

JOINT RESILIENCE COMMITTEE

Friday 24th January 2014

UPDATE REPORT on Emergency Planning, Resilience and Business Continuity matters for Neath Port Talbot CBC and the City and County of Swansea

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

The purpose of this report is to provide Members with an overview of the key resilience challenges facing both Councils, to explain how these challenges are currently being addressed and to provide an insight into the wider resilience framework which exists at a local, regional and national level.

2. FIRE SERVICE STRIKE

Current Situation

Fire and Rescue Services across England and Wales have held several strikes since the last meeting of this Committee. The JRU has maintained regular contact Mid and West Wales Fire and Rescue Service (MWWFRS) and have ensured that appropriate safety advice was published to the community and internal local authority directorates.

The JRU continue to monitor the situation and are prepared to offer timely advice.

MWWFRS had requested that all businesses and communities do all they can to reduce the risk of fire and other emergency situations from arising. This would assist MWWFRS in ensuring that the most serious and or genuine incidents can be prioritised and dealt with.

In line with this request the JRU circulated a briefing paper outlining the latest developments in the dispute and guidance to review procedures and practices relating to fire precautions.

RECOMMENDATIONS

It is **RECOMMENDED** that Members note this report.

3. SECURE RESILIENCE WEBSITE UPDATE

The Joint Resilience Unit (JRU) for Neath Port Talbot and Swansea has developed a bespoke Resilience secure website to improve multi-agency emergency planning and response arrangements.

Work has been underway (a) to further develop the website, (b) to identify options to host the application, (c) to obtain funding which will enable the local NPT/Swansea application to be rolled out on a regional and national basis, and (d) to obtain support for the secure website application

from a wider range of organisations, in support of the search for funding which has been taking place. All of these actions have now been significantly progressed.

The nature of the funding arrangement made with the Central and South West (CSSW) ICT Programme Board is such that the roll out of the secure website application to new partner organisations will be possible at minimal cost to each organisation. This arrangement will run until at least 2016.

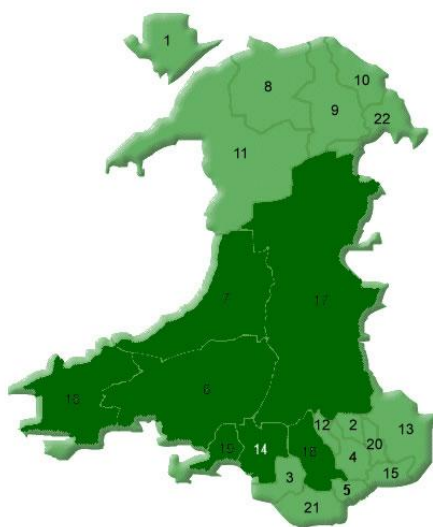
There is currently a robust system being put in place in place in terms of hardware and hosting arrangements which will help to ensure the resilience of the secure website application.

A Governance Group has been established comprising Emergency Planning leads from NPT, Swansea, Pembrokeshire, Ceredigion, Powys and Carmarthenshire local authorities.

More recently, I am pleased to report that Rhondda Cynon Taff (RCT) local authority has joined the other six local authorities as a co-founder member, in recognition of the work done by RCT in supporting the development of the application.

Ceredigion will host the application on its servers and will also provide a disaster recovery system with the application being 'cloned' at a separate location which is within acceptable parameters. This will allow the foregoing local authorities to access the application.

As can be seen **below** (dark shaded area) the initial deployment of the secure website application will cover a significant proportion of Wales at the outset, with the potential to increase both coverage and multi-agency users within a relatively short period of time.



The map at present equates to:

962,490	43% of the population of Wales
9,180km ²	44% of the geographical area
56,500	Local Authority employees

The secure website has been demonstrated over the last nine months to all four Local Resilience Forums (LRFs) in Wales with a very positive outcome.

Next Steps

The Resilience secure website application has been installed at Ceredigion Council and will be tested by the other co-founder local authorities during January and February 2014.

Subject to this process being completed satisfactorily, the application will be available for use by all four LRFs and other organisations across Wales on a phased basis with effect from March 2014 onwards. The recently established Governance Group will oversee this process.

The availability of this Resilience secure website application to partner organisations locally, regionally and nationally will assist to build greater resilience across Wales using a local solution to address a national issue.

Live demonstration of secure website to be provided to JRC Members at this stage

RECOMMENDATIONS

It is **RECOMMENDED** that Members endorse this approach to building greater resilience in conjunction with our partner agencies.

4. Public Facing Website

A public-facing website has also been developed in parallel with the secure website as a complementary method of communications. The public-facing website can be viewed at <http://www.jointresilience.co.uk/>

The public-facing website is intended to assist partner organisations to meet their warning and informing obligations in accordance with the Civil Contingencies Act 2004.

Crucially, it is also a mechanism by which residents, businesses and other local organisations can be assisted to prepare and respond to any emergencies which may occur in their locality. This website has been designed in a way which means that it has the potential to become a one stop shop for most resilience-related matters.

Links now exist in relation to Met Office information, an RSS feed for emergency services news stories, live traffic maps and M4 traffic watch cameras. Twitter also has a presence on the website.

The design and functionality of the Swansea and Neath Port Talbot public-facing website is also now sufficiently well developed for it to be considered for adoption by the SWLRF, subject to any necessary adaptations being agreed and implemented to reflect the requirements of the SWLRF and its constituent organisations. This is a timely development in the light of the technical difficulties now being experienced in relation to the current SWLRF public-facing website.

The public-facing website will continue to be hosted and managed by Swansea and NPT Council. Again, though, because of the work which has already been undertaken, the roll out of the public-facing website to partner organisations will be possible at a minimal annual cost to each organisation.

Live demonstration of public-facing website to be provided to JRC Members at this stage

RECOMMENDATIONS

It is **RECOMMENDED** that Members endorse this approach to building greater resilience in conjunction with our partner agencies.

5. COMAH Exercises

On 18th December 2013, the JRU arranged and facilitated a multi-agency desktop exercise with Vale Europe (formerly known as INCO), which is located at Clydach, Swansea. The aim of the exercise was to test the off-site emergency plan for Vale Europe, as a result of its top tier status under the Control of Major Accident Hazard (COMAH) regulations 1999.

The exercise scenario was based on an accident on-site which resulted in an escape of Sulphur Dioxide gas into the surrounding atmosphere. Organisations represented at the exercise included City and County of Swansea, South Wales Police, Welsh Ambulance Service, Mid and West Wales Fire Service, Natural Resources Wales, Public Health Wales and ABMU Health Board. These organisations worked together to respond to the exercise scenario and to discuss the impact it would have on the surrounding community of Clydach. Initial feedback from the exercise was very positive. The exercise highlighted several issues that will be followed up by the JRU, such as the need to effectively manage social media such as Twitter and Facebook during an emergency. An exercise report and forward action plan is currently being written, and will be circulated to exercise participants in February 2014.

RECOMMENDATIONS

It is **RECOMMENDED** that Members note this report.

6. Multi Agency Cross Border Chemical Incident Exercise

The Joint Resilience Unit has been approached by Natural Resources Wales and colleagues from the Dyfed Powys LRF to ask whether or not we would be interested in being involved in a cross border multi agency exercise.

This would appear to be an excellent opportunity to exercise cross border co-operation and mutual aid agreements and to test some of our internal plans such as Rest Centres, Recovery, air quality monitoring and possibly Business Continuity.

Details are a sketchy at present but the likely scenario would involve a tanker crash on the M4 at a point which would impact across both LRF areas. A planning group is being formed with an initial meeting planned for later this month. Indications are that a date for the exercise is to be sometime around November this year and likely to involve a mix of live and table top play.

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7. Summary of incidents

December 11th 2013

Call received from Fire Service Control to report an incident at Cwmtawe Comprehensive School in Pontardawe.. The Fire Service responded with 2 x pumps and a Chemical Unit to a suspected chemical spill in one of the science labs.

JRU Duty Officer informed of incident although no action was required.
Spill was found to be a leaking fridge.

December 18th 2013

Call received from Natural Resources Wales Floodline for a potential flooding issue at Cwmtwrch. It was identified that up to 167 properties may be affected. Heavy rain had caused the River Twrch where it meets the River Tawe to rise and trigger the flood warning system. Social Services in Neath Port Talbot were placed on standby to open rest centres if required. Highways placed on standby to assist with any flood related issues. However within an hour river levels had returned to near normal levels.

January 2nd 2014

Following several severe warnings form Natural Resources Wales to the potential of coastal flooding due to strong winds combined with astronomical high tides the JRU represented both authorities at a number of multi agency telephone conferences. Directorates in both areas were placed on standby to assist with flood related issues and the possibility of large scale evacuations.

As a result of the severe weather between the 2nd and 6th January several properties in the Crofty area of Swansea were flooded. Damage was caused to the seafront at Aberavon and numerous coastal roads were flooded or had debris blown across them. The potential for evacuations throughout this period continued and the JRU remained the focal point for alerts and updating directorates across the authorities.

RECOMMENDATIONS

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8. Other business – Staffing Matters

- a. I am pleased to announce the appointment of the new Emergency Planning Continuity Officer who will be joining the JRU on the 22nd April 2014. This will result in the JRU's staffing complement returning to four postholders.
- b. We are pleased to announce that another member of the team has now completed her Diploma in Emergency Management.

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