

Date: 1st February 2018

Title: Report Item 7 - Parish Emergency Resilience Plan
Revision

By: Cllr Mike Keller

Purpose of Report: To consider how to improve the existing plan, in view of recent experiences and advice from East Sussex Community Resilience Partnership.

Recommendations: To carry out further work in specific areas where the plan needs improvement with a view to completing the review before the Annual Village Meeting in April 2018.

The existing Emergency Plan, which was last revised in 2015, was originally drafted as a result of the village being cut off by severe weather in 2010 and 2013. Although it encompasses a broad range of possible emergency situations, it is now in need of some updating to reflect other potential emergency scenarios.

The Parish Council Chair and Vice Chair attended a conference on emergency resilience, organised by East Sussex Community Resilience Partnership (ESREP) on 21st November 2017. Following this, an informal working group of councillors discussed areas where improvements to the plan might be necessary and the following areas were put forward for potential action by the Parish Council.

- 1. Risk assessment.** Both the existing ED&F plan and the standard model plan proposed by ESREP list a number of potential hazards, ranging from extreme weather to terrorism. Clearly, some hazards are more likely than others to occur in the village and equally some will have a more devastating impact. Our first move should be to attempt to order these in terms of likely impact so that we can determine where resources need to be concentrated.
- 2. Communications.** A number of delegates at the ESREP conference related stories of communication problems during past emergencies. It became clear that no one means of contact should be relied on. In particular, mobile phone access can be difficult during an emergency due to an increase in private phone traffic (as well as the patchy coverage in the village and surrounding areas at present). We need to look at all possible means of communicating with residents, including social media, email, phone cascade and personal contact.

- 3. Resources.** These can be divided into two categories; fixed assets such as the Village Hall, that will be vital in dealing with any evacuation and will also provide a base for directing an emergency response, and volunteer supplied assets. At present, the only register for the latter items consists of a list of drivers of 4x4 wheel drive vehicles and householders willing to offer emergency accommodation. This could usefully be expanded to include items such as emergency heating and lighting, chain saws, vans and any other equipment that might be thought useful. Ways of appealing for volunteers to register their assets need to be considered. With regard to the Village Hall, the continuation of emergency access needs to be confirmed with the Village Hall Trust. In addition, consideration should be given to alternative bases for evacuation and command in the, admittedly unlikely, event that the Hall itself was rendered unusable through damage or preventative exclusion.
- 4. Contacts.** The maintenance of up to date lists of contacts, both within the village and externally is vital in enabling an effective response to an emergency. To this end, it is considered preferable for a centrally held list to be the primary one. This list should be paper based (although an electronic copy could also be held) and kept secure. Secondary lists will still be needed to be distributed in case the primary list is unavailable.
- 5. Vulnerable Residents.** Within the village we have two volunteer groups that deal with vulnerable residents; the Community Responders and the First Response Team. They should be asked to provide a confidential (possibly sealed) paper list of those who would need priority attention in the event of an emergency. This list would be kept securely with the primary contact list (see above). According to ESREP, such arrangements would satisfy the conditions of data protection legislation.
- 6. Emergency Resource Pack.** Although the Parish Council chair and vice chair are, ex-officio, the designated Emergency Co-ordinator and deputy, any councillor could be called on to lead the Parish Council response in the absence of the above. It is therefore important to have the necessary resources to hand for any councillor to pick up. ESREP recommend a “grab bag” containing the necessary contact lists together with such emergency equipment (e.g. torches, mobile phone chargers etc.) as might be deemed necessary. The working group suggested that a secure storage container, with a combination lock, located in the village hall would be the best way of providing this. All councillors would be provided with the combination to access the container.
- 7. Cost Implications.** A relatively small initial outlay would be required to set up the resource pack. However, the major cost implications would occur at the time of any emergency itself. Firstly, any user group at the Village Hall would need to be compensated for being denied access due to the emergency. Secondly, any resident offering the use of equipment or resources should be offered compensation for expenses occurred. Thirdly, the emergency co-ordinator should be entitled to authorise expenditure on food and drink (up to a pre-determined limit), in the event of an evacuation. The Parish Council should underwrite all these expenses, although attempts would be made after the emergency to recover the costs (e.g. from utility companies or County or District Council).

In conclusion, councillors are asked to approve and undertake actions to implement the various changes suggested above, with a view to having the revised emergency plan in place by April 2018.