appropriate Parish Councils consider establishing links with major employers in their Parishes to improve resilience and establish the possibility of mutual aid and that Parish Councils be encouraged to work with neighbouring parishes to produce effective emergency plans.**

*The findings of the Scrutiny Review, including the point above, were brought to the attention of Parish Councils in the letter from the Chairman sent to Parishes on 18 November 2010.*

**3.5 That the resources and expertise available from Winchester Area Community action be given consideration by Hampshire County Council in consultation with City Council's Emergency Planning Officer when preparing community plans.**

*The County Council has established close working links with the many voluntary agencies. WACA have resources including transport and communication links of which the County and City Councils are aware of to call upon to provide assistance as required. The Community Action Hampshire and the Chief Executive Representative for the Council of Voluntary Services also sits on the LRF Community Resilience Group and the County Council chairs the Hampshire and Isle of Wight Voluntary Sector Group..*

**4. That the Environment Scrutiny Panel should review biennially the effectiveness of the changes recommended by it to Cabinet, if adopted.**

*The Overview and Scrutiny Committee has taken on the role of the Scrutiny Panels.*

2. Additional Information

2.1 Training for Councillors

2.2 There have been a number of recent training events for Members on emergency planning. Training for City Council Members was last held on 27 March 2012. In addition, on 30 October 2012 the County Council hosted a training event held at Ashbuton Court, to which all Members were invited to attend.

## OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

### 3. SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY STRATEGY AND CHANGE PLANS (RELEVANCE TO):

- 3.1 An effective emergency response plan will provide support when and where it is most effective to our vulnerable and disadvantaged residents and will make sure that everyone in the District, no matter who they are or where they live, has the opportunity to enjoy a good quality of life now and in the future. To provide a high quality environment the process of emergency planning takes into regard the need to adapt to climate change and to protect and improve our landscapes and townscapes. Cultural and sporting opportunities have been supported during the Olympics including the highly successful event plan for the Torch Relay.

### 4. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 The Council has entered into a service level agreement with Hampshire County Council for the provision of emergency planning services. This service level agreement is for a three year period and was last renewed on 1 April 2011 and is now valid until April 2014. The cost of the service level agreement £18,530 per annum with annual inflationary uplifts at 2% per annum. In addition, the Council contributes towards the cost of the Local Resilience Forum at a cost of £1,500 per annum.

### 5. RISK MANAGEMENT ISSUES

- 5.1 There is a risk based approach to emergency planning with the production of a County Community Risk Register and analysis of local risks through a multiagency approach. There is a reputational risk to the authority through non delivery.

## BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS:

None

## APPENDICES:

- Appendix 1 Report of the Emergency Planning Informal Scrutiny Group 20 July 2010.



**EN100****Environment Scrutiny Panel – 20 July 2010****Emergency Planning Informal Scrutiny Group - Final Report****Report of the Chairman of the Emergency Planning Informal Scrutiny Group -  
Councillor Lipscomb.**

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**1. Purpose of the Report**

1.1 To provide the Scrutiny Panel with the opportunity to comment on the final report from the Emergency Planning Informal Scrutiny Group (ISG) convened in November 2009 and make any amendments it considers necessary before being recommended to Cabinet.

1.2 The Scrutiny Panel is asked to consider this matter as part of its role in holding the Portfolio Holder to account and monitoring the progress the Council is making in building emergency planning resilience at the community level. The ISG considered issues related to communication in the event of a civil emergency and the extent to which local communities are involved in planning for civil emergencies.

**Recommendations**

1. That the Scrutiny Panel considers the report and recommendations of the Informal Scrutiny Group.
2. That the Panel request that Cabinet approve the recommendations of the ISG set out on page 13 of the report.
3. That the Portfolio Holder for Communities report on Cabinet's progress to implement the recommendations of the ISG to the Environment Scrutiny Panel in 2012.

**Risk Management Issues**

There are no risk management issues arising from this Report.

**Background Documents**

None

**Appendices**

Emergency Planning Informal Scrutiny Group Report



**Winchester**  
City Council

## **ENVIRONMENT SCRUTINY PANEL**

### **REPORT EN100**

**20 July 2010**

**Report of the Chairman of the Scrutiny Review**

**Councillor Barry Lipscomb**

# **EMERGENCY PLANNING INFORMAL SCRUTINY GROUP**

## **ENVIRONMENT SCRUTINY PANEL**

### **REPORT OF THE CHAIRMAN – Cllr Barry Lipscomb**

#### **1. INTRODUCTION**

1.1 At the Environment Scrutiny Panel on 11 November 2009, Councillors Lipscomb, Busher, Howell, Mather and Spender were appointed to the Emergency Planning Informal Scrutiny Group.

1.2 The Panel met on four occasions. At its first meeting held on 14 December 2009 the City Council's Chief Executive, Simon Eden and the Head of Emergency Planning at Hampshire County Council, Ian Houlton, were in attendance. The second meeting of the Group was held on 14 January 2010 with Kate Ball, Head of Communications, Hampshire County Council; Eleanor Hodge, Head of Communications, Winchester City Council, and Dennis Brady, Senior Emergency Planning Officer, Hampshire County Council in attendance.

1.3 The third meeting of the Group was held on 4 March 2010 with the following representatives of parish councils and voluntary and community groups in attendance:

Durley Parish Council - Frank Holttrum and Ann Collins  
Hursley Parish Council – Councillor Bell  
Northampton Parish Council – Monica Nightingale  
Otterbourne Parish Council - Suzanne Hudson  
South Wonston Parish Council - Eileen Bolton  
Sparsholt Parish Council - David Parker  
Whiteley Parish Council - Kairen Goves  
Wickham Parish Council - Michael Bennett  
Winchester Area Community Action (WACA) - Paul Williams

1.4 The final meeting of the Group was held on 14 April 2010 and was attended by Simon Eden and Dennis Brady and gave consideration to the content of the final report of the Informal Scrutiny Group.

1.5 At the first meeting of the Group held on 14 December 2009, the following terms of reference were agreed, bearing in mind that, in initiating the ISG, the Environment Scrutiny Panel had asked it to concentrate its scrutiny on local communities' involvement with Emergency Planning

7. To review WCC and HCC procedures and plans that are in place to involve local communities in preparing for and reacting to civil emergencies.
8. To assess the extent to which there are emergency plans and procedures in place at the parish (or Winchester Town level).
9. To review the effectiveness of communications with the public and Parish Councils on arrangements to be followed in the event of a civil emergency (to include a review of work being undertaken by the Local Resilience Forum Warning and Informing Group).
10. To assess the extent to which local communities are involved in planning for civil emergencies.
11. To take oral evidence in pursuance of 2 to 4 above.
12. That the conclusions of the Panel be reported to Cabinet.

1.7 In terms of defining what constitutes an emergency, the guidance from the Civil Contingencies Act 2004 states that it is:

*“Any event or situation, which threatens serious damage to human welfare, threatens serious damage to the environment and war or terrorism, which threatens serious damage to security.”*

1.8 Of importance is who can declare an emergency incident. A major incident can be declared by any member of the emergency services, but in certain circumstances, such as flooding, it can be declared by a local authority. At the local level, communities that have prepared their own Emergency Plans would be able to consider their invocation to support the emergency services on declaration of an emergency incident, or could choose to implement them in part outside of a declared incident, such as in response to a minor flooding situation, or to clear a fallen tree.

1.9 During an emergency incident, Winchester City Council also provides support to the emergency services. If the incident is of significance, the City will establish its Emergency Control Centre in the City Offices. The City Council will provide expertise in the functions for which it has responsibility, principally environment health, housing, building control and engineering. It will also provide a point of contact and dissemination of information for the District’s population and undertake a coordinating role. The City can also provide equipment and plant as requested by the emergency services.

## **2. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS**

2.1 **At the first meeting of the Group**, Ian Houlton informed Members that the Cabinet Office was itself forming legislation to improve community resilience at the local level.

2.2 The objective of community resilience was to allow communities and individuals to harness local resources and expertise to join together to help themselves.

2.3 There had been a number of significant incidents such as flooding and severe weather that had highlighted the benefits that could be obtained through building community resilience.

2.4 Work had been carried out in recent years by Hampshire County Council prior to the forthcoming legislation to assist in building community resilience. The County Council had on its website under Emergency Planning Unit, Emergency Plans templates for preparing a Community Emergency Plan and associated guidance notes – these can also be viewed by this [link](#). These had been progressed through the Winchester Association of Parish Councils and via direct contact. Swanmore and Denmead Parish Councils had prepared their own plans with professional support provided by Hampshire County Council's Emergency Planning Unit.

2.5 It was for communities themselves to define the most appropriate boundaries and representation for their plan. For example, some community plans might be based on geographic boundary, such as a parish council ward area, but in other cases a cultural or ethnic Group or an individual housing development might be more appropriate. The template could be used in all circumstances with minor adjustment. A partnership approach was encouraged to develop the Community plan. An

important message was for communities and individuals to protect themselves but not to put themselves in danger.

2.6 At the first meeting, two principal themes developed - the protection of the vulnerable and the importance of communications.

3.1 **At the second meeting of the Group**, the communication representatives stated that in response to the reporting of an incident, the emergency services would provide an immediate response where lives were threatened. Should the County Council's Emergency Planning Unit be contacted by the emergency services, the County's Communications Team would also be contacted through their 24 hour contact arrangements.

3.2 If the incident was of a significant nature, then a media cell would be established and the Local Resilience Forum's Major Incident Media Plan would be implemented. Within the Media Plan, mutual aid was important, with a duty officer on standby to provide an out-of-hours response if required.

3.3 During the heavy January snow, a telephone helpline was established through Hants Direct, with the Emergency Planning Unit working in association with Adult Services responding to calls. Adult services used their contacts with existing carers and the meals-on-wheels service to provide information about those at risk. Employers had been requested to allow staff to stagger their journeys and Local Resilience Forum agencies had worked together through the Media Plan to provide a consistent message.

3.4 Local media, such as BBC Solent, were used to provide a local message. Details on closures of schools were provided through radio and websites. In considering methods to provide local messages it was now recognised that social media, such as Twitter and Facebook, provided valuable sources of information.

3.5 Members agreed that a positive message should be given on the legal liabilities of homeowners clearing pathways outside of their properties.

3.6 The Group also discussed methods of communication with the public and parish councils. It was suggested that working through Neighbourhood Watch schemes, Residents' Associations, Scouting organisations and neighbours acting as volunteers could be useful. Information on access to sandbags would also be of use.

3.7 It was also recognised that for messages to be adopted, the timing of the message was important. Times of stress, such as in periods of heavy snow, were more likely times to stimulate public interest. Any proposal also needed to be resilient.

3.8 The Group supported the use of an emergency response card to promote the emergency planning message, including the promotion of wind-up radios and torches.

4.1 **At the third meeting of the Group**, representation was received from the following Parish Council and Voluntary Sector representatives:

Durley Parish Council - Frank Holttrum and Ann Collins  
Hursley Parish Council – Councillor Bell  
Northington Parish Council – Monica Nightingale  
Otterbourne Parish Council - Suzanne Hudson  
South Wonston Parish Council - Eileen Bolton  
Sparsholt Parish Council - David Parker  
Whiteley Parish Council - Kairen Goves  
Wickham Parish Council - Michael Bennett  
Winchester Area Community Action (WACA) - Paul Williams

4.2 Durley Parish Council had an emergency plan for the village and a list of vulnerable persons. Lessons learnt from the heavy snow in January had been the need for grit bins at crossroads and on steep hills, and also the importance of the parish hall for providing a safe refuge. The parish had no resources to provide bedding or emergency supplies. The publicity regarding the location of Rest Centres and local facilities was also raised.

4.3 Otterbourne Parish Council Parish Council did have an emergency plan. What would be of use would be information on the availability of sandbags in the event of ground water flooding and also a building to store them in, together with information on their distribution and effective use. Neighbourhood and Civil Enforcement Officers also provided a valuable asset in protecting a community.

4.4 Sparsholt Parish Council sought clarity on methods of communication between parish councils and the Adverse Weather Unit, which had been established at Netley to co-ordinate the emergency response to the heavy snow in January. The awareness and sharing of information was extremely important.

4.5 The January heavy snow had caused considerable problems at Whiteley. Commuters had been trapped at Whiteley all night. No emergency refuge had been allocated and no signage or diversion signs had been provided to indicate that the Yew Tree Drive rising bollard system was open to all traffic. There was a need for digital information signs for Whiteley. In the event of an accident on the M27 or A27, Whiteley often came to a complete standstill. Unfortunately, when Whiteley traffic realised that there was a problem, residents were already committed to Whiteley Way and could not therefore turnaround. Non urgent journeys could be postponed if digital traffic information signs were in place and this could reduce additional congestion. The principal issues arising were identifying who to call, the direction of people to an allocated safe area and the provision of improved information, perhaps through digital signs.

4.6 Hursley Parish Council did not have an emergency plan. However, a lot had been done to address the principal risks to the area including flooding, by installing pumps within cellars that were prone to flooding and also providing sandbags for individuals. Many properties within the community relied upon electricity for heating. During heavy snow and with the loss of power these properties would be unheated, perhaps for a period exceeding 24 hours. The provision of grit bins was now being looked into, as it had been found that in many areas their provision and the stockpile of grit had proved to be inadequate. The County Council had set aside financial provision for grit bins and had consulted with parish councils for their future provision. They would also ensure that they would be kept full.

4.7 South Wonston Parish Council did not have an emergency plan, and did not have a list of vulnerable people. The grit bins were also found to be empty in the January heavy snow. South Wonston was a compact community which aided communications, and information had been placed on Parish notice boards to inform the local community.

4.8 Wickham Parish Council did not have an emergency plan. The Parish Council did not have a list of vulnerable people and it was commented that such a list would be soon out of date unless it was frequently updated. The protection of the vulnerable relied upon neighbours checking each other's welfare. To improve communications in an emergency situation, it was suggested that a telephone number could be published to take calls and to receive, gather and collate information. For example in the recent heavy snow, parish councils had not been aware that the Adverse Weather Centre at Netley had been opened.

4.9 Northington Parish Council had coped well during the heavy snow. There was no provision of gas in the local area and following electricity cuts, hot drinks could not be supplied. The Parish Council was unaware of the support that could be obtained from the County Council.

4.10 Winchester Area Community Action (WACA) supported voluntary and community Groups in parishes across the Winchester District. The organisation had 30 part-time staff. The organisation also provided skills in fund-raising, organisation and governance to voluntary and community organisations. WACA also had responsibility for dial a ride and community transport and had five minibuses and additional cars at its disposal. In the event of an emergency situation WACA could assist in compiling lists of vulnerable persons, provide transport, use its communication network and assist in co-ordination.

4.11 In respect of the involvement and support of WACA, the Group agreed that this should be investigated further but, due to the short lead-in time that was required to respond to an incident, for example in identifying vulnerable persons, the existing databases of Hampshire County Council Adult and Children Services should be relied upon.

## 5. Protection of vulnerable persons

5.1 Protection of those deemed to be vulnerable at local level was a major consideration for the Group. Mr Hault informed Members that experience had shown that in the event of an evacuation of an area following an incident, some 70 per cent of those affected would self-evacuate. The focus of the emergency services was therefore to ensure the welfare of those remaining.

5.2 A major piece of work for the County Council at present was developing methods to identify and protect those deemed to be vulnerable. Work was progressing in conjunction with General Practitioners, the National Health Service and Hampshire County Council's Adult Services to identify those at risk.

5.3 Of importance to rural communities was the prolonged loss of electricity. Members of the Group identified that in rural communities which were without

alternative means of power, such as gas or oil, the loss of electricity could leave a household without heating and a means of cooking for a considerable period. This situation was exacerbated where the vulnerable were involved. The electricity providers should prioritise restoration of services to take account of households that were most susceptible to the situation outlined above. Mr Houlton informed the meeting that the Emergency Planning Unit had close contact with Category 2 responders, such as the power utilities, to assist in prioritisation. During the heavy snow in early January 2010, 20,000 homes in the Hampshire Area had lost power, principally caused by trees falling against power lines.

5.4 The Group agreed that the Chairman would write a letter on behalf of the Group to all parish councils, to highlight the importance for residents and communities to build resilience at the local level in the event of a power failure.

5.5 The Group expressed concern that there was often no co-ordinated means of identifying the vulnerable within communities, though neighbour self-help was suspected to be widespread in varying forms. Members took this into consideration when taking evidence from Parish and Town Councils.

5.6 An additional consideration was the support to rural and vulnerable communities during a pandemic situation where communities and individuals could find themselves isolated from medical support and from neighbours to collect medical provision.

5.7 The Group acknowledged that in respect of the awareness of vulnerable people, the Winchester town area faced differing challenges from the rural communities due to its more transient student population and from visitors. It was agreed to take the Group's final report to the Winchester Town Forum.

## 6. Communications

6.1 Emergency planning had to strike a balance between raising awareness without raising alarm.

6.2 Of importance was finding a method to reach out into communities. A key objective was to identify a person to champion and lead on emergency planning at the local level and also a second individual to provide administrative support and be a custodian of emergency planning documentation. The Group agreed that the Chairman include reference to this in a letter to all parish councils.

6.3 The methods of communication employed were largely dependent on the nature of the incident. The emergency services would provide an immediate response where lives were threatened, and the "blue light" services were supported by their own communication teams.

6.4 In situations involving the County Council's Emergency Planning Unit, the means of contacting of the County's internal Communications Team was a priority. The Communications Team had a 24 hour contact arrangement. If the incident was of sufficient magnitude, then a media cell would be established and the Local Resilience Forum's Major Incident Media Plan would be implemented. The Media Plan also provided advice and guidance on disaster preparation and prevention.



Members noted that this communication was perhaps more effective outward from the internal Communications Team and the Emergency Planning Unit than in the reverse direction.

6.5 The Major Incident Media Plan had been implemented on 5 January 2010, following notification of an extreme weather event by the Met Office. The Media Cell had been established at Gold Command at Netley Police Headquarters and had established a close working relationship with the national media to maintain a consistent message with the correct facts.

6.6 A telephone helpline had been established through Hants Direct. The filtering of calls provided the opportunity to check data on potentially violent clients and to use registered volunteers who had received the necessary clearance.

6.7 It was clarified that the Adverse Weather Office established during the January snows was part of the Police operation and was not for receiving public calls. However, consideration should be given to providing a point of contact for Parish Council's to use during an emergency as an alternative to the 999 number. Secondary points of contact in an emergency could possibly be through Hants Direct or Winchester City Council's out-of-hours service (though this would need enhancing for the purpose).

6.8 Appeals were made through local media and the County's own communications channels, such as its website, to encourage neighbours to provide support to those living within their local area. Messages had also been provided by radio and through websites to encourage employers to allow staff to stagger their journeys.

6.9 Examples of positive communications had been the update provided by the County's Director of Environment, which had been circulated to all Members and Parish Councils. In addition, frequent updates on the situation with regard to refuse collection had been circulated by the City Council.

6.10 The timing of promotional messages was important, for example to include items in the District's and County's publications in October prior to the winter season or to publish shortly after an incident such as the recent severe winter.

## 7. Methods to support community resilience

7.1 In planning for emergencies at the local level, the Group identified a number of key elements that should be given further consideration for inclusion within emergency planning.

7.2 To be effective at the local level a Community Plan needed to include details of plant and machinery that could be called upon to assist in the case of an incident. Examples included reference to local owners of chainsaws, tractors (with snow ploughs), four-wheel-drive vehicles and groups who may provide support, such as the Farmers' Union.

7.3 There were a number of high risk incidents that could be identified and planned for in advance. Such a situation might be the occurrence of flooding in a high risk area, such as an identified flood plain.

7.4 Although the County Council had opened five Prepared Rest Centres on the evening of 5 January 2010 due to the impact of heavy snow, two of which were in Winchester's area, the communication of their opening required further consideration. It was noted that the County Council was considering mechanisms to open secondary buildings, for example schools and churches, to act as additional Rest Centres in times of an emergency.

7.5 The County Council and the supporting voluntary agencies, St John's Ambulance and the Red Cross, had committed considerable resources to provide these Rest Centre facilities and to support their continued opening, but the representatives of Whiteley Parish Council were unaware of their opening and had made representation to the Group that no facility had been provided. Appropriate signage should be provided, which could include the use of a parish notice board.

7.6 The means of communication between Parish Councils and the Adverse Weather Unit, which was opened at Netley to co-ordinate the emergency response to the heavy snow in January, needed to be established. There was a need to know who to call in the event of an emergency. The publication of a telephone number to take calls and to receive, gather and collate information would be of assistance. Parish Councils and residents needed to know who to go to for help. They also needed to be made aware that an incident was taking place and to be kept up-to-date on developments. There was also a need to know that a helpline for a co-ordinating body had been opened.

7.7 The use of local radio and websites was vitally important, for example in providing information on school closures as well as traffic information. It would be up to each Parish Council to decide how best to disseminate the information received within its own community.

7.8 The provision of salt and grit to cope with an extreme weather event, such as the heavy snow encountered in early January, required further consideration. It was noted that Hampshire County Council had contacted communities to treble the amount of grit bins provided in order that local communities could help themselves to improve community resilience.

7.9 In the parishes, it would be for the Parish Council to provide grit bins and Hampshire County Council would fill them free of charge. Winchester Town Forum was also considering provision of additional bins for the Winchester town area. The provision of grit bins at crossroads and on steep hills would be welcomed. There needed to be a regime to ensure that grit bins were kept full and there should be identification of who took responsibility for spreading the grit once it had been delivered by Hampshire County Council.

7.10 A clear and positive message should be given on the legal liabilities of homeowners clearing pathways of snow and ice outside of their properties prior to events.

7.11 The establishment of communication links with parish councils, neighbourhood watch schemes, residents' associations and scouting organisations could be useful. Methods of communicating information also needed to be resilient and the messages themselves needed to be of sufficient quality, frequency and consistency to be of benefit.

7.12 Clarity of information on the provision of sandbags would be useful. This included information on their availability, distribution and effective use together with a means of storage.

7.13 The direction of people to allocated safe areas was of vital importance. Parish and community halls provided important safe refuges as part of community resilience. A number of parish councils had recognised the use of their parish hall to provide a refuge for stranded commuters, but they had no resources to provide bedding or emergency supplies. These parish halls were separate to the Rest Centres opened and operated by Hampshire County Council. Once opened, the Rest Centres and parish halls required sufficient publicity of their location.

7.14 The extent of the identification of the vulnerable between parish councils was variable, with some parish councils having a list of those deemed to be vulnerable, and with other parish councils relying on local knowledge and good neighbourly contact. Where a list existed it required frequent updating.

7.15 Retired military personnel had often been used at parish council level to prepare emergency plans.

7.16 Neighbourhood Wardens and Civil Protection Officers and PCSOs provided a valuable resource in protecting a community.

7.17 Special consideration should be given to Whiteley, which had been particularly badly affected in the January heavy snow. The provision of digital signage would have been of assistance to provide information that the Yew Tree Drive rising bollard system had been lowered and this access route was open to all traffic. Due to transport infrastructure issues, Whiteley was also vulnerable to other hazards, such as a major fire or an accident on the M27. The Group agreed that the County Council was making progress on a traffic management plan for Whiteley and it was satisfied that no further action needed to be taken. The Group was not supportive of the use of digital signs, as proposed by the Parish Council representative at Whiteley, in view of the balance of cost to benefits and the practicality of their use.

7.18 Parish Councils might consider establishing links with major employers in their areas to improve resilience and establish the possibility of mutual aid.

7.19 Winchester Area Community Action could provide assistance in compiling lists of vulnerable persons, providing transport and using its communications network to assist in co-ordination in the event of a major incident.

7.20 Parish Councils should establish a chain of command. Where possible, there should be a champion to lead on Emergency Planning and also a support officer to collate documentation. There should also be a recognised point of reference such as the Parish Council Offices or the Clerk to the parish council.

7.21 The building of community resilience in Winchester Town required separate consideration. Due to the location within the town of the emergency services and Hampshire County Council's and Winchester City Council's Emergency Planning Units, an emergency would be readily dealt with through existing arrangements. It was agreed to take the Group's final report to a meeting of the Winchester Town Forum.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS:**

1. That in respect of the vulnerable:
  - 1.1 That Hampshire County Council be aware of the need to provide assistance to the vulnerable, not already on at risk register, living in rural communities in the event of a loss of electricity or a pandemic situation.
2. That in respect of communications:
  - 2.1 That Parish Councils and community groups be encouraged to identify a person to champion and lead on emergency planning and provide a second individual to provide administrative support and to store and update emergency planning documentation.
  - 2.2 That in the event of an incident, such as severe weather, frequent updates on the situation be circulated to all Members.
  - 2.3 That further consideration be given to publicising the opening of Prepared Rest Centres and Parish Community Halls when opened, to include signage and the use of Parish Notice Boards, in order that the public are directed to safe areas.
  - 2.4 That resilient communication channels be established between Parish Councils and other Community Groups with Emergency Plans and an incident control point, such as through Hants Direct or Winchester City Council's out-of-hours service (though this would need enhancing for the purpose).
  - 2.5 That public awareness of the need to tune into local radio stations and websites be increased.
  - 2.6 That information be provided on the provision of grit bins, their location, their replenishment and responsibilities for spreading grit in the event of adverse weather.
  - 2.7 That information be provided on the availability, distribution and effective use of the provision of sandbags.
  - 2.8 That a clear and positive message be given on the legal liabilities of homeowners clearing pathways of snow and ice outside of their properties.
3. That in respect of Community Plans:

- 3.1 That plans include details of plant and machinery that can be called upon to assist in the event of an incident.
  - 3.2 That identified high risks, such as flooding, be planned for in advance.
  - 3.3 That special consideration be given to the needs of Whiteley (including the participation of the Whiteley Business Forum) and Winchester Town and that the final report be taken to the Winchester Town Forum.
  - 3.4 That appropriate Parish Councils consider establishing links with major employers in their Parishes to improve resilience and establish the possibility of mutual aid and that Parish Councils be encouraged to work with neighbouring parishes to produce effective emergency plans.
  - 3.5 That the resources and expertise available from Winchester Area Community action be given consideration when preparing community plans.
4. That the Environment Scrutiny Panel should review biennially the effectiveness of the changes recommended by it to Cabinet, if adopted.

#### FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The recommendations can be implemented from within existing resources, although if it is agreed that resilient communication channels are required to be established between Parish Councils and Winchester City Council's out-of-hours service there may be costs associated in enhancing it for this purpose.

#### RISKS

The Community Risk Register contains details of identified hazards and threats for the Winchester District.

#### HOW SUCCESS WILL BE MEASURED

That the Environment Scrutiny Panel biennially reviews the effectiveness of the changes recommended by it to Cabinet, if adopted.

#### THANKS AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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 Hursley Parish Council – Councillor Bell  
 Northington Parish Council – Monica Nightingale  
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 Sparsholt Parish Council - David Parker  
 Whiteley Parish Council - Kairen Goves  
 Wickham Parish Council - Michael Bennett  
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