

REPORT TO: Housing and Safer Policy and Performance Board

DATE: 16th September 2025

REPORTING OFFICER: Executive Director Environment and Regeneration

PORTFOLIO: Community Safety

SUBJECT: Emergency Planning

WARD(S) Borough wide

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 To provide an annual report to the board on the Emergency Planning function and the work programme for the period 2024/25.

2.0 RECOMMENDED: That the report be noted.

3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

3.1 Emergency Planning Team

Emergency Planning is a team within Community Safety & Protection. The team consists of an Emergency Planning Manager and two Emergency Planning Officers.

3.2 Statutory Duties

Halton Borough Council, as a Local Authority, has a 'Statutory Duty' to comply with the following legislation:

- Civil Contingencies Act (CCA) 2004.
- Control of Major Accident Hazard Regulations (CoMAH) 2015.
- Pipeline Safety Regulations (PSR) 1996.

3.3 Civil Contingencies Act (CCA) 2004

The Act divides local responders into 2 categories, imposing a different set of duties on each. Category:1 organisations are at the core of the response to the majority of emergencies (e.g. Emergency Services, Local Authorities, NHS England).

- 3.4 As a Category:1 Responder, Halton Borough Council is subject to a full set of 'civil protection statutory duties' and is required to:

- Assess the 'risk of emergencies' occurring and use this to inform contingency planning.
- Put in place Emergency Plans.
- Put in place Business Continuity Management (BCM) arrangements.
- Put in place arrangements to make information available to the public regarding civil protection matters and maintain arrangements to 'warn, inform and advise' the public in the event of an emergency.
- Share information with other local responders to enhance co-ordination.
- Co-operate with other local responders to enhance co-ordination and efficiency.

Provide advice and assistance to businesses and voluntary organisations regarding Business Continuity Management.

3.5 **Response**

In an emergency, the local authority works with other emergency responders to mitigate the impacts on the local population, taking a leading role in humanitarian assistance and recovery.

3.6 HBC has a 'Major Emergency Plan' in place to enable the activation of an effective, scalable and coordinated response to the declaration of a Major Incident or Major Incident Standby.

3.7 As part of the council's Emergency Planning arrangements there is a 24/7/365 emergency response rota in place. The rota includes an Emergency Planning Officer / Tactical Officer (Head of Service) and Strategic Officer (Director / Strategic Director / CEX) on call at any one point in time. This enables the council to respond appropriately to major incident/standby in partnership with the Cheshire Resilience Forum (CRF) as part of the CRF Major Incident Response Principles.

3.8 **Responder Training**

The Emergency Planning (EP) team delivered a number of training sessions for all Council responding officers to attend in 2024/25. The EP team also held two 'Exercise Responder Sessions' with all on call officers invited to participate in.

3.9 The EP Team hold a record of attendance of both training and exercising. 84% of on-call senior officers attended the HBC Responder Training over the last 15 months facilitated by the EP team.

3.10 **Control of Major Accident Hazard Regulations (COMAH) 2015**

COMAH applies mainly to the chemical industry, some storage activities, explosives and nuclear sites and other industries, where a threshold quantity of dangerous substances identified in the Regulations are kept or used. The COMAH Regulations requires the authority to prepare adequate Emergency plans to deal with the off-site consequences of possible major accidents at 'Upper Tier' sites.

- 3.11 The COMAH Regulations 2015, places 'nine' industrial sites within Halton as 'Upper Tier' sites. These plans are reviewed and validated as part of the Emergency Planning work programme.
- 3.12 All 'Upper Tier' COMAH sites are required to produce both an 'Internal' and 'External' Emergency COMAH Plan. The 'Internal' Plan is produced by the operator and the 'External' Plan is produced in partnership between Halton Borough Council and the Operator(s).
- 3.13 Due to the complexity and interconnectivity of the six operators at the Runcorn COMAH site, the External COMAH Plan is tested/validated on an annual basis. This is a recommendation by the Competent Authority and has been implemented for a number of years.
- 3.14 **Exercises in 2024/25**
- Exercise Halton 18 - Major live exercise delivered – 30th May 2024
 - Exercise Iconichem 5 - Major live exercise delivered – 17th October 2024.
- 3.15 External Plan updates:
- Univar - Published May 2024
 - RSCO – Published Feb 2025
 - Iconichem – Published June 2025
- 3.16 **Business Continuity Arrangements**
- All services in the Council are responsible to produce and for the content of their service business continuity plans & arrangements.
- 3.17 In November 2024 the EP team facilitated a Business Continuity exercise with a focus on a loss of IT. Following the exercise the EP team launched a new Business Continuity template for all services to complete and held workshops in support of this piece of work.
- 3.18 The EP Team hold a record of all completed service plan updates

which inform the Corporate Business Continuity Plan, updated by the EP team accordingly on behalf of the Chief Executive Officer.

3.19 Rest Centres

There are a number of pre-identified Council owned venues across the borough that can be activated as a Rest Centre if required during an incident.

3.20 The EP Team have engaged on a recruitment process for volunteer rest support staff (HBC Employees) and facilitated rest centre training during 2024/25.

3.21 Training is ongoing with a Council rest centre exercise scheduled for September 2025.

3.22 Boards and Meetings

Emergency Planning are represented on a number of multi-agency boards and meetings including Halton Events Safety Advisory Group, Creamfields Safety Advisory Group & Liverpool John Lennon Airport Safety Liaison Group.

3.23 Emergency Planning are key members of a number of Cheshire Resilience Forum groups including Delivery Board, Industrial Issues and Tactical Contest.

3.24 Partnership Working

Emergency Planning arrangements for Cheshire are governed by Cheshire Resilience Forum. The EP team actively work with the forum to ensure risks are understood and appropriate measures are in place and reviewed regularly.

3.25 Devolution

The Cheshire Resilience Forum (CRF) consists of the four Cheshire local authorities; Cheshire West & Chester, Cheshire East, Halton and Warrington.

3.26 The Cheshire and Warrington devolution deal is an agreement between the UK government and the local authorities of Cheshire East, Cheshire West and Chester, and Warrington to create a Mayoral Combined Authority.

3.27 Halton is a key member of and works in close collaboration with the CRF particularly given HBC's alignment with the Police and Fire authorities. These arrangements have worked well in the past and Halton is currently assured this will continue. The detail will need to further be understood in due course and reported.

4.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

4.1 None to report.

5.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 None to report.

6.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES

6.1 Improving Health, Promoting Wellbeing and Supporting Greater Independence

Emergency Planning arrangements and preparedness to respond to major incidents supports residents and enables the community to have awareness and appropriate responses.

6.2 Building a Strong, Sustainable Local Economy

A safe Halton supports the business sector and economic growth. The emergency planning function liaises with the private sector to ensure statutory requirements are met, a significant contribution to sustaining businesses in the local economy.

6.3 Supporting Children, Young People and Families

Emergency Planning response arrangements are universal and consider the needs of different cohorts of residents.

6.4 Tackling Inequality and Helping Those Who Are Most In Need

Emergency Planning response arrangements include supporting the Boroughs vulnerable residents in a major incident situation.

6.5 Working Towards a Greener Future

The team seeks opportunities in its working practice and procurement measures to support delivery of the Council's Climate Change Action Plan.

6.6 Valuing and Appreciating Halton and Our Community

Emergency Planning response arrangements include supporting the Boroughs vulnerable residents in a major incident situation.

7.0 Risk Analysis

7.1 A failure to comply with statutory requirements as set out in 3.2 could incur legal action against the Council and significant reputational harm.

7.2 A failure to adequately work to understand risk, ensure preparedness, contingency and response arrangements also has the potential for severe legal sanctions for the Council.

8.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES

8.1 None to report.

9.0 CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS

9.1 None to report.

**10.0 LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS UNDER SECTION 100D OF
THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972**

‘None under the meaning of the Act.’