

COMMITTEE : COMMUNITIES AND PLACE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

DATE: 5 OCTOBER 2022

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**Storm Arwen, community resilience update report**

**Report of** - Helen Hinds, Business Resilience and Emergency Planning Lead

**Cabinet Member:** Councillor Colin Horncastle – Community Services

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**Purpose of report**

The purpose of this report is to provide Community and Place OSC an update on progress about the Community Resilience workstream prior to the winter and in line with the recommendations from the Storm Arwen review task and finish group.

**Recommendations**

It is recommended that the Committee received the report and continues to support the concept of community resilience within Northumberland.

**Link to Corporate Plan**

This work is linked to the key aims of the corporate plan 2021-24 in that its overarching aims are to support and protect our residents and, to continue providing services to communities during times of significant disruption.

**Key issues**

1. The Community and Place OSC Storm Arwen report included 28 recommendations. Eight of those are directly related to community resilience. These include:
  - a. Working with utility companies (NPg, SPEN, NWL and BT) on the community resilience project
  - b. Northumberland Communities Together to retain the Community Support Officers and embed them in the Council response structure
  - c. The County Emergency Committee to test and review the community resilience project annually
  - d. The Council to host annual winter preparedness sessions to include town and parish councils.
  - e. The council to prepare an Emergency Comms plan (to be covered in a separate report).
2. The Civil Contingencies Team continue to work with the NPg, SPEN and NWL through both day-to-day engagement and via the tactical coordination group in the case of

specific incidents e.g., the recent heatwave. NPg have been proactive in working with the Civil Contingencies Team to preidentified community buildings that might be suitable to receive a portable generator in event of a loss of power. NPg have also done a soft launch of their up-and-coming Foundation, which consists of £7.5 million for energy resilience projects at the community level. The official launch is expected later in the year.

3. NPg, SPEN and NWL are all members of the Northumberland Community Resilience stakeholder group, which met for the first time on 12 August 2022. Other members of the group including, Northumberland Communities Together, Community Action Northumberland (CAN), Northumberland Association of Local Councils (NALC), Northumbria Police and Northumberland Fire and Rescue service. The group is focusing on the development of Community Response Hubs and how the various agencies can support them.
4. Unfortunately, engagement with BT at the local level has been harder to achieve, although Guy Opperman's office has had conversations with them and with DCMS.
5. Colleagues from Northumberland Communities Together and the Civil Contingencies Team have been working together closely on the development of the Community Resilience Project, focusing in the first instance on a network of Community Response Hubs across the County. This partnership is helping to bring together some of the work on community resilience with the existing work on both warm hubs and the learning from development of community hubs, with the intention of supporting asset-based community development and emergency planning year-round. The Community Support Officers have been extended till December 2022 and a further proposal has been developed as part of the inequalities work to have them retained and assist with Community Based Development and Societal Resilience.
6. The Community Resilience project has not yet been tested by the County Emergency Committee.
7. September is preparedness month and Northumberland County Council have been taking part in the 30days 30ways UK social media campaign. This is the first year that Northumberland have taken part in the campaign with a different theme for each day of the month. As part of this a community resilience event has been planned for 29 September. Parish councils and community groups have been invited to attend an interactive event with the opportunity to share experiences and learning.
8. In addition to the above the Civil Contingencies Team have also been visiting individual and groups of parish councils as requested. By the time of the OSC meeting the team will have visited 19 parishes (some more than once), has communicated with others, has plans with visit at least one more and will be helping facilitate a local exercise later in October. This is in addition to the work that NCT and others are doing in connection with Warm Hubs (Community Action Northumberland) and Warm Places and Spaces.

## **Background**

After the disruption caused by Storm Arwen across the County, Northumberland County Council agreed to conduct a review of the implications of the Storm. A task and finish

group of the Communities and Place OSC was convened. This group met on five occasions to hear evidence from colleagues and partners. They also received and considered 87 written submissions from residents, businesses, town and parish councils, county councillors, an MP, the military, voluntary sector and BT Openreach.

At the end of the evidence gathering a report was produced with 28 recommendations. The report was presented to the Council meeting on 6 July 2022 where it was received positively and accepted unanimously. The application of lessons identified from incidents also contribute to Northumberland County Council's duties under the Civil Contingencies Act 2004.

### **Implications**

<b>Policy</b>	This project has overlaps with the warm spaces and places network.
<b>Finance and value for money</b>	Using existing community assets when responding provides a pragmatic and value for money operational response. Much of the funding for upfront investment in community response hubs has been met through grants outside of the Council.
<b>Legal</b>	Statutory provision via the Civil Contingencies Act 2004
<b>Procurement</b>	None
<b>Human Resources</b>	Delivered through existing resources in the Civil Contingencies Team and Northumberland Communities, together with partners.
<b>Property</b>	Use of existing community buildings
<b>Equalities</b> (Impact Assessment attached)  Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> N/A <input type="checkbox"/>	Providing a framework for community/local response improves access to support for everyone in the community in a time of crisis, in particular the more vulnerable, less mobile residents of Northumberland.
<b>Risk Assessment</b>	The project will assist in providing a framework to ensure an appropriate community response is put in place if and when needed.
<b>Crime Disorder &amp;</b>	Working in partnership with Northumbria Police
<b>Customer Consideration</b>	The aim of this project is to provide a consistent framework so residents and visitors to Northumberland receive a safe and robust response in emergencies.

<b>Carbon reduction</b>	None
<b>Health and Wellbeing</b>	Empowering individuals and the community to respond quickly and appropriately to incidents when needed is shown to reduce the impact on individuals' physical and mental wellbeing.
<b>Wards</b>	All

### **Background papers:**

Communities and Plan OSC, report of the Storm Arwen Task and Finish Group, 6 July 2022

[06.1 Report of the Storm Arwen Task and Finish Group.pdf \(moderngov.co.uk\)](#)

### **Report sign off.**

***Authors must ensure that officers and members have agreed the content of the report:***

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