

# A Civil Resilience Handbook for Councillors in London Local Authorities

This version contains important updates in relation to Covid-19  
Updated April 2020



**LONDON  
COUNCILS**

# **A Civil Resilience Handbook for Councillors in London Local Authorities**

**MAY 2019**

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## INTRODUCTION

London local authorities have a central role to play in responding to major emergencies and other significant crises in the capital. When such events happen, people expect councils to respond swiftly and effectively alongside other organisations, whilst continuing to deliver essential ‘business-as-usual’ services.

After an emergency response has been dealt with and the blue light services have withdrawn, the role of local authorities often becomes even more prominent as they assume leadership responsibility for recovery. As well as being important to those affected by an emergency, recovery can be a long, complex and highly-sensitive process. When done well however, it can also be a process that provides opportunities to improve local places and strengthen communities. On that basis, it is essential that councils are able to provide the resources necessary to lead effective recovery operations.

In order to be successful in response and recovery, local authorities must prepare, and have a duty to do so under the Civil Contingencies Act. Although the process of ensuring necessary preparedness involves many strands, at its heart rests a requirement for people to understand their roles and have the experience, skills and support necessary to exercise them well. In relation to this requirement, whilst all operational responsibilities associated with civil resilience will be assigned to officers, councillors in London local authorities have a key political role to play in preparing for, responding to, and recovering from major emergencies and other significant crises. Their contribution in this regard must not overlap with, but should be complementary to, the operational role of their officer colleagues.

The important part that councillors have to play in civil resilience is reflected in the Resilience Standards for London (RSLs)<sup>1</sup>. The Standards set an expectation for Leaders/Directly-elected Mayors and other Cabinet members, as well as Ward councillors to have clearly defined roles and responsibilities in relation to civil resilience. They also state that support arrangements should be put in place to enable councillors to fulfil their defined roles effectively.

This Handbook has been prepared to assist London local authorities in meeting the requirements set by the RSLs. It provides councillors with a range of information associated with their roles in relation to civil resilience, including:

- i. An overview of local authority responsibilities under the Civil Contingencies Act;
- ii. Practical guidance on the role of Leaders/Directly-elected Mayors and other Cabinet members (collectively referred to as ‘Leading Members’)
- iii. Practical guidance on the role of Ward Councillors; and
- iv. An Addendum containing guidance for officers on supporting councillors to fulfil their agreed roles in civil resilience.

Although the breadth of the guidance accounts for the roles of councillors in relation to major emergencies and other significant crises, the principles on which it is based are intended to be

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<sup>1</sup> At the time of drafting this version of the Handbook, the Resilience Standards for London were in their final stages of development. It is anticipated that the substantive Standards will be published in mid-2019.

applicable to all emergencies and organisational crises – regardless of their size and/or complexity.

In combination with an ongoing training and development programme, the guidance contained in this Handbook will help ensure that all councillors in London understand their roles in civil resilience and have the skills and support necessary to fulfil them effectively.

## **OVERVIEW OF LOCAL AUTHORITY RESPONSIBILITIES FOR CIVIL RESILIENCE**

Alongside all principal councils in the UK, London local authorities are classified as Category 1 Responders under the Civil Contingencies Act 2004 (CCA). As such, and in common with other Category 1 Responder organisations such as the emergency services and NHS, they have a range of statutory duties:

- To assess the risk of emergencies happening
- To put plans in place to deal with emergencies
- To establish business continuity plans, i.e. plans for ensuring that essential services can continue to be delivered during an emergency
- To make information available to the public about emergencies that may occur; to warn the public when an emergency is likely to occur; and to provide information and advice in the event of an emergency
- To share information and cooperate with other local responders in the interests of effective coordination and efficiency
- To provide business continuity advice to private and voluntary sector organisations in their area (a responsibility for local authorities only).

The CCA defines an “emergency” as follows:

- a. An event or situation which threatens serious damage to human welfare in the UK;
- b. An event or situation which threatens serious damage to the UK environment; or
- c. War, or terrorism, which threatens serious damage to the security of the UK.

Category 1 Responders must perform the above duties under the Act where the scale and/or nature of an “emergency”:

- Is likely to seriously obstruct their ability to perform functions for which they are responsible; and
- Makes it necessary or desirable for them to respond; and doing so requires [significant] changes to the deployment of their resources or the need to secure additional resources.

Local Category 1 Responders work to a generic national framework for managing emergency response and recovery. The framework provides local flexibility for responders to make their own decisions about what emergency planning arrangements are appropriate to deliver their duties under the CCA, based on local circumstances, priorities and risks.

Category 1 Responders are, however, required to work together as members of Local Resilience Forums (LRFs). LRFs operate across areas having coterminous boundaries with police

forces. They have a key statutory role in facilitating regional, strategic-level multi-agency cooperation in the process of establishing effective resilience. In London, the London Resilience Forum - which operates across, both, the Metropolitan and City of London Police areas - is supported by 33 Borough Resilience Forums (BRFs), i.e. one for each local authority area. BRFs are also statutory bodies, and are responsible for the development and delivery of local, Borough-level resilience arrangements.

# PART ONE

## Civil resilience guidance for Leaders/Directly-elected Mayors and other Cabinet Members

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## **1. PURPOSE AND APPLICATION OF GUIDANCE FOR LEADING MEMBERS**

The purpose of this guidance is to provide Leaders/Directly-elected Mayors of London local authorities and other Cabinet members **(collectively referred to as 'Leading Members')** with practical guidance on how to discharge the agreed role they have in civil resilience.

The guidance covers all key areas of activity in which Leading Members may be involved when preparing for, responding to and recovering from emergencies. In practice, the division of associated responsibilities will vary from one local authority to another, depending upon different decisions being taken locally regarding Cabinet member portfolio responsibilities. The nature and scale of particular emergencies may also affect the distribution of political leadership responsibility across Cabinet members during response and recovery. That being the case, political administrations should decide how to distribute the various activities to Leading Members on a 'by-default' basis – accepting that associated responsibilities may need to be adjusted during response and recovery.

The guidance is intended to be augmented by a training and development programme, to ensure that all Leading Members fully understand their role and are able to develop the skills and experience necessary to exercise it effectively.

## **2. SUMMARY OF LEADING MEMBERS' ROLE IN CIVIL RESILIENCE**

Whilst all operational responsibilities associated with civil resilience will be assigned to officers, Leading Members in London local authorities have a key political leadership role to play in preparing for, responding to and recovering from major emergencies. They also have an equally important role in confirming that appropriate business continuity plans are in place. Their contribution in this regard should complement, and be complemented by, the operational role of officers, as well as important political activities being undertaken by back-bench Ward councillors and other political stakeholders beyond the council.

Leading Members must make policy and funding decisions to ensure that their council is prepared to deal effectively with emergencies and other crises that will impact on communities and/or the council's ability to provide essential services. They must also put in place mechanisms for securing assurance that associated arrangements are robust.

When a council responds to a major emergency, Leading Members have a central part to play in providing visible civic leadership and reassurance to local people, as well as supporting and enabling council officers who are involved in the response effort. They will also lead on arrangements for engaging with political stakeholders outside the Cabinet – both within and beyond the council.

During recovery, Leading Members should maintain a visible civic leadership presence. They may also need to lobby for necessary financial assistance in support of the recovery operation and should closely monitor progress on its delivery. Finally, Leading Members should

champion the process of making certain that available lessons are learnt, addressed and shared with others.

### **3. THE ROLE OF LEADING MEMBERS IN ENSURING PREPAREDNESS**

#### **3.1 Personal Preparedness**

Experience clearly shows that there is a direct relationship between levels of preparedness and the effectiveness of a local authority's response to, and recovery from, an emergency. Whilst there are many strands associated with achieving necessary preparedness, at its heart rests a requirement for officers and councillors to fully understand their respective roles and have the experience, skills and support necessary to exercise them well. Where this is not the case, it is highly-likely that councils will be found wanting at a time when their help is most needed by the communities they serve.

On the above basis, the importance of all councillors investing time and effort in ensuring that they are personally prepared to contribute constructively in the event of a major emergency or other significant crisis occurring cannot be overstated.

In this regard, all Leading Members should set an example for others to follow by:

- i. **Having a thorough knowledge of the guidance contained in this document on how to exercise their role in practice**
- ii. **Ensuring that they keep headline guidance on actions to be taken during an emergency response readily available (see Aide Memoire at Appendix 1A)**
- iii. **Having a thorough knowledge of the guidance contained in this document for local Ward councillors.** This will to assist them in understanding how their political leadership role will complement the political roles of their colleagues, and also because they, themselves, are Ward councillors.
- iv. **Being familiar with the council's key emergency and business continuity plans**
- v. **Attending training courses to ensure that they understand their role and how to exercise it in practice**
- vi. **Taking part in exercises so that they are able to perform their role in a simulated environment, alongside officer and councillor colleagues, as well as representatives from other agencies.**

#### **3.2 Political leadership within the council**

Leading Members have a central role to play in ensuring preparedness by providing necessary political leadership within their local authorities.

As the most senior politicians in their councils, Leaders and Directly-elected Mayors must work closely with Chief Executives, as the most senior officers, to ensure a clear understanding of their respective roles and how they will complement one another - whilst it is important for clear lines of demarcation to exist between the political role of the Leader/Directly-elected Mayor and the operational role of the Chief Executive in all aspects of civil resilience, the

interface between the two needs to be well understood if the benefits of aligning political and managerial leadership are to be realised.

From a governance perspective, working with their officer colleagues where necessary, Leaders/Directly-elected Mayors and other Cabinet members should:

- i. **Assign lead portfolio responsibility for civil resilience to a single Cabinet member.** Leaders/Directly-elected Mayors may decide to retain this lead role themselves or assign it to another Cabinet member. Either option is perfectly acceptable. The important point is that there is clarity over who will hold lead political responsibility for civil resilience preparedness.
- ii. **Ensure that lead managerial responsibility for civil resilience is assigned to a single senior officer through the authority's scheme of delegation.** As with political leadership, it is important that lead professional responsibility rests with a single, designated individual.
- iii. **Ensure that a policy framework setting out details of the council's emergency planning and resilience responsibilities, and arrangements for discharging them, is produced and published.** Putting such a framework in place not only provides a focus for preparedness-related activity within the local authority, it also demonstrates a commitment to civil resilience, as well as transparency to external stakeholders in terms of what they can expect from the council.
- iv. **Ensure that necessary financial provision is made within the council's budget to deliver against the policy framework.**
- v. **Ensure that arrangements are in place to enable urgent decisions to be taken quickly during the response phase.** When responding to emergencies, operational decisions need to be taken quickly by officers. At times, the decisions in question will commit a level of resource that would require Cabinet-level approval under normal circumstances. However, formal processes that are used by officers to secure decisions from Cabinet members during 'business-as-usual' periods are not conducive to the fast-moving decision-making environment in which officers will be operating during emergency response. That being the case, arrangements must be put in place to delegate authority to officers for specified urgent decisions during an emergency response that would normally be reserved for Cabinet.
- vi. **Ensure that mechanisms are in place for securing assurance that the council is prepared to deal with major emergencies and has appropriate business continuity plans in place.** There are various routes by which this assurance can be secured. Internally, periodic reports could be provided to Cabinet on the authority's state of preparedness, based upon a self-assessment against the Resilience Standards for London, which have been developed as part of a pan-London assurance framework. Scrutiny committees also have an important internal assurance role to play, and the political leadership may wish to actively encourage scrutiny committee Chairs to consider including aspects of preparedness in their work programmes. External mechanisms for providing assurance can also be considered. For example, Peer Review

is a useful tool and the Resilience Standards for London provide a benchmark against which teams of independent experts can judge levels of preparedness.

Beyond putting the governance arrangements above in place, **Leaders/Directly-elected Mayors should consider producing a joint ‘statement of commitment’ with other political group leaders, to champion the role and involvement of their respective group members in achieving necessary preparedness.** Along with the heads of other political groups, Leaders/Directly-elected Mayors have an important role in setting clear expectations that members of their respective groups will play a full and active part in preparing for emergencies. Whilst these expectations can be set within individual groups, a joint statement demonstrates cross-party commitment to the principle that councillors of all political persuasions should work together on ensuring necessary preparedness.

The Cabinet member who is assigned lead portfolio responsibility for civil resilience preparedness should also:

- i. Build a strong professional relationship with the officer having lead managerial responsibility for civil resilience**
- ii. Engage with officer colleagues to understand the main risks to local communities and businesses – both existing risks and those being identified through horizon-scanning**
- iii. Secure assurance that there are robust plans in place for internal and external communication during response and recovery**
- iv. Enable Ward councillors to contribute to, and influence, mechanisms for securing assurance regarding emergency preparedness and business continuity**
- v. Confirm that business continuity advice is publicly available to local businesses, and that associated good practice is actively promoted**
- vi. Confirm that information is publicly available to raise awareness in communities and businesses about the risks they face, and the roles of different agencies in managing the risks in question**
- vii. Support Ward councillors in their local leadership role for building community resilience.**

### 3.3 Political Leadership beyond the council

In addition to the political leadership responsibilities that Leading Members have within their own local authorities for preparedness, they also have an essential role in the wider environment. By exerting effective external leadership influence, Leading Members can create the conditions for productive operational collaboration with partner organisations to achieve vital collective resilience. Such external political leadership also has potential to foster the development of constructive relationships with politicians beyond their council. Investing in such relationships around the theme of civil resilience as a strand of preparedness can deliver

significant downstream benefits where joined-up political leadership and/or engagement becomes necessary during an emergency response and recovery effort.

In terms of specific external leadership actions associated with preparedness, Leading Members should:

- i. **As members of the London Councils Leaders' Committee, and in accordance with the Assurance Framework for London Local Government, secure assurance that local authorities in London have the collective capability and capacity to deal with emergencies and other crises that require a pan-London response.** The resources required to respond effectively to a major incident are highly-likely to exceed those available to any single local authority in London. On that basis, all Leaders and Directly-elected Mayors have committed to the principle of building the collective resilience necessary to ensure effective responses to, and recovery from, all reasonably foreseeable incidents in London. An Assurance Framework has been developed in support of this commitment. The Framework should be used by Leaders and Directly-elected Mayors to arrive at informed judgements about the extent to which the collective resilience of London local authorities is fit-for-purpose.
- ii. **Consider exchanging contact details with other Leaders and Directly-elected Mayors, so that necessary high-level political discussions can take place in the event of a major emergency or other significant crisis.**
- iii. **Consider exchanging contact details with local MPs and discussing their role during the response to a major incident affecting their constituents.** Whilst MPs have no official role associated with the Civil Contingencies Act during an emergency response, they will inevitably seek to be involved in some capacity where the emergency directly affects their constituents. That being the case, Leaders/Directly-elected Mayors should initiate a dialogue with MPs in their local authority area. In doing so, it is suggested that they should acknowledge that MPs have a legitimate stake in any major emergency response and recovery effort. They should also discuss arrangements for enabling MPs to exercise their representative role constructively, and without in any way compromising the operational response.
- iv. **Give consideration to the role that the Mayor of London will wish to play during major incidents.**

#### **4. THE ROLE OF LEADING MEMBERS IN THE RESPONSE PHASE**

When an emergency occurs, the leadership of senior politicians is brought into sharp focus. Communities will look to Leading Members from local authorities to provide visible civic leadership and reassurance. Councillors and council officers within their own authorities will

also expect them to lead the political response, providing whatever support is necessary and enabling officers to focus on their role in leading the operational response.

#### 4.1 Political Leadership within the council

In terms of their internal political leadership role, Leaders/Directly-elected Mayors should open a dialogue with the Chief Executive (or duty 'Gold' on-call senior officer) as soon as they become aware of a major incident, to receive an initial briefing and agree any urgent steps that need to be taken in the early stages of the council's response. Whilst the Chief Executive and their officer colleagues must be allowed to manage all aspects of the operational response, alignment of their operational role with any political leadership activity is very important. In order to facilitate this, Leaders/Directly-elected Mayors and Chief Executives must keep communications channels open so that they are operating from an up-to-date, common understanding of the situation at all times.

The nature, scale and complexity of emergencies can differ significantly. As a result, Leaders/Directly-elected Mayors will need to decide which members of their Cabinet will lead on different aspects of the political response. In this regard, and in consultation with the Chief Executive, they will need to consider:

- i. **Whether another member of the Cabinet should be the 'public face' of the council in its civic leadership role.** By default, this will be the Leader/Directly-elected Mayor, but the nature and scale of the incident may lead to another Cabinet member with appropriate portfolio responsibility being selected for this role. It is also possible that the Leader/Directly-elected Mayor may be unavailable to take on the role initially, if, for example, they are out of the country.
- ii. **Which member of the Cabinet will lead on 'business as usual' during the response phase.** Again, depending upon the nature and scale of the incident, the response phase may continue for some time, and generate the need for Leaders/Directly-elected Mayors to focus exclusively on their associated civic leadership role. Where this is the case, it may be appropriate to allocate responsibility for political leadership of the local authority's routine business to another Cabinet member.
- iii. **Which member of the Cabinet will lead on providing political support to initial work associated with the recovery phase.** Although the response to major incidents is led by the emergency services, local authorities will almost always assume lead responsibility for the recovery operation. As a result, good practice will see local authority officers commencing work on recovery whilst the operational response is ongoing for the following reasons:
  - The response phase – even for major emergencies – can be relatively short in duration. Where this is the case, local authorities will be assigned responsibility for leading a potentially-significant recovery operation at short notice and need to be ready to do so.

- Recovery operations can be complex, protracted and resource intensive. They are also likely to attract a high-level of scrutiny. As a result, the sooner resources are assigned to developing a recovery strategy and associated action plans, the better. As with the response phase, all operational aspects of recovery will be led by officers. Nevertheless, strong and effective political leadership is necessary to support and complement the efforts of officers in delivering an effective recovery operation. Such political leadership needs to be in place from the point at which work on recovery commences, and it is important, therefore, for Leaders/Directly-elected Mayors to assign this role to a member of their Cabinet as soon as is reasonably practicable.
- iv. **Which member of the Cabinet will be assigned lead responsibility for Ward councillor engagement.** Both in their capacity as community leaders and community representatives, Ward councillors have a potentially significant role to play during an emergency response. As the ‘local face of the council’ they can be a great asset, providing reassurance to local people and businesses on behalf of the council, and also acting as a conduit through which regular and reliable two-way information can flow. Whilst some aspects of the Ward councillor’s role will be helpful in supporting the operational response effort, others may best be exercised through politician-to-politician interaction. That being the case, it can be helpful for the Leader/Directly-elected Mayor to appoint, and communicate details of, a Cabinet member who will be the conduit through which member-level interests associated with the response phase will be addressed by the administration.

With the above decisions having been taken, Leading Members should:

- i. **Confirm that arrangements have been put in place for briefing them and Ward councillors during the response phase.** The importance of providing all councillors with regular, appropriate and reliable communications – to avoid them feeling as though they are operating in an information vacuum – cannot be overstated. This is undoubtedly a challenge during the early stages of response when reliable information regarding operations ‘on-the-ground’ may be very limited. It can also be difficult when the nature of an incident means that associated details are sensitive for security reasons, for example. Even under these circumstances, however, generic messages of reassurance or confirmation that ‘there is no more news at this stage’ can reduce the risk of councillors feeling isolated from the council, at a time when their desire for news of what is going on will be significant.
- ii. **Confirm that business continuity plans are being deployed to enable ongoing delivery of essential services**
- iii. **Provide support and encouragement to council staff and others involved in the response effort.** During an emergency response, council officers and councillors are likely to be working extremely hard, for long hours, under potentially very difficult and, at times, harrowing circumstances. As a result, it is important for Leading Members, with necessary support from the communications team, to send out regular messages of thanks to their colleagues. They should also make time to ‘walk the floor’ and meet

- those involved in the response effort face-to-face, by visiting teams within the council and those running rest centres and sites offering temporary accommodation etc.
- iv. **Ensure they are briefed on activities associated with the deployment of 'spontaneous volunteers'**. When a major emergency occurs, it is likely that news and social media coverage will result in people travelling to the area in order to assist. Whilst such spontaneous volunteers can be a valuable asset, it is important that their involvement is managed to avoid it negatively impacting on the response effort. Failing to do so can also cause frustration amongst the volunteers, leading to reputational damage to local authorities and other responding agencies.
  - v. **Maintain a record of significant actions and events for use in subsequent debriefs, scrutiny activity and official enquires, etc.** Although everyone's efforts during the response phase should focus exclusively on minimising the impact of the emergency on those affected, after the transition into recovery has taken place, attention will begin to turn to examining the effectiveness of the emergency response. This is a crucial stage in the cycle of integrated emergency management. It provides an opportunity to identify examples of what went well - which can be celebrated and shared with others as good practice. It also enables areas where the response could have been better to be highlighted, addressed and disseminated as part of the 'lessons learned' process. Post-incident analysis can take many forms, including operational debriefs, formal reviews by local authority scrutiny committees, coroner's inquests, independent external reviews and Public Inquiries. It is almost certain that Leading Members will be asked to contribute details of their involvement in the response to one or more of these post-incident reviews. Consequently, and on the basis that they may be asked to provide an account many months, or even years, after the incident, it is highly-advisable for Leading Members to maintain a written record of significant actions and events in which they were involved, or witnessed, during the response phase.

#### 4.2 Political Leadership beyond the council

As far as external leadership focus of Leading Members is concerned during the response phase, consideration will need to be given to the following:

- i. **Working with the council's communications team to act as the 'public face of the council' in interactions with the media and local communities affected by the incident.** A key strand in the civic leadership role of local authorities during emergencies involves the intelligent and sensitive use of communications. In this regard, a communications strategy should be in place that exploits the benefits of using different communication channels to reach as diverse a range of audiences as possible. As well as focusing on the channels that will be used, the strategy should also recognise that different 'messengers' should be employed, depending on the nature of the messages being conveyed and the audiences for whom they are intended. Leaders/Directly-elected Mayors have a key role to play in this regard, in their capacity as the most senior elected representative in the local authority. They should be

positioned as the 'public face of the council' and, in this role, communicate regular, appropriate and reliable information on behalf of the local authority via the variety of communication channels available.

- ii. **Represent the council during visits by VIPs and ensure that such visits are sensitive to the 'mood' and needs of the community.** During the response to a major incident in London, it is highly-likely that VIPs, such as Government ministers, will want to personally visit the scene of operations to meet those affected by, and dealing with, the emergency. The fact that many such VIPs are based in London also means that these visits can take place at very short notice. Whilst the intent behind VIP visits is positive and understandable, it is essential that they do not interfere with the operational response being dealt with by officers. The timing and nature of the visits should also be sensitive to the 'mood' and needs of the communities affected. Leading Members have a key role in both respects. As those who will represent their council during such visits, they should liaise with their Chief Executives regarding any operational implications. They should also attempt to influence the detail of the visits, based upon intelligence they are able to gather about the 'mood' on the ground, through, for example, discussions with local Ward councillors.
- iii. **Consider initiating dialogue with Leaders/Directly-elected Mayors of other councils impacted by, or responding to, the incident.**
- iv. **Consider initiating dialogue with MPs whose constituencies are being impacted by the incident.** Where an MP's constituents are affected by a major emergency, they are almost certain to want to be seen to be getting directly involved in some capacity. It might be advisable for Leaders/Directly-elected Mayors to take the initiative and make contact to discuss how the MPs would like to contribute. In doing so, Leaders/Directly-elected Mayors may wish to remind them that they should not attempt to involve themselves directly in the operational aspects of the emergency response.
- v. **Consider liaising with the Mayor for London's office where appropriate.** In the event of a major emergency occurring in London, the Mayor will have an important civil leadership role for the whole city, alongside Leaders/Directly-elected Mayors as civic leaders of local places.
- vi. **If necessary, lead on making representations to the Government for financial assistance.** Although local authorities hold contingency reserves that can be used to meet immediate additional costs associated with responding to major incidents, it is conceivable that the scale of an emergency will exceed this financial provision. Where such a scenario does emerge, Leading Members will need to make the case to Government for emergency financial assistance to be provided.

## 5. THE ROLE OF LEADING MEMBERS IN THE RECOVERY PHASE

Throughout the process of recovery following a major emergency, the leadership provided by senior politicians will remain firmly in the spotlight. This is particularly so for those in local government, as their councils will almost always assume lead responsibility for the recovery phase – which is frequently a resource-intensive, complex and sensitive process that can continue for many years.

As with the response phase, operational aspects of recovery will be led by officers, however Leading Members have an essential role to play in providing civic leadership and political

oversight. Doing so will demonstrate to communities a commitment by senior political leaders to work with them on taking opportunities, as well as addressing challenges, associated with recovering from a major emergency. It will also ensure that the recovery process is well-planned, appropriately resourced and delivered in line with agreed timescales.

### 5.1 Political Leadership within the council

Due to the scale, complexity and resourcing requirements of recovery from a major emergency, Leading Members must ensure that effective arrangements associated with governance and political oversight are in place. In this regard, they should:

- i. **Alongside senior officers, agree internal governance and delivery arrangements that will be put in place during recovery.** Because of associated resourcing challenges, it is likely that governance and delivery arrangements will need to be temporarily reconfigured during a major recovery operation. Such temporary arrangements will assist in ensuring that 'business-as-usual' activities can continue in parallel with the recovery programme.
- ii. **Secure assurance that a recovery strategy has been developed and is supported by a comprehensive, balanced, timebound and affordable recovery action plan.** Operational delivery of the recovery phase will be overseen by a multi-agency Recovery Coordinating Group (RCG). RCGs bring together representatives from a range of organisations and are chaired by a senior officer – almost always a local authority Chief Executive or Director, to reflect the lead responsibility of local government in the recovery phase. The primary role of RCGs is to develop, and oversee delivery of, a Recovery Strategy. Whilst RCG activity is officer led, it is important for Leading Members to be assured that the Recovery Strategy is fit-for-purpose, as well as being delivered in accordance with agreed timescales.

Beyond addressing the above internal leadership issues associated with governance and political oversight, Leading Members should:

- i. **Work with the communications team to ensure frequent internal communications to keep all staff and councillors updated, and to provide them with key messages to be conveyed on behalf of the council.** Regular communication to officers and councillors will be essential throughout the recovery process. As well as such communication keeping colleagues well-informed, it will provide an opportunity for Leading Members to thank them for their continuing efforts, and demonstrate an ongoing personal commitment to the recovery operation. Leading Members can also use internal communication to provide key messages to be conveyed on behalf of the council to external audiences – particularly via Ward councillors operating in their community leadership role as the 'local face of the council'.
- ii. **Confirm that local voluntary sector organisations and the community are fully involved in the recovery process, and that their comments are appropriately acknowledged/taken into consideration.**
- iii. **Confirm that the community, businesses, councillors and council staff are being kept informed of plans and progress.**
- iv. **Play a prominent and proactive role in the process of ensuring that all available lessons are captured, shared with others and acted upon.** All major emergencies and

other crises provide opportunities for learning. In order to ensure that all available lessons – both positive and negative – are captured, shared with others and acted upon, it is essential for an open, honest and proactive leadership tone to be set. Leading Members are encouraged to demonstrate a personal commitment to learning all available lessons and actively engaging in associated internal and external post-incident review mechanisms.

## 5.2 Political Leadership beyond the council

Leading Members will need to maintain a visible civic leadership role throughout the recovery period. Although media focus and broader public interest tends to fall away soon after the response phase is completed, for communities and businesses directly affected the process of returning to normal – sometimes a very different ‘normal’ - is at least as important as the emergency response had been. When done well, recovery will strengthen the bond of trust between councils and the communities they serve by restoring and improving local places. However, if insufficient attention is paid to leading an effective recovery operation, trust will be lost, and local authorities may face increasing external scrutiny and criticism.

In addition to their ongoing civic leadership role in recovery, Leading Members will also need to exert influence at a political level to secure alignment of political effort, as well as additional financial resources necessary to fund delivery of the Recovery Strategy.

On the above basis, Leading Members should:

- i. **Maintain a visible civic leadership role.** This should involve them undertaking periodic visits to people and businesses in the affected area, as well as attending public meetings etc.
- ii. **Ensure that communities are engaged in the process of developing and delivering recovery plans.** It is essential for those in affected communities to directly influence details of the recovery operation. They must feel that recovery is being done *with* them and not *to* them. Leading Members are advised to publicly commit to this principle and then ensure that it is being reflected in the way the recovery operation proceeds, alongside local Ward councillors.
- iii. **Ensure that regular progress updates are communicated to communities and other stakeholders.** Once recovery plans have been developed and published, it is important for communities and other stakeholders to receive regular updates on progress against them. The link between making commitments, and then being seen to keep them, is fundamental to the process of building and maintaining trust. Again, Leading Members should publicly commit to this principle and then ensure it is adhered to throughout the recovery operation.
- iv. **Establish protocols for involvement of, and liaison with, other political stakeholders.** Beyond the central role that Ward councillors will have during the recovery phase, other political stakeholders, such as the Mayor for London, MPs and Government ministers are likely to maintain an interest. Leading Members should keep communication channels with these stakeholders open, in order to understand their wishes, manage expectations and, where possible, align political activity behind delivering the Recovery Strategy as effectively as possible.
- v. **Make the case for financial assistance to support the recovery process.** By default, local authorities are expected to make arrangements to bear the costs of recovery in all

but the most exceptional circumstances. Central Government is clear that it is up to councils to assess their own risks and put in place the right mix of insurance and contingency reserves to meet the cost of dealing with them. However, in the event of an exceptional emergency, Government departments will consider providing financial support for some aspects of the recovery effort. In order to access funding under these circumstances, a case will need to be made and Leading Members have a role to play in this regard, with necessary support from officer colleagues.

- vi. **Offer support to the process of managing 'disaster funds' set up to collect and distribute charitable donations, as necessary.** It is very common for disaster appeals to be set up in the aftermath of major emergencies. The process of doing so can generate significant levels of charitable giving in a very short space of time. Whilst this is clearly very positive in terms of providing, often much-needed, financial assistance to those impacted by the emergency, it is essential that such funds are appropriately administered. Such administration should properly balance the need for funds to be released to those who need them in a timely fashion, with the requirement to avoid charitable donations being passed on to those for whom they were not intended – particularly if fraud is involved. Where it is decided that local authority support and a degree of democratic oversight would be helpful in the governance of disaster appeal funds, Leading Members may have a role to play as, for example, trustees.
- vii. **Attend memorial or remembrance services, as appropriate.** In the aftermath of major emergencies that result in a loss of life, it is very likely that the loved-ones of those who have perished, and members of local communities, will want to come together for services of remembrance in order to pay their respects. It will be important for Leaders/Directly-elected Mayors to make themselves available to attend such events on behalf of the council. However, in doing so, they will want to be sensitive to the wishes of those organising the memorial and remembrance services who may or may not wish to have civic dignitaries in attendance.

# CHECKLIST FOR LEADING MEMBERS DURING RESPONSE

During the emergency response phase, **Leading Members** should:

- Always Stay Safe

**In the light of the Covid 19 Pandemic, the role of Councillors should be discharged with reference to the Government's latest advice and guidance. Please see the April 2020 Addendum for more information**

- Contact the Chief Executive (or duty 'Gold' on-call senior officer) to receive an initial briefing and agree any urgent steps to be taken.
- Decide which member of the Cabinet will be the 'public face' of the council in support of its civic leadership role (by default, this would be the Leader/Directly-elected Mayor).
- Work with council's communications team to act as the 'public face of the council' in interactions with the media and local communities affected by the incident.
- Decide which member of the Cabinet will lead on 'business-as-usual'.
- Decide which member of the Cabinet will lead on providing political support to initial recovery work.
- Decide which member of the Cabinet will lead on Ward councillor engagement.
- In conjunction with the Chief Executive, senior communications officer and Cabinet member responsible for Ward councillor engagement, put in place arrangements for briefing Leading Members and Ward councillors during the response phase.
- Provide support and encouragement to council staff and others involved in the response effort.
- Maintain a record of significant actions and events for use in subsequent debriefs, scrutiny activity and official enquiries etc.
- If necessary, lead on making representations to the Government for financial assistance.
- Represent the council during visits by VIPs and ensure that such visits are sensitive to the 'mood' and needs of the community.
- Consider initiating dialogue with Leaders/Directly-elected Mayors of other councils impacted by, or responding to, the incident.
- Consider initiating dialogue with MPs whose constituencies are being impacted by the incident.
- Consider initiating dialogue with the Mayor for London – particularly where a pan-London response has been mobilised.

# PART TWO

## Civil resilience guidance for Ward Councillors

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## 1. PURPOSE OF WARD COUNCILLOR GUIDANCE

The purpose of this document is to provide Ward councillors in London local authorities with practical guidance on how to discharge the agreed role they have in civil resilience, i.e. their role in preparing for, responding to, and recovering from major emergencies and other significant crises.

The guidance is intended to be augmented by a training and development programme, to ensure that Ward councillors fully understand their role, and are able to develop the skills and experience necessary to exercise it effectively.

## 2. SUMMARY OF WARD COUNCILLOR'S ROLE IN CIVIL RESILIENCE

Whilst all operational responsibilities associated with civil resilience will be assigned to officers, Ward councillors in London local authorities have a key political role to play which complements other important activities being undertaken by the Leader/Directly-elected Mayor, other Cabinet members and officers.

The overall role of ward councillors in this regard can be considered as having two dimensions:

- i. A **community representative** dimension – the role of Ward councillors in ensuring that the interests of their constituents are properly represented in the way the council conducts its business; and
- ii. A **community leadership** dimension – the role of Ward councillors in working closely with those in the communities they represent, to become the 'trusted face of the council' and lead the process of building community resilience.

## 3. WARD COUNCILLOR'S ROLE IN ENSURING PREPAREDNESS

### 3.1 Personal Preparedness

Experience clearly shows that there is a direct relationship between levels of preparedness and the effectiveness of a local authority's response to, and recovery from, an emergency. Whilst there are many strands associated with achieving necessary preparedness, at its heart rests a requirement for officers and councillors to fully understand their respective roles and have the experience, skills and support necessary to exercise them well. Where this is not the case, it is highly-likely that councils will be found wanting at a time when their help is most needed by the communities they serve.

On the above basis, the importance of all councillors investing time and effort in ensuring that they are personally prepared to contribute constructively in the event of a major emergency or other significant crisis occurring cannot be overstated.

In this regard, all Ward councillors should:

- i. **Have a thorough knowledge of the guidance contained in this document on how to exercise their role in practice**
- ii. **Ensure that they keep key guidance on actions to be taken during an emergency response readily available (see Aide Memoire at Appendix 1B)**
- iii. **Be familiar with the guidance in this document for Leaders/Directly-elected Mayors and Cabinet members, to assist them in understanding how their political role as Ward councillors might complement the roles undertaken by members of the political executive**
- iv. **Be familiar with the council's key emergency and business continuity plans**
- v. **Attend training courses to ensure they understand their role; and exercises so that they are able to perform it in a simulated environment.**

### 3.2. As a community representative

As community representatives, all Ward councillors have an important part to play in ensuring that local authorities are well prepared to manage emergencies that may impact upon their constituents. Where Ward councillors are also members of formal scrutiny committees with a remit covering civil resilience, their role in this regard broadens to encompass risks to which constituents anywhere in the borough are exposed.

In order to discharge this aspect of their role effectively, Ward councillors should:

- i. **Support the development of policy that meets the needs of communities they represent.** This involves councillors engaging with local communities to build a detailed picture of community risk by, for example, understanding and mapping vulnerabilities. This local intelligence can then be combined with risk analysis work being undertaken centrally by emergency planning professionals to build a really rich community risk profile, which can then inform subsequent civil resilience policy decisions and associated planning activity. In order to exert influence in this way, Ward councillors will need to engage with members of the emergency planning teams in their local authorities, as well as the Cabinet member with portfolio responsibility for civil resilience preparedness.
- ii. **Secure assurance that plans to manage major emergencies and other significant crises that could impact upon the communities they represent are comprehensive, robust and subject to testing and periodic review.** This aspect of a Ward councillor's role can be achieved by requesting and reviewing information available via the local authority's website, intranet and emergency planning team. Alternatively, it might involve them engaging in formal scrutiny of a local authority's preparedness, as a scrutiny committee member. In this regard, Scrutiny committee members should periodically examine the performance that their authority is achieving against the Resilience Standards for London. The Local Government Association has also prepared a set of questions that local Ward councillors and scrutiny committee members may

wish to ask, when seeking assurance in connection with emergency preparedness (see Appendix 3 of [A councillor's guide to civil emergencies](#)).

### 3.3. As a community leader

As community leaders, Ward councillors have an excellent opportunity to reinforce their position as the 'trusted face of the council' by working with residents and business owners to ensure they are well prepared for emergencies – with a particular focus on collaboratively building community resilience. The value of councillors 'banking' trust in this way when preparing for emergencies will really come to the fore in the event of a major incident occurring. In these circumstances, a trusted Ward councillor becomes huge community leadership asset – both to those impacted by the emergency and to the council they represent.

In order to collaboratively build community resilience in their role as leaders of local places, Ward councillors should:

- i. Share information with local residents and businesses about the risks in their area.** Ward councillors can assist in this regard by sharing with their constituents, details of risk profiling work that has been undertaken by emergency planning officers within their own local authorities, as well as by the multi-agency Borough Resilience Forum.
- ii. Actively engage in the process of understanding and mapping risk in the community and pass on associated details to council officers.** Beyond sharing details of risk-profiling work being undertaken centrally, Ward councillors are uniquely placed to gather and map further, detailed risk information by engaging with residents, community groups, voluntary sector organisations and businesses. By gathering such information and passing it on to officer colleagues, Ward councillors will help to build a really rich picture of community risk that can be used to inform subsequent emergency response and recovery planning activity.
- iii. Explain the civil resilience role of the council and its partner agencies and, in doing so, manage expectations and promote self-resilience within the community.** Having worked with their constituents and officers to build a detailed picture of risk in the area, Ward councillors should share details of the role that the council and its partner agencies have in managing it. In this regard, they should work alongside council officer colleagues and local representatives of the partner agencies in question to share and explain emergency plans. This will help local people to understand details of the response to emergencies that will be provided. It will also help to set reasonable expectations and, in doing so, create an opportunity for Ward councillors to introduce and promote the concept of building community resilience, i.e. what local communities can do themselves to supplement the response to, and recovery from, emergencies provided by statutory agencies.
- iv. Use local knowledge to identify and engage individuals and groups who can play a role in preparedness, response and/or recovery and, where appropriate, provide associated details to council officers.** Ward councillors can use their local knowledge

and connections to identify community 'assets' of the sort that are central to the process of building community resilience. By identifying and engaging with individuals, social networks and community groups that could play a role in preparedness, response and/or recovery, Ward councillors can act as convenors in unlocking and combining local resources to help manage risk. As with community risk information, councillors should share details of these community 'assets' with officer colleagues.

- v. **Promote, encourage and play an active part in the preparation of community plans.** Having worked alongside their constituents with the support of officers to assess risk in the area and identify local assets with the potential to help manage it, community resilience activity then needs to focus on preparing community plans. Local Ward councillors should seek support from officer colleagues in the development of these plans. HM Government has also published a range of practical guidance on [preparing for emergencies](#) that will be helpful to councillors and the community groups with which they are working.

#### 4. WARD COUNCILLOR'S ROLE IN THE RESPONSE PHASE

The role of Ward councillors is critical when an area is significantly impacted by an emergency. If they have invested necessary time and effort in working with local communities to ensure preparedness, Ward councillors will be seen as the trusted face of the council. In this capacity, they will be able to legitimately and effectively represent their constituents throughout the response phase. They will also be well placed to provide community leadership on behalf of the council and, in doing so, ensure that those they represent receive the information, reassurance and empathy they will expect from the council, whilst officers focus on the operational aspects of the response effort.

##### 4.1. As a community representative

As representatives of communities during the response phase, Ward councillors should:

- i. **Be present locally to identify the needs of individuals and the wider community and feed them in to the appropriate response organisation via council officers.** The most important role for local councillors in the event of an emergency is to be out-and-about in their communities. By directly engaging with constituents in this way, not only will they demonstrate a physical council presence, they will also be able to identify the needs of individuals, families and businesses, as well as maintaining a direct sense of the 'mood' in the community. Details of this intelligence can then be fed-in to appropriate response organisations via council officers.
- ii. **Confirm the reliability of information before passing it on.** During an emergency response, Ward councillors are likely to receive a huge amount of information from various sources, including social media. In order to add value and avoid the risk of

becoming seen as a source of unreliable information, Ward councillors must attempt to verify the authenticity of material communicated to them before passing it on.

**iii. Avoid attempting to get involved in the operational response to an emergency.**

Ward councillors must keep in mind that, as with the delivery of services during business-as-usual, the elected member role is not to be involved in operational activities. This principle is more important than ever when an emergency is being dealt with, as those with operational command responsibility must have had the professional training and development required to ensure necessary operational competence. Furthermore, operational activities can be hazardous. As a result, the geographical area within which an emergency response is taking place will often be cordoned-off by emergency services personnel. This is for good reason, as those entering will need to have received appropriate training in safe systems of work and will also, frequently, need to be wearing appropriate personal protective equipment. Councillors should not, therefore, attempt to cross access-controlled cordons.

**iv. Avoid attempting to evaluate the effectiveness of the emergency response.**

Although Ward councillors have a clear, important and entirely legitimate role in reviewing and scrutinising the council's corporate response after an incident, they should resist any temptation to make judgements in this regard during the response phase itself. In particular, actions that may be perceived as seeking political advantage should be avoided.

**v. Maintain a record of significant experiences and actions for use in subsequent debriefs, scrutiny activity and official inquiries etc.**

After an emergency, attention will turn to examining the effectiveness of the response. This is important as it provides an opportunity to identify examples of what went well, as well as examining aspects of the emergency response that could have been better. Post-incident analysis can take many forms, including operational debriefs, formal reviews by scrutiny committees, Coroner's Inquests, independent external reviews and Public Inquiries. It is likely that Ward councillors will be asked to contribute details of their involvement in the response to one or more of these post-incident reviews. Consequently, and on the basis that they may be asked to provide an account some time after the incident, it is advisable for councillors to maintain a written record of significant actions and events in which they are involved, or witness, during the response phase.

#### 4.2. As a community leader

In their role as community leaders during the response phase, Ward councillors should:

- i. Be a visible, trusted and reassuring presence in the community.** Again, the most important role for local councillors during an emergency response is to be out-and-about in their communities. As trusted community leaders representing the council, they can provide personal support and reassurance to residents, and calm emerging tensions at a time when emotions are likely to be running high. It is important that officers are aware of a councillor's involvement when they are providing such support

so that they can receive necessary briefings and other relevant information. On that basis, councillors should contact their council's on-scene Local Authority Liaison Officer (LALO) to advise them of the nature of community support they intend to provide.

- ii. Communicate key messages and reliable information to the public and media on behalf of the council.** As trusted community leaders, Ward councillors will, by default, be seen as a source of important information. This makes them a potentially valuable asset to local communities, the media, and to the council as a conduit through which key messages and other information can be passed. The importance of ensuring that any information communicated by Ward councillors is accurate and reliable cannot be overemphasised. Communicating inaccurate or unreliable information – particularly where it builds expectations that are subsequently not met – is a recipe for rapidly losing the trust of those receiving the information and causing damage to personal and corporate reputations. It is also likely to cause unnecessary anxiety and unrest, which can negatively impact on the response effort. Unfortunately, reliable information about what is happening on-the-ground – particularly in the fast-moving early stages of an emergency response – can be in short supply. It can also be difficult to provide such information when the nature of an incident means that associated details are sensitive for security reasons, for example. Even under these circumstances, however, communicating generic messages of reassurance or confirmation that 'there is no more news at this stage' can enable Ward councillors to say something helpful, at a time when they may be under significant pressure to explain what's going on.
- iii. Signpost members of the public and businesses towards the right agency to get the support they need.** Unlike many of their constituents, Ward councillors will understand how the public sector 'system' operates, and also have direct access to advice in this regard from officer colleagues. That being the case, they are well placed to signpost members of the public and businesses towards organisations that are able to provide necessary support and assistance.
- iv. Provide support and encouragement to council staff and others involved in the response effort.** When out in their communities during the response phase, Ward councillors will have the opportunity to thank and encourage council staff and others involved in the front-line response effort. The positive effect of providing people who are likely to be working under very difficult circumstances with a 'pat on the back' should not be underestimated and will send a clear message that the council is grateful for what they are doing.

## **5. WARD COUNCILLOR'S ROLE IN THE RECOVERY PHASE**

Whilst, mirroring the response phase, operational aspects of recovery will be dealt with by officers, as community representatives and leaders of local places, Ward councillors for affected communities have an important political role to play in supporting the recovery operation.

Recovery is often a complex and resource-intensive process, which can continue for many years. In fact, for some emergencies, there is a need to be cautious with the use of the word 'recovery', as some people will never fully recover from the physical or emotional trauma of having been impacted by a terrorist attack or other, similarly-catastrophic event. However, it should also be recognised that, when done well, recovery can realise opportunities to improve local places – both in terms of infrastructure, and by building better networked, stronger and more resilient communities.

#### 5.1 As a community representative

In their role as community representatives during recovery, Ward councillors should:

- i. **Listen to, and advocate on behalf of, the community to ensure that their needs and aspirations inform and influence details of the recovery process.** Whilst it is important for a strategic view to be taken when embarking on programme of recovery following a major emergency, it is equally important that the needs and aspirations of those who live and work in the affected communities are taken into account. In this respect, Ward councillors need to ensure that the interests and views of their constituents are well represented and influence high-level decisions associated with the recovery process.
- ii. **Help assess the extent to which business-as-usual frontline services are continuing to be delivered in parallel with the recovery operation.** Due to the significant resourcing demands of major recovery operations – often over long periods of time - they generate a risk to the delivery of business-as-usual frontline services in councils. Whilst business continuity plans should be deployed to manage such risks, Ward councillors can help monitor the service delivery experience of their constituents, to help confirm that the plans in question are effective.
- iii. **Be proactive in the process of ensuring that all available lessons are compiled, shared with others and acted upon.** All major emergencies and other crises provide opportunities for learning. In order to help ensure that all available lessons – both positive and negative – are captured, shared with others and acted upon, Ward councillors should be proactive in providing details of their experience of having been involved in the response phase. They may also have a formal role in this regard, if they are members of scrutiny committees with a remit covering civil resilience.

#### 5.2 As a community leader

In their role as community leaders during the recovery phase, Ward councillors should:

- i. **Continue to be a visible, trusted and reassuring presence in the community.** Throughout the recovery process, Ward councillors should position themselves as trusted and caring representatives of their local authority, providing personal support and reassurance to their constituents.

- ii. **Communicate key messages and information to the public and media on behalf of the council.** During the extended period over which recovery operations take place, it is important for local people to receive regular updates on progress, so they feel that they are being kept in-the-loop. Ward councillors can be a conduit through which such information can flow and can also communicate key messages to the media.
- iii. **Use local knowledge to provide information on local resources, skills and other assets to the council and relevant recovery groups, including local community groups.** If community response plans have been developed as part of preparedness activity, details of some local community groups with a role to play in recovery will already be known. However, in the aftermath of emergencies, it very common for other individuals and groups to put themselves forward to assist. Ward councillors are well placed to use their local knowledge and contacts to identify such volunteers and, having done so, pass on their details to relevant statutory agencies or existing community groups.
- iv. **Participating in community self-help groups that may be set up to support those affected in the community.** Ward councillors should encourage, and make themselves available to participate in, self-help groups that may organically emerge in the aftermath of a major emergency.
- v. **Provide support and encouragement to council staff and others involved in the ongoing recovery effort.** Council officers and their colleagues from partner agencies may need to 'go the extra mile' for some time during a recovery operation. Personal words of support and encouragement from councillors will be at least as important during this period – long after the emergency services and media have left – as they were during the response phase.
- vi. **Attending memorial or remembrance services, as appropriate.** In the aftermath of major emergencies that result in a loss of life, it is very likely that the loved-ones of those who have perished, and members of local communities, will want to come together for services of remembrance, in order to pay their respects. It will be important for Ward councillors to make themselves available to attend such events on behalf of the council and as a member of the community themselves.

# CHECKLIST FOR WARD MEMBERS DURING RESPONSE

During the emergency response phase, **Ward councillors** should:

- Stay Safe:

**In the light of the Covid 19 Pandemic, the role of Councillors should be discharged with reference to the Government's latest advice and guidance. Please see the April 2020 Addendum for more information .**

## **As community leaders**

- Be a visible, trusted and reassuring presence in the community
- Advise the Local Authority Liaison Officer (LALO) when providing direct support to communities, so that officers are aware of your involvement and can arrange necessary briefings etc
- Communicate key messages and reliable information to the public and media on behalf of the council.
- Signpost members of the public and businesses towards the right agency to get the support they need.
- Provide support and encouragement to council staff and others involved in the response effort.

## **As community representatives**

- Be present locally to identify the needs of individuals and the wider community and feed them in to the appropriate response organisation via council officers
- Confirm the reliability of information before passing it on.
- Avoid attempting to get involved in the operational response to the emergency and do not cross access-controlled cordons
- Avoid attempting to evaluate the effectiveness of the emergency response.
- Maintain a record of significant experiences and actions for use in subsequent debriefs, scrutiny activity and official inquiries etc.
-

## FURTHER READING

4. [A councillor's guide to civil resilience](#) – **Local Government Association**. This is a generic guide for councillors in all roles, which also signposts readers to useful reference documents in Appendix 4.
5. [Local authorities' preparedness for civil emergencies: A good practice guide for Chief Executives](#) – **Solace and Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government**. A guide that sets out the types of issues local authorities should consider in order to be fully prepared to respond to a civil emergency. Whilst primarily written for Chief Executives, the guide is also considered to be a useful resource for councillors.
6. [The life cycle of an emergency: learning from recent experience](#) – **Solace and Local Government Association**. Detailed case studies of the Manchester Arena bomb attack and a wide area flooding event in Suffolk – examined during the different stages of the integrated emergency management cycle, i.e. preparedness, response and recovery
7. **Resilience Standards for London**.

# Addendum

## Guidance for officers on supporting councillors to fulfil their civil resilience roles

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## 1. PURPOSE OF OFFICER GUIDANCE

The purpose of this document is to provide generic guidance to London local authority officers on supporting councillors to fulfil their agreed roles in civil resilience effectively.

The guidance has been intentionally written in high-level, generic terms to allow necessary flexibility in its practical application, so that particular circumstances within individual local authorities can be taken into consideration. In tailoring the guidance to local circumstances, it is important for officers to keep the overall objective in mind on which the guidance is focused, i.e. ensuring that all councillors in London local authorities have the support they need to exercise their roles effectively in preparing for, responding to and recovering major emergencies and other significant crises.

## 2. INTRODUCTION

Whilst all operational responsibilities associated with civil resilience will be assigned to officers, councillors in London local authorities have a key political role to play in preparing for, responding to, and recovering from major emergencies, as well as confirming that appropriate business continuity arrangements are in place. Their contribution in this regard must not overlap with, but should be complementary to, the operational role of their officer colleagues.

The important role that councillors have in civil resilience is reflected in the Resilience Standards for London. The Standards set a clear expectation that political leaders and Ward councillors will have clearly defined roles and responsibilities in relation to civil resilience. They also state that support arrangements should be put in place to enable councillors to fulfil their defined roles effectively.

Councillors' ability to follow the guidance will be substantially dependent on necessary support arrangements being put in place by officers. Hence, this guidance has been introduced to assist officers in the process of making certain that their councillor colleagues are getting the information, training and development they require to understand, and acquire the skills necessary for, their roles in civil resilience. It also focuses on the day-to-day support that councillors will need from officers when actually undertaking their roles in preparedness, response and recovery.

## 3. STRUCTURE AND APPLICATION OF GUIDANCE

### 3.1. Structure

The guidance contained in this document is divided into two main parts - Part A is focused on the provision of support to Leaders/Directly-elected Mayors and other Cabinet Members (**collectively referred to as 'Leading Members'**), with Part B addressing the support

requirements of local Ward councillors. Both Parts are subdivided into sections dealing with preparedness, response and recovery.

Within Parts A and B, the document is structured to mirror that of guidance prepared for Leading Members and Ward councillors on their respective roles in civil resilience. The rationale for taking this approach is to clearly align guidance for councillors on exercising their roles, with guidance for officers on supporting and enabling them to do so.

### 3.2. Application

In applying the guidance, Chief Executives should assign lead responsibility for its implementation to a designated member of their senior leadership team. Doing so will demonstrate a clear corporate commitment to ensuring that councillors get the support they need in their roles associated with civil resilience.

The guidance itself has been written in high-level, generic terms to allow necessary flexibility in its application across the 33 London local authorities. Rather than being prescriptive, it is intended to signpost officers to key issues that need to be addressed, in order that councillors are enabled to fulfil their roles effectively. The detailed solutions arrived at through this process need to fit with organisational context, whilst, at the same time, supporting councillors to operate in accordance with agreed good practice for elected members in London local authorities. With that in mind, the starting point for applying this guidance should involve officers reviewing the guidance that has been prepared for councillors.

## 4. **PART A – SUPPORTING LEADING MEMBERS**

The guidance contained this section of the document should be applied such that Leading Members are able to follow the good practice set out in the Part 1 of this Handbook.

### 4.1. Officer support in ensuring necessary preparedness

#### Supporting Personal Preparedness of Leading Members

In order to support Leading Members to be personally prepared to fulfil their agreed roles during the response to, and recovery from, major emergencies, officers should:

- i. Make guidance associated with the role of councillors in civil resilience readily available to elected members
- ii. Make copies of the local authority's key emergency and business continuity plans readily available to elected members
- iii. Make initial and refresher training courses available, to assist Leading Members to understand their respective roles, and how to exercise them in practice
- iv. Run exercises that enable Leading Members to perform their respective roles in a simulated environment.

#### Supporting the political leadership role of Leading Members within the council

In order to support Leading Members to exercise their internal and external political leadership roles in connection with preparedness effectively, officers should:

- i. Assign lead managerial responsibility for civil resilience to a single senior officer
- ii. Put in place arrangements to ensure that Leading Members will be able to contact the Chief Executive/Gold on-call senior officer immediately, in the event of an emergency
- iii. Work with councillor colleagues to put arrangements in place to enable urgent decisions to be taken during an emergency response
- iv. Put in place arrangements for reporting on the performance of the local authority in relation to preparedness – with a particular focus on performance against the Resilience Standards for London.
- v. Support the Leader to engage effectively as a member of the London Leaders' Committee, on issues associated with the individual and collective resilience of London local authorities
- vi. Where requested, support Leaders to put arrangements in place associated with the political role of MPs during response and recovery operations
- vii. Where requested, support Leaders to consider issues associated with the Mayor of London's role during response and recovery operations.

#### **4.2. Officer support in the response phase**

In order to support Leading Members to exercise their internal and external political leadership roles effectively during the response to a major emergency, officers should:

- i. Ensure that effective and resilient arrangements are put in place for regularly briefing Leading Members throughout the response phase
- ii. Ensure that effective and resilient arrangements are put in place to support the Leader/Directly-elected Mayor in their civic leadership role as the 'public face of the council'
- iii. Ensure that effective and resilient arrangements are in place to enable the two-way flow of information between the Cabinet member with lead responsibility for Ward councillor engagement and Ward councillors themselves
- iv. Support Leading Members in expressing their gratitude to council staff involved in the response operation
- v. Support Leading Members to represent the council during visits by VIPs
- vi. Where necessary, provide support to Leading Members in making representations to the Government for financial assistance
- vii. Assign responsibility for initial work associated with recovery to a designated lead officer, who will engage with the Cabinet member appointed by the Leader/Directly-elected Mayor to provide necessary political support.

#### **4.3. Officer support in the recovery phase**

In order to support Leading Members to exercise their internal and external political leadership roles effectively during the recovery from a major emergency, officers should:

- i. Ensure that effective and resilient arrangements remain in place to support the Leader/Directly-elected Mayor in their ongoing civic leadership role as the 'public face of the council'
- ii. Put in place arrangements for reporting progress to Leading Members on the development and delivery of a Recovery Strategy
- iii. Support Leading Members to ensure that regular progress updates are communicated to communities and other stakeholders
- iv. Support Leading Members to ensure that frequent messages on progress are conveyed to staff and councillors
- v. Support Leading Members in communicating key messages to staff and councillors that they should convey on behalf of the council
- vi. Support the Leader/Directly-elected Mayor in establishing protocols for any involvement of external political stakeholders in the recovery operation
- vii. Support Leading Members in making the case for financial assistance to support the recovery operation
- viii. Provide necessary support to the process of establishing and managing any 'disaster funds' set up to collect and distribute charitable donations
- ix. Support Leading Members in attending memorial or remembrance services
- x. Support Leading Members to engage in post-incident reviews, scrutiny, inquests and Public Inquiries

## 5. PART B – SUPPORTING WARD COUNCILLORS

The guidance contained in this section of the document should be applied such that Ward councillors are able to follow the good practice set out in Part 2 of this Handbook:

### 5.1. Officer support in ensuring necessary preparedness

#### Supporting Personal Preparedness of Ward councillors

In order to support Ward councillors to be personally prepared to fulfil their agreed roles during the response to, and recovery from, major emergencies, officers should:

- i. Make guidance associated with the role of councillors in civil resilience readily available to elected members
- ii. Make copies of the local authority's key emergency and business continuity plans readily available to elected members
- iii. Make initial and refresher training courses available, to assist Ward councillors to understand their role, and how to exercise it in practice
- iv. Run exercises that enable Ward councillors to perform their role in a simulated environment.

#### Supporting Ward councillors as community representatives

In order to support Ward councillors to exercise their role as community representatives in connection with preparedness effectively, officers should:

- i. Provide routes by which Ward councillors can feed-in local intelligence on community risk, to inform civil resilience policy decisions and associated planning activity
- ii. Make plans available to Ward councillors associated with managing risks that may impact upon the communities that they represent

#### Supporting Ward councillors as community leaders

In order to support Ward councillors to exercise their role as community leaders in connection with preparedness, officers should:

- i. Develop and communicate details of arrangements that are available to support Ward councillors in developing community resilience
- ii. Provide routes by which Ward councillors can feed-in local knowledge on individuals and groups who could play a part in preparedness, response and/or recovery, to inform central planning activity
- iii. Establish and disseminate details of reliable, resilient and secure communication routes through which information can be passed to-and-from Ward councillors during an emergency response
- iv. Put arrangements in place to ensure that the safety of councillors will be protected when they are providing direct support to communities during an emergency response and through the recovery phase

- v. Put arrangement in place to ensure the personal welfare of councillors when they are providing direct support to communities during an emergency response and through the recovery phase.

## **5.2. Officer support in the response phase**

### Supporting Ward Councillors as community representatives

In order to support Ward councillors to exercise their role as community representatives during an emergency response, officers should:

- i. Provide resilient and reliable routes by which Ward councillors can identify the needs of individuals and the wider community and feed them in to the appropriate response organisation/s via council officers

### Supporting Ward Councillors as community leaders

In order to support Ward councillors to exercise their role as community leaders during an emergency response, officers should:

- i. Provide details to Ward councillors of locations/facilities, such as rest centres, where they will be able to present as a visible, trusted and reassuring presence for their constituents
- ii. Provide briefings and regular updates on the response operation to Ward councillors, so that they are able to communicate key messages and reliable information to the public and media on behalf of the council
- iii. Ensure that details of welfare support arrangements for councillors are communicated

## **5.3. Officer support in the recovery phase**

### Supporting Ward Councillors as community representatives

In order to support Ward councillors to exercise their role as community representatives during the recovery phase, officers should:

- i. Provide routes by which Ward councillors can articulate the needs and aspirations of the communities they represent in ways that are able to inform and influence the recovery process
- ii. Make details of the recovery strategy readily available to Ward councillors, and provide them with regular updates on progress in delivering it
- iii. Provide routes by which Ward councillors can feed-in details of any local impact that is being experienced by their constituents on the delivery of front-line services during the recovery phase
- iv. Support Ward councillors to engage in post-incident reviews, scrutiny, inquests and Public Inquiries, as appropriate

### Supporting Ward Councillors as community leaders

In order to support Ward councillors to exercise their role as community leaders during the recovery phase, officers should:

- i. Provide regular updates to Ward councillors, so that they are able to communicate key message and information to the public and media on behalf of the council
- ii. Provide routes by which Ward councillors can feed-in emerging local knowledge about individuals and groups who may be able to assist with the recovery operation
- iii. Support Ward councillors to participate in the proper administration of funds from any disaster appeals, as necessary
- iv. Support the attendance of Ward councillors at memorial and remembrance services, as necessary.

## 6. FURTHER READING

1. **Resilience Standards for London.**
2. [A councillor's guide to civil resilience](#) – **Local Government Association.** This is a generic guide for councillors in all roles, which also signposts readers to useful reference documents in Appendix 4.
3. [Local authorities' preparedness for civil emergencies: A good practice guide for Chief Executives](#) – **Solace and Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government.** A guide that sets out the types of issues local authorities should consider in order to be fully prepared to respond to a civil emergency. Whilst primarily written for Chief Executives, the guide is also considered to be a useful resource for councillors.
4. [The life cycle of an emergency: learning from recent experience](#) – **Solace and Local Government Association.** Detailed case studies of the Manchester Arena bomb attack and a wide area flooding event in Suffolk – examined during the different stages of the integrated emergency management cycle, i.e. preparedness, response and recovery

# Important Update: April 2020 Covid-19

**In light of the Covid 19 Pandemic, it is important that the role of Councillors should be discharged with reference to the Government's latest advice and guidance. In particular, it will be important to adhere to the social distancing guidance (As at 1 April 2020):**

- Stay at home
- Only go outside for food, health reasons or work (but only if you cannot work from home)
- If you go out, stay 2 metres (6ft) away from other people at all times
- Wash your hands as soon as you get home
- Do not meet others, even friends or family.
- You can spread the virus even if you don't have symptoms.

The full guidance is [available here](#)

**NB: The Government is advising those who are at increased risk of severe illness from coronavirus (COVID-19) to be particularly stringent** in following social distancing measures, to 'shield' themselves at home. This group includes those who are:

- Aged 70 or older (regardless of medical conditions)
- Under 70 with an underlying health condition listed below (ie anyone instructed to get a flu jab as an adult each year on medical grounds):
- Further guidance on shielding is [available here](#)

## Keeping in Touch

If you are not clear on your council's processes for how it will keep you informed during the emergency response, you may wish to seek clarity on this. In turn, the London Local Authority Co-ordinating Chief Executive on a pan-London level, and the Sub-Regional Lead Chief Executives, will ensure that your authority is kept up to date with developments and guidance.

Be mindful of the increased burdens on councils at a time when Members and officers may be required to self-isolate or look after family members – where possible minimise the usual requirements on officers as resources are focused on supporting the vulnerable, and ensure that your own efforts are focused on this overwhelming priority.

Demonstrate community leadership by taking a responsible approach to the information you share and the messages you give, and by following the guidance they receive from your council.

Base any information you provide to the public on confirmed messages from the council, local DPH and Government.

## Make responsible use of social media –

- Used well, social media can be a vital channel for communicating with residents – whilst avoiding unnecessary physical contact
- Work with your council's communications teams and draw on your own council's guidance.
- Refer residents to trusted messengers, signposted by your council

## CHECKLIST FOR LEADING MEMBERS DURING RESPONSE

During the emergency response phase, **Leading Members** should:

- Always Stay Safe

**In the light of the Covid 19 Pandemic, the role of Councillors should be discharged with reference to the Government's latest advice and guidance. Please see the April 2020 Addendum for more information**

- Contact the Chief Executive (or duty 'Gold' on-call senior officer) to receive an initial briefing and agree any urgent

steps to be taken.

- Decide which member of the Cabinet will be the 'public face' of the council in support of its civic leadership role (by default, this would be the Leader/Directly-elected Mayor).
- Work with council's communications team to act as the 'public face of the council' in interactions with the media and local communities affected by the incident.
- Decide which member of the Cabinet will lead on 'business-as-usual'.
- Decide which member of the Cabinet will lead on providing political support to initial recovery work.
- Decide which member of the Cabinet will lead on Ward councillor engagement.
- In conjunction with the Chief Executive, senior communications officer and Cabinet member responsible for Ward councillor engagement, put in place arrangements for briefing Leading Members and Ward councillors during the response phase.
- Provide support and encouragement to council staff and others involved in the response effort.
- Maintain a record of significant actions and events for use in subsequent debriefs, scrutiny activity and official enquiries etc.
- If necessary, lead on making representations to the Government for financial assistance.
- Represent the council during visits by VIPs and ensure that such visits are sensitive to the 'mood' and needs of the community.
- Consider initiating dialogue with Leaders/Directly-elected Mayors of other councils impacted by, or responding to, the incident.
- Consider initiating dialogue with MPs whose constituencies are being impacted by the incident.
- Consider initiating dialogue with the Mayor for London – particularly where a pan-London response has been mobilised.

## CHECKLIST FOR WARD MEMBERS DURING RESPONSE

During the emergency response phase, **Ward councillors** should:

- Stay Safe:

**In the light of the Covid 19 Pandemic, the role of Councillors should be discharged with reference to the Government's latest advice and guidance. Please see the April 2020 Addendum for more information .**

### As community leaders

- Be a visible, trusted and reassuring presence in the community
- Advise the Local Authority Liaison Officer (LALO) when providing direct support to communities, so that officers are aware of your involvement and can arrange necessary briefings etc
- Communicate key messages and reliable information to the public and media on behalf of the council.
- Signpost members of the public and businesses towards the right agency to get the support they need.
- Provide support and encouragement to council staff and others involved in the response effort.

### As community representatives

- Be present locally to identify the needs of individuals and the wider community and feed them in to the appropriate response organisation via council officers
- Confirm the reliability of information before passing it on.
- Avoid attempting to get involved in the operational response to the emergency and do not cross access-controlled cordons
- Avoid attempting to evaluate the effectiveness of the emergency response.
- Maintain a record of significant experiences and actions for use in subsequent debriefs, scrutiny activity and official inquiries etc.