



A Strategy for Community Based Emergency Planning



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Preface

“Community Planning in East Sussex operates on a number of levels from the countywide strategic focus of the East Sussex Strategic Partnership, to the district and borough level Local Strategic Partnerships (LSP) and the many area, neighbourhood and parish partnerships which are all seeking to identify and address local needs. By ensuring those working at each level have a clear understanding and knowledge of what is happening elsewhere we can make sure issues are dealt with at the lowest level that makes sense.

This approach means that each partnership is addressing issues where they can have a direct impact. That said, many of the actions taken at one level might help to meet the objectives of other levels. Partnerships with a wider focus only get involved in issues where they can add value to what is happening locally or where the issues involved are too strategic to be dealt with at a local level. This way we prevent duplication and avoid the process becoming too bureaucratic.”

A Community Strategy for East Sussex 2003 (Draft)

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1 Introduction

Throughout the 1980s considerable effort was devoted to training Civil Defence Community Volunteers. The Civil Defence (General Local Authority Functions) Regulations 1983 imposed upon local authorities the duty to make arrangements to enable suitable persons to serve as volunteers in order to assist them in the performance of their civil defence functions. Home Office Guidance was given in the Emergency Planning Guidance to Local Authorities and later (2 March 1989) in a letter to Chief Executives.

The 1989 letter highlighted the fact that community volunteers would have an important part to play in the response of a local authority to a war emergency. It also highlighted the difficulties in establishing and maintaining community volunteer schemes and that such schemes are expensive in terms of both emergency planning staff time and resources. The letter went on to reduce the requirement to maintaining volunteer community advisers only at a ratio of about 1:2000 population.

In 1993 new Civil Defence Regulations were introduced that removed altogether the need for civil defence volunteers. A review did take place, but no peacetime role was established. Although some volunteer groups continued, the severe reduction in emergency planning staff resources meant that very little advice and assistance could be given to them.

The purpose of this paper is to draw together the local volunteer arrangements that have evolved over recent years and to develop a strategy that takes account of the lessons learnt during recent incidents, especially the October 2000 Floods. These events highlighted that there is a great deal that local communities can and should do to mitigate the effects of many major incidents.

2 Aim

The overall aim of community-based emergency planning is to minimise the effect of any disaster (major incident) on the local community and environment by helping that community to play their part in any emergency response.

3 Objectives

The objectives of this strategy are to:

- Ensure that key local community representatives (councillors and/or volunteers) are aware of the inter-agency response to a major incident and know what contribution they could make.
- Ensure that those communities where there is a definite hazard (e.g. in a flood plain) are given the opportunity and assistance to develop a community plan that complements the inter-agency response.
- Ensure that specific inter-agency plans are developed where there is an identified need.
- Ensure that contact is maintained between local government and the Emergency Groups.

4 Key Developments So Far

In 1993 guidance was given to local community volunteers in East Sussex after appropriate consultation. The principles contained in this guidance are still relevant today and these are reproduced at Appendix A. The number of parishes with volunteer groups has varied, but Wealden District has by far the majority. Some parishes have developed their own local community plan and many have VHF radio communications.

The October 2000 Floods have stimulated local interest in planning and preparing for major incidents, particularly flooding. In addition to the volunteers in Wealden District, Rother District Council has developed an initiative with parishes (Parish Emergency Groups) that is similar to the proposals in this paper. Some parishes in Lewes District are also showing an interest in this work.

For several years now an evening workshop has been arranged for community volunteer co-ordinators in Wealden District. The Year 2001 workshop was held on 17 and 18 January with 27 participants attending. A short report is attached at Appendix B. This shows that there is much that local communities can do in preparation for a major incident but that they do need the assistance of professional emergency planners.

In March 2002 four workshops were held across the county, during which a draft of this strategy was circulated and discussed. Feedback gained was taken into account in this final version, as was information gained as a result of the consultation process undertaken during the Best Value Review into Emergency Planning in October 2002.

5 Overall Strategy

The overall strategy takes account of local hazards and the willingness of parishes to participate in this work. The strategy is based on the principle of "helping local communities to help themselves". Whilst the response to any major incident rests with the statutory bodies, initially the emergency services, there is a considerable amount that local residents can do to reduce the potential impact of a major incident. However, they do need professional emergency planning advice, guidance and assistance.

The overall strategy is based on three levels of emergency planning: Raising Awareness, Community Emergency Planning and Inter-agency Planning. All local communities will require the first level. Progression to Level 2 will require the willing co-operation of the local parish or town council and some local volunteers. Progression to Level 3 is dependent on local hazards and the adequacy of generic plans to deal with a major incident in that area.

6 Level One: Raising Awareness

As a minimum all local communities should be aware of the inter-agency arrangements for responding to a major incident in their area. This will ensure that they are better placed to offer help to those statutory bodies responding to a major incident and, more importantly, that their response will not hinder the emergency services. This would normally take the form of a presentation that is repeated every two or three years.

A programme for this session is attached at Appendix C.

7 Level Two: Community Emergency Planning

Local communities should be encouraged to establish a group of emergency volunteers and develop a community plan. The town/parish council should take responsibility for overseeing this work and emergency volunteers should always be seen to be acting under their authority. Development to this level would only take place if there were sufficient local enthusiasm and volunteers. The plan would highlight the local resources that could be used in any emergency and say how the local community, under the guidance of a Town or Parish Emergency Group, could respond to any warnings and emergencies.

Guidance for developing such a plan is shown at Appendix D.

A more detailed booklet has been prepared, entitled "Town/Parish Emergency Groups", as has a short exercise that can be organised by those Emergency Groups. This exercise is summarised at Appendix E.

8 Level Three: Inter-agency Planning

The final level involves the development of an inter-agency plan for **a specific hazard** in an area. This plan would complement the local community plan and be based on the Sussex Major Incident Linking Document. It would show how the emergency services, local authority, etc. would respond to a major incident in that area, and how the local community could assist.

Appendix F gives a summary of the main points that the local group should consider when developing their contribution to an inter-agency plan.

9 Risk/Priority Assessment

There are 105 towns/parishes in East Sussex (Lewes District has 29, Wealden District 42 and Rother District 34) and there are insufficient emergency planning staff to meet all the possible demands for assistance from them. It will therefore be necessary to prioritise the work. Key factors that will determine the priority given will be the extent of the local hazard, its likely impact on the community and how much the community can assist in the response. However, since this work relies heavily on their full participation a critical factor will be the enthusiasm of the local community.

A matrix of towns/parishes with their associated hazards and suggested levels is given at Appendix G. (N.B. Only those hazards in which it is felt the community might be directly affected and can assist have been included.)

Appendix A

1993 Principles and Roles for Community Volunteers

Principles

- 1 The overall aim of CV groups should be to help the local community by assisting the respective borough/district/town/parish council in the response to a civil emergency and, if isolated, to respond by self-help within their capabilities until local authority administration can be restored.
- 2 Local community volunteer groups should always act in support of their respective borough/district/town parish council. They should have a firm link with the local authority Parish/Town/Borough Council). If possible a specific councillor or committee should have responsibility for the group.
- 3 Groups should have a recognised leader and deputy.
- 4 The relevant local authority (parish/town/borough/district council) Emergency Plan should refer to CV groups and include details such as possible roles and call-out arrangements.
- 5 Community volunteers should not attempt to take on roles which will conflict with those of the emergency services or local voluntary organisations, but should concentrate on roles which complement or augment them.
- 6 Their activities should include assistance to the uniformed emergency services and voluntary organisations if requested. Wherever possible this should be organised through the local authority.
- 7 They should keep their Town/Parish Clerk informed of their membership and general state of readiness (availability, capability etc).
- 8 CVs only operate in the area in which they live and as far as possible they will have clearly defined roles and tasks. Individuals will be employed on tasks for which they are best suited (i.e. dependent on experience, knowledge and skills).

Possible Roles

Community volunteer groups/teams which form in peacetime could undertake any of the following roles:

- 1 To assess the situation within the community.
- 2 If isolated, to co-ordinate some immediate local self-help recovery.
- 3 To report the local situation to the respective borough/district council.
- 4 To organise such community resources as are available.
- 5 To act as a focal point for the community, in particular for the exchange of information and the dissemination of official announcements.
- 6 To provide local knowledge to the local authorities or other organisations responding to the emergency.
- 7 To organise volunteer assistance to local authorities and other organisations responding to the emergency.

Appendix B

Summary of Meetings of Wealden D.C. Town/Parish Emergency Co-ordinators

Two meetings were held, one at Hailsham on 17.1.01 and the other at Crowborough on 18.1.01. A list of the facilitators and the 27 co-ordinators who attended is held by the Emergency Planning Division in File EP.10/5.

Programme

- 1930 Welcome & Administration
- 1940 Introduction and Severe Weather Warnings
- 1955 Flood Warning Arrangements
- 2015 Lessons from recent floods
- 2035 Introduction to Syndicate Exercise
- 2040 Syndicate Discussion
- 2100 Plenary Session
- 2125 Summary & Conclusion
- 2130 Evening complete

Summary of Responses to Syndicate Exercise

Question 1. “List the preparatory actions that local communities could take to improve the local response to a major incident from flooding or severe weather in their area.”

- Identify areas at risk, make residents aware
- Utilise technical information (e.g. maps and weather maps)
- Create equipment stores e.g. sandbags, generators, maps, heating, food, blankets
- Mobile canteens
- Mobile phones
- Ring-round plan
- Written local plans, including key contacts and responsibilities
- Local web-sites
- Identify co-ordinator and command chain, runners
- Develop good radio coverage, with back-up power
- Identification for key personnel
- Identify vulnerable members of community (N.B. Data Protection Act)
- Identify locals with relevant skills, volunteers etc.
- Utilise self-help groups such as Neighbourhood Watch as street network
- Encourage personal ‘survival kits’ inc. battery or clockwork radio, torches, candles, stove

Appendix B

- Fill bath with fresh water at onset
- Identify 2 or 3 suitable control centres
- Identify Rest Centres/Information Points
- Identify relevant keyholders and local contacts
- Create Evacuation plans, with electoral registers
- Local media links
- Appraise locals via newsletters
- Regular exercises
- Community action e.g. watch over empty properties, social contact between victims etc.
- Parish Councils to raise profile of emergency planning

Question 2. “What professional emergency planning assistance (i.e. EPOs) do you feel that you need in order to help you prepare and train for the response to local emergencies?”

- Regular training and (annual?) exercises
- Advice on plans, structures and systems etc.
- Provision of maps, with contour details, to identify flow paths
- Talks to Parish council meetings
- Liaison with Emergency Co-ordinator
- Route into Local Government communications
- Dissemination and implementation of good practice/lessons learned
- Availability of information, maps etc.
- Fuel availability
- Medical facilities
- Vehicles with PA systems
- PR to inform community of identity of volunteers etc.
- Councils need to make money available to respond
- Provision of own road signs for flooding etc.
- Radio link and initiation of system
- Training on communications and radios
- Involving local voluntary groups
- Road Traffic information
- Web-site and e-mail

Appendix C

Level One - Raising Awareness

Aims

- To raise the awareness of local communities of the inter-agency arrangements for responding to a major incident.
- To highlight the assistance that can be provided by the local community in such circumstances.

Learning Outcomes

- Appreciate the meaning of a “Major Incident.”
- Understand the responsibilities and inter-agency command structure of the Ambulance, Fire and Police Services.
- Understand the responsibilities of the County, Borough and District Councils, and the utilities.
- Recognise the support services that the various voluntary organisations can offer.
- Understand the basic principles of major incident scene management.
- Appreciate the role that can be taken by communities under the leadership of their town/parish council.

Syndicate Exercise

- Prioritise the actions of your Town/Parish Emergency Group in response to information respecting a ‘Major Incident’ occurring in your area, bearing in mind the level of community aid and assistance at your disposal.
- Outline the actions of your Town/Parish Emergency Group during the first 4 hours of a situation where the community is isolated from outside assistance, assuming the availability of normal lines of communication.

Note:

- Presentation phase should be between 60 to 70 minutes.
- Syndicate sessions should be of 15 minutes each, with subsequent 10 minute plenary sessions.
- Total time of programme should be two hours

Appendix D

Guidance for Developing a Community Emergency Plan

Aim

To develop a Town/Parish Community Emergency Plan that harmonises with inter-agency arrangements, so as to assist in mitigating the impact of a major incident.

Objectives

- To ensure that the planning arrangements developed are appropriate for the needs of the community.
- To ensure that any planned response will not hinder the emergency services.
- To encourage support from the Town/Parish Council.
- To ensure that the plan is developed in accordance with any guidelines circulated by the County Emergency Planning Officer.
- To validate those emergency planning response arrangements by way of a syndicate exercise.

Fundamental Principles

- The need for a local plan must be recognised by the town/parish council concerned, and formally minuted.
- Production of a plan cannot be undertaken by one person acting alone. Two to three councillors or nominated members of the community should be appointed to ensure successful completion.
- The plan must harmonise with existing County and District emergency planning arrangements and established inter-agency practices.
- It might be useful to begin with a short syndicate exercise involving interested parties to identify willing participants and ideas for inclusion.
- The plan must not commit anybody to an unrealistic level of activity.
- It should address “All Hazards”, not confined to a specific risk.

Structure and Contents

- The plan should outline the role of the Emergency Group and local councillors in an emergency, and be structured in three distinct parts:-
 - General information identifying the emergency response, including call-out procedures and how that local response will be managed
 - An effective communications network linking the community with the Town/Parish Council and the District Council. Radios could play a key part in this
 - A list of local resources that might usefully be employed. These should be contained in a series of appendices.

Appendix D

- It should be prefaced with an index of contents and a short introductory paragraph signed by the chairperson of the Town/Parish Council.
- More detailed guidance is contained within the booklet “Town/Parish Emergency Groups”, available from the Emergency Planning Division.
- The draft plan must be presented to the Town/Parish Council for comments and approval prior to final submission and signature.

N.B. A number of local plans have already been prepared and could be used as a ‘template’.

Confidentiality

- All personal data included must have the approval of those individuals concerned. They will need to be assured that their personal details will be circulated on a ‘need to know basis’ only.
- Guidance on data protection issues is given in the booklet “Town/Parish Emergency Groups”.

Circulation and Updating

- The final plan should be circulated and held in such a way as to be easily accessible and for amendments to be easily inserted.
- The plan should be updated annually, with particular emphasis on details contained within the appendices. The main contents should generally remain constant.

Validation

- It is important to test the quality of the plan by way of an exercise, based on an imaginary scenario. Participants should include representatives of the local emergency services. Shortcomings can then be identified and rectified.

Appendix E

Summary of Exercise P.E.G.

This training event, which takes the form of a syndicate exercise, has been developed by the Emergency Planning Division and the full papers are available from there.

Aim of the exercise

To enable local emergency group members to consider how they could respond to a major incident within their community.

Objectives are to consider

- The initial response to an emergency
- Possible roles for local volunteers
- Communications systems
- Local resources in the community

It is designed to last for three hours and can be run by a group without outside assistance, although it is recommended that some participants are invited from the following:-

- Town/Parish Councillor
- Local Police Constable
- Local Fire Brigade Officer
- WRVS
- Red Cross
- St. John Ambulance

The exercise is designed to be held with the minimum of equipment, all of which is described in the training pack.

Appendix F

Community Involvement in Inter-Agency Plan

Objectives

- To prepare the community input to an inter-agency plan in respect of a specific identified risk, to be complimentary to existing town/parish emergency management arrangements
- To consult and liaise with local community groups as to the requirements and objectives of the plan
- To ensure that the plan remains current and is updated regularly.

Inter-Agency Planning Group

- The Inter-Agency planning group will include representatives from the emergency services and agencies directly associated with the identified risk hazard, together with the district emergency planning officer
- The first meeting should define roles and responsibilities of all contributory organisations and groups, chairmanship etc., and agree a realistic timetable for completion.
- The district emergency planning officer should act as the link between this group and the local community.

Community Planning Group

- It is advisable to begin with an open meeting to outline the perceived risk/hazard and intended emergency response. This provides the opportunity for those interested to air their views and concerns.
- It would also enable the community to recognise the way forward and allow suitable volunteers to come forward to form the Community Planning Group.
- The Community Planning Group should then meet to agree a timetable that complements that of the inter-agency group.

Community Plan Content

- The plan should follow best practice as defined in the Sussex Major Incident Linking Document.
- The plan should take into account the interests of all sections of the community, including the special needs of hard-to-reach groups, and the Planning Group should feed back to them progress reports as necessary.
- The plan should reflect methods of effective communication throughout the community.
- Other considerations should focus on areas of population that may need evacuation, transportation, temporary shelter or other assistance.
- The final version of the community plan should be agreed by the town/parish council and signed off by the chairperson.

Appendix F

Approval of Inter-agency Plan

- Senior officers of the organisations involved should 'sign off' the inter-agency plan, which will incorporate the community plan, or a summary of it, as an appendix.
- The plan should then be circulated as applicable, and held in a manner whereby it can be easily accessed, regularly reviewed, and updated as necessary.

Validation Exercise

- It may be appropriate to hold an inter-agency exercise to validate the plan, the arrangements for which would need to be decided at the time.

Appendix G

Hazards and Levels

Eastbourne Borough			
Ward	Local Hazard	Level	Notes
Devonshire		1	
Hampden Park	Industrial estates	1	ESFB aware of high risks
Langney	Flooding	3	Incorporated in Pevensey Plan
Meads		1	
Old Town	A22 Trunk Road	1	
Ratton	A22 Trunk road	1	
Sovereign	Flooding	3	Incorporated in Pevensey Plan
St. Anthony's	Gasometers, Industrial estates Flooding	1	Incorporated in Pevensey Plan
Upperton	A22 Trunk Road		

Hastings Borough			
Ward	Local Hazard	Level	Notes
Castle		1	
Conquest		1	
Gensing		1	
Hollington	Industrial estates	1	ESFB aware of high risks
Maze Hill		1	
Old Hastings		1	
Ore		1	
Tressell		1	
West St Leonards	Bulverhythe coastal flooding area	3	Plan required
Wishing Tree		1	ESFB aware of high risks

Appendix G

Lewes District			
Town/Parish	Local Hazard	Level	Notes
Barcombe	Local flooding	2	
Beddingham		1	
Chailey		1	
Ditchling	Final flight path	1/2	
East Chiltington		1	
Falmer		1	
Firle		1	
Glynde		1	
Hamsey		1	
Iford		1	
Kingston		1	
Lewes	Flooding from Ouse	3	Inter-agency Plan
Newick		1	
Newhaven	Flooding & industrial	3	
Peacehaven	Large town	2	
Piddinghoe		1	
Plumpton		1	
Ringmer	Local flooding	1/2	
Rodmell		1	
Seaford	Large town. Flooding	3	
South Heighton		1	
Southeast		1	
St Ann Without		1	
St John Without		1	
Streat		1	
Tarring Neville		1	
Telscombe	Isolation, high winds	2	Inc. Tel Cliffs & E. Saltdean
Westmeston		1	
Wivelsfield		1	

Appendix G

Rother District			
Town/Parish	Local Hazard	Level	Notes
Ashburnham			
Battle		1	
Beckley		1	
Bexhill	Coastal flooding	3	Pevensey Inter-agency Plan
Bodiam	Local flooding	1/2	
Brede	Local flooding	1/2	
Brightling		1	
Burwash		2	
Camber	River flooding	3	Rye Bay Inter-agency Plan
Catsfield		1	
Crowhurst		1	
Dallington		1	
East Guldeford		1	
Etchingham	Local flooding	2	
Ewhurst		1	
Fairlight		1	
Guestling		1	
Hurst Green		1	
Icklesham	1. Coastal flooding 2. COMAH site	3	1. Rye Bay Inter-Agency Plan 2. COMAH Plan
Iden		1	
Mountfield		1	
Northiam	Local flooding	1/2	
Peasmarsh		1	
Penhurst		1	
Pett	Coastal flooding	3	Rye Bay Inter-agency Plan
Playden		1	
Rye		3	Rye Bay Inter-agency Plan
Rye Foreign		1	
Salehurst	Severe flooding	2	
Sedlescombe		1	
Ticehurst		1	
Udimore		1	
Westfield		1	
Whatlington		1	

Appendix G

Wealden District			
Town/Parish	Local Hazard	Level	Notes
Alciston		1	
Alfriston	Local flooding	2	
Arlington		1	Reservoir
Berwick		1	
Buxted	Local flooding	2	
Chalvington with Ripe		1	Local airstrip
Chiddingly		1	
Crowborough	Final flight path	2	Industrial area
Cuckmere Valley		1	
Danehill		1	
East Dean & Friston	Isolation in severe weather (SW)	2	
East Hoathly		1	
Fletching		1	
Forest Row	Final flight path	2	Forest fires
Framfield		1	
Frant	Isolation in SW	2	
Hadlow Down	Final flight path	2	
Hailsham	Urban area. Industry	2	Shopping Centre
Hartfield	Final flight path. Isolation in SW	2	
Heathfield & Waldron	Final flight path	2	
Hellingly	Local flooding	2	
Herstmonceux		1	
Hooe		1	
Horam		1	
Isfield	Local flooding	2	
Laughton		1	
Little Horsted		1	
Long Man	Isolation in SW	2	Split by A27
Maresfield	Final flight path	2	Flooding in Cackle St. & Old Forge Lane. Forest fires
Mayfield	Final flight path	2	

continued...

Appendix G

Wealden District (continued)			
Town/Parish	Local Hazard	Level	Notes
Ninfield		1	
Pevensey	Coastal Flooding	3	Inter-agency plan
Polegate	Urban. Industrial	2	
Rotherfield	Final flight path	2	Isolation in SW
Selmeston		1	
Uckfield	Severe flooding	3	Industrial area
Wadhurst		1	
Warbleton	Final flight path	2	Isolation in SW
Wartling		1	
Westham	Coastal fld. Industr	3	Incorporated in Pevensey Plan