Report of the Head of Democratic Services

Report to Scrutiny Board (Strategy and Resources)

Date: 7 September 2020

Subject: Scrutiny review of resilience and emergency planning – recommendation tracking update.

Are specific electoral wards affected? If yes, name(s) of ward(s):	☐ Yes	☒ No
Has consultation been carried out?	☐ Yes	☒ No
Are there implications for equality and diversity and cohesion and integration?	☐ Yes	☒ No
Will the decision be open for call-in?	☐ Yes	☒ No
Does the report contain confidential or exempt information? If relevant, access to information procedure rule number: Appendix number:	☐ Yes	☒ No

1   Purpose of this report

1.1   This report sets out the progress made in responding to the recommendations arising from the previous Scrutiny review around resilience and emergency planning.

2   Background information

2.1   The Council's city-wide resilience and emergency planning functions fall within the remit of the Council's Strategy and Resources Scrutiny Board and last year the Board agreed to undertake further scrutiny of current resilience and emergency planning arrangements in Leeds, particularly in light of good practice and learning stemming from local incidents and emergencies, but also in the context of other national major incidents and events.

2.2   The Board decided to consider this matter via a working group meeting, which took place on 28th February 2019. The findings of the working group informed a formal Statement of the Scrutiny Board, which was agreed in April 2019.

2.3   In September 2019, the Scrutiny Board received a formal response to the recommendations arising from this review.

2.4 This item was scheduled to come to the March meeting of the Strategy and Resources Scrutiny Board which was cancelled as a result of the emerging Covid-19 pandemic. Given the wider agenda which includes items on Business Continuity during Covid-19 and Risk Management it was determined that this report should now feature on this agenda.

3 Main issues

3.1 The Scrutiny recommendation tracking system allows the Scrutiny Board to consider the position status of its recommendations in terms of their on-going relevance and the progress made in implementing the recommendations based on a standard set of criteria. The Board will then be able to take further action as appropriate.

3.2 This standard set of criteria is presented in the form of a flow chart at Appendix 1. The questions in the flow chart should help to decide whether a recommendation has been completed, and if not whether further action is required. Details of progress against each recommendation are set out within the table at Appendix 2.

4 Corporate Considerations

4.1 Consultation and Engagement

4.1.1 Where internal or external consultation processes have been undertaken with regard to responding to the Scrutiny Board's recommendations, details of any such consultation will be referenced against the relevant recommendation within the table at Appendix 2.

4.2 Equality and Diversity / Cohesion and Integration

4.2.1 Where consideration has been given to the impact on equality areas, as defined in the Council's Equality and Diversity Scheme, this will be referenced against the relevant recommendation within the table at Appendix 2.

4.3 Council Policies and Best Council Plan

4.3.1 Effective management of the range of risks that could impact upon the city and the council supports the delivery of all Best Council Plan outcomes and priorities.

Climate Emergency

4.3.2 Climate change is leading to more frequent extreme weather events, which is increasing the importance of resilience and emergency planning.

4.4 Resources and Value for Money

4.4.1 Details of any significant resource and financial implications linked to the Scrutiny recommendations will be referenced against the relevant recommendation within the table at Appendix 2.

4.5   Legal Implications, Access to Information and Call In

4.5.1 This report does not contain any exempt or confidential information.

4.6   Risk Management

4.6.1 Any specific risk management implications will be referenced against the relevant recommendation within the table at Appendix 2.

5   Conclusions

5.1   The progress made in responding to the recommendations arising from the Scrutiny Board's earlier review around resilience and emergency planning is set out within Appendix 2 of this report for the Board's consideration.

6   Recommendations

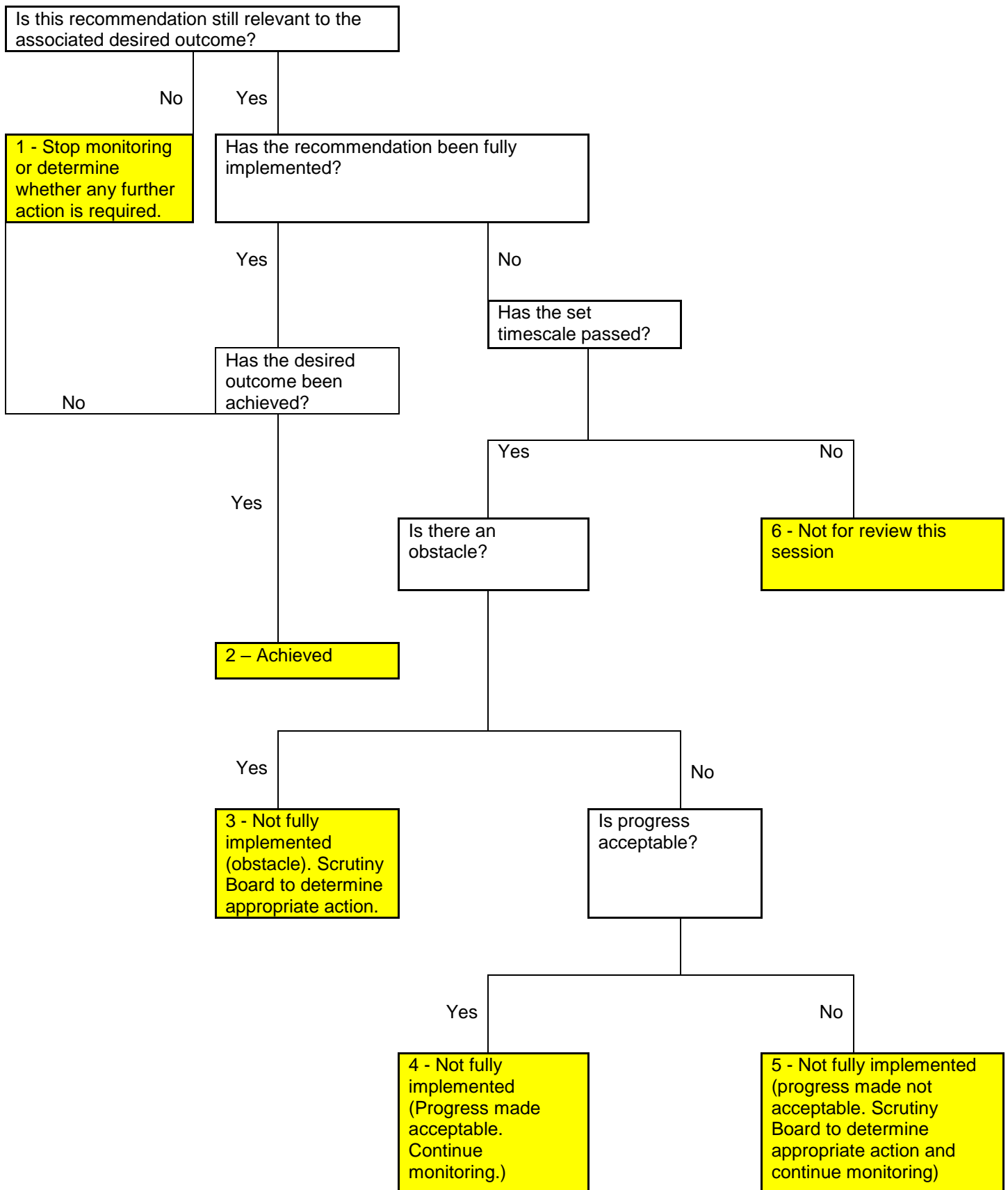6.1   The Board is requested to:

- Agree those recommendations which no longer require monitoring;
- Identify any recommendations where progress is unsatisfactory and determine the action the Board wishes to take as a result.

7.   Background documents[1]

7.1   None

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[1] The background documents listed in this section are available to download from the Council's website, unless they contain confidential or exempt information. The list of background documents does not include published works.

Recommendation tracking flowchart and classifications:
Questions to be considered by Scrutiny Boards

Is this recommendation still relevant to the associated desired outcome?

No — **1 - Stop monitoring or determine whether any further action is required.**

Yes — Has the recommendation been fully implemented?

Yes — Has the desired outcome been achieved?

No

No — Has the set timescale passed?

Yes — Is there an obstacle?

No — **6 - Not for review this session**

Yes — **2 – Achieved**

Yes — **3 - Not fully implemented (obstacle). Scrutiny Board to determine appropriate action.**

No — Is progress acceptable?

Yes — **4 - Not fully implemented (Progress made acceptable. Continue monitoring.)**

No — **5 - Not fully implemented (progress made not acceptable. Scrutiny Board to determine appropriate action and continue mponitoring)**

Position Status Categories

1 - Stop monitoring or determine whether any further action is required
2 - Achieved
3 - Not fully implemented (Obstacle)
4 - Not fully implemented (Progress made acceptable. Continue monitoring)
5 - Not fully implemented (Progress made not acceptable. Continue monitoring)
6 - Not for review this session

Recommendation 1 – That the Director of Resources and Housing takes the lead in exploring additional ways of proactively disseminating key information and guidance, such as the 'home emergency kit', 'preparing your household' and 'useful contacts' more widely to local residents. Linked to this, particular consideration should be given towards potentially maximising existing systems and processes within the Council, such as the Council Tax notification process.

Formal response (September 2019):

There are several publications available both in hard copy format all electronically accessible from www.leeds.gov.uk/prepared. The publications offer guidance and advice on how to plan for emergencies. Guidance for domestic properties includes 'Your Household Emergency Plan', 'Home Emergency Kit' and 'Preparing Your Household'. Hard copies of these documents are printed A4 size and are unsuitable for inclosing in Council Tax billing. However, these plus other guidance could be signposted from an insert included in the Council Tax bill. The feasibility of using the Council Tax notification process is being pursued with the Council Tax & Benefits Team within the Communities & Environment Directorate.

The Council has also produced a quantity of ICE cards (In Case of Emergency) which are handed out to the public at events etc. The ICE Cards contain very brief guidance on what to do in an emergency situation along with some key partner contact numbers as well as a blank space for the card holder's next of kin/guardians contact details to be included. The cards also include the www.leeds.gov.uk/prepared link to access further information including the publications noted above.

During the Storm Eva severe weather event in 2015, spontaneous volunteers from the local community and beyond proved a valuable resource particularly during the recovery/clean-up phase. In conjunction with Open Source Arts, LCC has provided input into developing a 'Spontaneous Volunteers Toolkit' to help co-ordinate the volunteers. Whilst further work is still required surrounding the development of this toolkit, it aims to contain guidance and resources for communities in the safe and effective management of a spontaneous volunteer response to an emergency incident.

The West Yorkshire Community Risk Register is available in an interactive e-Book format. The e-Book can be easily accessed by members of the public via a link embedded in partner websites and electronic documents (Link to e-book). The e-Book provides an overview of the four highest risks facing West Yorkshire (severe weather, health pandemic, electricity loss and, malicious attack) and contains a wide range of links to other information and guidance including videos which will help to inform community resilience.

Update Position (March 2020):

Climate change is leading to more frequent extreme weather events, which is increasing the importance of resilience and emergency planning and the need for citizens and communities to seek advice and guidance to become more self-resilient protecting themselves, their property and communities.

The recommendation from Scrutiny Board (Strategy & Resources) to consider inclusion of signposting in Council Tax billing to advice and guidance on how to plan for emergencies has been progressed to implementation. The signposting is included on the reverse of the Leaders Message in the form of 'Top Tips' and will 'hit' in the region of 350k domestic households.

Further opportunities to promote self-resilience arose during the planning for a no deal EU-Exit. This focussed on citizens and community impact, ensuring community understanding of their rights and the EU settlement scheme, monitoring community tensions/providing reassurance and ensuring effective dissemination of public information, relevant advice and support to individuals, communities and partners.

Incidents, such as the recent storms and the current Coronavirus outbreak have helped to establish and test communication arrangements with citizens and communities. This included signposting to where further information and advice can be accessed.

The 'Spontaneous Volunteers Toolkit' has been developed to draft status and is ready for exercising. Three exercises are to be scheduled (including an evening exercise) to be facilitated by Open Source Arts.

Current Position (September 2020):

'Spontaneous Volunteers Toolkit'. The planned exercises scheduled to take place towards the end of March 2020 were postponed due to the COVID 19 outbreak. At present the exercises have not been rescheduled. A formal release of the toolkit is dependent on the exercises to ascertain that the toolkit is fit for purpose and to inform final development. The 'Spontaneous Volunteers Toolkit' has been handed over to Open Source Arts for onward ownership, implementation, testing and maintenance. LCC maintains input via working/sub group representation from Communities & Environment and Flood Risk Management.

Position Status (categories 1 – 6)   *This is to be formally agreed by the Scrutiny Board*

Recommendation 2 – That the Director of Resources and Housing works closely with the Director of Communities and Environment in utilising the Community Committee network to engage proactively with all Councillors in generating greater awareness and understanding of the existing local resilience and emergency planning arrangements and the implications and effectiveness of their own role in this regard

Formal response (September 2019):

Councillors have key roles and responsibilities for ensuring preparedness and resilience, responding to, and recovering from emergencies. There is a guide published by the Local Government Association entitled 'A Councillors Guide to Civil Emergencies' which clearly sets out Councillor roles and responsibilities. Consideration had initially been given to providing a Councillor seminar relating to these key roles and responsibilities. However, the Executive Member for Resources is keen to explore other methods of engagement and to invite the views of Councillors to help inform an effective approach.

Linked to the Community Committee network, particular efforts continue to be made towards increasing awareness of the Prevent and Counter-extremism agenda amongst Councillors, with workshops being held to enable Councillors to understand their roles and be introduced to the relevant officer support team should they require further information and advice. Dedicated work is also undertaken with Community Committee Chairs to increase their awareness of these agendas.

Throughout the course of each year there are also several opportunities to engage Councillors in matters relating to both council and city resilience.
All Councillors registered with Leeds Alert (a joint LCC and West Yorkshire Police 'warning and informing' system) are invited to the twice yearly Leeds Alert Network Events. The events comprise a programme of guest speakers providing presentations to help build personal and organisational resilience. Also through Leeds Alert, invitations are issued to attend a range of exercises and workshops again covering various themes.

Recent exercises held this year include Exercise Hana Hana.

Hana Hana was a series of three exercises aimed at encouraging businesses and organisations located within the city centre to network with each other and gain awareness of each other's plans and procedures. There was minimal Councillor attendance at the exercises.

There is an 'Annual Business Continuity Report' which is presented to the Corporate Governance & Audit Committee. The report sets out key areas of progress relating to improving council and city resilience along with future plans and initiatives.

There are two corporate risks (Council Resilience and City Resilience) which are reviewed on a quarterly basis. The risks are also reported in the Annual Risk Assurance Report. The annual report provides assurances to the Executive Board, Corporate Governance & Audit Committee and Strategy & Resources Scrutiny Board of LCC's alignment with the requirements of the Civil Contingencies Act 2004. The report is published on www.leeds.gov.uk.

Update Position (March 2020):

The recent storms have tested councillor response to and recovery from emergencies in the wards affected by flooding.

During the flooding, an email was issued to councillors sign-posting to the confidential 24 hour one number call-out and contact telephone number for use by professional partners, councillors and council staff. This non-public number ensures that the call is escalated as a priority, avoiding call queuing and is dealt with as soon as an operator is free.

More recently, emails have been issued to all councillors regarding the current Coronavirus outbreak, as a support to help them with their role.

Social media has also been utilised to provide/signpost to information.

Copies of the Emergency Management Plan 'Quick Guide' will be re-issued to councillors to re-enforce understanding of the council's approach to responding to and recovering from emergencies.

Consideration is to be given to using the recent severe weather/flooding events as a prompt to facilitate an exercise for councillors, this could also test awareness of the roles and responsibilities documented in the LGA publication, 'A Councillors Guide to Civil Emergencies'.

Briefings have been provided to the city's 10 Community Committee Chairs about the local approach to Prevent and Counter Extremism, with an offer of attending one of their committee meetings, which some committees have taken up. Chairs and Community Safety Champions have also been invited to attend LGA Essentials training for Prevent and Counter Extremism. The Communities Team continues to meet regularly with the Executive Member for Communities.

Current Position (September 2020):

COVID 19. Councillors have been kept informed and up to date during the COVID 19 outbreak through regular 'Elected Member & MP COVID 19' emails enhancing communication of information and guidance with communities and local residents. An Elected Members Support email in-box was also created to deal with COVID 19 related queries from Councillors during the pandemic – this remains operational.

Position Status (categories 1 – 6)   *This is to be formally agreed by the Scrutiny Board*

Recommendation 3 – That the Director of Resources and Housing leads on exploring the feasibility of adopting a universal emergency warning system within all Council owned buildings aimed at enabling all staff, regardless of their usual place of work, and other users of Council owned buildings to be able to instantly recognise and respond accordingly to a particular emergency alert.

Formal response (September 2019):

After consideration, it is currently thought that a universal emergency warning system within all Council owned buildings covering a range of emergencies would not be feasible. Even the universal warning system and procedures for evacuation due to fire differ slightly from setting to setting, taking into account the nature of the building and occupancy etc. as determined by the Fire Risk Assessment.

For other types of emergencies it is more difficult, as staff would need to respond differently to each type of emergency, and different warning sounds may be confusing.

For example, there may be a range of actions required including lockdown (keeping staff and visitors safe within a building); silent evacuation; invacuation (where staff and potentially some clients or members of the public are asked to come into a building to stay safe); or moving people to certain parts of a building etc. This is one of the key reasons why there are trained Emergency Incident Officers in each building, usually senior members of staff who utilise Fire Wardens to provide instructions regarding the course of action to be taken and effect the correct response required.

However, what Recommendation 3 has raised, is the need for a mechanism to effectively invoke the procedure and ensure staff, visitors, members of the public and other key stakeholders such as Elected Members are aware of the situation and the correct course of action to be taken. Work is also currently ongoing to research 'app' based communication systems utilised via mobile telephones and other devices that would ensure bespoke responses could be communicated and managed effectively.

Update Position (March 2020):

Work to procure an app based communication solution to address this and issues relating to lone working is ongoing. Members have been consulted and Cllr Scopes has been nominated by Member Management Committee to feed into the specification for such a solution.

Current Position (September 2020):

Member Management Committee Sub-Group on Member safety, led by Cllr Scopes, held several meetings and surveyed Members to help determine the best solution to fit expressed needs. Work to progress this to procurement was then curtailed due to the COVID-19 pandemic response, which is taking all health and safety resources. This will be picked back up when the work in response to COVID-19 relents.

Position Status (categories 1 – 6)   *This is to be formally agreed by the Scrutiny Board*