



**Audit and Standards Advisory
Committee**

25 September 2024

**Report from the Corporate Director
of Finance and Resources**

**Lead Member -
Deputy Leader and Cabinet
Member for Finance & Resources
(Councillor Mili Patel)**

Emergency Planning & Resilience Update

Wards Affected:	All
Key or Non-Key Decision:	Not Applicable
Open or Part/Fully Exempt: <small>(If exempt, please highlight relevant paragraph of Part 1, Schedule 12A of 1972 Local Government Act)</small>	Open
List of Appendices:	Two Appendix 1: External Review Action Plan Appendix 2: Training and Exercise Programme 2024-25
Background Papers:	None
Contact Officer(s): <small>(Name, Title, Contact Details)</small>	Melissa Brackley Emergency Planning & Resilience Manager 020 8937 1767 melissa.brackley@brent.gov.uk

1.0 Executive Summary

- 1.1 This report continues the cycle of regular updates that the Emergency Planning team has shared with the Audit and Standards Advisory Committee since 2018.
- 1.2 The report provides the Committee with an update on the work and priorities of the team since the last update in February 2024, focusing on the steps and actions taken to drive further improvement to the Council's Emergency Planning and Resilience arrangements.
- 1.3 Throughout 2024, there has been progress in relation to the recommendations made in the external review in Oct 2023. In particular the increased capacity of the Emergency Planning and Resilience Team and the provision of training and exercising opportunities for those with response roles. Areas of improvement have also been influenced by the Resilience Standards for London, incidents and public inquiry recommendations

2.0 Recommendation(s)

2.1 The Committee is asked to note the report.

3.0 Detail

3.1 Contribution to Borough Plan Priorities & Strategic Context

3.1.1 The service updates provided in this report align with the following relevant priorities and outcomes within the Borough Plan:

- Prosperity and Stability in Brent - Building stronger partnerships with local organisations and supporting our community in the context of Emergency Planning and Resilience.
- Thriving Communities - Helping to support the creation of a safer borough through proactively planned interventions to reduce exposure to Emergency Planning and Resilience related risk.

3.1.2 The service updates provided in this report align with the following key corporate strategic documents:

- The Brent Borough Risk Register.
- Corporate Business Continuity Plan and Brent Recovery Plan.

3.2 External Service Review

3.2.1 An external review of the Council's Emergency Planning and Resilience (EP&R) capabilities was undertaken in October 2023. Since then the EP&R team has been working towards implementing the 22 recommendations that were raised.

3.2.2 The recommendations were RAG rated in terms of priority and included six rated as high priority. Five of these six high priority actions have now been completed. The outstanding recommendation relates to the grade of the Emergency Planning and Resilience Manager, which has been put on hold following the move of the team to the Organisational Assurance and Resilience Department.

3.2.3 In summary, of the 22 recommendations raised:

- 9 have been completed;
- It has since been decided that 2 will not be taken forward at this stage. These relate to how we deliver our on call arrangements and the recruitment of an additional Business Continuity Manager. Our on-call arrangements are broadly in line with the London standardised approach and the recommendation would move away from that approach.
- 11 are in progress.

- 3.2.4 A summary Action Plan is provided at **Appendix 1**. The aim is to complete all actions in progress by the end of the year, although the delivery of some of the proposed training may be in the 1st quarter of 2025, depending on trainer and attendee availability.
- 3.2.5 These recommendations are being progressed alongside actions that were identified as part of a self-assessment that was completed against the Resilience Standards for London (RSLs). The RSLs are a set of standards that all London Boroughs are expected to self-assess against on an annual basis. Boroughs are asked to assess if they are 'developing', 'established' or 'advanced' in relation to each standard.
- 3.2.6 Across the 11 standards, the Council has assessed itself (as at February 2024) as having four areas that are established and seven that are developing, which is broadly in-line with other boroughs across London. One of the key themes arising from the self-assessment is the need to generate greater awareness of emergency response and resilience across the Council.

3.3 Emergency Planning and Resilience Team – Recruitment

- 3.3.1 The EP&R team is now fully resourced with four FTE. The Emergency Planning & Resilience Manager moved into a permanent role in March and two Emergency Planning and Resilience Officer moved into permanent roles in July, alongside an existing Emergency Planning and Resilience Officer. Recent benchmarking across London confirms that the resourcing is now in line with the average across London.
- 3.3.2 As well as the permanent team, the Council's response arrangements are supported by volunteers from other parts of the Council. There are a number of roles that people can volunteer to undertake, including Loggists, Local Authority Liaison Officers (LALOs) and Rest Centre staff. There is currently a need to increase the number of volunteers that support the team, to ensure the Council has the resilience to sustain a protracted response if required. The team are in the process of trying to raise the profile of the volunteer roles.
- 3.3.3 Recent benchmarking has also highlighted that the Council pays those on call for emergency response arrangements one of the lowest levels in London. This is therefore being reviewed and recommendations will be made to bring this more in line with the London Average and across the Country.
- 3.3.4 The EP&R team have been allocated a Graduate to work with the team from October and their focus will be on improving the Council's Business Continuity Programme working with one of the Emergency Planning and Resilience Officers. As part of this work they will also pick up the develop of the BECC exercise, using Willesden Library as the location of the BECC. During September and October the team are hoping to train some additional volunteers who could work in a BECC and then ideally complete the exercise in late October, as this would be in time for the next planned power down of the Civic Centre.

3.4 Humanitarian Assistance

- 3.4.1 An additional officer has now undertaken Humanitarian Assistance Lead Officer (HALO) training, which means the Council currently has three people trained to fulfil this role. An additional officer is due to attend on the 26th September.
- 3.4.2 In addition to the HALOs, training has also been arranged in November for those from the Council and local partner agencies who may find themselves working in a Humanitarian Assistance Centre or Community Assistance Centre in the event of an incident. This training is being delivered by Dr Anne Eyre, a sociologist specialising in the psychosocial aspects of major incidents, emergency planning and disaster management. Anne has provided support and advice to those responding to many incidents over the last 20 years. Anne also delivers the London Resilience training for Humanitarian Assistance Lead Officers (HALOs). There has been a good level of interest in this session from within Children and Young People and Community Health and Wellbeing. Between now and November the EP&R team will be trying to ensure there is also representation from other teams who could need to support residents.
- 3.4.3 Following the revised London Humanitarian Assistance Framework and some feedback from our trained HALOs, our internal plans and procedures are also undergoing a review. Once these are finalised and the training is completed, the team are proposing to run a Humanitarian Assistance exercise. Dates for this are yet to be confirmed, but it is likely to be between December 2024 and February 2025.

3.5 Training and Exercising

- 3.5.1 To build on the training delivered in January and February 2024 for the Strategic (Gold) team and Tactical (Silver) team, a series of exercises were delivered on the 23rd July. Four small groups of Golds, Silvers, specialist advisors and members of EP&R team were presented with different scenarios to consider and asked to formulate a strategy and tactical plan. The scenarios covered a terrorist incident, a crush at a Wembley event, flooding, and a cyber-attack. The exercises were delivered by the same consultant who previously completed our external review and delivered the training in January and February. He has shared a number of recommendations following the session, which are as follows:
- **Template Placement:** Reference Gold and Silver Aide Memoire templates at the beginning of Council plans and update action cards to provide a clear prompt for initial actions.
 - **Multi-Agency Exercise:** Arrange a table-top exercise for an event at Wembley Stadium to confirm roles and enhance inter-agency understanding.
 - **Decision Loggists:** Expanding and training more Decision Loggists is crucial for accountability and effective post-incident analysis. Senior managers should encourage staff to volunteer and participate in future training.
 - **Business Continuity Awareness:** Review and test BC plans and processes among junior managers and staff.

- **Borough Emergency Control Centre:** Test the activation of the full back BECC.
 - **Continued Training and Development:** Conduct regular exercises to maintain and improve the capability and understanding of incident management roles, ensuring that knowledge and skills are kept current.
- 3.5.2 As well as the multi-agency exercise mentioned above in the recommendations, the Borough Resilience Forum will be having a multi-agency exercise on the 13 November 2024. The scenario for this exercise will be unexploded ordnance, as chosen by members of the forum.
- 3.5.3 The team have also delivered a number of Local Authority Liaison Officer training sessions for our existing Emergency Response Officer (EROs) and have been recruiting new ERO, who should start to receive their training in September. Further recruitment is required for a number of volunteer roles to improve the level of resilience in place.
- 3.5.4 The Emergency Planning and Resilience Service, in partnership with Shared Technology Services (STS), have now delivered 2 cyber attack exercises. The first was in March and the impact focused on Housing Services. In August, the session was aimed at teams within Children and Young people and Community Health and Wellbeing. Both sessions have highlighted the need to socialise and embed the Council's Business Continuity arrangements.
- 3.5.5 The EP&R team have been working with colleagues from housing teams to explore how the Council responds to a large scale evacuation of the Council owned block. While the Council already has arrangements in place for the immediate response and the establishment of emergency rest centres, greater clarity is needed on the role of the Housing teams in the initial response and the handover of the longer term response after the first 24/48 hours. To support this work, the EP&R team delivered an discussion based exercise on the 19th August to help the teams talk through the requirements and start to map out the processes. This will be followed up by a live rest centre exercise.
- 3.5.6 In May 2024 the team delivered a briefing for key staff covering the annual launch of the heat health alerts in June and the actions needed in the event of alerts. The EP&R team are now working to prepare for the launch of the Cold Weather Alerts, ideally delivering a similar briefing but in partnership with the Public Health team.
- 3.5.7 As recommended in the external review, the EP&R team are also working on a handbook and training package for elected members. This is based on some materials previously developed by London Councils, but with Brent specifics. This is likely to be delivered as a online session to ensure as many as possible can attend and that a recording can be shared with those unable to attend.
- 3.5.8 To ensure that training is refreshed regularly and that exercises are planned in alignment with plan reviews, the EP&R team are developing a Training and Exercise Programme for the year ahead - see Appendix 2.

3.6 Incidents

- 3.6.1 Since our last update there have been further flooding incidents within the Borough on the 5th and 15th July, which were followed up by a meeting with the Environment Agency (EA) to discuss the ongoing situation. This meeting identified the need for a joint approach from the Council, Transport for London (TfL) and EA to resolve this issue.
- 3.6.2 TfL are responsible for part of the brook (which is causing the flooding) for the land in which they own and they have expressed an eagerness to resolve the situation, however, there is a lack of clarity over who owns the remaining land and they are working with Legal colleagues to try and resolve this.
- 3.6.3 A collective and coordinated effort is therefore required to ensure this issue is tackled and that residents concerns are dealt with fully. To that end, we arranged an internal meeting with Public Realm colleagues at the end of the July. At this meeting it was agreed that the Council will work with the TfL in the short term to get the brook cleared and to put in place a maintenance programme, while the discussions around legal responsibilities continue. Once ownership is clarified, all parties will explore further options to provide a longer term solution. Public Realm colleagues are meeting with both the EA and TfL again on 12th September to discuss progress and next steps.
- 3.6.4 There have been a number evacuations from the Civic Centre over the last few months, which has prompted some valuable discussions to ensure the decision making in the event of an evacuation is joined up and that potential business continuity implications are considered. The team are working with colleagues in the Facilities team to arrange some training on the Council's command and control arrangements, to ensure everyone understands how they fit into the bigger picture and who is responsible for which decisions.
- 3.6.5 Following the fire in Elm Road in January 2024, the EP&R team have arranged with the Housing Partnership team to have a slot at their annual event they organise for the housing providers within the borough. They will be covering the Council's response arrangements and how the organisation can support them in the event of a major incident, while setting out the council's expectations of the providers. We are also hoping the London Fire Brigade will be able to join us and update the housing providers on the risk of fires involving lithium batteries from bikes and scooters.
- 3.6.6 The borough has also been impacted by national incidents in recent months. On the 19th July 2024, the Council's IT was disrupted by the CrowdStrike incident that has global impacts. Fortunately the council's team were able to quickly get our systems back up and running, with minimal disruption in comparison to many organisations.
- 3.6.7 The events that followed the tragic incident in Southport on the 29th July also had an impact on Brent, with understandable concern amongst the community. Community Safety colleagues worked closely with the Police and other partners to offer reassurance to our community. While Brent was spared from the violence and disorder, the EP&R team took steps to consider how

they would respond if required, while trying to ensure the safety of our teams and those impacted.

3.6.8 The final report from the Grenfell Tower Fire was published on the 4th September. There were 10 recommendations related to Local Authority emergency planning and response arrangements. Each of the recommendations has been allocated a Local Authority Resilience Board or Professional Network to consider, consult, and propose actions necessary to support the way in which London Boroughs collectively address them, where necessary. Likewise, the London Resilience Forum (LRF) has an extraordinary meeting on 3rd October, with the intention to consider the findings and agree any which require collective action from the wider London Resilience Partnership. The EP&R team had already identified improvements in some of the areas identified and will continue to progress this work, while awaiting feedback from the resilience boards.

4.0 Stakeholder and ward member consultation and engagement

4.1 There are no implications from a stakeholder/ward member consultation and engagement perspective.

5.0 Financial Considerations

5.1 There are no specific financial implications leading from this report.

6.0 Legal Considerations

6.1 The Act provides the primary framework for dealing with large-scale emergencies under UK law and, Part 1 concerns the responsibility of various public bodies and certain private bodies (e.g., energy suppliers or telecommunications providers) to undertake contingency planning for emergencies.

6.2 The Act recognises an emergency as an event or situation that threatens damage to human welfare for the purposes of The Act only if it may cause:

- loss of human life
- human illness or injury
- homelessness
- damage to property
- disruption of a supply of money, food, water, energy or fuel
- disruption of a system of communication
- disruption of facilities for transport, or
- disruption of services relating to health

6.3 It is apparent that the definition of 'emergency' under the Act is capable of covering an extremely broad range of circumstances, ranging from disasters that are life-threatening and large-scale (e.g., a hurricane, major earthquake or nuclear attack), to relatively small-scale, discrete events that cause 'disruption' rather than outright damage a fuel strike or power failure affecting telephone lines.

6.4 Emergency planning should aim where possible to prevent emergencies occurring, and when they do occur, good planning should reduce, control or mitigate the effects of the emergency. It is a systematic and ongoing process which should evolve as lessons are learnt and circumstances change.

6.5 According to the Cabinet Office guidance, Category 1 responders are required to:

- Put in place emergency plans business continuity management arrangements informed by risk assessment.
- Put in place arrangements to make information available to the public concerning civil protection matters and maintain arrangements to warn, inform and advise the public in the event of an emergency.
- Co-operate and share information with other local responders to enhance co-ordination and efficiency.

6.6 Local authorities are also expected to provide advice and assistance about business continuity management to businesses and voluntary organisations.

7.0 Equality, Diversity & Inclusion (EDI) Considerations

7.1 There are no implications from an EDI perspective.

8.0 Climate Change and Environmental Considerations

8.1 There are no implications from a Climate Change and Environmental perspective.

9.0 Human Resources/Property Considerations (if appropriate)

9.1 There are no implications from a Human Resources/Property perspective.

10.0 Communication Considerations

10.1 There are no implications from a communications perspective.

Report sign off:

Minesh Patel

Corporate Director of Finance and Resources