

HAMPSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Decision Report

Decision Maker:	Cabinet
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Title:	Community Resilience
Reference:	5653
Report From:	Chief Executive Director, Economy, Transport and Environment

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1. Introduction

- 1.1 Members will be well aware of recent flooding in Hampshire. The rainfall in Hampshire during January 2014 has been some of the heaviest in the United Kingdom and was the wettest January since records began. The County Council has responded to the situation in Hampshire through its Emergency Planning Team, its staff from the Economy, Transport and Environment department, one of its principal contractors Amey and the Accredited Community Support Officers (ACSOs). Other agencies, public and private, have been actively involved in the community since immediately before Christmas as exceptional levels of rainfall and high winds have caused significant damage to property and disruption to transport and daily life within the County.
- 1.2 The purpose of this report is to reflect on recent events, evaluate the County Council's response and to look at how greater levels of resilience and different levels and types of support could be given to different communities throughout Hampshire. This is not simply to respond to the recent rainfall and high winds but in anticipation of snow, ice and other disruption to daily and working life in the County. It is also important to note that once the emergency response phase of weather incidents is passed, the recovery phase is often both longer, more challenging and a greater call on resources. The report makes a series of recommendations for further work and the involvement of the Hampshire Partnership in a wider discussion on these issues.
- 1.3 The County Council has always placed a high importance on responding to severe weather and other emergency events, and has a good reputation for

leadership and practical and effective action in emergency situations and extreme weather events. The national drive to introduce more consistent multi agency responses through the Civil Contingencies Act (2004) led to a more structured approach to emergency response, and introduced the concept of the multi Agency Local Resilience Forum (LRF) as the key mechanism to co-ordinate emergency response planning. The Act also places defined responsibilities on various agencies in the event of emergencies. The County Council has a key role as a “category One” responder. The County Council also undertakes emergency planning activities on behalf of all the District Councils in Hampshire except Eastleigh. Southampton City, Portsmouth City and Isle of Wight Council have their own teams and defined responsibilities under the Act.

- 1.4 Following the decisions to externalise Highways Maintenance services in the 1990s, the County Council has relied on the manpower and support of its Highways Maintenance contractor to deliver direct winter maintenance and weather emergency response. Provision for this has been built into successive Highways Maintenance Contracts, and the arrangements were generally successful in dealing with a normal range of weather events. However, the severe ground water flooding in 2000/2001 stretched resources significantly, and the County Council relied on multi agency support from the emergency services and the armed forces at the height of that event.
- 1.5 Similarly the successive severe winters in 2008 and 2009 stretched resources further, and through the LRF required co-ordinated engagement from Police and Fire and Rescue resources, and even the mobilisation of the army to rescue stranded motorists on the A3 at one point. These winters brought huge disruption to Hampshire, primarily because of the restriction on strategic and local highway and transport systems. As travel was restricted people struggled to get to work, therefore services were reduced or closed, including the great majority of schools, which in turn meant parents had to arrange child care or stay at home, further impacting on services.
- 1.6 The Hampshire economy, in common with the rest of the UK depends on a “just in time” supply system for goods, including food supplies, reaching the shops and supermarkets, and therefore disruption to the road system would quickly begin to have an impact on supplies, exacerbated by panic buying of commodities like bread and milk. There was also a severe impact on vulnerable groups, dependent on domiciliary social care or support services.
- 1.7 The County Council responded to the challenges of the emerging pattern of more frequent severe weather events by building up its own response capacity, and investing in greater support for community self help. Recognising the primary need to keep the road system operational, decisions were made to increase stocks of road salt held locally from 2010 onwards, with new salt barns constructed at Micheldever and Havant, new community routes added to the snow clearance and secondary salting network (with dedicated equipment brought in to support this) and some

3,000 grit bins distributed across Hampshire to support local community self help in tackling snow and ice on minor roads. However the severe weather also highlighted the fragility of the power and communications networks, especially to trees falling on overhead lines, and a recurrent theme of severe weather events in rural areas like Hampshire has been the severe impact and often extended duration of local power outages, which also disrupt other services like mobile phone networks or sewage and water pumping stations. Utility companies have attempted to improve resilience by cutting back trees adjacent to overhead lines, but this remains a vulnerable area, particularly at times of severe cold weather.

- 1.8 The extreme rainfall, and the return of widespread flooding in 2013/14 poses a further and different challenge. While river and coastal flooding can to an extent be managed by investment in flood defences, severe events, which appear to be happening more frequently, can overwhelm even high specification defences. Ground water flooding, which is a particular feature of central and north Hampshire, is impossible to prevent and often of extended duration, which has a major impact on resources. Only increased local community capacity to help manage local flood events, and significant additional national investment in flood relief schemes, increased drainage system capacity, and vigilant maintenance of ditches and water courses can help to mitigate impact on communities and property. At national Government level flood and coastal defence funding is being reduced as part of the budget deficit response, and local funding is under severe pressure as Councils also face budget reductions.
- 1.9 The successive severe winters of recent years, whether characterised by snow, ice or flooding and gales, have served to highlight the importance and the relative fragility of the highway network, power supplies and transport and communication systems in Hampshire. Whilst severe events are challenging as they happen, they also leave a long tail in terms of impact on infrastructure. The damage to highways already this winter amounts to over £1M more than would normally be expected, as an increasingly fragile network is exposed to flooding and freezing. The damage to flood defences, drainage systems and other infrastructure will only become fully apparent when the flooding subsides, but restoration and improvement of local infrastructure is also a critical aspect of local resilience.

2. Developing Community Resilience

- 2.1 The development of Community Resilience and Planning is well established within Hampshire. There is established planning procedures and coordination arrangements involving the Emergency Services, the County Council, Emergency Planning, the District Councils and a range of Community Action Groups. In addition, the voluntary sector and many community groups emerge from bad weather events and take a part in supporting the local community.
- 2.2 Arguably, it is now worthwhile as resources become more scarce that we look once again at our planning for such events and our community

resilience as, in particular, the County Council changes the nature of its services in response to the government grant reductions and the existing savings programme amounting to some £93 million by March 2015.

- 2.3 The County Council has traditionally played a significant part in these arrangements and the assumption is that it will continue to do so in the future. However, it may well be that the County Council needs to rethink and redesign how it develops its contribution, particularly to wider resilience fora, where the Army, the Constabulary and the Fire and Rescue services play prominent and significant parts. The County Council's 2014-15 budget savings proposals may bring to an end the ACSO service, which in the past has played a part around Community Resilience and more recently sterling work in connection with the flooding at Hambledon. Recent discussions with the Police and Crime Commissioner have focused on the issues around the ACSOs and PCSOs but also how services could be commissioned from the Constabulary. The vast majority of our resilience planning and resources remain intact – but in the light of recent events, an opportunity to develop new thinking and application should not be missed.
- 2.4 Recognising the multitude of agencies and organisations it would seem appropriate that, subject to Cabinet agreement, a wider discussion be enabled at the Hampshire Partnership, to allow other political leaders and agencies to develop thinking on how we could review the future individual and collective roles of the different agencies. Indeed, the County Council may wish to think of funding support from other agencies and contractors rather than always retaining its full complement of resources associated with Community Resilience.
- 2.5 The County Council could not act on its own and would therefore need to be informed and influenced by the contributions of other organisations and agencies. This could suggest that a next step would be to develop this report for the Hampshire Partnership and at the same time hold a range of discussions with other agencies on how the County Council is changing its approach and its impact on other organisations or arrangements.
- 2.6 The County Council has a range of key contributions to make obviously around the management and maintenance of the Highway Network, particularly in inclement weather. The County Council's Emergency Planning Team have been a central contributor to resilience planning and implementation of community support for a number of years, with the County Emergency Planning Officer leading and coordinating the activities for a number of the Districts. The County Council's recently acquired Public Health function could at some time in the future be required, depending on the nature of the issue, and be actively involved in planning for particular events with a health dimension. In very poor weather and heavy snow the Countryside Service has both hardware and staff that have made a contribution, particularly with the provision of 4x4 vehicles. Adult Social Care and Children's Services are also involved where there are vulnerable groups that may be exposed to a risk in these circumstances. On this basis

it is probably appropriate that the Director of Environment, Transport and Economy and the Director of Policy and Governance (responsible for Emergency Planning) act as the lead officers for the Council, involving other departments as appropriate.

3 Recommendations

3.1 It is recommended that Cabinet:

1. Agree to review Community Resilience Planning and the County Council's future contribution to these arrangements;
2. That the County Council continues its regular dialogue with the other agencies, particularly the Police and Crime Commissioner and the Constabulary, the Hampshire Fire and Rescue Service, but also including the Environment Agency, and the Unitary and District Councils on how best to develop the County Council's approach to wider community resilience issues;
3. That the Chief Executive write to the water and utility companies operating within Hampshire to identify how best to develop their approach alongside this wider dialogue;
4. That a paper outlining the approach be submitted for discussion to the Hampshire Partnership; and
5. That a report be brought back to Cabinet in connection with these discussions to ensure that a relevant review and new planning arrangements can be made in anticipation of events in the winter of 2014/15.

CORPORATE OR LEGAL INFORMATION:**Links to the Corporate Strategy**

Hampshire safer and more secure for all:	yes
Corporate Improvement plan link number (if appropriate):	
Maximising well-being:	yes
Corporate Improvement plan link number (if appropriate):	
Enhancing our quality of place:	yes
Corporate Improvement plan link number (if appropriate):	

Section 100 D - Local Government Act 1972 - background documents

The following documents discuss facts or matters on which this report, or an important part of it, is based and have been relied upon to a material extent in the preparation of this report. (NB: the list excludes published works and any documents which disclose exempt or confidential information as defined in the Act.)

DocumentLocation

None

IMPACT ASSESSMENTS:

1. Equalities Impact Assessment:

It is considered that the issues covered by this report will not have impacts requiring further specific actions by the Council above those already established in existing policies and working procedures.

2. Impact on Crime and Disorder:

N/A

3. Climate Change:

- a) How does what is being proposed impact on our carbon footprint / energy consumption? N/A

- b) How does what is being proposed consider the need to adapt to climate change, and be resilient to its longer term impacts?