

**Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council**

**Date 23 August 2018**

**Report to Health, Wellbeing and Partnerships Scrutiny Committee**

**Reason for Report**

The Committee has requested information on:

*Emergency Planning and in particular an update on the Borough's preparations for the impact of Winter on the provision of, and demand for, services.*

**Officer Response**

**a) Emergency Planning**

The Council has a number of statutory obligations for emergency planning which are set out in the Civil Contingencies Act (2004) and its accompanying Civil Contingency Planning Regulations (2005). This includes the responsibility to have in place plans to respond to, and recover from, a Major Incident or Emergency.

The Act defines a Major Incident or Emergency as:

*'An event or situation which threatens serious damage to human welfare in a place in the UK, the environment of a place in the UK, or war or terrorism which threatens serious damage to the security of the UK'.*

In the event of a Major Incident being declared, the role of the Council is to:-

- (i) support the emergency services response to the incident;
- (ii) lead the recovery process enabling a restoration to normality;
- (iii) maintain as far as is practicable the normal Council services.

A Major Incident or Emergency may occur at any time of day or night therefore the Council has established and approved a Major Incident Plan complimented by Business Continuity Plans and other supporting plans. The Major Incident Plan identifies the Council's command and control structures, which are necessary to manage the effects of a Major Incident or Emergency. It also defines the roles of trained senior officers, who will carry out the key roles in any Council response. Additionally the Council is a member of the Staffordshire Resilience Forum a public sector partnership that plans and prepares for emergencies and through this receives support from the Staffordshire Civil Contingencies Unit. In the event of a major incident or emergency the Council is able to call on support from the Staffordshire Resilience Forum and Civil Contingencies Unit should the need arise. This arrangement also assists the Council in ensuring that its response plans are fit for purpose.

**b) Business Continuity**

The Civil Contingencies Act (2004) requires the council to have Business Continuity Plans in place to facilitate the recovery of critical services during an emergency. The Council has a Corporate Business Continuity Plan that gives guidance on the Council's corporate arrangements during a Business Continuity incident. This has been made available to the Wider Management Team and also forms part of the Council's incident response and on-call documentation. In addition service specific Business Continuity Plans are owned and

maintained by individual Heads of Service and these detail the service priorities and recovery procedures for each individual area.

The emergency planning and business continuity processes are separate but parallel processes. In the event of an incident the Director on Call and Executive Management Team (as appropriate) are tasked with balancing the need to respond to an incident and the need to continue the business of the Council.

**c) Winter Preparedness**

The Council receives Met Office forecast information to assist with planning for adverse weather conditions. Business continuity processes are in place to ensure that as far as possible services are delivered as normal. For example, the Council's remote working arrangements can facilitate access to Council systems for office based staff to alleviate the need to travel in poor weather conditions. For external services such as refuse collection a dynamic risk assessment is undertaken on the morning of an adverse weather event and a decision is made whether it is safe to operate or whether the service needs to be suspended or adapted. Should a decision be taken to suspend or adapt the service then the Communications team and Customer Services team are briefed accordingly. The Communications team uses a number of means such as the website, social media and local media to inform residents about the adapted service arrangements and the Customer Service team responds to enquiries from residents who contact the Council directly. An action plan is also put into place to recover service gaps. For example, the Recycling and Waste Service would take steps to recover missed collections, prioritising refuse first and then recycling.