



NOTTINGHAMSHIRE
Fire & Rescue Service
Creating Safer Communities

Nottinghamshire and City of Nottingham
Fire and Rescue Authority
Community Safety Committee

FLOOD PREPARATION REPORT

Report of the Chief Fire Officer

Agenda Item No:

Date: 16 January 2009

Purpose of Report:

To update Members on the flood preparation work undertaken by Nottinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service both individually and as part of the Local Resilience Forum.

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1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 This report sets out to identify the key areas and proactive actions being undertaken by the Service both on a local and national level, and how its positive impact will enhance the lives of the community. Elements of the work being undertaken are as a direct result of initiatives devised by the Service. Other areas form part of the work streams of the Inland Water Strategic Group, the Local Resilience Forum (LRF), Emergency Planning Liaison Group (EPLG) and specialist capability groups such as warn and inform community resilience and flood warning groups.
- 1.2 The terms of reference for this report are drawn from the extensive review of the recent local, regional, and national flooding, which resulted in the production of several reports on the improvements needed in prevention, response and recovery. Category 1 responders have devised and implemented a variety of projects and initiatives to meet these recommendations. Much of the work is ongoing, and the purpose of the report is to update the Community Safety Committee on activities which are designed to ensure that, both locally and nationally, communities are better prepared, protected and supported. This will facilitate a greater degree of resilience to the real threat of further flooding and encourage overall community safety.

2. REPORT

- 2.1 Throughout the extensive preparation work that is currently ongoing many of the separate working groups' objectives overlap. Therefore, where practical, joined up working is utilised. This is highlighted in the sections below.

Prevention

Flood Capability Group - [LRF]

- 2.2 This area of activity is hosted by the Environment Agency (EA), with Category 1 and 2 responders attending. A flood response plan is currently being drafted and is soon to be tested and validated. It is drawn from the 92 recommendations made by the Pitt Review with all parties, including the fire service, contributing actively to its construction.

Key areas which are being addressed are:

- Surface water;
- Capacity of drainage systems;
- Enhanced forecasting and predictive software for the EA and the Met Office;
- Identification of critical infrastructure;
- Identification of vulnerable people / groups;
- Warning, informing and preparing ;

- Training for responders and local assets – ie: flood wardens (addressed separately below);
- Reservoirs – recategorisation, action plans and anticipated flood / risk rating.

2.3 It is at these meetings the Service has been able to offer training and deliver guidance on flood awareness. Additionally the Service has been able to steer, guide and support the group giving clarity on operational response implications.

Community Resilience Group - [EPLG]

2.4 The Service's attendance and participation in this group has allowed the Service to influence the warning and informing objective. Here the Service is looking at not only supplying the communities with quality information prior to the event, but also how it will be able to support them with timely accurate updates during the flood.

2.5 This group, which is chaired by Nottinghamshire County Council Emergency Planning, has allowed the Service to raise and secure positive collective action to comprehensively meet the recommendations cited in the Flood (Drainage and Watercourse) Select Committee.

2.6 **Recommendation 13** requires the Service to *"liaise more closely with residents who have in-depth local knowledge (eg: representatives of the Parish Council)"*

2.7 A pilot scheme has been agreed where three districts, the Meadows, Ashfield and Newark and Sherwood will test the template which is being created to receive information, pass that information on through key figures in the community (wardens or parish councillors), identify critical resources and vulnerable people, collate local knowledge and risk information and enable an initial point of contact facility. This will be enhanced by flood awareness information from the Service and has direct links to the 'warn and inform' capability sub-group.

2.8 The pilot which is due to go live in April 2009, forms part of the many work streams which are ongoing in promoting and generating local area community resilience in the event of an emergency.

Training

2.9 Several aspects of training are ongoing and being planned for the medium and long term, all of which will either directly or indirectly consolidate community safety:

- Flood warden training – water awareness level 1;
- The planning for water awareness level 1 training to community resilience officers;
- Level 1 water awareness training is being plotted for fellow Category 1 responders to enhance their safety and service delivery;

- Inter-agency work with the St.John Ambulance Service to provide advice relating to water awareness;
- Self help and awareness raising through the warning and informing process for the public and communities – including home protection measures;
- Training for operational crews;
- Tactical Co-ordination Group (TCG), flooding exercise “Diamond”.

Response

- 2.10 Community Safety is being further enhanced by the Service’s commitment to its operational staff in responding to flooding incidents. As part of the national working group it is actively raising issues and seeking solutions to many of the specific recommendations made in the various reports post the floods.
- 2.11 The result of which is the production and implementation of a regional standard operating procedure (SOP) which will enable resources to be collectively mobilised to and coordinated at flooding incidents. Thus, generating a smoother multi-agency response, a more efficient and effective use of resources and greater public and crew safety.
- 2.12 The Service has also instigated a rolling three year training package to raise the standard of training afforded to its front line staff to level 2 water awareness. This is to complement the significant investment made to purchase new personal protective equipment (PPE) for crews when responding to flooding. This decision has been taken in the absence of any statutory duty being placed upon the Service through legislation.
- 2.13 The Service has also purchased three new boats to replace its existing operational resources. The expectation is to keep the older models as added resilience to the Service’s operational water rescue capability.
- 2.14 The regional SOP was tested with other East Midlands Fire Services and multi-agency partners during the recent exercise on 12 November 2008 at Holme Pierrepont in Nottingham, which was organised and facilitated by members of the Service.
- 2.15 During this flooding exercise all aspects of the new procedures, equipment and multi-regional/multi-agency response were tested. The main aim being to assess the enhanced response capabilities through a controlled training event which would ultimately demonstrate community safety and care during an operational incident.

Response / Recovery

- 2.16 Many of the key agencies are producing emergency plans which will be activated during the response phase and into the recovery process. Although the Service does not have direct ownership of these plans it has been proactive in supporting and guiding partners in what assistance the Service can deliver during the various phases of an incident. Additionally, the Service is actively involved in delivering many of the key messages during various

training events – for example it has facilitated civil contingency awareness and TCG training which were themed around flooding.

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Training to other Category 1 responders is not anticipated to be significant as it will be provided by existing resources, Service Development Centre staff and specialist Station Managers. The current ongoing training to all operational staff is a rolling three year programme at an approximate cost of £250,000, including new PPE, and is considered within existing budgets.

4. HUMAN RESOURCES AND LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT IMPLICATIONS

The above has required new internal policies and procedures to be generated and instructional training packages to be written. The training team are drawn from in-house staff utilising existing specialist knowledge. Operational personnel will need to maintain competency levels.

5. EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

New training packages and PPE delivered to operational staff will have been subject to equality impact assessment. New training packages designed for Category 1 responders will also be subject to an equality impact assessment.

6. CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS

There are no crime and disorder implications arising from this report.

7. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- New equipment and training has been implemented despite no specific statutory duty in the Fire and Rescue Service Act 2004 for fire and rescue authorities to undertake flood rescues.
- The Civil Contingencies Act 2004 places a duty on the Service.
- The National Framework document requires the Service to produce an integrated risk management plan, and takes steps to mitigate those risks identified.
- The National Framework document also outlines an expectation for fire and rescue authorities to educate the community with regard to all safety related issues.
- Health and Safety at Work Act requires that sufficient training be afforded to employees, particularly in respect to new equipment issued
- Several reports commissioned recommend areas of improvement. Whilst these are not legally binding, the implications to the Service in ignoring these recommendations could be severe.

8. RISK MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS

The Service actively manages and controls risks as far as is reasonably practicable associated with the flooding scenario. This is clearly done in partnership with other agencies. Failure to conduct adequate risk assessments and incorporate suitable and sufficient control outcomes could lead to adverse scrutiny, especially when the issue is very high on the national agenda. The Service is cognisant of this and tailors its arrangements having considered appropriate detail.

9. RECOMMENDATIONS

That Members note the contents of this report.

10. BACKGROUND PAPERS FOR INSPECTION (OTHER THAN PUBLISHED DOCUMENTS)

None.

Frank Swann
CHIEF FIRE OFFICER