

ISLE OF ANGLESEY COUNTY COUNCIL Scrutiny Report Template

Committee:	Partnership & Regeneration Scrutiny Committee
Date:	8 March 2022
Subject:	North Wales Council's Regional Emergency Planning Service (NWC-REPS)
Purpose of Report:	Annual Report 2020/21
Scrutiny Chair:	Councillor Gwilym Owen Jones
Portfolio Holder(s):	Councillor Llinos Medi Huws
Head of Service:	Dylan Williams, Deputy Chief Executive
Report Author:	Helen Kilgannon, Regional Manager NWC-REPS Helen.Kilgannon@nwc-reps.org.uk Susan Owen Jones, Executive Manager (SLT) SusanJones4@ynysmon.gov.uk
Local Members:	Relevant to all members

1 - Recommendation/s

1.1 The Committee is asked to note the progress of the North Wales Council's Regional Emergency Planning Service work to date.

2 – Link to Council Plan / Other Corporate Priorities

2.1 The Council has duties for emergency planning and response under the Civil Contingencies Acts 2004, the Radiation (Emergency Preparedness and Public Information) Regulations 2001, and the Pipeline Safety Regulations 1996.

2.2 The Council is a principal responder and meets its obligations by collaborating with the North Wales Local Authorities through the North Wales Councils Regional Emergency Planning Service (NWC-REPS).

2.3 The North Wales Council's Regional Emergency Planning Service is required to report annually to this committee each year through an Annual Report.

3 – Guiding Principles for Scrutiny Members

To assist Members when scrutinising the topic:-

3.1 Impact the matter has on individuals and communities [focus on customer/citizen]

3.2 A look at the efficiency & effectiveness of any proposed change – both financially and in terms of quality [focus on value]

3.3 A look at any risks [focus on risk]

3.4 Scrutiny taking a performance monitoring or quality assurance role [focus on performance & quality]

3.5 Looking at plans and proposals from a perspective of:

- Long term
- Prevention
- Integration
- Collaboration
- Involvement

[focus on wellbeing]

4 - Key Scrutiny Questions

4.1 To what extent did the regional service deliver its functions and key aims for 2020/2021 (during a pandemic period)?

4.2 What are the immediate key priorities for the service to support the Council and North Wales as we hopefully move out of the pandemic period?

5 – Background / Context

5.1 The Council has duties for emergency planning and response under the Civil Contingencies Acts 2004, the Radiation (Emergency Preparedness and Public Information) Regulations 2001, and the Pipeline Safety Regulations 1996.

5.2 The Council is a principal responder and meets its obligations by collaborating with the North Wales Local Authorities through the North Wales Councils Regional Emergency Planning Service (NWC-REPS), for which Flintshire County Council is the host authority.

5.3 North Wales is the first region in Wales to form a fully integrated service to support all councils to fulfil their duties. It is supported by an Executive Board of all six Councils. This is underpinned by a Service Level Agreement and an Inter-Authority Agreement.

5.4 Within the Council, responsibilities for emergency planning and response are shared across services and nominated service representatives are identified within the Emergency Management Response Team structure.

5.5 Whilst much progress has been made, work is underway to further consolidate how the activities provided by the service are undertaken, particularly by strengthening performance management and training delivery. This will enable the service to more effectively prioritise areas of work and resource allocation but also ensure that councils benefit fully from the range of expertise held within the service.

Regional Activity

5.6 NWC-REPS provides the primary link between the Council and North Wales Local Resilience Forum (LRF), with contributions from service staff being fundamental to multi-agency groups, events, processes and plans.

5.7 Review and renewal of North Wales 4 x 4 Service Agreement. This is a formal agreement between the six authorities and the 4 x 4 Wales Service and describes the mechanisms to be followed should any authority need the support in delivering services. The voluntary service has proved to be an invaluable partner in assisting in severe weather where they have assisted with evacuations during floods and transporting care staff to remote areas not accessible by car following heavy snowfall.

5.8 As the pandemic has restricted classroom-based training, NWC-REPS have diversified to ensure staff continue to be competent in their emergency planning and incident response roles. NWC-REPS have designed and implemented a range of e-learning modules including, Strategic Management, Tactical Management and Rest Centre staff Training. These are currently being integrated within the Isle Anglesey County Council's internal Learning Pool portal.

5.9 NWC-REPS continues to provide out of hours support to the local authority and blue light services in response to queries and incidents 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. To test responses within local authorities NWC-REPS carry out Exercise Cooper quarterly to test both the contact details we hold and the out of hours availability of key staff.

Activity within the Council

5.10 The Emergency Management Response Team (EMRT) structure within the Council facilitates the coordination of incidents with Business Continuity implications for the authority. EMRT will coordinate the response on behalf of the Council to any multi-agency incidents.

5.11 The EMRT provides a robust mechanism for the delivery of planning and response functions. Teams meet regularly to review arrangements in place and identify future activities. Oversight is provided via the Senior Leadership Team.

5.12 NWC-REPS supports the EMRT by representing the Local Authorities at the Local Resilience Forum and their sub-groups. In addition, NWC-REPS assist the authority by writing, exercising and testing emergency plans as detailed below:

5.13 A Regional Emergency Rest Centre Plan has been developed for the Council. Training of Rest Centre staff is being further supported by the addition of e-learning. This also supports mutual aid requests from other local authorities as the plan is now generic to all 6 North Wales Councils.

5.14 Business Continuity Plans – At the beginning of the Pandemic, Business Continuity plans were implemented for the Council to identify and prioritise the critical services and work to ensure these were maintained. Throughout the pandemic, NWC-REPS circulated a questionnaire to gain insight into the usage of the plans during the pandemic and also identify any improvements. Having Business Continuity plans in place is a statutory requirement of the Civil Contingencies Act 2004. A review of the plan template is underway and a regional task and finish group has been established to take this work forward. Once this template is complete, a review of both corporate and service level plans will commence within the council.

5.15 Major Emergency Arrangements – NWC-REPS has finalised a template for the Major Emergency Arrangements. Once the template is implemented, officers will be able

to plan for emergencies and respond effectively and efficiently in a coordinated manner to any crisis or any threatened crisis within the County. The completed template is in draft form and under review.

COVID-19

5.16 Emergency Planning for the coronavirus pandemic falls under Civil Contingency legislation and is led nationally by the United Kingdom and Welsh Governments. At a North Wales level this is co-ordinated and led by the Local Resilience Forum (where the public sector works collaboratively), through the emergency Strategic Co-ordination Group (SCG).

Regional Activity

5.17 In the early stages of the COVID-19 pandemic, Multi-Agency meetings were taking place on a daily basis. One mutual aid request came to NWC-REPS from Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board (BCUHB). While many Health services across the Country had stopped, midwifery services had to be maintained with routine appointments, pre and post-natal check-ups.

5.18 As COVID-19 cases were rising across North Wales, and patients were being admitted to local community hospitals, BCUHB could no longer ask their pre and post-natal clients to attend COVID-19 premises. Working collaboratively and effectively NWC-REPS facilitated the groundwork to identify alternative, suitable buildings in collaboration with Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board (BCUHB) and Local Authorities. Leisure Centres, Schools and Community halls across North Wales were transformed into clinical settings to enable midwives to maintain their services and ensure that their clients continued to receive the care and the attention they required during the pandemic.

5.19 Mass Vaccination Centres and Local Vaccination Centres:

Multi agency working continued when SCG representatives agreed the location of three large Mass Vaccination Centres sites in North Wales. This would give access to members of the public to be vaccinated against COVID-19.

NWC-REPS continued to work in close partnership with BCUHB and the Local Authorities to identify smaller 'Local' Vaccination Centres. These centres are located within communities to accommodate the local community and assist in the delivery of the vaccine to greater numbers of people. Numerous site visits took place across North Wales, to assess the suitability and accessibility of Community halls, Leisure Centres and Theatres. In total, NWC-REPS helped to identify 21 Local Vaccination Centres across the region and responded effectively to all the challenges and requests made by BCUHB.

5.20 Surge Testing Plan

This plan was adapted from a Flintshire County Council template. The strategic intent of this plan was to identify and control the community spread of COVID -19 variants of concern. The plan assisted the Council, in cooperation with Public Health Wales and Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board to carry out localised 'surge testing'. This was part of the support offered to the Council in its response to the Covid-19 pandemic.

Activity within the Council

5.21 The Council has been responsible for local decisions and to deliver relevant national legislation and guidance. The first positive Covid-19 case was reported on Anglesey on the 11th March 2020. Following the UK Government advice for everyone in the UK to avoid all 'non-essential' travel and contact with others, an Emergency Management Response Team (EMRT) first met on the 18th March 2020. This has continued to meet virtually through the pandemic period. The EMRT ensured that decisions were timely, evidence based and consistently implemented in response to key issues and risks.

5.22 Dealing with the Covid-19 crisis has been a significant challenge for the Council; not only in maintaining front-line services and conducting normal business where possible, but also in ensuring health and safety arrangements are in place to protect the Council's staff whilst providing those services. At the start of the pandemic governance arrangements were amended to operate under emergency conditions. Office based Staff were asked to work from home wherever possible and numerous staff from all Services were redeployed to undertake essential additional work related to the Covid-19 pandemic. Inevitably, because of this, some day to day work had to be suspended or cancelled. Over the period we prioritised:

- a) Maintaining frontline statutory services
- b) Implementing new services in direct response to the crisis
- c) Protecting and safeguarding the Council workforce
- d) Protecting and supporting vulnerable individuals and children of key workers in Care Hubs
- e) Implementing national guidance
- f) Administering national grants e.g. business support; direct payments for free school meals
- g) Workforce adaptation to enable different ways of working
- h) Re-allocating staff duties in order to work on the Test, Trace and Protect initiative
- i) Dealing with numerous challenges relating to COVID 19 clusters and increasing cases
- j) Regular communication and information sharing
- k) Co-operating effectively at a local, regional and national level, and
- l) Supporting BCUHB in the Regional Vaccination roll out across the County

5.23 Day-to-day work (business as usual) has continued during the pandemic, the commitment, resilience and selflessness of front line service providers across several services has been adapted to keep the workforce and residents of the Island safe.

5.24 The Isle of Anglesey County Council's annual contribution to the service is £61,844. The contribution is based on a proportion of 10.472% towards the annual budget for the service.

Local Authority	Annual Contribution %
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Isle of Anglesey County Council	10.472%
Conwy County Borough Council	16.940%
Denbighshire County Council	14.865%
Flintshire County Council	19.348%
Gwynedd Council	17.979%
Wrexham County Borough Council	20.396%
Total	100%

6 – Equality Impact Assessment [including impacts on the Welsh Language]

6.1 Potential impacts on protected groups under the Equality Act 2010

N/A

6.2 Potential impacts on those experiencing socio-economic disadvantage in their lives (strategic decisions)

N/A

6.3 Potential impacts on opportunities for people to use the Welsh language and treating the Welsh language no less favourably than the English language

N/A

7 – Financial Implications

7.1 The report does not identify any specific financial implications for the Council.

7.2 The annual contribution to the service by the Council is £61,844.

8 – Appendices:

North Wales Councils Regional Emergency Planning Service (NWC-REPS) – Annual Report 2020/21.

9 - Background papers (please contact the author of the Report for any further information):



Annual Report 2020/21

North Wales Councils Regional Emergency Planning Service

enquiries@nwc-reps.org.uk
01352 702124



North Wales Councils Regional Emergency Planning Service (NWC-REPS).

Isle of Anglesey County Council, Gwynedd Council, Conwy County Borough Council, Denbighshire County Council, Flintshire County Council and Wrexham County Borough Council work together in a partnering relationship through the establishment in 2014 of a Regional Emergency Planning Service for North Wales. This Service undertakes the functions of the Councils in respect of civil contingencies and is accountable to an Executive Board that comprises senior representatives of those Councils. NWC-REPS provides a service to ensure the Local Authorities are compliant with the following legislation: -

- [Civil Contingencies Act, 2004](#)
- [Control of Major Accident Hazards Regulations, 2015](#)
- [Pipeline Safety Regulations, 1996](#)
- [Radiation \(Emergency Preparedness and Public Information\) Regulations, 2019](#)

This is the annual North Wales Councils - Regional Emergency Planning Service report for the year 2020-2021. It covers the work carried out by NWC-REPS across the six local authorities in the region, as well as multi-agency activities undertaken to support North Wales Local Resilience Forum.

The Service works to:

- Reduce duplication and repetition of tasks
- Improve the harmonisation of the work and resilience of teams
- Improve deployment of available resources by sharing specialist support and common tasks
- Improve consistency of response between authorities
- Improve communication channels between the North Wales Resilience Forum and local authorities



INCIDENT MANAGEMENT

NWC-REPS provides a 24/7 year-round Duty Officer to act as the initial point of contact for emergency response.

In 2020/21, NWC-REPS assisted in this role in the following ways: -

- Receiving and assessing 152 Flood Alerts and 9 Flood Warnings.
- Receiving, and assessing 28 Weather Warnings - issued by the MET Office
- Receiving and responding to a number of incident reports that included: -
 - Ardagh Group Chemical Incident April 2020
 - Hafod Landfill Fire May 2020
 - Motorbike Gathering May 2020
 - Storm Francis August 2020
 - Storm Christoph January 2021
 - Flood warning river Cefni, Llangefni February 2021

Of these incidents, 2 required the opening of an Emergency Rest Centres by the relevant Council, with NWC-REPS support. We responded to other incidents but utilised hotels in favour of rest centres due to Covid restrictions and public safety. Over the course of the year, NWC-REPS represented and support local authorities at Multi-Agency Tactical Coordination Groups at a number of the incidents above.



INCIDENT MANAGEMENT

From April 2020 and currently ongoing saw activities around the multi-agency response to the COVID-19 pandemic. This required active redeployment of the team onto a range of work streams that included :-

- Supporting Councils own internal emergency response arrangements
- Advising Councils on Business/Service Continuity matters
- Supporting partners with solutions to their business continuity needs
- Participating on the multi-agency Strategic Coordination Group and Tactical Coordination Group work streams
- Coordinating the local distribution of data between Welsh Government and Councils in relation to the Shielding scheme
- NWC-REPS staff continue to provide project support to COVID-19 Prevention & Surveillance groups as part of the authorities local statutory infectious disease compliance work streams;
- Chairing the North Wales Excess Deaths Group and
 1. Leading on proving a specific Covid-19 excess Deaths Response Plan
 2. Chairing a Funeral Directors Liaison sub group.
 3. Providing weekly information on body storage capacities
 4. Liaising with Welsh Government all Wales excess death response team.
 5. Briefing the Strategic Coordination Group on the stand down of regional body storage resources



WORKING TOGETHER

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“Good exercise well done”

“Realistic. Some exercises are ‘over done’ this was more likely to be what would occur in reality.”

LEARNING & DEVELOPMENT

2020/21 Learning & Development was reduced due to Local Authority staff prioritising response to COVID-19. Due to this NWC-REPS facilitated training and exercising for specific needs. Please see details of Exercise we have undertaken during this time detailed below. As a team we have also been working on moving to an online platform to be able to deliver training via ELearning until face to face training can resume safely. An Emergency Planning Officer has been an integral part of JESIP training to provide information on Local Authorities perspective when dealing with incidents.

COMAH Exercise Barrage (for FMC Agro Ltd, Deeside)

A statutory set of exercises was delivered in August and September 2020, to validate Flintshire County Council's external emergency plan for the Deeside based agricultural chemical manufacturer; NWC-REPS coordinate the multi-agency work required in order to maintain and test the off-site emergency plan on behalf of the authority, for it to remain compliant under the COMAH 2015 legislation. Exercise Barrage was delivered virtually, culminating on 4th September 2020 in a multi-agency site familiarisation/accident scenario desktop exercise. The exercise was completed within statutory timescales and therefore fulfilled the authority's legislative compliance requirements.

COMAH Exercise Aether (for Synthite Ltd, Mold)

Planning for the statutory set of exercises to validate Flintshire County Council's external emergency plan for the Mold based chemical manufacturer began in November 2020; NWC-REPS coordinate the multi-agency work required in order to maintain and test the off-site emergency plan on behalf of the authority, for it to remain compliant under the COMAH 2015 legislation. Exercise Aether will be delivered virtually over three dates between March and May 2021.



COMAH External Emergency Plan development and testing (for Great Bear Distribution Ltd, Deeside)

In response to the demand placed on the UK's chemical industry by the COVID-19 pandemic, there has been an increased national supply chain demand for consumer grade bleach. This demand resulted in the Great Bear Distribution warehouse site in Deeside, moving to Upper Tier COMAH status, in order to store increased stocks of the product.

The service delivered a virtual site familiarisation session and virtual major accident declaration briefing session over two dates in Q4 2020 for key site health and safety personnel, to initiate the emergency planning and exercising work. The service expects to conclude the development of the external emergency plan for the site and validate it via two virtual emergency exercises with multi-agency partners during the next financial year, in order to ensure the authority is compliant with the COMAH legislation.

Denbighshire County Council Operations Team Exercise

On the 13th January 2021, NWC-REPS conducted an operations team exercise looking at the impact of COVID-19 during a severe weather event. The exercise tested the team on how they would ensure they had an adequate amount of staff to assist in the severe weather whilst also maintaining social distancing.



Exercise Cooper

Throughout the year, NWC-REPS have ensured that a critical component of the Councils ability to respond - the Emergency Contacts Directory - is maintained and up to date. One of the ways that this has been done is a test of the content by calling the numbers within the Directories. The test took place out of hours. In doing the test, an assessment of the ability to produce an effective response is also gained, with results of these tests regularly reported back to the Councils. Exercise Cooper test was undertaken in October 2020. 41 contacts within the directories were checked in these tests and the programme of Exercise Cooper tests will continue into 2021/22. This will be undertaken on a quarterly basis including our External Directory. Time and dates and numbers are randomly chosen from sections within Emergency Contact Directories.

Development activities in planning

- Rest Centre Plan- a multi-agency plan to meet the needs of the 6 North Wales Local Authorities is currently being finalised
- Leading on compiling a North Wales Excess Deaths Response Plan on the North Wales Excess Deaths Group
- Finalising the Local Authority corporate emergency response guidelines/plans/ policy

Forward Look

Mutual Aid between LA's bordering with North Wales local authorities.
COMAH exercise for Great Bear Distribution Ltd
Publishing ELearning Modules.
Business/Service Continuity review.
Major Emergency Plan review.
Learning from COVID-19.
Learning and Development Programme

