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| MEETING | Education and Economy Scrutiny Committee |
| DATE | 8 June, 2023 |
| TITLE | Regional Emergency Planning Service |
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| CABINET MEMBER | Councillor Menna Trenholme |

Why does it need to be scrutinised?

To ensure that sufficient arrangements are in place regarding emergency Planning within the Council and specifically:

- How does the regional service contribute to resilience and security of communities in Gwynedd?
- What is the current work programme of the Service?
- What is the structure within Cyngor Gwynedd to respond to a crisis or Emergency?

1. Background

The Council has duties for emergency planning and response under the Civil Contingencies Acts 2004, the Radiation (Emergency Preparedness and Public Information) Regulations 2001, and the Pipeline Safety Regulations 1996.

In September 2010, following some deliberation of the benefits of taking a more collaborative approach to the Emergency Planning Support function, the North Wales Chief Executives commissioned a piece of work to develop a collaborative model which would establish a single regional emergency planning service. An appraisal of the previous arrangements undertaken by the emergency planning community demonstrated the arrangements exhibit:-

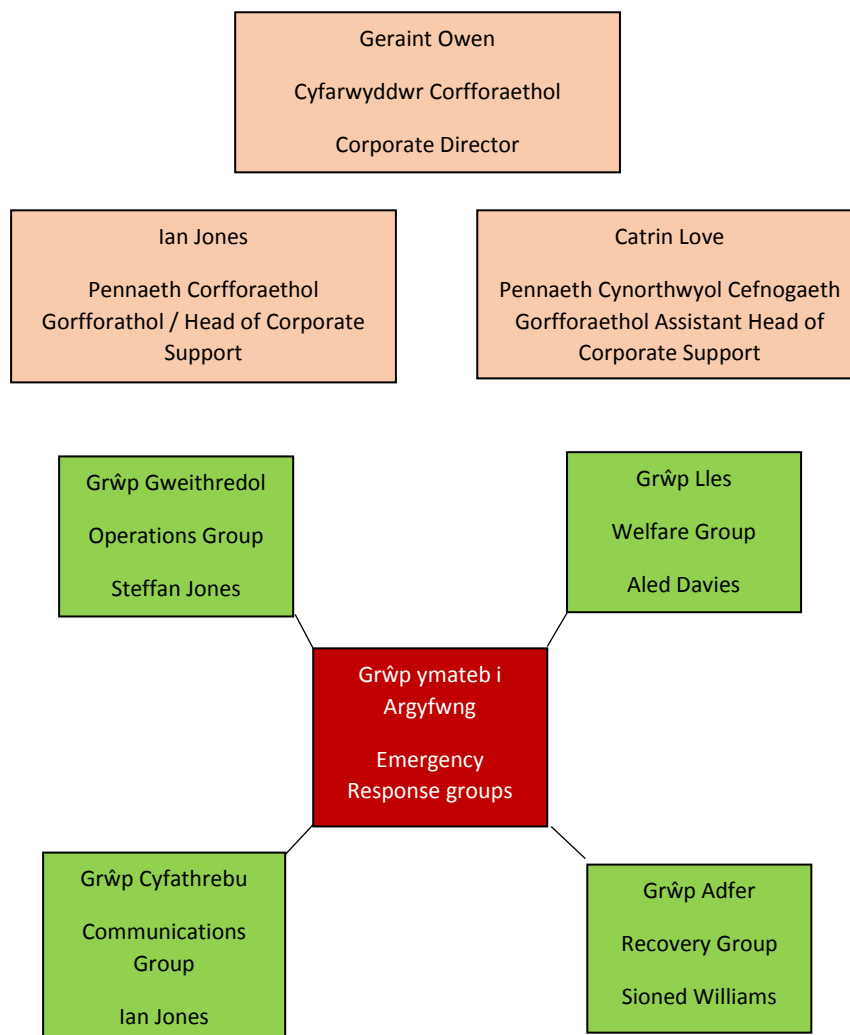
- Duplication and repetition of tasks;
- Lack of harmonisation and resilience;
- Inconsistency of response (suggesting a lack of systematic dissemination of best practice); and
- Lack of integration and interoperability.

Following consultation and ratification through the political process in each Local Authority, Emergency Planning functions for all 6 local authorities in North Wales were amalgamated into one service in 2014. North Wales is the first region in Wales to form a fully integrated service to support all councils to fulfil their duties. It is supported by an Executive Board comprising representatives from the six Councils. The representative from Cyngor Gwynedd is Geraint Owen, Corporate Director.

The arrangements are underpinned by a Service Level Agreement and an Inter-Authority Agreement. The service is currently hosted by Flintshire County Council.

Within the Council, responsibilities for emergency planning and response are shared across services and nominated service representatives are identified within the Emergency Management Response Team structure.

The following diagram details the current structure within the Council. The Corporate Director is the Chair of the Group whilst the Head of Corporate Support together with the Assistant Head are responsible for managing the day-to-day relationship with the Regional Service.



Under the Civil Contingencies Act 2004 a major emergency is defined as:

- An event or situation which threatens serious damage to human welfare in a place in the United Kingdom,

- An event or situation which threatens serious damage to the environment of a place in the United Kingdom, or
- War, or terrorism, which threatens serious damage to the security of the United Kingdom.

The Regional Service will be notified of a major emergency or incident:

- as soon as assistance is required from the local authority
- when one of the agencies' resources are overwhelmed
- the incident is likely to be ongoing and may impact the local authority

Once alerted to an incident the Service will contact the oncall contact at the Council to discuss the issue and consider the setting up of one or more of the above response groups. For example, we have had several fires recently which has required local authority support for road closures but also rest centres to ensure people have somewhere safe to shelter while waiting for the fire to be put out. In this circumstance we may want to consider standing up the welfare group to ensure the ongoing needs of people are met.

2. Regional Activity

The Service provides the primary link between the Council and North Wales Local Resilience Forum (LRF). The LRF is a multi-agency partnership made up of representatives from local public services. It is responsible for planning and preparing for localised incidents and catastrophic emergencies and responding to them.

For example, the Service reviews and renews the North Wales 4 x 4 Service Agreement. This is a formal agreement between the six authorities and the 4 x 4 Wales Service to provide assistance and describes the mechanisms to be followed should any authority need support in delivering services. The service has proved to be an invaluable partner in assisting in severe weather where they have assisted with evacuations during floods and transporting care staff to remote areas not accessible by car following heavy snowfall.

The service also coordinates mutual aid for the six local authorities. As not all incidents will affect all local authorities, we have the ability to ask other local authorities to assist in times of need. This includes rest centre staff and response staff for severe weather incidents. Whilst this has not been required by Gwynedd Council to date, it has been utilised in Eastern Counties successfully in supporting a flood incident and the manning of a reception centre for evacuees.

Following the pandemic and the change in how people work, the Service has diversified to ensure staff continue to be competent in their emergency planning and incident response roles. The Service has designed and implemented a range of e-learning

modules including, Strategic Management, Tactical Management and Rest Centre staff Training. These are currently available via Gwynedd's internal Learning Pool portal.

The Service continues to provide out of hours support to the local authority and blue light services in response to queries and incidents 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. To test responses within local authorities NWC-REPS carry out Exercise Cooper quarterly to test both the contact details we hold and the out of hours availability of key staff. In Cyngor Gwynedd's case, the response over the course of the year demonstrated an 80% response rate over the quarterly tests however we would expect this will improve following the implementation of the on-call rota arrangements.

Whilst much progress has been made, work is underway to further consolidate how the activities provided by the service are undertaken, particularly by strengthening performance management and training delivery. Our host Authority, Flintshire has recently purchased the in-phase performance management system and the service has obtained a licence to be able to use the system. This will allow the Manager to provide improved reporting methods and data to the Executive Board and Local Authorities.

This will also enable the service to effectively prioritise areas of work and resource allocation and ensure that councils benefit fully from the range of expertise in the service.

3. Activity within the Council

Learning from COVID –19

Key Members of the Operations group and Strategic Panel were keen to reflect on the pandemic and identify any learning to ensure resilience and effective response to any future requirements. In order to do this, work has been progressed in the following areas:

Structures

The Emergency Management Response Team structure within the Council facilitates the coordination of incidents with Business Continuity implications for the authority. The Strategic Panel is the group established within Cyngor Gwynedd, The group comprises the Corporate Director, various department heads, the Lead Officer of the Regional Service for Cyngor Gwynedd and the Regional Manager. The Panel meets quarterly where the progress of the sub-groups is reviewed and multi-agency work is summarised. This is also the forum for the Regional Service to share their activity, any changes to legislation and share best practice. Training opportunities are reviewed for the coming quarter and staff are nominated to attend.

The Strategic Panel meetings have been effective in keeping all members informed on current events, rising time events and an overview of risks allowing workstreams to be broken down into sub-groups -

The Council has recently incorporated the following four sub-groups into its strategic panel, including –

- Recovery
- Operations
- Welfare
- Communications, IT and Training

All groups have established memberships and hold regular meetings. Workplans for these sub-groups are being developed, along with training and exercise opportunities.

The Strategic Panel and Sub-Groups provide a robust mechanism for the delivery of planning and response functions and include a number of critical staff and service areas to ensure resilience and proper response.

Training and Exercising

Under the Civil Contingencies Act 2004, Local Authorities as Category One Responders have a duty to undertake training and exercises with partners on a regular basis. This requires local authorities to exercise scenarios every 12 months with Live exercises every 3 years.

Gwynedd staff have attended the following –

Following the development and roll out of the Regional Emergency Rest Centre Plan, three training events took place to ensure the embedding of the plan. These were carried out in Q3 2022. Training of Rest Centre staff is being further supported by the addition of e-learning.

- Power outage contingency training and a scenario run through were undertaken to accompany the UK Government Guidance on Power Outage Rota Disconnection. This was further exercised as part of the Uk Wide Power Outage Exercise (Exercise Mighty Oak) in March 2023.
- Officers from Cyngor Gwynedd have also attended nationally recognised Wales Gold and Silver Courses namely:
 - Wales Gold - Chief Executive, Steffan Jones, Geraint Owen, Huw Dylan Owen, and Sioned Williams
 - Wales Silver – Ian Jones, Catrin Love, Rhion Glyn, Ceri Thomas and Adrian Williams

These are multi-agency courses which allow professionals to rehearse working together effectively and provide insight into what is expected.

New on call structure

The Council has introduced a seven week on-call structure for senior officers to improve resilience and response when dealing and responding to incidents. This rota is shared with the Emergency Planning on call officers and cuts down time on the previous system of best endeavours. This further reduces the risk of single point of failure. This is seen as best practice for local authorities and has worked effectively since its introduction locally.

Recently, Officers from Cyngor Gwynedd contributed to the emergency response for the following incidents:

Extreme Weather – There were 70 weather warnings for Gwynedd in 2022/23 (67 were yellow / 3 were Amber which led to a response from Cyngor Gwynedd and the standing up of a Tactical Coordination Group)

There was also Tactical Co-ordination Groups held for the first time last year regarding the risk of heatwaves which Cyngor Gwynedd staff also attended.

Hirael Fire – Staff were integral in the response to the large-scale fire at a former builders' merchants in Bangor. Road closures and safety measures were put in place to protect the public.

Service Continuity

Gwynedd has worked closely with the Regional Service over the last six months to develop an improved template for business and service continuity. This is being finalised and rolled out over the coming months in order for all service areas to mitigate the shared risks within the Council.

Community Risk Register

As part of the work of preparing for emergencies across the region, key partners work together to prepare the North Wales Community Risk Register.

The Risk Register is compiled by the North Wales Resilience Forum which is made up of representatives of the main agencies involved in responding to emergencies – the emergency services, local authorities, health, environment and utility organisations. The overall purpose is to ensure representatives work together to achieve an appropriate level of preparedness to respond to emergencies that may have a significant impact on the communities of North Wales.

The main risks for North Wales communities are identified as follows:

- Flooding
- Severe Weather
- Pandemic
- Terrorist Incidents
- Industrial Incidents
- Loss of Critical Infrastructure
- Animal disease
- Pollution
- Transport Incidents

The full document is attached at appendix A.

4. Future Priorities

- The Regional Service is currently reviewing its priorities, given changes to Legislation and to ensure we are working to mitigate the risks on the National Risk Register.
- Martyn's Law – Following the Manchester Arena attack, the mother of Martyn Hett who was a victim in the incident, has campaigned for changes to the law to protect people by increasing security at public events. The general debate on the Bill has not yet been scheduled but preparatory work is being undertaken as this will impact the Public Safety and Protection Group and other Health and Safety Advisory Groups held by the Council. This work will be undertaken in conjunction with a review of the findings in relation to the Manchester Arena report.
- Training and Exercising - During lockdown, with people working in a more agile nature, time was invested in preparing and developing e-learning packages. We now need to focus on delivering face-to-face training and exercises in order that attendees benefit from shared learning and networking opportunities.
- Recovery Plan - A full review of the Recovery Plan is underway to eliminate duplication and also incorporate learning from Covid.

5. Finance

The funding for the Regional Service is calculated on the basis of population. Cyngor Gwynedd's annual contribution to the service is £106,177 which equates to 17.979% of the population of North Wales. The Service has realised a saving of over £300k per annum across the region since its inception and a full service review is underway to identify any possible savings.

| Local Authority | Annual Contribution % |
|---------------------------------|------------------------------|
| Isle of Anglesey County Council | 10.472% |
| Conwy County Borough Council | 16.940% |
| Denbighshire County Council | 14.865% |
| Flintshire County Council | 19.348% |
| Cyngor Gwynedd | 17.979% |
| Wrexham County Borough Council | 20.396% |
| Total | 100% |

Appendix A



NWCRR A5 Booklet
E.pdf