



City of Westminster

Westminster Scrutiny Commission

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Title:	Emergency Preparedness Update
Report of:	Stuart Love, Chief Executive
Cabinet Member Portfolio	Leader of the Council
Wards Involved:	All
Policy Context:	City for All
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1. Executive Summary

- 1.1. This report provides an update for the Westminster Scrutiny Commission on the following key areas of work:
- Update on Review of the July 12th Flooding Response
 - Humanitarian Assistance
 - Emergency Preparedness Review
 - Overview of current core activity
 - Grenfell Tower Inquiry
 - London Local Authorities assurance programme

2. Introduction

- 2.1. An annual update has been provided to the Scrutiny Commission since 2018 providing an update of the council's current activity in relation to emergency preparedness and resilience. The report also addressed specific areas of interest to the Commission.
- 2.2. The previous annual report focused primarily on the July 2021 flooding response and the lessons learned from it, and also the Council's planning and preparedness for cold weather.

- 2.3. The focus of this report is updating on the work to improve the resilience and preparedness through a culture of continuous improvement. Alongside this, updates are provided on key elements of core activity in relation to emergency planning and preparedness.

3. Update on Review of the July 12th Flooding Response

- 3.1. An update was provided to the Scrutiny Commission following the surface water flooding response on 12th July 2021 and the 'hot' review of the response to that incident. From the recommendations, an action plan was produced and work to implement the recommendations of that review has continued throughout the year.
- 3.2. The Westminster multi-agency Flood Plan is based on the London flood response framework and is owned by the Borough Resilience Forum. It has been reviewed entirely in light of the recommendations of the above review and from the pan-London 'lessons learned' exercise. This has been shared with external partners to add their activity and for comment. The final plan will be signed off at the Forum meeting in December.
- 3.3. One area highlighted within the review was the strategic oversight of emergency preparedness and ensuring that 'resilience is everyone's business'. The wider management and organisational structures are being considered as part of the Emergency Preparedness Review outlined below. The team now report directly in to the Chief Executive who is driving this work.
- 3.4. An internal Resilience Hub has been produced, bringing together organisational resilience and business continuity, emergency preparedness and humanitarian assistance in to a single place. This is being used to engage and encourage staff to volunteer for training enabling them to support our response to major incidents. This includes strategic and tactical controllers, emergency centre, crisis support and borough emergency control centre staff. This will continue as an ongoing piece of work for the team.
- 3.5. The internal site will be used as the basis for an improved external website, providing advice to businesses and residents in order to contribute to our work to build community resilience. Building community resilience and putting outcomes for communities at the heart of our resilience work will remain a focus of activity in the coming year.

4. Humanitarian Assistance

- 4.1 The bi-borough Humanitarian Assistance Board is responsible for ensuring that health, social care, housing and other partners in the two boroughs have the capacity to provide effective humanitarian assistance in local emergencies and major incidents. The Board has direct responsibility for the Bi-borough Humanitarian Assistance Framework; the extreme weather plans; the identification of vulnerable people and information sharing agreements. It also

has responsibility for overseeing other plans which have a Humanitarian Assistance element.

- 4.2 Following the publication of the London Humanitarian Assistance Framework in 2021, the local bi-borough Humanitarian Assistance Framework was reviewed and approved by the bi-borough Humanitarian Assistance Board in January 2022. The revised framework includes a number of considerations and recommendations arising from the Grenfell Inquiry, including plans for the provision of key workers for those significantly impacted by a major incident and emergency. As with all major incident and emergency plans, the document will remain under regular review.
- 4.3 The local roll out of the bi-borough Humanitarian Assistance Framework has continued throughout the year. This included delivering training to social care directors and emergency response tactical leads in the role of Humanitarian Assistance Lead Officer and Humanitarian Assistance Steering Group (once activated). Further staff have been trained to work within Emergency Centres, and the recruitment and training of staff volunteers for these roles will continue.
- 4.4 Learning from recent experience, a priority for the ongoing work of the Humanitarian Assistance Board is the development of our ability to share information with other partners to identify the people most vulnerable to widespread emergencies such as heatwaves, flooding and extreme cold weather.

5. Emergency Preparedness Review

- 5.1 An independent review of the Council's emergency preparedness is being undertaken in order to assess the City Council's current approach to delivering emergency planning and building resilience and provide recommendations as to how the Council can improve delivery and build confidence.
- 5.2 The findings of the review are expected in September 2022, following which an action plan will be developed to drive immediate and longer term service and organisational improvement. An update will be provided to the Commission at a future date.
- 5.3 The review is expected to inform work to ensure the Council's emergency preparedness is fit to face the challenges of the 21st Century, taking on board the findings from the Grenfell Inquiry, the review of the Civil Contingencies Act and to deliver the revised National Resilience Strategy locally. It is anticipated that this will place outcomes for residents, businesses and communities at the heart of preparedness, with a resilience team that is forward thinking and outward facing – able to support, enable and deliver across the organisation and our communities.

6. Overview of current core activity

6.1 The table below highlights some of the core business as usual activity that the Emergency Planning team undertake. As management of the Pandemic returned to a business as usual, the focus of the team returned to more typical core activity.

6.2 While there was a notable reduction in the number of major incidents and emergencies during the Pandemic, there have been 14 incidents in the first five months of this financial year, suggesting a return to the same levels seen pre-pandemic. As per previous years, the majority of these are fires or gas leaks.

Performance Indicator	2021/22 Total	2022/23 Apr-Aug	Comments
External Business Continuity Engagement Events	24	9	<i>Return to both in person as well as virtual meetings. Meetings include with South Westminster Bids and Heart of London.</i>
External Business Continuity Engagement Event Attendees	228	196	<i>Regular meetings also held coordinated by the West End Security Group Attendees at virtual briefings not recorded</i>
Incidents Responded to	28	14	<i>No large-scale incidents responded to. Increased number of fires, particularly during the period of hot weather.</i>
EP Tests or Exercises	15	7	<i>Included Exercise Safer City, pan-London exercise testing mutual aid frameworks and emergency response.</i>
Training Sessions Delivered	12	5	<i>Emergency centre and Training for Elected Members delivered.</i>
Number of People Trained	61	44	<i>Tactical 'Silver' command and coordination training session scheduled for October.</i>

6.3 Training is primarily delivered to Council staff to undertake various roles in the event of a major incident or emergency. These roles vary from strategic command 'Gold' and tactical command 'Silver' training, from frontline roles in emergency centres, the Borough Emergency Control Centre or on the ground as Local Authority Liaison Officers. The figures in the table above also include two training sessions for elected members in order to provide an overview of emergency preparedness, how we respond to major incidents and emergencies and the role of elected members in it.

6.4 Working alongside colleagues in City Promotions, Events and Filming, a risk-based approach to resourcing protests has been implemented. Previously these have placed significant demands on the emergency planning team and on the command team out of hours. This new approach enables the council to prioritise resources on those protests that are likely to impact most on our communities or on Council services.

6.5 Corporate business continuity arrangements have been activated a number of times in the last 12 months. In December 2021 and January 2022 these related to the pandemic wave over the festive period and the Government

advice to work from home where possible. Daily situation reports were received from across Council services in order to ensure that critical services were able to continue and reports were produced for ELT on a daily basis.

- 6.6 Lighter touch arrangements have been in place for the periods of industrial action, especially the ongoing rail strikes. Support and assistance was provided to the MPS and NHS partners during these times to enable on-street parking for frontline staff unable to travel to work on public transport.
- 6.7 Extinction Rebellion (XR) returned for further mass protest in April, however it did not result in the significant disruption seen by previous 'rebellions'. As such, the demand on the Emergency Planning team and other services was significantly reduced. Sporadic low level activity by XR and associated groups takes place throughout the year. The Extinction Rebellion activity planned for September 2022 was postponed following the death of Her Late Majesty The Queen. This may be rescheduled for later in the year.
- 6.8 After the hiatus caused by the pandemic, most regular major events have returned, with the addition of the Queen's Platinum Jubilee. The work of the Emergency Planning team has been focused on reviewing, testing and exercising event plans and ensuring that the Council and its services are prepared for a concurrent major incident and emergency. In doing so, the team are able to take a risk informed approach, providing advice and resources as necessary.
- 6.9 The Emergency Planning Team were also heavily involved in the operation of the Borough Operational Control Centre to co-ordinate the delivery of service plans to facilitate the ceremonial events relating to the death of HM Queen Elizabeth II.

7. Grenfell Tower Inquiry

- 7.1 Previous reports have provided updates in relation to lessons learned from the Grenfell Tower fire and their implementation. The recommendations of the Grenfell Tower Inquiry Phase 1 Report were largely incorporated within the pan-London EP2020 standardisation programme rolled out from 2018 onwards.
- 7.2 Phase 2 of the Inquiry has concluded and the Phase 2 report, including Module 4 which considered Central and Local Government responses to the disaster, is being prepared. The publication of this is anticipated in April 2023, at the earliest.
- 7.3 The above sections detail work that is underway to address areas that the evidence suggests may feature in the final report, for example, ensuring sufficient and trained staff to undertake key roles, strengthened focus on humanitarian assistance and the provision of emergency centres.

7.4 The Council will continue to collaborate closely with the Royal Borough of Kensington & Chelsea, particularly in line with shared services, in order to share expertise and achieve efficiencies.

8. London Local Authorities Assurance Process

8.1 The usual London Local Authorities assurance process involves an annual self-assessment, followed by a sub-regional challenge process. As was the case in 2020, the self-assessment process was replaced by a lighter touch interim assurance process as a result of then demands of the Pandemic.

8.2 This Assurance Checklist for 2021 was a combined assurance process considering learning from the Grenfell Tower Fire (based on recommendations from the Phase 1 Inquiry Report) and winter preparedness (based on Resilience Standards for London (RSLs)).

8.3 In terms of the former, the Council was rated as 'Green' on all actions except one. This included those in relation to mutual aid arrangements, borough emergency control centres and Local Authority Liaison Officers. The Council rated itself as 'Amber' on the actions in relation to emergency centres in light of the ongoing roll out of the bi-borough Humanitarian Assistance framework, outlined above.

8.4 The RSL self-assessment was focused on key tasks in relation to winter preparedness. Against those, the Council was assessed as 'Established' against eight of the standards and 'Developing' against three: Managerial Leadership, Organisational Engagement and Recovery management. Work has been going on throughout the year to improve against those, which is detailed above.

8.5 Details of this process for 2022 have not been received. Whether required by a London assurance process or not, a full self-assessment against the Resilience Standards for London will be undertaken following the implementation of the recommendations from the above emergency preparedness review.

**If you have any queries about this Report or wish to inspect any of the Background Papers please contact Mark Chalmers 07817054759
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BACKGROUND PAPERS

N/A